

Ecological Practice: Performance Making in the Age of the Anthropocene



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Abstract

The emerging field of Performance and Ecology addresses approaches to performance and performance making in response to the profound challenges heralded by the age of the Anthropocene. Transdisciplinary artist-scholars within this paradigm bring into question spatiotemporal relationships between all things, through varying artistic and scholarly practices. This practice-led-research project seeks to create work at the open intersections of the human and more-than-human, audience and performer, practice and research. The aim of the project is to disturb these binaries, which contribute to hierarchies of destruction of all multispecies beings and habitats, including humans. Through performance, this work addresses and critiques distinctive ways of being in, listening to, and viewing our shared world. The accompanying exegesis highlights how performance can reveal what otherwise remains hidden in this entangled process.

The exegesis documents the development of site-specific performance works over three active modes: Walking, Dancing and Writing. These experiments in performance include both solo works and participatory projects. All works traverse these modes and are influenced by current international and Australian performance practices in site-specific Walking, Dancing and/or Writing. Three main projects are discussed through text, photograph and video. These are *Promenade Locale* a participatory walking project that took place in Central Victoria, *Ends of the Earth* and *Instability*, dance solos performed in Melaka, Malaysia and the practice of *Weather Writing*, which takes places at my home, also in Central Victoria.

As global warming becomes ever prevalent, performance works based in relationality, that embody aspects of place, movement and weather, are significant. These works seek knowledge created through, for and by differing body worlds. A relationship between inside and outside the body occurs through this research. The body performs the ecologies of place. The research places me, as one of many who are striving through ecological practice for performance, to participate equally and reciprocally across human and more-than-human trajectories in unprecedented times.

Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.



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A section of this thesis has been provisionally accepted for publication in the following article.

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Statement of Ethics Approval

Approval



Human Research Ethics Committee

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Project Title:	Promenade Locale #2
For the period:	11/03/2015 to 30/09/2015

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Fiona Koop



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Extension Approval

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Ethics Officer
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Instability video loop: 7.00mins.

Filming: Georgia Snowball

Editing: Leonie Van Eyk

Soundtrack: recorded by Georgia Snowball

Sound edit: Paul Kavanagh

Ends of the Earth video loop: 5.29mins.

Filming: Georgia Snowball

Editing: Leonie Van Eyk

Background sound includes: Ajak Kwai and Reuben Lewis.

Footfall video loop: 2.58mins.

Filming: Georgia Snowball

Editing: Leonie Van Eyk

Soundtrack: recorded by Georgia Snowball

Promenade Locale video loop: 8.32mins.

Filming: Lisa Mills and Eamon Coulthard

Editing and sound recording: Lisa Mills

Soundtrack: live recording from *Promenade Locale*

Sound edit: Paul Kavanagh

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To my beautiful children Molly and Arki, I love you and want to thank you for understanding and being interested. Alice my canine companion, you kept me sane.

Kav, my love, thank you for everything. This is for you.

Foreword

This exegesis aims to position my research within the field of Performance and Ecology. It seeks to contribute to the shifting paradigm that is Performance and Ecology, through experiments in site-specific practice-led-research. Performance and Ecology offers ways of understanding the agency of the ecological world around us, at a time when global warming through climate change is no longer a contested fact, but rather forms a political agenda. I have come to the evolving field of Performance and Ecology in the Anthropocene, from a grass roots background in protest and activism. My focus has been on sites of old growth forest destruction and uranium mine sites in Australia. I have also been influenced for many years by the training and philosophy behind the movement practice of Body Weather. I consider that the knowledge acquired through these formative experiences has shaped my present outlook.

In 2017, humanity evolves in ever confronting directions. In Australia as I write, summer is now dubbed ‘fire season’ and rising sea levels worldwide are forcing people to think and act differently. This research comes at a very specific index of time where each year tops the previous as the ‘hottest on record.’¹ 2017 is currently set to be the second hottest year recorded.² Extreme weather events continue to confuse and provoke debate about the benefits of renewable energy versus nuclear power. Political battles continue concerning the best way to maintain human life on

¹ Reuters: "World Temperatures Hit New High in 2016 for Third Year in a Row, NOAA and NASA Say." ABC News, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-19/temperatures-hit-new-high-in-2016-for-third-year-in-row-us-data/8193046>. This report noted that world temperatures had hit a record high for the third year in a row in 2016, creeping closer to a ceiling set for global warming with extremes including unprecedented heat in India and ice melt in the Arctic.

² "At Midway Point, 2017 in the 2nd-Hottest Year on Record" Climate Central. <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/midway-point-2017-2nd-hottest-year-21625>. Accessed September 6, 2017.

Earth now and into the future. The UN has recently attempted to develop an international organised human response. “The Sustainable Development Goals” aim to ‘end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change’ by 2030.³ The unbalanced agency among humans and that of our more-than-human counterparts requires addressing. Spatiotemporal relations between the human and the more-than-human, between body and place, as explored in this exegesis, exemplify the fragility of all life and the reciprocity inherent in all we do. The sense of urgency in the present time and the scale of the task, both near and far, have proved to be humbling and vital considerations in the search for new knowledge.

³ "United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda" United Nations.
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>. Accessed August 20, 2017.

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Introduction



Figure 1. *Above the Clouds*, Northam Western Australia, 2015.

The Roar of the Planet

Drifting up through the clouds in a hot air balloon on a foggy morning over Northam in Western Australia, all I can see and feel around my body is white moisture. There is no above and no below, only whiteness. We are in the cloud. We are the cloud. The balloon and basket seem miles away from human activity below. We are floating upwards at around two hundred feet per minute. The atmosphere is peaceful, radiant and unreal, as if bearing witness to a dream. It takes me a while to feel comfortable, to get over my fear that we will drop out of the sky. My senses slowly become more attuned to where we are, the smell, the sight of being in the upper atmosphere. We emerge above the clouds to a dazzling warm day; it's an impossibly beautiful sight.

Then below I hear the roar and beep of a truck reversing in the small country town we are flying over, but cannot see. The sound of human activity floating upward is crystal clear, amplified. Cars tear along the highway below; roosters call out, dogs bark and doors slam. Human activity permeates every facet of the Earth, particularly through sound, both above and below.

Location - I Sound

The aural atmosphere locates where I am on the ground and marks out time. I fall into place amongst the noises at Block 119; from the shack where we live, the silence can be deafening and the noise shocking. Situated as we are up in the bush 1.19 kilometres from the main road and between the ancient volcanos of Tarrengower and Lalgambook (Mount Franklin) in Central Victoria, the senses are tuned to the open space that creates a haven for life here. The sounds are big, whether from the crash of a falling branch or the rumbling of trucks along the highway. The silences in between provoke a heightened awareness of location. The sounds I hear and make are a compilation of the weather, land and animals, as well as those directly and indirectly resulting from human activity. Jay Martin observes the liveliness of listening to and making noise:

Our language nicely captures the ambivalence of activity vs. passivity in the dual meanings of the verbs “to smell,” “to look,” “to taste,” and “to feel.” Only hearing lacks a comparable verb, at once active and passive. Instead, it complements “I hear” or “I listen” with “I sound.”⁴

There is one road in and one road out at Block 119. We rarely get visitors and the car-like sounds are somewhat confusing. The crunching gravel stirred up by the motion of

⁴ Martin Jay, "In the Realm of the Senses: An Introduction," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (2011): 309. (footnote 10).

car tyres sends me running outside on many occasions to greet the unexpected visitors, who never seem to arrive. I can hear the road clearly when the wind is right and not at all when it is blowing in the other direction. We do have one group of neighbours over the hill, though we don't see much of them. However, the sound of their dogs or their rooster is a comforting one. Sheep and cattle graze to the north and west, randomly calling out on seemingly miles of parched farmland. To the south and east the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park grows wild and pushes through the boundary fence, stretching for more space. On weekends trail bikes screech so loudly that they may as well be travelling through the paddock next to the house. While these large sounds inform my general location; it is the smaller seasonal sounds of birds, frogs, bats, crickets and rain on the tin roof that mark out the finer details of intimate experiences of time and space at Block 119.

Learning to define the vaguely similar sound of 'rumbling' from a distance creates a multidirectional sense of location. Although the rumblings of approaching thunder, of the highway or of a plane overhead can seem pervasive, over time a clear differentiation becomes apparent. As they travel nearer, through and past Block 119, these rumbling sounds separate out uniquely and I am further able to position myself in temporal and spatial relation. Sound, heard as it moves through the atmosphere, defines an awareness that locates my body in time and space. The wind through the trees has an expansive travelling resonance here; the sound and motion of the trees act as a type of warning signal for the weather that is approaching and give an indication of its direction. Intonations change as the wind travels from afar and gets closer, negotiating the patches of trees and bare space and creating a giant rustling musical score of sound and silence.

The acoustics of our human existence are wholly apparent to those living off the grid at Block 119; the generator whirring, the high-pitched whistle of the modem, kids shouting, the chopping of wood, chickens clucking, the dog barking. This initial site of home has no mains power, flushing toilet or running water, but is powered by solar panels, and has rainwater tanks for drinking water and dam water for the garden. The proximity of the fridge, the shower and the washing machine all within a few feet of each other, adds many human layers to the sounds coming from the surrounding country. At Block 119 sound has a visceral affect providing mental warnings and physical triggers of motion and stillness. The scraping of mice, the distant thump of kangaroos, the sunset call of magpies, claps of thunder or the dry crunching of leaves under foot are a reminder of seasonal changes, the time of day and of what needs to be prepared for the future. These sounds, which become absorbed into the body, situate me in this particular place and in this specific climate and geography, as distinct from any other experience or locality.

Listening takes time; it makes one stop and think. As I share my study with micro bats, I can hear their tiny high-pitched squeals in the corner of the room as I write. Dry summer branches crack and tumble down tree trunks outside the window, triggering the flight of a flock of galas. The insistent preach of cicadas or crickets alternates with the warble of birds close by, and then they play together. The summer wind blows gently through the slightly open window creating a deep and mournful hum. At night the window is left ajar, so the bats can make their way in and out. Observations of the aural atmospheres surrounding me influence my movement

through space. The action of listening heightens my awareness of the role I play, of how 'I sound' in amongst the wider ensemble at Block 119.

Navigation

Sensorial encounters realised through original performance works form the practice-as-research enquiry of this project. The performative and visual elements of the research are collated through artist notes, image and video. The structural modes of the written exegesis come under the headings of Walking, Dancing and Writing, and these form the performative actions of the chapters. Each mode develops processes of thought, development and reflection that align with the practice of performance making. The work responds to the research questions, renamed here as propositions, by further defining the term 'ecological practice' through a series of site-specific performances. The text is styled in different registers of language, including personal reflection (artist notes) and descriptive writing that respond to the practice-as-research experiments within each mode. The layout of the writing moves between indexes of knowing and not knowing, navigating thought, theory and practice.

To begin I define ecological practice as developing an awareness of human and more-than-human relations in the creation of artistic research. I have borrowed Stacey Alaimo's phrase 'more-than-human' in this research, as I see it as a generous and all encompassing term for attribution to both the living and the nonliving. It raises the status of the non-human and suggests questions about what it means to be human.⁵

⁵ Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press' 2010) 2.

The term ‘practice’ describes the method used to conduct the project.⁶ The time line of this research follows a trajectory from living in a tin and wooden shack with my family for the majority of the project, through to designing and building a solar passive home. The implications of the parallel project of constructing a new home and living space are addressed in the final reflections of this research.

The term ecological practice is positioned within the emerging theoretical field of Performance and Ecology, providing a practical approach to the creation of site-specific performance that foregrounds the living, breathing relationship with the more-than-human world, in a continuum of dynamic ‘multiplicity.’⁷ Ecological practice attempts to put the human position into action by taking up and responding to a wider and non-hierarchical ecology of all things. The processes surrounding the performance works locate importance in acknowledging the challenge of responsibility required in this engagement. Reciprocity between cause and effect, between the human and the more-than-human, generates invaluable insight and potential new knowledge, as we witness each other and participate *in* the Earth rather than *on* the Earth.⁸ The project foreshadows further ecological practice; through site-specific performance making that becomes transferable across locations in response to the Anthropocene. The method of Body Weather, a movement practice that works with the senses in relation to site and atmosphere, will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two. Body Weather is key to this process and several original performances

⁶ See, Baz Kershaw, "Practice as Research: Transdisciplinary Innovation in Action," in *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, ed. Baz Kershaw & Helen Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011). Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds. *Practice as Research : Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007).

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 296.

⁸ Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 318.

by the author that explore its potential as an investigatory ecological performance practice, have been presented in the public domain both locally and internationally.

Research Propositions

The separate, yet permeable modes of Walking, Dancing and Writing support the iterations of live and documented performance, to answer the research propositions.

The broader intention is to demonstrate how performance and performance making in the context of ecological performance practice can challenge the human and more-than-human binary. This is important to the process of rethinking our shared relations across time and space, species and materialities in the Anthropocene. The propositions are activated through practice-as-research experiments that each re-imagine human interrelationship with the Earth in times of unprecedented transformation.

Statements to be discussed are:

- ❖ Site-specific performance addresses and attends to wider concepts and effects of the Anthropocene.
- ❖ Participatory performance works to extend performer/audience and human/more-than-human relations.
- ❖ The technique of Body Weather for performance making applies across the disciplines of Writing, Walking and Dancing, in the context of creating artistic material that responds to place.

I have chosen the term *proposition* instead of *question*, as I feel that I have not created correct answers to answerable questions. Rather I have presented the intention of the

research and then documented performative experiments to support my initial objective. Elizabeth Grosz imagines ‘the body as a hinge or threshold between nature and culture.’⁹ This research offers the performing body as a meeting point between the human and the more-than-human, between the internal and the external. In performing the Body Weather technique, a porous encounter at the nexus of body and weather guides the work. The project puts forward a potential model for experiencing place in a present that is undergoing ‘unprecedented transformation.’ My aim has been to capture moments of everyday experiences of place, combining ecological sensibility with performance making techniques, to highlight difference and collusion in human and more-than-human encounters of the world.¹⁰

I develop these propositions through live performance works with audience feedback and through my own creative process, personal experience and critical reflection. Through the modes of Walking, Writing and Dancing each performance work speaks to the current field of performance studies while seeking to contribute to a wider discussion about the power of art and performance to create knowledge and to affect an expanded sense of perspective in living with the Anthropocene.

⁹ Elizabeth Grosz, "Notes Towards a Corporeal Feminism," *Australian Feminist Studies* 2, no. 5 (1987): 8.

¹⁰ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du reel, 2002), 19.

‘In the materialistic philosophical tradition ushered in by Epicurus and Lucretius, atoms fall in parallel formations into the void, following a slightly diagonal course. If one of these atoms swerves off course, it “causes an encounter with the next atom and from encounter to encounter a pile up and the birth of the world”... This is how forms come into being, from the “deviation” and random encounter between to hitherto parallel elements’.

The Anthropocene

Ecological awareness is about becoming friendly with hypocrisy, not because one doesn't care but because one does.¹¹

Timothy Morton



Figure 2. *Smoke and Cloud*, Wye River, Victoria, 2016.

As we arrive dishevelled and in a panic on the scene of the sixth mass extinction event, within the post Holocene geological timescale of the Anthropocene, this research project appears timely. The Anthropocene, the age of humans, is a proposed epoch in the present geological time scale as named by Nobel Prize winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen.¹² The Anthropocene began with the first major atmospheric pollution toward the end of the 18th Century and associated with the Industrial Revolution, a process that has accelerated since World War II. It was

¹¹ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 134-58.

¹² Clive Hamilton, "Can Humans Survive the Anthropocene?" <http://clivehamilton.com/papers/>. Accessed September 5, 2017.

marked by ‘a point of inflexion at which growth rates of consumption, resource use and waste generation shifted onto a much steeper path.’¹³ With our rapid industrial, agricultural and technological progress, we have now emitted enough carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to have irreversibly changed the ecosystems of the planet.

Timothy Morton confirms the onset of the Anthropocene as follows: ‘After the invention of the steam engine, humans began to deposit layers of carbon in Earth’s crust. In 1945, there occurred “The Great Acceleration,” a huge data spike in the graph of human involvement in Earth systems.’¹⁴

Humans had now begun to pollute the atmosphere as a by-product of industry and progress, marking a huge step in the technological and economic evolution of humanity. This progress has spiralled out of control, with no end in sight, as we now affect the planet, akin to a natural disaster, changing it forever. In his 2013 speech for *The Anthropocene Project*, at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin, historian Dipesh Chakrabarty notes that we need to look at the history of the Earth in relation to the short time period humans have inhabited it. He speaks of the question of scale and the global magnitude of climate change that confronts humanity both intellectually and politically.¹⁵

This epoch marks the geological time period in which human activity has become geophysical and continues to create irreversible change to the Earth, similar to the natural events of a volcanic eruption or a shift in tectonic plates. Chakrabarty affirms

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Timothy Morton, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Term *Anthropocene*," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 00, no. 0 (2014): 1.

¹⁵ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "History on an Expanded Canvas: The Anthropocene’s Invitation" in *The Anthropocene Project. An Opening*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, (video) 1:01:41, posted January 21, 2013. Accessed January 16, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svgqLPFpaOg>

that natural history and human history have now converged. He ascribes a new kind of 'geological agency to humans...this implies that humans are now part of the natural history of the planet.'¹⁶ Australian Professor of Ethics Clive Hamilton further defines the type of entrenched damage done to the fragile eco-systems that support all life. 'The Anthropocene is not defined by the broadening impact of humans on the environment, but by interference in the processes that govern the geological evolution of the planet'.¹⁷ Artist and scholar Jen Rae describes the massive ecological fallout from excessive human interference and continual technological progress thus:

Whilst the power of steam and the seemingly endless possibilities of fossil fuels revolutionised the conditions and aspirations of contemporary life, they also produced unforeseen environmental consequences that triggered the beginning of global ecological imbalances.¹⁸

Some scientists and politicians are still conflicted over the use and even the validity of the term Anthropocene or indeed that global warming exists at all.¹⁹ Scholars such as Donna Haraway are calling for alternative titles such as Capitalocene, Plantationocene and Chthulucene that refocus the *anthropos* as secondary.²⁰ In the interim, Deborah Bird-Rose states, 'The Anthropocene is now doing what decades of insightful critique never quite succeeded in doing: it is forcing the truth upon us.'²¹ This reality raises important issues for arts practitioners across the globe, as individual and group

¹⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change," *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (2012): 1-18.

¹⁷ Hamilton, "Can Humans Survive the Anthropocene?" 3.

¹⁸ Jen Rae, "Art & the Anthropocene: Processes of Responsiveness and Communication in an Era of Environmental Uncertainty", (RMIT University, 2015), 39.

¹⁹ "Working Group on the 'Anthropocene' ", Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, <http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/workinggroups/anthropocene/>. Accessed November 13, 2016. See also, Timothy Morton who emphasises the need to state that the slogan 'climate change' has made little impression on our ability to confront major climatic and ecological issues, as it implies that the climate was always going to change. He prefers 'global warming,' as an undeniable description of what is happening to the planet.

Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013). 7-8.

²⁰ Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015).

²¹ Deborah Bird-Rose, "Anthropocene Noir," *Arena Journal* 41/42 (2013): 209.

performance makers respond to the most prevalent issue of our time, the well being and survival of people, the planet and the diverse species inhabitants. It requires an effort to imagine, create and perform more dynamic and relational ways of being and becoming. An artistic practice that works to address changes in both the weather and how we consume is required, one that adopts empathetic and conscious human-creature relations.

Block 119 is a microcosmic example of typical eco-systemic transformation resulting from human activity. Central Victorian land has been degraded specifically through logging, waterway diversion and dam water allocations, as well as via chemical spraying, fencing and grazing. This area (and much of Australia's farmland) serves as a local example of Morton's global *agrilogistics*. For farmers to sustain the ever increasing and constant demand on the land of producing crops all year round, agricultural practices must:

Eliminate contradiction and anomaly, establish boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, maximize existence over and above any quality of existing. Now that *agrilogistics* covers most of Earth's surface, we can see its effects as in a polymerase chain reaction: they are catastrophic.²²

The main catastrophic concerns at Block 119 associated with heat, drought, bush fire and flood are being exacerbated and accelerated by human activity. As well as erosion, threats loom from waterway pollution, habitat destruction, introduced animals and plants and related Indigenous species extinction.

²² Morton, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying," 3.



Figure 3. *Cracked Earth*, authors image, Block 119, Victoria, 2015.

Dipesh Chakrabarty and Baz Kershaw agree that the human impact on the Earth, in terms of both concept and effect, brims with contradiction, irony and paradox.²³ As previously noted and more recently addressed by theatre makers and academics Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow, the Anthropocene implies ‘collapsing the long-standing distinction between natural history and human history, climate change science proposes a new kind of agency for humans: geological agency.’²⁴ Put simply the age of the Anthropocene is ‘the era when humans act as a geological force on the planet, changing its climate for millennia to come.’²⁵ Chaudhuri and Enelow place this human/geological time frame, the Anthropocene, into context as ‘the era when the idea of the human must include a recognition of its shaping role in massive,

²³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change," 2. Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events*, 98-131.

²⁴ Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow, *Research Theatre, Climate Change and the Ecocide Project: A Case Book* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 25.

²⁵ Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies," 2.

planetary, geophysical change.²⁶ The hailing of the human as geologic provides a motivation for this research, to bring this unwieldy and catastrophic issue, overflowing with paradox, hypocrisy and confusion, into the realm of performance. This line of research is internationally recognised as the field of Performance and Ecology and is discussed below.²⁷

The research is also aligned with the thinking that global warming directly affects all bodies and traverses the spaces between inside and outside human and more-than-human forms. Containment of the body and the senses is re-framed through performance practice, to take on new ethical considerations of place, space and ecology, in the hope of providing an opening for multiple voices to emerge and be heard.

Country and Ecology

I prefer to refer to country rather than to landscape, as the term appears to frame country at a distance from human experience. This creates a vantage point to observe something that is ‘over there’ and separate from our bodies. Kershaw notes that: ‘For centuries “landscape” has been a major trope contributing to the elevation of the human over the environment.’²⁸ In Australia ‘country’ is an Indigenous term that describes the highest form of respect and belonging to the land. I am still getting used to using this term, although sometimes I feel I am not justified in doing so. The term differs from categorising a whole landmass as *a* country and is separate again from

²⁶ Chaudhuri and Enelow, *Research Theatre*, ix.

²⁷ See, Tanja Beer, "Ecoscenography: The Paradigm and Practice of Ecological Design in the Performing Arts." (The University of Melbourne, 2016). See also, Lisa Woynarski, "Towards an Ecological Performance Aesthetic for the Bio-Urban: A Non-Anthropocentric Theory" (University of London, 2015).

²⁸ Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology*, 309.

the concept of going to *the* country. The reference is usually to being *on* country.

Bird-Rose describes country as a term that is inclusive of:

The soils, water, underground water, plants, animals, landforms, and all the patterns of organization of life, and all the connectivities of mutuality and exchange, the life and death, the metamorphic flow of beginning creation through the life and lives of country.²⁹

Ecology derives from the Greek word *oikos*, which literally translates to the study *of* and *in* the household.³⁰ With ‘ecological practice’ as the focus of this study, it has been framed to both incorporate and integrate the home in relation to the place within which it sits. Ecology is also formally ‘the scientific study of the distribution and abundance of organisms and the interactions that determine distribution and abundance.’³¹ To this Stephen Bottoms and Matthew Goulsh add that: ‘There are finite resources in any ecosystem (man-made systems included), and the inhabitants of a given system are mutually dependent on each other’s activities for the distribution of those resources.’³²

It is through the reflection of sensorial feedback arising from devising and performing, that this work articulates a considered and active relationship with the more-than-human world.³³ This exegesis is informed and engaged by current critical theory spanning feminism, new materialism and the environmental humanities. Amelia Jones joins this encounter, saying that: ‘New materialist theory allows us to complicate the notion of the performative as well as to enliven models of art and

²⁹ Deborah Bird-Rose, "Anthropocene Noir," *Arena Journal* 41/42 (2013).

³⁰ Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology* 16.

³¹ Colin R Townsend, Michael Begon, and John L Harper, *Essentials of Ecology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 4.

³² Stephen Bottoms and Matthew Goulsh, *Small Acts of Repair : Performance, Ecology and Goat Island* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 7.

³³ Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 2.

performance interpretation.’³⁴ A relationship with the more-than-human has always existed inside my performance practice and I am confident that now, more than ever, it is important to work on diminishing binaries between the human and more-than-human. Jones notes that:

We do not, in fact, have to claim that the status of human consciousness is nil — that the “human” is onto-logically the same as the “non- human”—just because we have a new understanding of ourselves as materialities interrelated with other materialities, and a new concept of our agency as intra-actively determined in continual engagements with the stuff of the world, of which we ourselves are constituted. The very attempts to articulate variations of this argument indicate that we still have a stake in our own consciousness, intellect, or whatever we want to call the force of our thought, as agential.³⁵

This research project provided the opportunity to perform experimental examples of rich everyday entanglements with things other than our selves, but which are inherently part of us.

Nature and Culture

Baz Kershaw’s important contribution to the field of Performance and Ecology, *Theatre Ecology*, closes with the statement that: ‘Immersive performance events which are articulated directly to what’s left of the “natural world”, unlike theatre, may have the capacity to collapse that disjuncture, to suture more fully human “nature” with nature’s “nature”’.³⁶

This statement has been influential in guiding the line of research throughout this exegesis. I agree with Kershaw when he says that nature is ‘a cultural construct that

³⁴ Amelia Jones, "Material Traces," *TDR: The Drama Review* 59, no. 4 (2015): 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁶ Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology*, 318.

separates humans from their environment.’³⁷ Historically the Western paradigm of the nature/culture binary promotes a way of being and thinking that maintains a separation, where one simply stands to define the other. Though to make specific headway on the issue of nature vs. culture, I find Elizabeth Grosz’s claim beneficial.

Rather than seeing it as either fixed origin, given limit, or predetermined goal, nature, the natural, must be seen as the site and locus of impetus and force, the ground of a malleable materiality, whose plasticity and openness account for the rich variability of cultural life.³⁸

The performance works here embrace the concept that ‘nature is the stuff of culture’ or nature as culture,³⁹ that is mutually informed by coexistence. The in-between space of openness and becoming, at the point of engagement, is the philosophical site of this work. Grosz references: ‘The in-between, formed by juxtapositions and experiments, formed by realignments or new arrangements... is the locus of futurity, movement and speed; it its thoroughly spatial and temporal, the very essence of space and time and their intrication’.⁴⁰

Performance projects explored herein are participatory and site-specific at their core. They involve audiences of both the human and more-than-human and look to create an experience of performing *with* rather than *about*, *in* rather than *on*. They could therefore be translated as ‘immersive performance events’ as Kershaw suggests.⁴¹ It is my contention that site-specific performance making acknowledges and provides a response to the time and space of the present Anthropocene. Indeed addressing issues of time and space in locations is central to this work.

³⁷ Ibid., 305.

³⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside : Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 97.

³⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 93.

⁴¹ See also, Gareth White, "On Immersive Theatre," *Theatre Research International* 37, no. 3 (2012).

Recent articles by Dee Heddon and Carl Lavery, published in *Green Letters* (2016) serve to remind performance practitioners that ecological theatre/performance needs to embrace disappointment and failure at the impossibility of the task of saving the world.⁴² Works grounded in a philosophy of Performance and Ecology can provide a gateway for rethinking our relations with and expectations of both performance works and the more-than-human players. Here I find resonance with the late Margaret Cameron's mantra, that the problem or difficulty of making the work *is* the work.⁴³ Kershaw similarly presents the conundrum and paradox of facing the overwhelming concept of our reliance on the Earth for nourishment and shelter and the Earth's reliance on us to put an end to excessive consumerism. Kershaw illustrates thus: 'Enter Po-chang's ox and paradox. Asked about seeking the Buddha-nature Po-chang says: "It's much like riding an ox in search of the ox!" The quest is a search for itself.'⁴⁴

The exegesis, following on from my performance making, is one such example of a search into meaning making within the current ecological and political predicament faced by humanity.

⁴² Deirdre Heddon, "Confounding Ecospectations: Disappointment and Hope in the Forest," *Green Letters* 20, no. 3 (2016); Carl Lavery, "Introduction: Performance and Ecology – What Can Theatre Do?,"

⁴³ Author communication with Margaret Cameron, *Performance Practicum*, Body Voice Studio, Footscray, 2008.

⁴⁴ Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology*, 52.

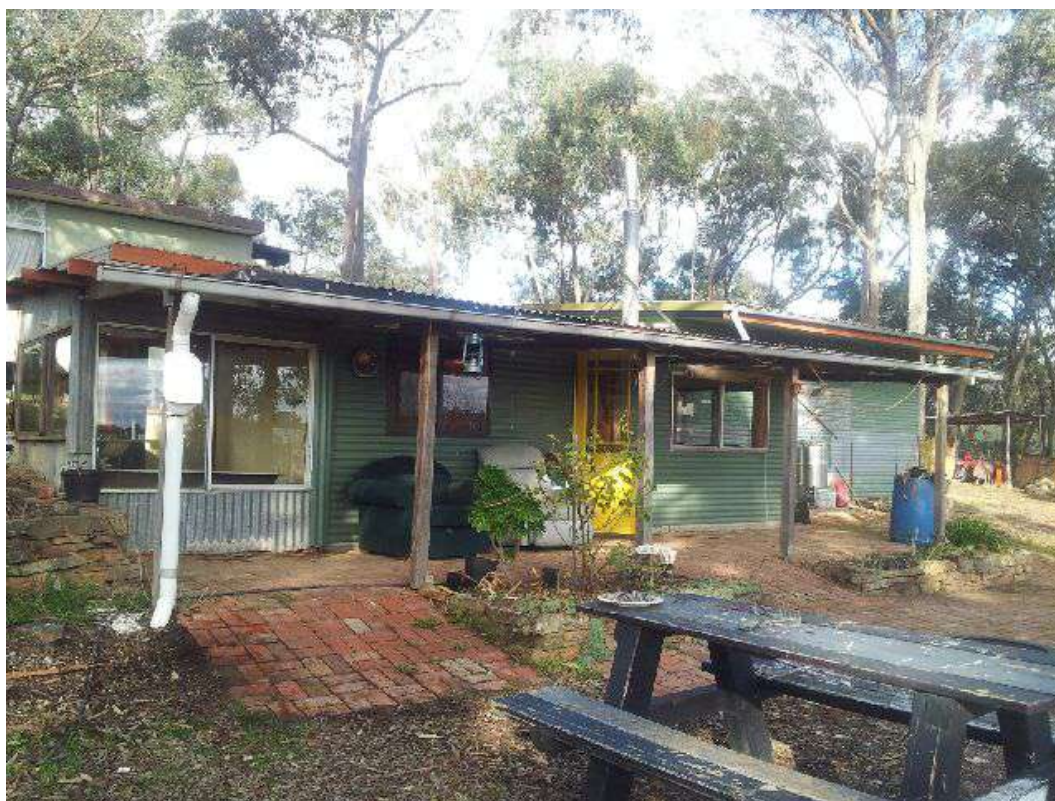


Figure 4. *The Shack*, author's image, Block 119, Victoria, 2017.

Home

Throughout this research I use the term ‘country’ as discussed previously, which is my attempt to speak about Australia in the most appropriate way. I acknowledge the complex knowledge systems within Australian Indigenous culture and relationship to place, which accept all aspects of country as sentient beings. In the text below a Dja Dja Wurrung elder of North Central Victoria, Justice B. Nelson, begins the creation story of *The Two Feuding Volcanoes* as follows:

A long, long time ago, long before anyone but the Traditional People walked our country, our lands, rivers, mountains and animals alike, all had magical life. They had personalities, purpose, speech and they could think for themselves.⁴⁵

The story of *The Two Feuding Volcanoes* surrounds the area where I live and where this research is undertaken. The Dja Dja Wurrung's total awareness and respect for

⁴⁵ Justice B. Nelson, "Dja Dja Wurrung: The Two Feuding Volcanoes," in *Nyernila: Listen Continuously*, ed. Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (Southbank: Arts Victoria, 2014), 46-47.

country influences my own approach, which learns from and pays homage to 'indigenous emphasis on participation and a world lived-in.'⁴⁶ An exploration of the complex relations within Indigenous communities is beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless any discussion of the land and ecologies rightfully includes recognition of Australia's First Peoples and their powerful relationship to country. As my research is based in site and the relationship to Australian place and space, it is importantly relevant to recognise the Indigenous peoples' connection to the land through their law. Indigenous philosopher Mary Graham explains the relevance and importance of Aboriginal Law.

Aboriginal Law 'never changes and is valid for all people', because it implicitly describes the wider emotional, psychological and perhaps cognitive states of the world to which all humans beings are subject, which means that Aboriginal Law is as natural (and as scientific) a system of law as physics.⁴⁷

In this research I have a clear intention to be sensitive to Indigenous ways of thinking while developing my body-based practice in an Australian site-specific locale. I do not align my research with an Indigenous cultural relationship with country. While giving the respect due to the First Peoples of this country, I must also attempt to make amends by standing on my own two feet and acknowledging my own position. The landmass that makes up Block 119 is representative of the direct spoils of a colonial war on the local Dja Dja Wurrung people. I fully acknowledge this and hope that my research works to highlight the fact that this country is sacred and that it doesn't belong to me. The knowledge acquired through this research is situated as a response to the ongoing divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and goes

⁴⁶ Stephen Muecke, *Ancient & Modern: Time, Culture and Indigenous Philosophy* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2004), 18.

⁴⁷ Mary Graham, "Some Thoughts About the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews," *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 45 (2008): 190.

some way to begin to show the recognition that the custodians of this country have always deserved.

Throughout this project, my performance plays with and jumps between registers of time and between live performance and documentation, solo and group work. The body in space is a varying mode experiencing particular time; through performance the body is seen as a physical marker on an index of planetary time. I recognise a togetherness of all things in the process of time, as a collective experience rather than as an individual one. Though some of my work is performed alone, I am aware of the ongoing collaboration between all things that adds to and surpasses the singularly human-centric. It is my intention that this awareness of the collective, appreciates the notion that all my actions have reactions that spill over into a wider worldview. Performing relationships and encounters with the more-than-human is integral to creating a benchmark of mutuality, where recognising call and effect, action and response, dissolves preconceived ideas of fixity. As outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, this perspective involves a complex multiplicity of human and more-than-human potential, that Performance and Ecology has the capacity to engage with.⁴⁸

Considering the function of such mutuality Kershaw explains, ‘performance ecology is the way in which performance and performances function eco-systematically.’⁴⁹ He claims that the term ‘performance’, as defined in physics, implies ‘energy’ as a constitutive quality of materiality harnessed to ‘perform work’.⁵⁰ In this case the materiality of my research comes about through bodily exchange in performing work

⁴⁸ Deleuze, "A Thousand Plateaus," 296.

⁴⁹ Baz Kershaw, "Performance Ecologies, Biotic Rights and Retro-Modernism." *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 17, no. 2 (2012): 267.

⁵⁰ Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology*, 275.

between the world and the self, and the relationship between audience and performer. Kershaw states, ‘The transformation of energy in and between materials is the process that expresses vitality, and without appropriate vitality performance is not likely to bring about change.’⁵¹

Change is a key theme in this research as the methods and performance outcomes strive, through new approaches to performance making, to address the ability to enhance the perspective of our relationality with the more-than-human. Addressing ecological and human concerns as one, through performance making plus live/documented performance events and audience viewing, becomes an active contemplation in new ways of relating.

⁵¹ Ibid. 275.

Chapter 1 - The Field

As I set out to answer Val Plumwood's call for a post-colonial 're-think' of both people and place in an Australian context, this research is firmly grounded in Australian place, space and time.⁵² Informing this view is Deborah-Bird Rose's approach to taking notice and attending to place.⁵³ The concept of 'paying attention' to place, space and time in the wider context of the Anthropocene involves being aware of one's actions and presence which in turn affect and respond to all things.

Significantly the practice-as-research component of the performance making process allows for and depends on trial and error and both success and failure. Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow have recently suggested that the makers of outdoor, or rural, performance work proclaim to have the leading edge in the field of Performance and Ecology. Artists have ostensibly achieved this through creating more immersive or connected to 'Nature' performance works, an approach justified by sheer location.⁵⁴ I agree with Chaudhuri and Enelow's statement that, 'The myth of an untouched Eden from which our species has carelessly banished itself...has by now been quite thoroughly debunked.'⁵⁵ I do however think that providing new locations for viewing performance, that involve an audience encounter with the literal 'outside', is important. I believe this to be a significant step in a process of engaging with place that puts audience and performer in contact with the environment outside of the body. The locations of my own self-devised works are specific to what is at hand, in a practice-as-research framework based in site-specific improvisation. These relational

⁵² Val Plumwood, "Nature in the Active Voice," *Australian Humanities Review* 46 (2009): 113.

⁵³ Deborah Bird-Rose, "Taking Notice," *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion*, no. 3 (1999).

⁵⁴ Chaudhuri and Enelow, *Research Theatre*, 29.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

improvisations become examples of Donna Haraway's situated knowledge.⁵⁶ This work embraces only one aspect of objective meaning making in the multiplicity of the whole within the field of Performance and Ecology, one that is local.⁵⁷

A New Materialist Approach

This practice-led-research is an attempt to communicate the human relationship with the more-than-human in performance through the ever-widening new materialist theoretical perspective, rather than via a purely representational one.⁵⁸ Australian arts theorist and scholar Barbara Bolt explains the significance of a neo or new materialist viewpoint as a way of confronting the present epoch of the Anthropocene through academic inquiry and arts praxis. 'With its acknowledgment of agential matter, neo-materialism questions the anthropocentric narrative that has underpinned our view of humans-in-the-world since the enlightenment.'⁵⁹ The philosophical move away from representation as knowledge and the dissolution of the mind/body split was initially theorised through Spinoza's conative body of affect,⁶⁰ and in turn the concept of affects as becomings, documented by Deleuze and Guattari.⁶¹ The contemporary field of new materialism has been further defined by, for example, Jane Bennett's 'thing

⁵⁶ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 583.

⁵⁷ Outdoor ecological performance is not somehow more viable or influential than urban or city based eco-performance works. However it does communicate a living relationship with the more-than-human out of doors and out of the body (out of the comfort zone) and provides an example of traversing the inside and outside boundaries of the human through site, movement and the senses.

⁵⁸ Nigel Thrift, "Steps to an Ecology of Place," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. John Allen and Philip Sarre Doreen Massey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 304.

⁵⁹ Barbara Bolt, "Introduction: Toward A "New Materialism" through the Arts," in *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts*, ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 2.

⁶⁰ Benedictus de Spinoza, *Spinoza's Ethics and, on the Correction of the Understanding* (London: Dent, 1910).

⁶¹ Deleuze, "A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia," 299.

power,⁶² and Karen Barad's concept of 'worlding'.⁶³ The field has also been extended through Timothy Morton's writing on ecology, nature and the Anthropocene,⁶⁴ and through Rosi Braidotti's theories on posthumanism.⁶⁵

Re thinking the consequences of human impact on the planet through new materialist theory enables a capacity to reason, with greater awareness of the intertwining agency of all things. It shifts thinking born out of the 'enlightenment', whereby humans were primarily positioned in a hierarchy over all things. Bolt notes: 'The new materialist discourse derives its urgency from the ethical, ecological and political imperatives that loom as a consequence of this world view.'⁶⁶ In recent thinking and in critiquing new materialist approach Australian playwright and academic Peta Tait, particularly known for her work in the field of emotions, animal sentience and body and gender theory, questions if there is something unexamined in the new materialist perspective. In an excerpt from Tait's Keynote paper presented at the University of Helsinki she remarks that:

One of my concerns is that posthuman ideas of vital materialism, arguing for movement across dissolving assemblages and with the singularity of cells as a primary mode, inadvertently flatten out the recognition and appreciation of nonhuman animals to their detriment at this crucial time.⁶⁷

Tait points towards Elizabeth Grosz and her differing concept of matter and the spark of life. Grosz may provide a response to Tait's concern thus: 'What I am seeking is a

⁶² Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 6.

⁶³ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 181.

⁶⁴ Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*.

⁶⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013).

⁶⁶ Ibid. 2-3.

⁶⁷ Peta Tait, "Emotional Species Bodies: Intention and Attention within Artistic Form." In *Proceedings of CARPA4 – Colloquium on Artistic Research in Performing Arts*, edited by Annette Arlander, University of the Arts Helsinki, 11th-13th June, 2015. <http://nivel.teak.fi/carpa4/emotional-species-bodies-intention-and-attention-within-artistic-form-peta-tait/>. Accessed January 16, 2016.

new concept of matter that also involves something incorporeal, a spark of virtuality that enables life to emerge.⁶⁸ This alternate perspective informs my practice-as-research, building as it does upon new materialist thinking. This is enhanced by Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti's theories of becoming, which underpins much of the creative and theoretical enquiry.⁶⁹

Participation and Encounter

This research also transits themes raised by Nicolas Bourriard in *Relational Aesthetics*, where he states that 'art is a state of encounter' between humans and their constructs,⁷⁰ and a more diverse 'relational play through art that is inter-species' as suggested by Charles Garoian.⁷¹ Taking into account Claire Bishop's more contemporary critiques of participatory art and 'delegated performance',⁷² each mode in this research frames different performative experiments of site-specific events.⁷³ These involve participation and encounters to create new relationships, with people, place and at the intersection of both.

I acknowledge the well-established traditions of land based earth works and performance art that have been site-specific focused since the 1970s. Artist Richard Long's durational walking pieces and sculptures have been influential in this field of

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Grosz, "Matter, Life and Other Variations," *Philosophy Today* 55 (2011): 17.

⁶⁹ Rosi Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject," *Comparative Critical Studies* 11, no. 2-3 (2014):

171. Donna Haraway, "When Species Meet," (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 163.

⁷⁰ Bourriard, *Relational Aesthetics*, 18.

⁷¹ Charles R. Garoian, "Sustaining Sustainability: The Pedagogical Drift of Art Research and Practice," *Studies in Art Education* 53, no. 4 (2012): 285.

⁷² Claire Bishop, "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity," *October* 140 (2012).

⁷³ See also, Nick Kaye, *Site Specific Art : Performance, Place, and Documentation* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another : Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local : Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: New Press, 1997); Joanne Tompkins and Anna Birch, *Performing Site-Specific Theatre : Politics, Place, Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

research and include themes of repetition, scale, exchange and speed. His work, predominantly made in situ, is created out of material elements and found objects of stone, wood, ash, snow, and mud. The sculptures are then documented through photograph and written notes, often being re created in gallery spaces. Long writes of his art: 'Relationships are a fundamental theme of many works. I walk on a planet which circles the sun. Each day is a solar event. Time is measured in days, and walking time can be the measure of a country.'⁷⁴

Jill Orr's seminal performances for camera, *Bleeding Trees* and *Lunch with The Birds* (1979), speak of encounters between person and place, the human and more-than-human. The female body performs a collaboration with the land and its inhabitants, rather than being the sole object or subject of the image. In *Bleeding Trees* Orr explains:

Bleeding Trees is an early environmental work where the body is used as an 'emotional barometer' placed in empathy with the natural and unnatural life cycles of trees. The empathy enlisted through the viewer is through identification with the human body. As female, the early feminist critique places the naked body as 'pandering to the male gaze'. In an environmental sense it is a gaze towards all.⁷⁵

Long and Orr engage with the elemental geographies and material aspects of a specific location, in the process of making an artwork. Whether on site or framed by the gallery, an ongoing experience for and with a public audience is created at the intersections between artist, audience and place. Long's and Orr's works are political; both artists suggest their work is a marker of time, place and feeling in response to being in the world.

⁷⁴ Richard Long, *Richard Long : Walking the Line*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 69.

⁷⁵ Jill Orr, "Bleeding Trees 1979," an artsphere website, <http://jillorr.com.au/e/bleeding-trees>. Accessed December 12, 2016.

In moving across transdisciplinary boundaries, from Visual and Live Performance to contemporary participatory modes, I consider the work of theatre makers such as Darren O'Connell and Eva Verity of Canadian Company Mammalian Diving Reflex, who speak of performing social relationships through the platform of art. According to their mission statement they, 'create work that recognizes the social responsibility of art, fostering a dialogue between audience members, between the audience and the material, and between the performers and the audience.'⁷⁶

The company's *Haircuts by Children*, which took place at the 2016 Melbourne Festival, is a recent example of participatory and relational performance that has toured to an international audience.⁷⁷ The performance event worked to benefit and question both social and cultural issues, in this case trust and responsibility relating to the ability of young people to cut hair, thus breaking down the audience/performer binary and boundaries of age and expertise. Verity observes the subtlety of relationships newly formed by the work:

Something that's always a pleasant thing to hear is the kinds of conversations people have with the children and the ways in which they're so often shocked by the intimacy or carefulness of both the act of having their hair cut by a child and the conversation.⁷⁸

Australian Indigenous/British performance artist Sarah Jane Norman combines ritual practice with live art that often involves blood-based tasks, repetition and intimate audience encounter. Norman's installations set an almost domestic scene, at once recognisable and familiar. Yet her performances raise questions surrounding memory,

⁷⁶ "Artistic Mission," The Mammalian Diving Reflex, <http://mammalian.ca/about/>. Accessed October 6, 2016.

⁷⁷ In 2017 at the Melbourne Festival the company will be performing *All the Sex I've Ever Had*.

⁷⁸ John Bailey, "Melbourne Festival: The Money and Haircuts by Children," Fairfax Media, <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/m01coverbox-20160915-grhbc1.html>. Accessed November 8, 2016.

language and the loss of both for Aboriginal people through the colonisation of Australia. Anne Marsh explains:

Norman speaks across languages, embracing the language of the body: its abject reactions and unseemly borders. At the same time, she welcomes people into these actions as intimate viewers or participants in real-time rituals. The work is poignant on a human and a political scale.⁷⁹

Performed at Carriageworks in Sydney, Norman's *Unsettling Suite* (2013) was curated drawing on several years of performance works. These included *The Rivers Children* (2013), *Corpus Nullius/Blood Country* (2013), *Take This, For it is My Body* (2013) and *Bone Library* (2013). Dancehouse in Melbourne hosted *Unsettling Suite* as part of Dance Territories 2016. In the provocative iteration of *Take This, For It Is My Body*, 'the artist infuses a basic scone mixture with their own blood, before baking the scones and offering them to the audience.'⁸⁰ While Norman's work is performance art and my own is framed as ecological performance, there are similar connecting themes of bodily encounter, domestic space and audience participation.⁸¹ Sarah Jane Norman's work plus recent Mammalian Diving Reflex projects intersect in ways that provoke new audience/performer relationships, also highlighted in my own performance work (particularly *Promenade Locale* as discussed in chapter three). These provocations through live performance create real time outcomes for both the audience and performer that contribute to how the performances are received and the performative effects they may have.

⁷⁹ Anne Marsh, *Performance Ritual Document* (South Yarra, Victoria: Macmillan, 2014), 181.

⁸⁰ Dancehouse, "Dance Territories,"

<http://www.dancehouse.com.au/performance/performanceDetails.php?id=234>. Accessed December 16, 2016.

⁸¹ The participatory encounter is a theme developed in this research through the night tour of *Promenade Locale* documented in the *Walking* mode chapter, and solo dance works detailed in the *Dancing* mode chapter.

Performance and Ecology - Australia

As climatic issues worsen, an increasing number of artists and art institutions are creating work that relates to global warming and the Anthropocene. While there have been recent developments in Australia both in the academy and on the ground in relation to ecological performance, some artists have been making work in this field for many years.

Jill Orr's recent work, the *Antipodean Epic*, was performed at the Mildura Palimpsest Biennale #10 (2015), the Lorne Sculpture Biennale (2016), and the Belo Horizonte Biennale in Brazil (2016). Her ongoing history of site-specific performance dates back to 1978, while also providing a current example of Australian ecological performance art that speaks to an international community as well as a local one. The *Antipodean Epic* finds new ways of raising important global issues, including food security, the use of genetically modified crops and consumer society. Orr's use of costume, location, sound, movement and projected visuals are distinctive and meticulous. *Antipodean Epic* provokes questions surrounding the journey of a creaturely species, through possible mutation and extinction, displacement and transportation.⁸² This resonates with Australia's continuing systematic and brutal treatment of displaced peoples, both the original inhabitants of this land and refugee asylum seekers. Orr's use of unconventional locations and implicit audience participation creates the live image of the work anew in each performance.

⁸² Jill Orr, "Jill Orr: Antipodean Epic".

Peta Tait's recent keynote lecture on Orr's *Antipodean Epic*, at the Performance Studies international (PSi) conference in Melbourne (2016), *Performing Climates*, is a testimony to Orr's work. Tait reveals the production and function of affecting the 'strange emotions' in an audience that are needed to re think ways of both viewing performance and thinking about the content. In her paper Tait states:

Ideally performance-makers like Orr challenge the predictable explanations that anthropocentrize the nonhuman into pre-existing patterns of emotional relations. The contention is that although performance is invariably anthropomorphic, it can decentre humanness.⁸³

Lyndal Jones' *The Avoca Project* (2005-2015), the Environmental Performance Authority's (EPA) performance of *M47* (2016) and De Quincey Co's ongoing dance collaborations and recent performance of *Metadata* (2016) are Australian projects created in parallel, also located in Victoria. These performance projects, live works and collaborations all have at the heart of their inception an awareness of ecological issues, both regionally and on a larger scale. A commonality between these works is that they do not evoke spectacle, but are more concerned with an intimate participatory relationship with place and audience. Audience participation in performance works is an important theme that extends this research, and involves both human and more-than-human bodies in Walking, Dancing and Writing, to create new ways of being and therefore becoming.⁸⁴

The field of Performance and Ecology is gathering momentum worldwide as can be seen, for example, through the work of the CLIMARTE alliance. Based in Melbourne, the organisation promotes and presents yearly national and international artistic collaborations, publications and conferences that support and encourage an

⁸³ Peta Tait, "Performing Species Kinship, Feeling and Strange Emotions" (paper presented at the PSi#22 Performance Climates, University of Melbourne, Australia, July 7, 2016).

⁸⁴ Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject," 171. Haraway, "When Species Meet," 163.

ecologically informed and considerate worldview.⁸⁵ It raises the platform of awareness of global warming issues, by keeping them in a public and visually progressive realm, through the arts. Recent art and performance conferences themed around Performance and Ecology include The Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies (ADSA) *Restoring Balance: Ecology, Sustainability, Performance* conference in New Zealand (2014), PSi *Performing Climates*, Melbourne (2016) and *Hacking the Anthropocene II* at the University of Sydney (2017). Artist in residence initiatives and live performance programs at Arts House in Melbourne bolster the field and help to connect international networks of emerging practice, theory and collaborations.⁸⁶ Australia identifies and greatly contributes academically and performatively with the Asia Pacific region as well as Europe and America. This is assisted by the interconnectivity of technology.

Performance and Ecology - International

In the field of Performance and Ecology a cross section of performance artists and scholars' present work, which is broad, dynamic and interdisciplinary. Recently in the UK, Dee Heddon, Sally Mackey, Lisa Woynarski, Carl Lavery, Jess Allen, Stephen Bottoms and Baz Kershaw, among others, have created and critiqued performance through the evolving theories within Performance and Ecology. Projects created across the varied fields of dance, walking, theatre, scenography, philosophy and audience participation all seek to create knowledge through practice and performance.⁸⁷ UK Projects such as Julie's Bicycle,⁸⁸ and The Cape Farewell Project

⁸⁵ See, <https://climarte.org/>. Accessed July 24, 2017.

⁸⁶ See, City of Melbourne, <http://www.artshouse.com.au/>. Accessed July 24, 2017.

⁸⁷ Deirdre Heddon and Sally Mackey, "Environmentalism, Performance and Applications: Uncertainties and Emancipations," *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and*

inspire collaboration at the intersection of art and climate.⁸⁹ Theatre Company Fevered Sleep is experimenting with making music and dance improvisations with and for animals.⁹⁰ Mike Pearson's knowledge of site-specific performance provides strategies with which to engage with place and has been influential on my activations of site and walking practice.⁹¹ Similarly the inspiration of Phil Smith from Wrights & Sites has been important in this research, and this is discussed in detail in the context of the Walking mode. Tim Ingold's Anthropological viewpoint of atmosphere has also contributed to the rationale and therefore the outcomes of this research,⁹² and this is elaborated further.

An international cross collaboration with Canadian dancer Bronwyn Preece, Australian ecosenographer Tanja Beer and UK ecodramaturg Lisa Woynarski produced *The Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013). The performance event, which was a form of 'slow performance activism',⁹³ involved gathering locals together to plant seeds, drink tea and connect with their surroundings, through the site of the urban allotment. They stated that the performance was for the plants as well as the audience.⁹⁴ Tanja Beer's *The Living Stage*,⁹⁵ which has toured internationally, is in Australia in 2016-2017 and will be heading over to New York in late 2017. Beer's eco-scenography project will see permaculture and performance making facilitators

Performance 17, no. 2 (2012). This work provides a detailed account of site-based performance making in response to issues of climate change and its effectiveness

⁸⁸ "Julie's Bicycle," <http://www.juliesbicycle.com/>. Accessed August 15, 2017.

⁸⁹ "Cape Farewell," <http://www.capefarewell.com/about.html>. Accessed August 15, 2017.

⁹⁰ Fevered Sleep, "Sheep Pig Goat," <http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/sheep-pig-goat-film/>. Accessed August 15, 2017.

⁹¹ Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁹² Tim Ingold, "On Place and the Atmosphere," *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature*, no. 12 (2016).

⁹³ Lisa Woynarski & Bronwyn Preece, "The Trans-Plantable Living Room," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 25, no. 3 (2015).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Tanja Beer, "Ecoscenography: Adventures in a New Paradigm for Performance Making," Wordpress, <https://ecoscenography.com/the-living-stage/>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

work with seniors and children in the construction of an edible garden stage and create the eco-performance to take place inside it.⁹⁶ In significance with my work, these performative projects use a unique method of creating performance for and with an audience. They engage with the themes of locality, community and a continuing responsibility towards the planet.

US literature in Performance and Ecology, including Una Chaudhuri's "There must be a lot of fish in that lake,"⁹⁷ and more recently Wendy Arons and Theresa May's *Readings in Performance and Ecology*,⁹⁸ has had a significant influence on my research. American dancer/artist Kimi Eisele and The Borderlands Theatre created the intimate performance project *Standing with Saguaros*. It involved an activation of the Sonoran desert in the Saguaro National Park Arizona, through a 'series of *site-responsive performances and activities*.'⁹⁹ Participants were invited to stand for an hour with a saguaro (a tall, indigenous, spiky cactus) and respond to what they learnt and felt about the cactus and the desert. Eisele questions, 'How might such performances expand our notions of community, inspiring us to be better stewards of where we live?'¹⁰⁰ The work encompasses processes of live and durational performance, plus gatherings between the Indigenous locals and visitors. This process created an avenue for generating knowledge about the stately cactus, its stories and uses. Eisele collected participant feedback on the project over several iterations. She reported that: 'many note how generous the saguaros are, offering beauty, blooms,

⁹⁶ "Living Stage," <http://www.superheroclubhouse.org/living-stage/>. Accessed November 11, 2016.

⁹⁷ Una Chaudhuri, "'There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake': Toward an Ecological Theatre," *Theater* 25, no. 1 (1994).

⁹⁸ *Readings in Performance and Ecology*, ed. Wendy Arons & Theresa J May (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁹⁹ Kimi Eisele, "Standing with Saguaros," WordPress, <https://standingwithsaguaros.org/about-2/>. Accessed October 5, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Kimi Eisele, "Standing with Saguaros: Intimate Theatre and Intimate Environmentalism," HowlRound.com, <http://howlround.com/standing-with-saguaros-intimate-theatre-and-intimate-environmentalism>. Accessed October 6, 2016.

and fruit to countless species, including us. What can we possibly give back but our time and attention?’¹⁰¹ Eisele’s work questions the boundary between audience and performer, defines a performance practice that is participatory and encourages the public to travel to remote parts of the country to experience being outside with a saguaro. It traverses the topics of quiet contemplation, paying attention and taking notice, which are all important themes in this research project.

The University of Arts, Helsinki, in Finland has created a new MA course entitled Ecology and Contemporary Performance.¹⁰² As a lecturer in this course, and an artist, Tuija Kokkonen’s research looks at performance events that consider the non-human agent around issues of ‘duration and potentiality.’ Kokkonen states, ‘my research is motivated by the question, what is and can be the role of art and performance in the age of eco-crises.’¹⁰³ Also hailing from the University of Helsinki, Annette Arlander spoke about her performance work *Year of the Snake-Swinging* at the 2014 ADSA conference *Restoring Balance*, which I attended in New Zealand. Arlander initially placed a child’s swing at a specific location next to the shoreline opposite Helsinki harbour and video recorded her weekly visits throughout the year to the location. While there she swung or sat with her back to the camera looking out over the water. The artwork was dedicated to the Chinese Year of the Snake and formed part of a twelve-year project. Arlander writes: ‘This way of working is based on the traditions of performance art, video art and environmental art, moving in the borderland

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "M.A. in Ecology and Contemporary Performance (Maecp)," University of the Arts, <http://www.uniarts.fi/en/teak/ma-ecology-and-contemporary-performance-maecp>. Accessed October 12, 2016.

¹⁰³ Tuija Kokkonen, "Art Works of the Research Project," <http://www.tuijakokkonen.fi/en/research/>. Accessed October 12, 2016.

between them.¹⁰⁴ In the work, she consults both swing and tree in their relationships with each other, against the background of the changing seasons. Her work is focused on performance and repetition in her definition of landscape.¹⁰⁵ Through it she discovers new ways of being in and with, different outdoor spaces over long durations, and this is recorded and presented to the public through video works. In speaking of another project in the twelve-year cycle, *Year of the Rabbit-With a Juniper* (2011) Arlander states: 'By focusing on junipers, or other parts of the environment, repeatedly and in a performative manner, as a process, I have tried to perform landscape rather than merely represent it.'¹⁰⁶

Arlander's works exemplify a participatory encounter, where experiences and actions of time, place and repetition open possibilities for a non-hierarchical relationship between the human and the more-than-human. Only a small section of video was presented to the public as a visual example of the work, as an extract of a yearlong process of engagement in that place. The work is about the temporal processes of engagement and duration, rather than any fixed and presentable outcomes. Both Arlander and Kokkonen have long seeded practices that are firmly based in site-specific relations with more-than-human worlds. Their art works define the interdependence, connectedness and continuity that more-than-human worlds contribute to performance events and performance making.

The field in which this project sits is still establishing and re-establishing itself, with developments in both scholarship and live performance work. The significance of this

¹⁰⁴ Annette Arlander, "Year of the Snake Swinging," WordPress, <https://annettearlander.com/2014/04/23/year-of-the-snake-swinging/>. Accessed October 12, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ "Becoming Juniper: Performing Landscape as Artistic Research," *Nivel06 The Publication Series of the Theatre Academy of Helsinki* (2015).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

research is that it ‘answers a call’ in regional country Victoria. It is unique in that it seeks to generate new knowledge that is able to harness intimate and local experiences, thereby adding to the vastness of Australian space. In line with much of Australia’s geography, this is an isolated research project. Proximity to potential collaborators or audience members is at a distance. I have come to realise in working as an artist in regional Australia that we have one thing that those in the cities are clamouring for, and that is space. This includes community halls, church halls, abandoned sheds and, for the sake of this research, open space. Communication technology has made it possible for me to draw parallels within the field of Performance and Ecology, with the work of many artists, performers and scholars across the globe. This research is significant in opening awareness of an Australian context as well as keeping abreast and connecting with work being made particularly in the US, UK and Finland.

Chapter 2 - Method

Butoh and Body Weather

The body is not a set entity. It constantly changes, like the weather. The body that measures the landscape, the body in intercourse with weather, the body kissing [the] mass of peat, the body in [a] love-death relation to the day. For me the dance has been a symbol of despair and courage.¹⁰⁷

Min Tanaka

The creation of performance works, discussed in the *Dancing* mode of this research, converse with the exegesis propositions. I argue that Body Weather training produces embodied knowledge through practice and is therefore a transferable methodological technique in which to approach and understand body/site relations for performance. I will initially introduce the dance training practice of Body Weather. I explain its origins and influence on my dance practice, claiming it as technique. I then go on to summarise two examples of Body Weather in my own performance making processes of devising; rehearsing and conducting live performance across sites and across countries.

Body Weather was founded by Min Tanaka in Japan in the 1980s and is distinct from, though related to Butoh.

Tanaka has evolved the traditional, slow-moving Japanese dance form of Butoh into a new method intended to connect dancers deeply to the space and landscape around them. Like Butoh, Body Weather often depicts cycles of birth, death and renewal, but unlike its predecessor, the primary focus is on the intersections of the dancers' bodies and the environments they inhabit.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Jonathan Marshall, "Dancing the Elemental Body: Butoh and Body Weather: Interviews with Tanaka Min and Yumi Umiumare," *Performance Paradigm*, no. 2 (2006): 56. These are the words of Min Tanaka.

¹⁰⁸ "Body Weather Database," <http://bodyweather.blogspot.com.au/>. Accessed February 2, 2017.

Body Weather is an extension or offshoot of Tatsumi Hijikata's and Óno Kazuo's Butoh or 'dance of darkness' (Ankoku Butoh). The dance, developed in the 1950s and 1960s, was born out of post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan.¹⁰⁹ 'Butoh's intense political nature,' was influenced by 'German expressionist dance, classical forms such as Noh, and the nascent avant-garde art movement.'¹¹⁰ Initially Hijikata's Butoh dance directly absorbed movements, gestures and behaviours, from the 'outcasts'¹¹¹ and rejects (for example the elderly, the mad, the homeless) of Japanese society, to comment on the society itself. Butoh was an 'experimental movement,' developed in reaction to the perceived incapacity of modern dance 'to rediscover and redefine what it meant to be Japanese.'¹¹² Min Tanaka and Bonnie Stein comment that, 'Hijikata was motivated by anger at how bodies had been controlled historically.'¹¹³ Tanaka, who was deeply inspired by Hijikata's Butoh, claimed to be his 'legitimate son' through dance. He explains that, 'since Hijikata stung my eyes, I became his son. I am still intensely irritated. I wish to become an artist who shoots an arrow into everyday life'.¹¹⁴ Body Weather could be said to be a 'codification'¹¹⁵ of Butoh that has spread around the globe since the 1980s. This occurred initially through the international members of the Mai Juku performance group who trained with Min Tanaka at the Body Weather farm in Hakushu Japan.

It was at the farm that Tanaka developed the Body Weather approach to dance training. The routine consisted of half a day of farm work, weeding, planting and

¹⁰⁹ Jonathan Marshall "Dancing the Elemental Body," 59.

¹¹⁰ Peter Eckersall, "Putting the Boot into Butoh: Cultural Problematics of Butoh in Australia," *MAP Symposium* (1998): 42.

¹¹¹ Vicki Sanders, "Dancing and the Dark Soul of Japan: An Aesthetic Analysis of 'Butō'," *Asian Theatre Journal* 5, no. 2 (1988): 148.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 148-49.

¹¹³ Bonnie Sue Stein and Min Tanaka, "Min Tanaka: Farmer/Dancer or Dancer/Farmer. An Interview," *The Drama Review: TDR* 30, no. 2 (1986): 146.

¹¹⁴ Min Tanaka, "I Am an Avant-Garde Who Crawls the Earth: Homage to Tatsumi Hijikata," 155.

¹¹⁵ Sanders, "Dancing and the Dark Soul of Japan," 161.

growing vegetables, with the remainder of the day dedicated to movement work, including daily performances. Tanaka borrowed aspects of Hijikata's philosophy, creating a unique method of training that could be taken on by anyone, including 'school teachers, housekeepers, monks. Everybody.'¹¹⁶ Body Weather practice is fine-tuned to different locales across the globe and involves a combination of studio and outdoor practice. Opening the bodily senses and perceptions to receive external stimuli and imagery becomes the material to be performed.

This research project discusses the 'training' part of a larger Body Weather methodology practiced at the Body Weather farm in the 1980s up until 2010. I can only explain the training aspect from my personal knowledge gained in Australia and do not claim the practice methods or experiments to be mine. I maintain the importance of the Body Weather method as it relates to, and has been incorporated into, ecological practice for performance. This guides the modes of Dancing, Walking and Writing in my exegesis. There are three phases to the training approach; including the mind/bone, muscle/body or MB, Manipulations and Laboratory/Groundwork (which I will discuss shortly).¹¹⁷

Body Weather travelled to Australia, influencing my dance practice through the work of former Mai Juku performer Tess de Quincey and former Dai Rakuda Kan Butoh dancer Yumi Umiuare, who both performed regularly in Japan in the 1980s. Body

¹¹⁶ Stein and Tanaka, "Min Tanaka: Farmer/Dancer," 148.

¹¹⁷ See, Peter Snow, "Imaging the in-Between: Training Becomes Performance in Body Weather Practice in Australia," (University of Sydney, 2002) Peter Fraser, "Now and Again: Strategies for Truthful Performance," (Monash University, 2015), Gretel Taylor "Empty? A Critique of the Notion of 'Emptiness' in Butoh and Body Weather Training," *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 1, no. 1 (2010): 72-87. Gretel Taylor. "Locating : Place and the Moving Body / Gretel Taylor," (Victoria University, 2008). Jasmine Robertson, "Drawing Us In: The Australian Experience of Butoh and Body Weather" (The University of Sydney, 2015) provides a recent critique of Butoh and Body Weather in Australia.

Weather practitioners such as Gretel Taylor, Linda Luke, Victoria Hunt, Peter Fraser and Frank van de Ven (Body Weather Amsterdam) have also helped shape my practice in Australia. Sondra Fraleigh explains how Butoh's roots in Body Weather have spread and changed, 'now there are fragments of Hijikata's dance around the globe. The most vital ones are not imitations of Hijikata or his techniques rather they have morphed.'¹¹⁸ In an Australian context Body Weather is 'useful in opening and sensitising *any* body to *any* terrain,'¹¹⁹ as a foundation for site-specific dance performance. The method has been appropriated by de Quincey through her experience of training, performing and teaching over many years. Taylor has a background in Body Weather and her unique practice of relating to place, known as 'locating,' which is specific to Australian country has its origins in a Body Weather sensibility.¹²⁰ Through the experience of running the interpreted knowledge of a Body Weather practice through my own body, in a regional Victorian context and site for performance, I am able to comment on Body Weather as an active practice that experiments with a relational response to place. I have applied what I have learnt, from my extended contact with the Body Weather technique and community of performers and academics, to the sociocultural protocols of the Australian bush.

This perspective takes into account the responsibility to acknowledge and respect the traditional owners of the area, in this case the Dja Dja Wuruung people. It also takes notice of the damage done to country by humans through over use, the introduction of non-native species and animal and plant extinction. It is my view that the experience of a Body Weather practice running through the body ensures a relationship to place

¹¹⁸ Sondra Fraleigh, "Butoh Translations and the Suffering of Nature," *Performance Research* 21, no. 4 (2016): 69.

¹¹⁹ Taylor, "Empty? A Critique of the Notion," 73.

¹²⁰ See, Gretel Taylor "Locating : Place and the Moving Body / Gretel Taylor" (Victoria University, 2008): 72-87.

that is external to the body. This relationship is brought into the body through the senses by the dancer, walker or writer, who gains a deeper understanding of place and its diverse inhabitants. This is of particular importance in the process of making performance works on, in, and about my experience of Australia in the Anthropocene. Fraleigh provides an account of the varied present day sites of extremes that, in the Butoh tradition, have now become the stimuli to dance in the age of the Anthropocene.

For Butoh, nature includes the landscapes we move through and inhabit, even elements of harsh environments, like forests on fire, melting icebergs, desert canyons of shifting sand and volcanic rock, tornados and, over time the detritus of landfill.¹²¹

Stuart Grant explains that during Body Weather processes, ‘a body becomes a site where things other than it can take root and be performed.’¹²² Likewise Min Tanaka reflects on how we are influenced by the world around us, through a vulnerability and openness created through dance. Tanaka claims, ‘The patterns of the society are inevitably printed on the body’s surface [as] it rolls around on the Earth. The dance permeated the body’s surface and reached the flesh. My body was turned into a receptacle.’¹²³

The performer of Butoh and Body Weather, ‘purposely points to something beyond himself, inviting the audience to contemplate an unrevealed essence.’¹²⁴ It is my claim that a Body Weather practice trains the mover to keep the self concealed and therefore open, as a vessel to other forms of action, sensing and emotion. Body Weather practices are unbounded by the restraints of conventional studio work and look to the

¹²¹ Fraleigh, "Butoh Translations and the Suffering of Nature," 63.

¹²² Stuart Grant and Tess de Quincey, "How to Stand in Australia?," in *Unstable Ground: Performance and the Politics of Place*, ed. Gay McAuley (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2006), 250.

¹²³ Tanaka, "I Am an Avant-Garde," 154.

¹²⁴ Sanders, "Dancing and the Dark Soul of Japan," 152.

outside to reflect society and location. An example of such a practice task, from the Groundwork/Laboratory phase of training, is documented in the artist notes below. These notes were taken in response to one of Frank van de Ven's practice 'experiments' at the Body/Landscape (2014) workshop in the Grampians, Victoria.



Figure 5. *Cave Studio*, author's image, The Grampians, Victoria, 2014.

In this exercise one partner again keeps their eyes closed and the whole body is guided through the surrounding terrain, up steep rocky outcrops, squeezed between huge boulders, through dense bush. The leading partner then places the sensing partner in different positions embedded in that particular place, pressed against a rock face, crouched in amongst branches, stretched out on the sandy floor of a cave. The guiding partner then introduces different types of outside/external simulation through physical objects: heavy rocks weighted on the torso, twigs and branches placed in the hair, limbs buried in cold sand.

As the receiver of these stimulations one's whole body is now the sensing and perceiving medium between the Earth and the Sky. The strangeness or discomfort experienced is taken over by a deeper awareness of specific locations in and on the body and what they are feeling.

I had the experience of heavy rocks being placed on my abdomen, one arm buried in cold sand and the other arm experiencing the falling sprinkling of small rocks and sand. This was initially a new and interesting internal sensation as my partner went from the stomach to one arm, then the other, to build on the simulation. Once left there the throbbing pulse of my own blood pumping against the cold stone in my stomach became almost unbearable. My buried arm became so cold it was distressing and the stream of sand and rocks on my other arm was irritating to the point of madness. I could not feel the rest of my body, as coping with the cold, heavy and continuous sensation of falling rocks became the internal experience of my whole body. Once the objects were finally removed from my body, the relief and rush of simulation from opening the eyes and becoming 'whole' again was overwhelming.

A Body Weather practice, once realised through training, holds the capacity to communicate shades of environmental beauty and calm, crisis and extremes.

Embodied Technique

Technique consists of discoveries about specific material possibilities that can be repeated with some degree of reliability, so that what works in one context may also work in another. Changes in the environment, or in our own embodiment, or the passage of technique from one context to another, can produce unexpected results.¹²⁵

Ben Spatz

Min Tanaka disliked the concept of Body Weather as a technique, and refuted the use of an ongoing or fixed style and system in training.¹²⁶ This refusal to proclaim a fixed style of Body Weather has allowed it to adapt and grow through practitioners and across continents.¹²⁷ Body Weather, as a technique of principles, can respond to a range of contexts and perspectives. In view of the changeability of the weather, differing external influences, and the unpredictable response of the performer's body to unpredictable sites, I agree that the dance cannot be set as 'form'. However the technique does become patterned through the repetition of a particular *way* of opening the body to perceive, imagine and store images.

In my experience the three main sites of the training technique remain constant across practitioners. The M/B, or mind/body, muscle/bone workout, is a sequential repetitive training of high energy multidirectional, multi-rhythmic and oppositional movements, running long ways in separate lines usually down a studio floor. The M/B can and does take place outside, in the sea, the forest floor and the desert, but often the flat surface of a wooden floor is preferred to support complicated footwork and balance.

Manipulations involve two people, a giver and a receiver, and follows a very particular and ordered set of tactile instructions on the exact, movement, pressure and

¹²⁵ Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do : Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 42.

¹²⁶ Taylor, "Empty? A Critique of the Notion," 75.

¹²⁷ "Body Weather Database". Accessed February 2, 2017.

trajectory of each ‘manipulation’ to be applied to the receiver’s body. The whole sequence is ordered from step one to seven, although I have only had the experience of becoming familiar with the first set in the sequence.¹²⁸ Groundwork/Laboratory is made up of improvisational experiments, which allow the body’s imagination to work closely with external imagery in conjunction with either or both an indoor and outdoor locale. The Groundwork/Laboratory session comes after the body has been finely tuned and exhausted from the MB and has received input from another (the giver), through the Manipulations. The process of Manipulations has helped the bones, muscles and joints to find their greatest potential and an un-habitual range of movement and release. Blindfold work and ‘bizocu’ are typical of the outdoor movement tasks and experiments undertaken in the Groundwork phase of training.¹²⁹

A specific technique discovered through Body Weather training allows the porous sensibility of, for example, encountering the rock face or visual perceptions of the forest floor to take place in and through the body. Peter Snow has trained with Min Tanaka at the Body Weather Farm in Japan and worked on performance projects for many years with Frank van de Ven. Snow asserts:

Body Weather training has also been called a ‘performance training’ (de Quincey 1998). And as methodologies and philosophies acquired in the training are often utilised in making performances, Body Weather practice could be considered to underpin, or even to be, a performance aesthetic.¹³⁰

The style and method I have been taught over the years and adapted by Tanaka’s contemporaries (Tess de Quincey, Frank van de Ven and with more recent experience of the Body Weather farm, Gretel Taylor), is a technique with firm boundaries

¹²⁸ Joa Hug, "Writing with Practice: Body Weather Performance Training Becomes a Medium of Artistic Research," *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* 7, no. 2 (2016). This reference outlines a recent discussion on linguistic expression of artistic practice working with Manipulations.

¹²⁹ Snow, "Imaging the in-Between," Snow provides an extensive descriptive break down of the three modes of the Body Weather practice.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 68.

operating between layers of training and sequential ordering of movement tasks. The three layers or modes of training have been consistent throughout my ten-year plus experience of Body Weather.

The strategy or technique of performance training that *responds* to place also creates a visceral *responsibility*, potentially generating distinct ethical and political knowledge across known and unknown bodies. Stacy Alaimo's description applies to the experience of a blurring between body and place in my work. 'To think as a body- indeed as a body that is part of the substantial interchanges, flows, and substances of the co-extensive world-is an entangled, provisional, highly mediated, but also potentially ethical and political endeavour.'¹³¹

The 'entangled' body is multiplied through research, improvisation and rehearsal, which are the responsive processes of performance making at a particular site. It is in and through the layers of creating, that I consider Body Weather practice to be an ecopolitical technique for embodying place. Working with the weather does produce 'unexpected results' as it is an improvisation shared between internal and external forces. It involves precisely accepting the unknowability of the movement encounter, now embodied through experience to produce an ostensibly reciprocal dance. Acquiring skills to open the sensing body to external experience, other than those of the self, serves as both technique and as a political exchange.

In the introduction to his book *What a Body Can Do*, Ben Spatz points out the importance of embodied technique being separate from the technological advances

¹³¹ Stacy Alaimo, "Thinking as the Stuff of the World," *O-Zone: A Journal of Object-Orientated Studies*, no. 1 (2014) 17.

that have come to rule society in the Anthropocene. Spatz writes: ‘In this sense, an engagement with embodied technique can be seen as an ecopolitical rather than purely philosophical move.’¹³² Body Weather is one such embodied technique that relies on the relationship between body and place, human and more-than-human.

Body Weather is an improvisatory technique for merging and internally absorbing external environmental conditions and atmospheres outside of the body to create performance that considers the human and more-than-human in a dynamic and interrelated way. In site-specific performance it is the ‘back and forth’ relational engagement with the weather through the senses that creates movement. The interrelationships formed, between the human and more-than-human, push the boundaries of a typically recognisable genre of movement performance. Body Weather training techniques work to break down habitual movement relations with place. The effect produced is something that is of this Earth, although it is not visibly ‘normal’ human movement. Dancing with the ‘outside’ is an experiment in becoming.

¹³² Spatz, *What a Body Can Do*, 12.

Chapter 3 - Dancing

Performance works

Improvised and Rehearsed

The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to remark again the performative possibilities of writing itself.¹³³

Peggy Phelan

The text that follows details the processes and performances of two differing dance works, *Ends of the Earth* and *Instability*, both of which I performed in 2016 for MAP Fest, Melaka Art and Performance Festival in Malaysia.¹³⁴ *Instability* was the outcome of a rehearsal process, while *Ends of the Earth* emerged from live improvisation. These performances drew on personal knowledge of Body Weather training discovered and explored in an Australian context. I have adapted a foundation in Body Weather training, to the creation of site-specific performance in differing locales. The account explains how the use of Body Weather, is a technique to engage with site through movement. This can be transferred from outdoor to indoor, country-to-country and it uncovers a multiplicity of ways of engaging with the body and the site. The critique also charts the process of different types of performance, from spontaneous improvisation that utilises the senses to make immediate discoveries and connections to the geography of a site, to a rehearsed performance. Rehearsal enables one to take into account more complex layers of a place such as history, variations in

¹³³ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked : The Politics of Performance* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1993), 148.

¹³⁴ "Melaka Art and Performance Festival," <http://melakafestival.com/>. Accessed February 5, 2017.

light and temperature over time, or the changes in the movements of human and more-than-human audience and participants around the site.

In a philosophical context, the transferability of the knowledge of Body Weather technique upholds my claim for it as an epistemological practice: a practice that creates knowledge and provides a way of knowing. Tess de Quincey describes the body as the layered responder to site, opening and revealing external attractors of place and space in different internal body parts, which perform a multiplicity of place through the body.¹³⁵ In my improvisation and devising process, the dance occurs as a combination of moving-with a site and the site moving me. The qualities of place affect the body, be it atmospheric, concrete, geographic and historic.

Such transmissible embodied knowledge becomes the conduit for discovering a trans-corporeality of place through performance, by audience or performer responses inside the live event. Stacy Alaimo writes, 'trans-corporeality can be extended in such a way as to imagine all creatures existing within their own corporeal crossroads of body and place'.¹³⁶ A foundation in Body Weather practice becomes a transferable embodied knowledge that functions as a movement exchange between the body and a given site. It is possible to perform/improvise the ongoing live encounter with a site after only a few minutes with the place or, more deeply, after days or weeks of consideration.

In November 2016 in Melaka, Malaysia I had the opportunity to perform at MAP Fest (for the second time). Australian/Malaysian dancer Tony Yap, with whom I already

¹³⁵ Author communication with Tess de Quincey, *Body Weather Intensive*, Northcote Town Hall, November, 2016.

¹³⁶ Alaimo, "Thinking as the Stuff of the World," 8.

had a dance and training history, curated the festival.¹³⁷ Tony's hometown is the colourful and multicultural site of the ongoing experimental performance festival then in its eight year, centred in and on the UNSECO site of St. Paul's Hill (Bukit St. Paul).¹³⁸ There I performed two solos, a rehearsed short ten-minute work for the evening program of the festival and a longer daytime site-specific performance for the 'mapping' aspect of the event.

On arrival all the artists, who hailed from various countries and artistic disciplines, were allocated a 'mapping' or roving performance area around the site of the festival on Bukit St. Paul.¹³⁹ My 'mapping' performance area was the busy and exposed landing area outside the old church structure itself. I had two days to be with and think about the site. I found that the senses provided the body with an overwhelming wealth of information about this new place.

The structural ruins on the hill of St. Paul's church is busy most of the time and by day hordes of visitors and tourists travel noisily up and down the steep steps, taking pictures and talking loudly. Cats wander in and out of arched doorways, stallholders spruik cultural memorabilia and humidity fills the place with heavy moisture, as aromas and noise waft up from the town below. By night the hill is lit up and insects take over the sky, a glittering view of the ever-growing town of Melaka stretches out

¹³⁷ Tony Yap has been a Melbourne based dancer and teacher for many years. Tony introduced me to Asian style trance training techniques alongside Yumi Umiumare, who introduced me to Butoh at the Oki Do Centre in 2000, Melbourne.

¹³⁸ Established by a Malay Sultan, Melaka became a trading centre in the 15th Century. In 1521, a Portuguese captain built a chapel to commemorate surviving his journey through the South China Sea; it was then appropriated by the Dutch as a Church and burial site and subsequently used as a store for English weaponry. <http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/sid/508/malaysia/melaka/st-pauls-church>. Accessed May 21, 2016.

¹³⁹ See also, Cheryl Stock, "From Urban Cities and the Tropics to Site-Dance in the World Heritage Setting of Melaka: An Australian Practitioner's Journey," in *Moving Sites: Investigating Site Specific Dance Performance*, ed. Victoria Hunter (Taylor and Francis, 2015), 392.

to the sea. It is a place seeped in comings and goings. Tombstones memorialise those who have passed and whose journeys survive and are celebrated and honoured, making Melaka the site of multi religious freedoms flavouring the Melaka of today

Ends of the Earth

The atmosphere of the body in relation to my allocated ‘mapping’ site at Bukit St. Paul provided numerous live nuanced occasions and impetuses to movement and stillness within the place. With no readable narrative or text based ‘story’, the performance relied on a trajectory of movement, bodily expression and response. This included an awareness of the relationship with the audience and the 360-degree terrain. *Ends of the Earth* was initially inspired by the rising awareness of atmospheric pollution in South East Asia and the concept of the caged or prowling human-animal. I combined this with my immediate body place relations and began the improvisation with a slow, low crawl; a medical facemask covered my mouth and nose.



Figure 6. *Crawl*, Photo by Cheyenne Aw, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

The crawl is not an easy movement. In Body Weather training the multidirectional use of the limbs in opposing directions and planes creates heightened tension in the body, breaking habitual movement patterns. Through this tension, in training and performing, the body is highly alert in responding to changes within the site, be they geographic or atmospheric. This state is also a choreographic awareness called ‘seeing myself seeing’ which is a mantra and improvisation technique I acquired from workshops with Deborah Hay and Margaret Cameron.¹⁴⁰ This means I can track other bodies in space as well. I know where the audience is and what they are doing; I am able to incorporate their actions into my own, as another dynamic or repetition of movement through the space.

¹⁴⁰ *Sweetening the Abstract*, performance workshop given by Deborah Hay and Margaret Cameron, Aberystwyth University, Wales, 2005. This is one just example of a performance making workshop led by Hay and Cameron, though I attended many given by both artists as collaborators and also as individual practitioners.



Figure 7. *Balance*, author's image, video still, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

My insertion into the site with painted white skin (itself a remnant of early Butoh tradition) merged with the white washed walls of the ruined church and the marble white of the one-armed statue of St. Francis Xavier.¹⁴¹ The view out across the city and the ocean, the close-up touch of the weather worn bricks, pock marked and holed, created contrasting visages, vantage points, textures and directional levels with which to dance. Similarly Gretel Taylor's practice of 'locating' speaks of her process of engagement in initiating and embodying response to a particular site.

My locating process begins from a multi-sensorial listening – I focus on my perception of localised sounds, rhythms, textures, movement and smells, as well as visual cues such as the contour and colour of features in my surroundings.¹⁴²

My own energy levels would rise and fall during the performance of *Ends of the Earth*, swinging from lethargic contemplation to more manic, repetitive and energetic movements. Sheer exhaustion and prolific sweating from the hot and humid weather was a constant throughout the whole festival. These factors became integrated into both my solo performances and also that of the group-improvised performances.

¹⁴¹ Taylor, "Empty? A Critique of the Notion," 77 and Sanders, "Dancing and the Dark Soul of Japan," 148, reference the white face in the tradition of Butoh.

¹⁴² Taylor, "Empty? A Critique of the Notion," 73.

Sweating became a cooling, and therefore pleasurable, involuntary activity, a choreography performed in its own right, tempered by the breeze.



Figure 8. *State of Stone*, Photo by Denniz Lim, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

In live site-specific performance, the performer often feeds off the energy and actions of the audience; the boundary between who is on stage and those off stage simply isn't present.¹⁴³ In the *Ends of the Earth* performance, tourists would wander all around me as I danced. Such was the level of activity at the site, that people would not realise I was performing even when rolling on the ground near their feet. The framing

¹⁴³ In the recorded video to be presented in the Guildford Hall as part of the final work, I have purposely sped up the timing and mirrored sections of *Ends of the Earth*, as an example of the play between audience and performer movements.

of the festival context and the mixed usage of the site, as performance space, tourist destination, photographic opportunity, as well as historical site, meant there was potential to perform almost unnoticed at times. Performing with and for the site itself became the priority. The lack of an officially announced beginning, middle and end of the piece, or clearly marked performance area, were symptomatic of the decisions made in my approach to the site. The altered performance/theatrical conventions created a sense of freedom for me as the performer and a latent curiosity in the audience.



Figure 9. *Rolling*, author's image, video still, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

Peggy Phelan notes that: 'Performance implicates the real through the presence of living bodies.'¹⁴⁴ It is the murky in-between of Lacan's real where audience and performer switch roles momentarily, only reacting and interacting, unaware of fixed functions or outcomes of the performance.¹⁴⁵ This performance served as an example of improvised live encounter on the part of both performer and audience. The audience were free agents, unaware of any theatrical protocols, and my performance

¹⁴⁴ Phelan, *Unmarked : The Politics of Performance*, 148.

¹⁴⁵ Marsh, *Performance Ritual Document*, 182.

broke any predictable spatiotemporal performer/audience relations. They ambiguously took part in the experience of *live-ness* that site-specific performance contends with.¹⁴⁶ Culturally the audience appeared to be firm in their stance, that they would not be ‘put off’, made to move or feel uncomfortable. I, of course, have very different live experiences of the performance than those of the audience. As Phelan affirms: ‘Performance art usually occurs in the suspension between the “real” physical matter of “the performing body” and the psychic experience of what it is to be embodied.’¹⁴⁷



Figure 10. *Trees*, Photo by Senghong Ng, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

The live-ness of the performance encounter between the place, the audience and me, experienced in the fleeting moments of the performance, becomes itself a paradox when reproducing the experience here. I agree with Amelia Jones’s claim in relation

¹⁴⁶ Kaye, *Site Specific Art*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Phelan, *Unmarked : The Politics of Performance*, 167.

to live performance and its documentation that 'the performativity of the remains of the action' is captured through the image.¹⁴⁸ I have a diverse collection of photographs of my performance taken by Malaysian photographers, most of whom I have never met. While some shots seem to 'glamorise' my face and body in particular, others cut off any interaction with audience responses. At certain points photographers took it upon themselves to obscure the audience in an attempt to get a better shot. Philip Auslander writes of the performance documentation in the work of Chris Burden and Gina Pane, 'sometimes the process of documentation actually interfered with the initial audiences ability to perceive the performance.'¹⁴⁹ A similar situation arose in relation to *Ends of the Earth*, with photographers who specialise in landscape and fashion photography. This can be an issue in the absence of a designated photographer with a brief of what to capture. The photos do however capture the residue of the performance and the place, the moments of exhaustion, of sweat dripping and smeared body paint. The images freeze a certain tension and sense of the performance, capturing glimmers of thought and processes of engagement inside the live event.

¹⁴⁸ Jones, "Material Traces," 20.

¹⁴⁹ Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 [84] (2006): 3.



Figure 11. *Weathering*, Photo by Steve Chong, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

One of my primary interests is in audience response. This element contributes another aspect to the larger conversation occurring at the site, which also includes my own interactions, and the sounds of other festival artists performing at the same time. It was obviously not important from the perspective of the professional photographers to include the audience in their photos. This is understandable if they are not given clear directions to do so. A spontaneous relationship with the audience can be documented when the photographs are taken from a more encompassing angle at the site. A fleeting sensation of exchange can be communicated through some of the still photographs, but particularly in the live footage (to be presented in the Guildford Hall). When I use the term ‘exchange’, it is not in the sense of a polite and amiable understanding of space and relationship, but rather as an awkward and provocative entanglement with the norm.



Figure 12. *Resting*, author's image, video still, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

Audience and performer unknowingly work together in these situations. I recall the experience of moving between being the performer, and being performed by the audience, as well as by the site. Says Stuart Grant, commenting on the potential collectivity of live public performance, 'atmospheres are generally also social phenomena, felt and spread by more than one person, requiring completion.'¹⁵⁰ My senses were alert to the noise of the tourist audience, the crowded click of cameras, the hot ground and bright sun, combined with my knowledge of colonial power struggles, religious ceremonies and the warfare that took place on the hill. This information translated into my body as movement, stillness and the many places in between. 'In the moment' I felt lost, raw, exposed and confused at my predicament. I lingered in that uncertain and unknown place. At other times I felt confident in my improvised response to the site, working with the audience and my embodied and spontaneous knowledge. The weather of both body and place intermingles and before,

¹⁵⁰ Stuart Grant, "Performing an Aesthetics of Atmosphere," *Journal of Literature and Aesthetics* 23, no. 1 (2013): 21.

during and after a performance work 'checking in' with the body's weather serves to feed the movement score and reflect on the experience of it.¹⁵¹



Figure 13. *Ends of the Earth*, Photo by Senghong Ng, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

Instability

Instability was an example of a rehearsed performance that was devised in one location (Block 119) and performed in another (Melaka, Malaysia). The simple choreography was born out of Body Weather tasks and activities relating to the environment and weather at Block 119. This material was then developed into a movement sequence, and rehearsed in the local Guildford Hall. Primarily initiated by

¹⁵¹ Gay McAuley, "Bodyweather in the Central Desert of Australia: Towards an Ecology of Performance.," (2000), <http://dequinceyco.net/media-archive/articles/>. 3. Accessed August 17, 2016. Fraser, "Now and Again", 18.

an attitude or sensibility fore fronted in body-place relations and response, I created movement material that was grounded in my experience and knowledge of Body Weather training. Samples of my own Body Weather vocabulary have been collected and stored in the body. They emerge renewed and different with each repetition of practice in response to a specific place. Physical images have been developed over time with the help of group training, workshop intensives and my own sustained outdoor practice. Originating at Block 119, earthly, atmospheric and animal body relations were the stimuli to create movement for *Instability*. The actions crouching, electrified, blown by the wind, collecting and twisting, provoked both action and sensation to affect movement.



Figure 14. *Rehearsal #1 and #2*, author's image, video still, Guildford Hall, 2016.



Moving, from the extreme conditions of Block 119 to the cool, flat, spacious area of the Guildford Hall in rehearsal, translated into a live performance that subsequently became transformed by the conditions in Melaka. The Melakan heat was such that I was dripping with sweat and my costume stuck to my skin. Aside from the audience

and lights, which are a given in most night time traditional performance set-ups, the old brickwork that made up the stage floor was rough and uneven underfoot. The close angles of the performance area compressed the space I was able to move inside. Body Weather techniques have trained me to be open to differing space and place, taking in and working with these factors becomes the live adjustment to the performance. Negotiation of the variables of time and space enables one to maintain the integrity of the original work. I am therefore, able to work in any conditions and actually integrate them into the work, as body and mind work together.

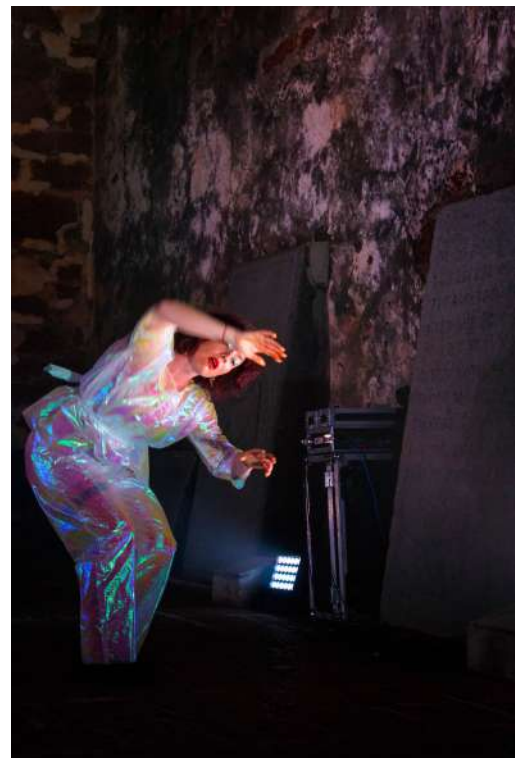
The nervous anticipation of performing live and in a different cultural context drove my energy levels during *Instability*. My movement was faster and grittier, as I was allowing myself to really ‘go there’ in front of an audience. This doesn’t happen when rehearsing alone. The performance became a more intense and unpredictable yielding to the performance space and atmosphere. Space and time within the movement score expands in front of an audience, as one responds to the ‘real time’ live-ness of the event. Concentration on the body moving through space, commitment to the choreographic trajectories, and connection to the audience form a simplified structure that, on reflection, kept the dance buoyant in Melaka. Finding a balance between a perceived pressure to ‘perform’ and interest an audience, and staying true to the simple and earthly nature of my work is a core element in the performance process that *Instability* exemplifies.

The performance for MAP Fest expressed traces of the impetus that was instigated at Block 119, in my everyday experiments in moving with the environment in and around the body. I chose the name *Instability* in the attempt to name a process of

becoming through dance, where motion is subtle, constant and fragile as well as being electrifying and frantic.



Figure 15. *Instability* #1 and #2, photos by Jimm Lee, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.



Reflections

The photographic and video documentation of *Instability* and *Ends of the Earth* falls between 'the documentary and the theatrical' categories of recording live performance events.¹⁵² The works were not 'performance for camera' and I did not instruct the photographers in what to shoot. They are also not a straightforward and unbiased collection of photos; most capture what the photographers themselves thought important or interesting. I find the stills from my own camera, that videoed both events without precise angles or close ups, to be most interesting.

In discussing these performance works, I claim that the visceral technique of Body Weather is transferable over sites, from Block 119 to the Guildford Hall, to the heritage site of a ruined church in Melaka, Malaysia and back again. Body Weather philosophy, as stated here, provides a repeatable sensibility or way of sensing place, space and site. Body Weather does not afford generic movements in live performance, but knowledge of the technique espouses a receptive way of embodying *how* to listen and see with all the senses, from all angles of the body. The dance becomes a feedback loop of call and response at the undefined intersection of physical exertion and exhaustion. In continual dialogue with the site an engagement with that other than the self occurs. Baz Kershaw describes the ambiguity of the performance event.

Paradoxical qualities inevitably inflect the discourses of performance studies because it is always teetering on the slippery edge between live event and its mnemonic traces, between the 'real' and its 'representation'. This uncertain, ambiguous realm is where 'essential' qualities of performance itself flourish: ephemeral, evanescent, refractory, ineffable, enduring, substantial, accessible, intelligible, efficacious and so on.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," 1.

¹⁵³ Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology*, 119.

Habitual movement is broken down and is no longer the vocabulary that reply's to the language of the site. 'Becoming' through dance happens when body and place move together. When they move together, one can begin to grapple, in albeit contradictory and paradoxical ways, with the many readings of human relationship to place. The dancer feels the human impact on place. The dancer responds and moves with the site or rather the site and its participants (cats, stallholders, rain, heat, brickwork) *move* the dancer. A mutual reciprocity is uncovered, that allows the human to move with more care, to be more sensitive, to perceive future obstacles or interactions and prepare for them. Peter Snow comments that: 'Performing with someone, and for someone, is an ethical relation. Performing always involves ethical relations...technique is itself an ethical question.'¹⁵⁴ Establishing the reflective outcome of the dance performances in the knowledge of a Body Weather technique, demonstrates the potential of the practice to perform ethical and political relations with place. Here, through movement, the human on the edge of becoming, can listen more clearly to local and global ecological issues and crisis.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Clinton Snow, "Performing All over the Place," in *Unstable Ground: Performance and Politics of Place*, ed. Gay McAuley (Brussels, Belgium: Peter Lang S.A, 2006), 244.



Figure 16. *Footprints in Motion*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

Footfall - Touch

In order to describe and uncover the participatory encounter that takes place when moving outdoors for the short performance solos of *Footfall*, I will expand on Paul Carter's notion of *methexis*. *Methexis*, meaning 'participation,' is the philosophical theory Carter uses to explain the complex practice of the Aranda (now spelt Arrernte)¹⁵⁵ people of the Western Desert's active and present relationship, in human and more-than-human rhythms of the land. Carter's definition of *Methexis* is not a representation of thought, nor does it correspond to a map or a way of naming things.¹⁵⁶ It is performing a present, concurrent, mobile relation to the land that generates and traces experience through movement.

¹⁵⁵ Muecke, *Ancient & Modern*, 16.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Carter, *The Lie of the Land* (London ; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), 66.

Footfall is a selection of juxtaposing and experimental solo performance works that involves running on the spot. These are works for camera, also witnessed and shared in ‘real time’ by the more-than-human inhabitants of Block 119. The artist, through photograph, video and reflective writing, documents the relationality of the work. The ‘artist notes’ section below is intentionally short, as viewing the videos (presented in the Guildford Hall) will provide another layer of insight into the theory surrounding the work. The five short works communicate a quiet, considered and slow participation that aims to physically connect with my home country, through the ecological practice mode of Dancing. A potential *methektic* relationship is revealed through the process, which responds to Carter’s call for a different relationship with the land. He notes:

To inhabit the land differently, to remove one’s gaze from a horizon that is as much historical as visual, and once again turn to tracing patterns on the ground. This return to ground-tracing would involve a different conception of movement, one that deepened grooves that to the novice at least might seem like running on the spot, but to the initiate would appear instead as a way of “marking time”, of metricalizing the ground and so keeping the place in play.¹⁵⁷

Methexis

The action of running, though not travelling anywhere, is a small marker of the thickness of past, present and future time, a participation in the making of the present and a possible *methexical* event. In agreement with Carter, Barbara Bolt claims that the ‘glare’ from light specific to Australia informs artistic practice and that this process is also *methektic*, much different she says to European notions of light.

The dazzling glare of the Australian light necessitates a downward look and an attention to the patterns and rhythms of the ground. It is a performative model where the “landscape” emerges through the tracing of patterns on the ground.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 113.

¹⁵⁸ Barbara Bolt, "Shedding Light for the Matter," *Hypatia* 15, no. 2 (2000): 209.

Joanne Tompkins claims that Carter's spatial strategy of *methexis* provides an opportunity wherein 'it is possible to rethink the role of space and landscape in Australia.'¹⁵⁹ While a *methetic* practice has its roots in Indigenous cultural ideology,¹⁶⁰ I contend that the concept can be extended to incorporate *Footfall* as an example of co-productive participation in place, particularly for site-specific performance. It contributes to the definition of ecological practice for performance, the process being an example of sustaining 'openness' with the more-than-human performing as co-producers. *Methexis* is performative, productive and concurrent. It is an oscillation, is transformative and is not about what the artwork/form represents, but 'what it can do and what effects it will have.'¹⁶¹ Margaret Mayhew applies the process of *methexis* in life drawing to the relationship between the artist and model, as one of collaboration between the two, instead of a mastery of one over the other. She claims the artwork emerges out of performative *methektic* praxis from 'an aesthetic model based on participation.'¹⁶² Conversely Mayhew makes an observation that applies to both the stroke of pencil across paper in her work, and the physical movement in *Footfall*. 'The dance of marks, is not a response to the world, but a means of encountering it, sensing it, and remaking it.'¹⁶³ Body Weather practice is the embodied language that develops or connects the theory of *methexis* to the process of creating *Footfall*.

¹⁵⁹ Joanne Tompkins, *Unsettling Space: Contestations in Contemporary Australian Theatre* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 11.

¹⁶⁰ See Brian Martin, "Immaterial Land," in *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts*, ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013).

¹⁶¹ Bolt, "Shedding Light for the Matter," 211.

¹⁶² Margaret Mayhew, "Marking Time; Examining Life Drawing as Methexis" (Monash University, Melbourne, 2009), 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.

Putting Carter's request 'to inhabit the land differently' into action, I am running on the spot in *Footfall*. I have taken his term 'initiate', to mean to initiate action or movement where simple, yet sustained activity participates in the concurrent movement of the immediate surroundings. Through this practice of 'doing' I am able to understand a little more of Carter's invitation. My up and down movement is in direct relationship with the busy activity of the trees, the wind, the dog, the ground and birds, the television. Nothing is ever totally still. Running on the spot is a very human action, but both during the 'real time' event and watching it back on video I get a sense of temporal coexistence.

Several locations at Block 119 were chosen for *Footfall*; a patch of grass up on the hill, a dry yet muddy dam, an area of twigs and leaves under a tree, a space on top of a piece of machinery and in front of the TV inside the shack. The touch of the ground under my feet as I move up and down affects my whole body. How the feet negotiate this small surface alters my balance, breath, posture, muscles and my line of sight. *Footfall* transfers the marking of time to a simple repetitive action and through it the world surrounding the body forefronts the movement. I am momentarily more aware of participation among the busyness of life at Block 119. I move and the place performs me. The place moves and I respond.

The Body Weather 'experiment' experienced in Frank van de Ven's Body/Landscape workshops (detailed in the artist notes below), which focus in on the intricacies of pattern and movement over a small space of ground, also informs *Footfall*. The particular Groundwork/Laboratory task of visually studying a circle of ground at close range develops the concept of looking down and staying connected to the dance of the

body, and focuses on the complicated movement and decompositions of the layers of ground.

This task provided an in depth view of the minutiae of life on the ground, at each site the natural make up of the ground was different. I was able to focus on the tiny particles of 'stuff' that everything is made up of. The ground in its many layers of decomposition and regrowth; sand, dirt, rocks and whole leaves, parts of leaves, rotten wood, ants. I saw the close up textures of a flat rock face, whose slow and chalky crumbling was now visible to my eye, a deep internal and external experience.

The Grampians, November 2014.

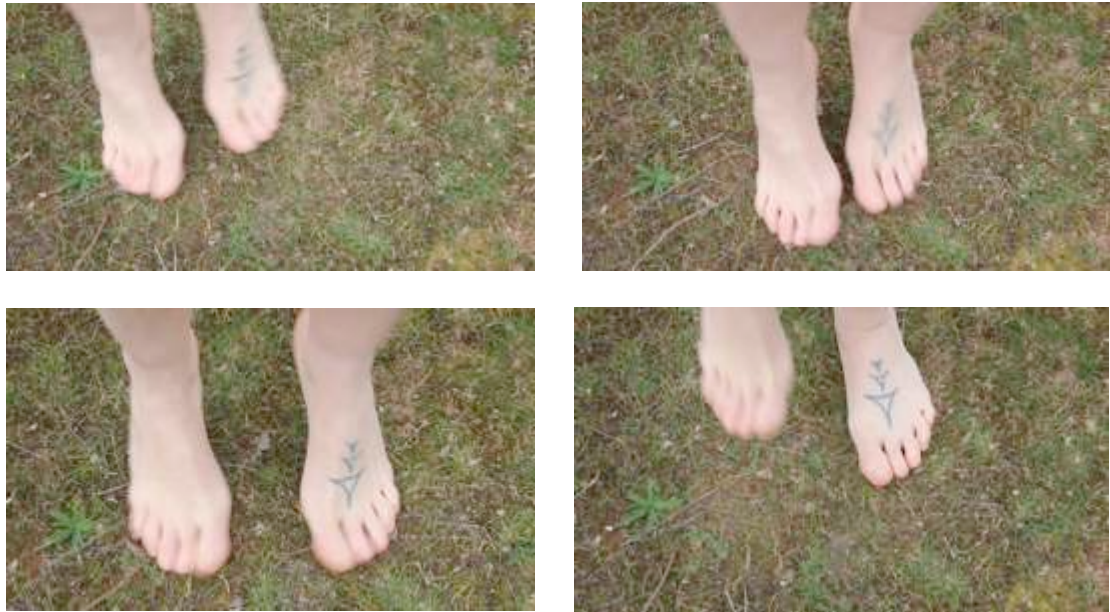


Figure 17. *Touch Grass*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

Footfall

Action intersects with materials to produce new spaces of meaning.¹⁶⁴

Amelia Jones

Grass

On a small patch of green grass I have a 360-degree multi-dimensional view, a huge open space. I find a rhythm with my legs and lose it again; my breath grows with exertion and then evens out. As I run up and down a prickle punctures my foot, but I keep going, observing how this small pain affects the movement, an internal sensation of discomfort travels my body. The dog chases insects, birds screech overhead and I lurch around, falling off balance to see what is there.

¹⁶⁴ Jones, "Material Traces," 21.



Figure 18. *Touch Mud*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

Mud

In the muddy dam the slapping and sticky touch against my feet is hard to work with, it pulls me down as the weight of my body presses further into the mud. The holes my feet create now attempt to suck me further down and I wobble to regain the rhythm. My feet become enclosed in mud, each rise and fall strains with a slippery resistance and sucking motion. The grooves my feet have made force me into a pattern, a mould that sinks deeper with each rise and fall. My feet are almost swallowed by the sucking down pressure of stickiness and have created markers of time, grooves in the earth in its most literal sense. Amelia Jones remarks on the materiality of clay and the performative impression left on it by the action of the artist, in the performance work *Becoming an Image* (2013) by Heather Cassils.

Clay produces phenomenological effects relating to the previous creative action of an artist's laboring body. The clay presents itself as having been made, having been formed by an intense artistic labor; as I engage it, it enacts and enlivens my own sense of embodiment.¹⁶⁵

The intense live gallery performance Jones critiques is in stark contrast to the Mud phase of *Footfall* at Block 119. However, the materiality of the interaction with a malleable substance through a performative motion, whether it is punching clay as in *Becoming an Image*, or jumping up and down in mud, produces similar imprints. The

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

force, essence and physical embodiment of the movements mould external materials into a residue of the performance.



Figure 19. *Touch Machine*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

Machine

On the giant 'roller' machine in the front paddock, the surface under foot is smooth, hard and cold. My feet bend to the curve of the metal as they rise up and down on this huge tool of destruction and order. The static surface is unforgiving; my balance teeters from side to side. The metal warms slightly under my feet, or maybe it is my feet that warm the metal. It is steadfast yet slippery. Above ground level I have a new visual perspective. As my feet gently smack the roller I wonder what it is I am doing up there and if the machine owner will suddenly appear and tackle me down.



Figure 20. *Touch Sticks and Leaves*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

Sticks and Leaves

A small place under the trees is tricky to navigate with my feet, rocks, twigs and leaves constantly shift underfoot. With each up and down motion the mark I make becomes more visible, my feet make a nest in the dirt amongst the foliage. I am uneven, awkward, as my soft soles make contact with rocks and sharp sticks.

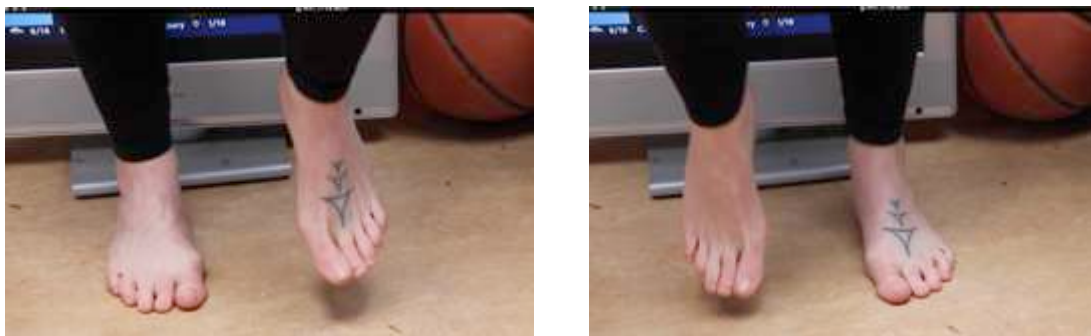


Figure 21. *Touch Linoleum*, author's image, video still, Block 119, 2016.

Linoleum

Inside the shack, the linoleum is smooth; news on the TV channel makes my activity seem banal. The flat floor, slightly tacky, supports my weight in a familiar way. There is the movement though, the repetitive up and down, the physical action of my body seems to highlight the importance of the news. Physical action in contrast to the

digital action, the visceral versus the technological, informs the more domestic relationship created by the image.

Reflections

The semi-rhythmic pounding of the feet punctuates the ground as well as the atmosphere. The grass, mud, steel, sticks, leaves and linoleum, push me back up above ground level with varying resistance. My feet and my muscles react to the force of 'keeping the place in play'. Each surface provides a differing sensation of touch to the underside of my feet, which travels through the whole body and is a motion in conversation with that particular site. *Footfall* is in the realm of the non-representational,¹⁶⁶ it does not attempt to mimic the elements, wind, water, rock, tree and so on, but rather is a dance in connection with the elements. Nigel Thrift elaborates on the thinking:

Non-representational theory arises from the simple...observation that we cannot extract a representation from the world because we are slap bang in the middle of it, co-constructing it with numerous human and non-human others for numerous ends (or, more accurately, beginnings).¹⁶⁷

Dance or movement through space is a multi-porous experience. Encounters with the weather-country cloak skin and bones with tiny forces, pushing it this way and that. Each surface of the body receives a multitude of pressures, requests and invitations to move, and to perform tasks of negotiation from the outside world. The geography of Block 119 provides the impetus to move, combined with attention to specific sites. Bugs crawl and bite, the breeze moves my hair, water-cools the body, rocks poke the feet. Voluntary and involuntary movement make up the score depending on the folds of the ground, or the transitory impressions on the body. Do I touch the external from

¹⁶⁶ Carter, *The Lie of the Land*, 84.

¹⁶⁷ Thrift, "Steps to an Ecology of Place," 296-97.

within? In *Footfall* the feet make contact with the ground, the dance provokes sensations of touch through the feet that guide the rest of the body over the spaces between Earth and Sky.

Chapter 4 - Walking

Why should our bodies end at the skin?¹⁶⁸

Donna Haraway

In this chapter I begin by examining the sense of smell in relation to the ecological practice mode of Walking. What follows is a discussion of breath, as integral to the sense of smell. Walking and breathing are active participations in the more-than-human worlds around us and smell adds depth of knowledge to the experience. I discuss the potential that breath and walking have to create change in the body, through the back and forth movement of both, surmising that ‘the movement of walking is itself a way of knowing.’¹⁶⁹ The chapter further discusses findings from two different walking practices that vary in method and location. Firstly, the experiential solo work of *Boundary Walks*, located at Block 119, is a collection of texts and images taken while circumnavigating the fence line of the 143 acre seasonally dry and scrubby block. The collated materials explore themes of ownership, colonial division of land, and flora and fauna boundaries on both sides of the ‘fence.’

Secondly, I discuss the performance events of *Promenade Locale* #2 and #3, situated 15 km away from Block 119 in the regional town of Castlemaine. The ‘night tour’ style of performance involved audience/spectator participation, collaborative

¹⁶⁸ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women : The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991), 178.

¹⁶⁹ Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, "Introduction," in *Ways of Walking*, ed. Tim Ingold and Jo E Vergunst (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate 2008), 5.

processes and public feedback responses via questionnaire.¹⁷⁰ I have written in length about *Promenade Locale*, aligning it with similar walking practices in Australia and overseas. I have drawn on similarities, differences and inspirations offered by an interpretation of the performative walking projects of UK walkers Jess Allen, Baz Kershaw and Phil Smith.

Walking - Smell

Walking is not just what a body *does*; it is what a body *is*.¹⁷¹

Ingold & Vergunst

Smell, breath and walking are quotidian processes that can contribute to the dissolution of both physical and geographic boundaries, therefore blurring the definitions between the human and more-than-human. In this research the sense of smell is an important element that connects one with place through memory and breath, and with the atmosphere. An inhalation and exhalation of breath, through the mouth or nose, is a simple yet vital participation that manifests as rhythmic collaboration with the air. It is perceivable as a universal relationality beyond the cellular surface of the skin. My breath affects the air and the air affects my breath, I breathe in the cold, the trees, the tiny trails of pollen made by bees.¹⁷² Karen Barad's intra-activity of all things is in play.¹⁷³ My mouth and nose exhume warmth and

¹⁷⁰ Formal ethics approval was received for each of these events see pages, v and vi.

¹⁷¹ Ingold and Vergunst, "Introduction," 2.

¹⁷² Neimains, Astrida & ((pollen)) collaborators. "-Collaboration Is Airbourne-." Edith Cowan University, http://www.perditaphillips.com/wp-content/uploads/writings/pollen_essay_one_page_Astrida_Neimanis_et_al.pdf

¹⁷³ Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 818.

steam, minute particles of water and the odours of food. Jim Drobnick elaborates on this relationship:

The boundary of the body is inherently permeable and porous, one in constant exchange with the environment. Through the process of breathing in and breathing out we intimately assimilate that which is airborne and project our own molecules into the immediate surroundings.¹⁷⁴

Walking performance works, that concentrate on participatory and imaginary processes with changing surroundings act as a corporeal marker of new knowledge that highlight immersion. The experience is an intimate, molecular, micro level marker that can reflect wider climatic issues, such as global warming, on a macro level. Smell provides the sense to take in qualities of the earth and weather events, be they the freshly logged destruction of a forest or the damp atmosphere of heavy fog or pollution. Encounters are experienced through the interfacing site of the moving body, situated in space and time. Smells move, travelling away and towards, lingering or intensifying as one approaches, like the threatening smoke from a bush fire. It clings to clothing, on skin, animals and rocks. The scent of something can be an indicator of life, decay or death. Variant weather conditions can be perceived through the sense of smell; the summer dry heat on the wind, and the petrichor of rain on the earth, the rankness of rotting compost, leaves or rubbish. Weather smells can evoke a sense of danger, excitement, calmness or even anger.

Breath is the inhalation and exhalation of air, the inhalation and exhalation of expression and articulation, and the appearance of one's bearings.¹⁷⁵ While out walking in the wind, air rushes into the mouth like an involuntary breath, which then

¹⁷⁴ Drobnick, "Trafficking in Air," 38.

¹⁷⁵ Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, trans. Mary Beth Mader (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 189. In the footnotes here I am reminded of both the 'literal or figurative' uttering of the word air.

shuts against the battering wind. With this experience, the wind breathes for me, guides and physically pushes the body. Cold forceful air re energises and exhilarates the lungs. I shudder, stamp and puff atmosphere, gently veering off course. Air manifests in the body through a relationship both known and unknown, both resisted and embraced. Tim Ingold writes:

The relation between place and atmosphere, I suggest, is equivalent to that between breathing out and breathing in. Atmosphere is the way the world is *with* us; place is the way we are *with* the world. And the living, respiring being is the site where atmospheric immersion is transformed into the movements by which we 'take place' in the world, and conversely, where these constitutive movements of everyday life yield to the atmosphere.¹⁷⁶

Away from the sensorial comforts of a house or enclosed space, a particular sensibility of becoming alert to the scent of place happens when walking out in the open, be it in the city or the bush. The movement of walking encourages the breath to flow more vigorously, for the lungs to work harder, the blood to pump faster, while internal and external merge. Martin Jay comments on the fluid state of smell and breath as being a communicative component of body place relations, rather than an activity that divides.

Attending to the history of smell... is also valuable in undermining simple binary oppositions between boundaried individuals and their englobing environment, the basis of Cartesian subject/object dualisms. Instead, it helps situate us in a more fluid, immersive context, where such stark oppositions are understood as themselves contingent rather than necessary.¹⁷⁷

It is possible to become more in tune with place and space when walking and as one comes to stillness blood can be heard pumping in the head, a throbbing of activity that meets the energy of the outside world. The potential may be that, 'paying attention to the breath serves as a provocative and continual reminder to live life consciously.'¹⁷⁸

Through the participatory collaboration of breathing in and out and of the 'taking in'

¹⁷⁶ Ingold, "On Place and the Atmosphere," 12.

¹⁷⁷ Jay, "In the Realm of the Senses," 307.

¹⁷⁸ Drobnick, "Trafficking in Air," 42.

of smells, one is removed from habitual ways of being and understanding into the more flexible life of airy possibility and inhabiting air.¹⁷⁹ Luce Irigaray eloquently offers, 'to live-to breathe: to become-to change/alter. An appearing that is always different within an air that continuously offers itself as other. And at a tempo of transformation that is too quick for reason.'¹⁸⁰

The experience of putting one foot in front of the other has the ability to open up known and unknown knowledge about place and space and the interactions that dwell in each moment. My claim, explored through the practice-as-research performative walking events of *Boundary Walks* and *Promenade Locale*, is that the action of walking, particularly in a country and regional setting, has the potential to provoke questions. It also brings about new ways of thinking to the walker, walkers or those that the walker comes into contact with. This is particularly important at a time when we are increasingly cut off from physically interacting with the outside world and often take for granted relationships with things other than the self. Walking provides the space to move from being to becoming part of the world at large.

Boundary Walks

The solo performance of *Boundary Walks* at Block 119, and subsequent documentation, takes a heuristic approach that uncovers concepts of 'inside' and 'outside' of immediate boundary fence lines. Eco-phenomenologist David Wood opens up the term boundary as a threshold or 'limina,' a space emphasised through walking.

¹⁷⁹ Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air*, 163.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 164. Cited in Drobnick, "Trafficking in Air," 40.

Boundaries are the way stations between insides and outsides, the sites of negotiation, of transformation, of sustenance, of protection. Boundaries are real, and yet they are often recessive and ambiguous. Boundaries are not at first things, but they arise in and for certain things, and they may even turn into things.¹⁸¹

The fence line became a geographical reference in this work and a starting point, an opening out and a closing in, a pervasive threshold to be breeched and one that also encloses.



Figure 22. *Private Property*, author's image, Block 119, 2015.

January

I reach the boundary fence of the neighbours cattle and sheep farm, already nervous that they will spot me and think that I am poking my nose in their business. The old fence cuts a line between 'my' side and 'their' side. 'Our' side is bare of big trees near the fence; the 'other' side still has some big old trees (due to recently bought government land), but then opens up to scorched, brown animal pasture. This fence is old and hand cut wooden posts crumble and lean, woven into shape by rusted fencing wire, chicken wire and star pickets, a clear yet ramshackle marking of who's whose and what's what... I have come to a corner in the boundary fence and had to back off and slow down, while a mother and baby kangaroo negotiate getting out of my way,

¹⁸¹ David Wood, "What Is Eco-Phenomenology?," in *Eco-Phenomenology : Back to the Earth Itself*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Charles S. Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 220.

the younger roo being stuck on the wrong side of the fence... Some way back along the fence I thought I could hear running water.

I am at a three-way junction; 'our' land on 'my' side, straight ahead state park and to the left the neighbour's paddock. The diversity of the state park casts a contrast to each 'others' side of the fence. I wonder how long these fences have been here?

There is a different mood down by the back dam, the fences are nearly completely down and the lines between the state park and 'our' land are trying to blur.

I hear a tree creaking and an old sign that says 'private property' lies on the ground tangled in the flattened fence. The leaves around me gently rustle, the treetops making more noise, activated by the wind.

I lost a section of fence along the lower perimeter covered in gorse and blackberries (which I ate) and spiky weeds. There is a narrow creek line under that tangle.

The leaves are making sounds like rain and the sky looks the same as when I left. It could be any time of day, but I checked my phone and know it has been three hours; time that totally disappeared.



Figure 23. *Tangled Fence Lines*, author's image, Block 119, 2015.

February

I head up the hill away from the shack and veer off the path; suddenly I have a different viewpoint of the land, than what I can see from the more familiar route of the path. I don't think I have been in this spot before. I make my way back towards the house again staying off the main track and find that I am following another clear track made by the kangaroos.



Figure 24. Kangaroo Crossing, author's image, Block 119, 2015.

June

I follow the kangaroo tracks, which traverse the slopes, in what feels like the most direct route to somewhere unknown to me. I leave them for a moment and head directly up hill; the bush pulls me in that direction... I keep walking, following another well-trodden track further uphill; I then come up against the fence line. The kangaroo track is barely broken on the other side of the fence, as I imagine them knowing this crossing jump well. I stop and wonder if I am allowed to cross this boundary and keep going, and wonder if I want to. I am in the middle of Mt Franklin (Lalgambook) and Mt Tarrengower, in the middle of the region's Indigenous creation story of Bunjil. Bunjil, the wedge tail eagle, is one of the first animals I saw in the sky when I came here. I wondered what it meant.



Figure 25. *Mt Lalgambook*, author's image, Block 119, 2015.

Fences that form boundaries and thresholds of ownership and containment interrupt walking over this country. Imagined and physical 'limina' are navigated through both known and unknown knowledge of this place. Walking high, the dormant volcanoes of Mt Tarrengower and Mt Lalgambook bring home the Indigenous creation stories of *The Two Feuding Volcanoes* that with Bunjil, created the surrounding country.¹⁸²

Down in the gully the fading 'Private' sign is almost indistinguishable from the tangle of fence and growth. Animals and plants move with particular skill through, around, over and in between the crumbling fence line, while human trajectories are trapped on either side. Regardless of whether one has permission or not, it is possible both

¹⁸² Nelson, "Dja Dja Wurrung."

physically and mentally, to step over these thresholds in such an ecological walking practice. Effectively one is stepping from inside to outside, from a place of safety to one of danger, or simply moving through space and time, blurring lines of definition that divide and conquer through the simple stepping motion of walking. Baz Kershaw's performance concept of 'embodying the "less is more" ecological principle' is played out along the fences lines.¹⁸³



Figure 26. *Boundary Fence*, author's photograph, Block 119, 2015.

UK walker Jess Allen's concept of *Tracktivism* involves extended periods of walking and engagement with individuals on specific environmental topics such as food, water or power. In this way she attempts to create a new dialogue and outcomes with the public.¹⁸⁴ Allen's walking-talking projects confront her local public domain with conversation and provide open opportunity for the public to participate, either verbally or via a related object. Allen's recent walking project, *The Water Treatment Walks* (2016), took place in mid-Wales and involved, 'pacing out the entire network

¹⁸³ Baz Kershaw, "Projecting Climate Scenarios, Landscaping Nature, and Knowing Performance: On Becoming Performed by Ecology," *Green Letters* (2016): 6.

¹⁸⁴ Jess Allen, "Tracktivism," Word Press, <https://allinadayswalk.org.uk/tracktivism/>. Accessed July 19, 2016.

of mains water pipes.’¹⁸⁵ In describing another performance work *Trans-missions* (2015) Allen notes that: ‘This solo, long-distance walking performance will follow the lines of electricity pylons.’¹⁸⁶ Following fence lines and animal tracks at Block 119 resonates with the methodology harnessed by Allen in both the *Water Treatment Walks* and *Trans-missions*.

Baz Kershaw’s walking project *A Meadow Meander* (2011-2015) initially took place close to his home of Devon in the UK. He describes the process as ‘an accidental result of messing about in an almost-flat patch of lane-side grass.’¹⁸⁷ Kershaw’s *détournement*, in which participants were invited to meander along a path of overgrown grass roped off from the rest of a field, was recreated over several locations. Kershaw created the *Meander* in the shape of a major geographical feature of the Earth, which if created to scale could have been seen by the naked eye from the Moon. The audience/participants were able to experience the small patch of Earth and meander its Global significance, with the aid of a collection of diverse seeds from local overgrown grasses and flowers, plus a Mercator map pinpointing the location. Kershaw explains the underpinning aim of the work as, ‘raising the ante that meander participants might experience both performing and being performed by the local state of path, meadow, field, earth, water, land, as well as region, territory, continent, ocean, atmosphere and beyond.’¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ "Water Treatment Walks," Word Press, <https://watertreatmentwalks.org.uk/>. Accessed July 19, 2016.

¹⁸⁶ "Trans-Missions," Word Press, <https://allinadayswalk.org.uk/trans-missions/>. Accessed July 19, 2016.

¹⁸⁷ Kershaw, "Projecting Climate Scenarios, Landscaping Nature, and Knowing Performance: On Becoming Performed by Ecology.," 11.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

A Meadow Meander shares the context of Thrift's non-representational embodiment with both *Footfall*, as previously discussed, and *Boundary Walks*. It is through the action of walking that one may discover the meaning of the site and the work. Stephen Bottoms comments on issues of real and imagined boundaries in Kershaw's *Meander* noting that, 'he draws attention to the fact of an outside – something beyond our ken. [This is] all the more paradoxical, when this experience of the outside lies inside a rope fence.'¹⁸⁹ Similarly *Boundary Walks* negotiate conundrums of inside and outside the fence line, of where one can and cannot walk. It follows tracks, lines and passageways made by both human and more-than-human inhabitants of Block 119. The solo practice-as-research walking experiment observed the total disregard of the animals and trees for fence lines and the human obsession and emotional entanglement with them.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 12. For comment by Stephen Bottoms, Performance Footprint B, <http://performancefootprint.co.uk/projects/earthrise-repair-shop/psi-meadow-meander-leeds/>. Accessed July 28, 2016.

Promenade Locale

Walking Practice as Performance

Space is a practiced place.¹⁹⁰

Michel de Certeau

Walking is a diverse modality for differing performance events, practice-led-research and audience/performer experiments across the country. As previously noted, internationally emerging 'walking practice' has been both critiqued and activated through a performance context by many, including Dee Heddon, Cathy Turner,¹⁹¹ and Baz Kershaw, Jess Allen and Mike Pearson.¹⁹² Members of UK Company, Wrights & Sites developed the concept of the 'mis-guided tour' to 'employ disrupted walking strategies as tools for playful debate, collaboration, intervention and spatial meaning-making.'¹⁹³ This chapter outlines the process of creating a 'mis-guided tour'¹⁹⁴ for performance that is site-specific and participatory. It develops and narrates concepts of audience encounters with place through the practice-led-research performances of *Promenade Locale*. The *Promenade Locale* series was performed over three consecutive years from 2014-2016, as part of the Castlemaine Fringe Festival in Central Victoria.

¹⁹⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 117.

¹⁹¹ Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner, "Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22, no. 2 (2012).

¹⁹² Mike Pearson, "Performance: *Bubbling Tom*," in *In Comes I* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006).

¹⁹³ Wrights & Sites, <http://www.mis-guide.com/ws/about.html>. Accessed March 29, 2017.

¹⁹⁴ Crab Man & Signpost, *A Sardine Street Box of Tricks* (Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2012).

The activity of walking is currently popular in Australia within the broader field of performance studies; this chapter investigates a local regional discourse around walking as a performative event. Australian walker and artist Perdita Phillips writes, 'I believe walking continues to offer a tactical space because of the way that it combines place, motion, the body and others together in an unruly mix.'¹⁹⁵ In what follows I focus in on the implications of what Phillips' 'unruly mix' may reveal, while walking in *Promenade Locale*.

Mark Minchinton and Domenico de Clario's long distance walks across Western Australia exemplify a solitary and extended practice that took place over weeks and months.¹⁹⁶ More recently De Clario followed the Murray River in Victoria from source to mouth in *Walking Slowly Downhill* (2015).¹⁹⁷ In Victoria, the walking tour, mobility,¹⁹⁸ and movement of an audience in general have been popular modes in performance events. For example the Environmental Performance Authority (EPA) performed the *Smellbourne Toilet Tour* (2016), as part of their M47 performance series in Melbourne.¹⁹⁹ PSi #22 Melbourne: *Performance Climates* curated several tours and walks around the Melbourne CBD and surrounds for Performing Mobilities, in a category known as 'Passages: Mobile Performances'.²⁰⁰ Locally, in Central Victoria, Punctum Inc. has also hosted numerous performances involving walking

¹⁹⁵ Perdita Phillips, "Walk 'Til You Run out of Water," *Performance Research* 17, no. 2 (2012): 104-06.

¹⁹⁶ Mark Minchinton and Domenico de Clario, "Kellerberrin on Our Minds," *About Performance*, no. 7 (2007).

¹⁹⁷ Domenico de Clario, "Walking Slowly Downhill," <http://mildurapalimpsestbiennale.com/artists-thinkers/domenico-de-clario/>. Accessed February 2, 2017.

¹⁹⁸ Fiona Wilkie, "Site-Specific Performance and the Mobility Turn," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22, no. 2 (2012). Wilkie writes particularly about the work of Melbourne based artist and academic Mick Douglas in her critique of mobility vs. walking practices. .

¹⁹⁹ Environmental Performance Authority, "Smellbourne Toilet Tour," <http://epaperformance.org/event/smellbourne-toilet-tour-3/>. Accessed February 1, 2017.

²⁰⁰ "Passages: Mobile Performances," *Performing Mobilities*, <http://www.performingmobilities.net/symposium/passages/>. Accessed July 24, 2017.

tours,²⁰¹ walking experiments,²⁰² and historical and cultural walking practices and events.²⁰³ My contention is that the surge of enthusiasm for this simple and straightforward activity in the performing arts, particularly in Australia, is associated with the potential for walking to reach into and connect with varied communities of all backgrounds in diverse locations. Observing sensorial feedback through walking emphasises being *in* and *moving through* a different locale or being in and moving through a locale *differently*. Although there is a distinction between the long distance walks of de Clario and Minchinton and the humorous short tours of the EPA, in both instances the theme of embodied participation in place through walking exemplifies the experience of an audience moving through and between different encounters.

In the following chapter, I discuss methods of the performance making process and for documenting ‘real time’ feedback from the audience. The performances sought to guide the participants through the streets of Castlemaine, en route engaging with a sensorial and active relationship to the everyday. *Promenade Locale* works to distract audience participants from an ordinary experience of their own town while offering up new imaginings experienced through encounters with both tactile tasks and story. I consider how the performance series of *Promenade Locale* became an example of Michel de Certeau’s spatial practice of enunciation,²⁰⁴ through and with the spectator-participants. I also reveal the processes and tactics behind the adapted tropes of a ‘mis-guided tour.’²⁰⁵ A metaphorical narrative of both real and imagined stories,

²⁰¹ Punctum, "Ramble by Mish Grigor," <http://www.punctum.com.au/residencies/seedpod-amplified/ramble>. Accessed February 1, 2017.

²⁰² Punctum, "Expanding Movement Fields by Kaya Barry," <http://www.punctum.com.au/residencies/seedpod/expanding-movement-fields>. Accessed February 1, 2017.

²⁰³ Punctum, "Big Walk to Golden Mountain," <http://www.punctum.com.au/works/big-walk-golden-mountain>. Accessed February 1, 2017.

²⁰⁴ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 98.

²⁰⁵ Wrights & Sites.

events and geographic features of Castlemaine surrounds the practice-as-research event. The text, spoken by the author, invites opportunities for participants to take part in a unique experience of place. The initial written documentation of the performance, including photographs and feedback questionnaires, serve as the basis for analysing the outcomes of the performance work. Preparations for viewing the video work at a later date (to be presented in the Guildford Hall) have also helped to form research material to critique. It is through this range of experience, documentation and research data that I derive evidence to discuss issues of spectator participation and relationship to place.

The Scene

Michel de Certeau's concept of walking as a spatial practice and Erika Fischer-Lichte's writings around spectatorship inform the underlying themes of the work. This is to potentially alter audience perception of place, 'to activate the spectator',²⁰⁶ through active participation, framed by the physical performance event of walking. The performance was designed in the mode of participatory practice, aiming to contribute to Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of 'transformative aesthetics' for spectators in live performance.

Participant/performer relations were enabled through the 'mis-guided tour' guide role in which the performer (and author) also participated as a spectator to some degree. As the performer/participant, I directed particular attention toward developing a tour

²⁰⁶ Erika Fischer-Lichte, "The Art of Spectatorship," *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 4, no. 1 (2016).

that was both ‘performance like’²⁰⁷ and performative. Barbara Bolt explains the importance of the performative in artistic practice-led-research: ‘Performativity has invited new ways of analysis, modes that focus on process, participation, events, expressive actions and experience.’²⁰⁸ These artistic tropes framed the process to inspire participant involvement through the performative events. Some of the most fruitful and poignant interactions to demonstrate an embodiment of a new experience of time and space through the activity of the ‘mis-guided tour’ are included below.

The ‘mis-guided tour’²⁰⁹ is essentially an anti-consumer and non-touristic concept of being in and exploring urban areas and has its roots in a Situationist rationale. Phil Smith of Wrights & Sites explains the approach thus:

Walking – wandering. Not buying, window shopping or taking part in leisure activities – but just letting the flows and currents and rhythms of the city pull and draw them. The situationists called this ‘*dérive*’ or ‘drift’: they hyper-sensitized themselves to the city’s shapes, symbols and encounters; letting its atmospheres be their guides.²¹⁰

Promenade Locale is a contemporary response to Guy Debord’s *dérive*.²¹¹ Debord notes: ‘Dérives involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of a journey or stroll.’²¹² Fun, humour, playfulness and a hint of the carnivalesque created

²⁰⁷ Phil Smith, "Turning Tourists into Performers: Revaluing Agency, Action and Space in Sites of Heritage Tourism," *Performance Research* 18, no. 2 (2013): 112.

²⁰⁸ Barbara Bolt, "Artistic Research: A Performance Paradigm?" *Parse Journal Repetitions and Reneges*, no. 3 (2016): 134.

²⁰⁹ Crab Man and Signpost, *A Sardine Street Box of Tricks*, Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2012.

²¹⁰ Phil Smith, "Psychogeography Now," in *Psychogeography Symposium – Taking it to the Streets: Empowering Interactions with the Urban Environment* (Edge Hill University, Plymouth: Academia.com, 2016), 3. See also, Tina Richardson, ed. *Walking inside Out*, Contemporary British Psychogeography (London, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

²¹¹ The project was partly funded by the local Mount Alexander Shire Council, which assisted in my decision to make it a free event. I had acquired ethics approval and assessed any potential risks beforehand.

²¹² Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive," in *Internationale Situationiste* #2 (1958), 1.

an experiential opening amongst the participant-spectators and the place they moved through.

Phenomenologist and philosopher of place Edward Casey argues, 'the enactive vehicle of being-in-place is the *body*.'²¹³ In a more specific reference to the embodied, performative practice of walking Michel de Certeau affirms, 'in the framework of enunciation, the walker constitutes, in relation to his position, both a near and a far, a *here* and a *there*.'²¹⁴ Conversely Mike Pearson contends that performance making may actually be 'place-making,'²¹⁵ in that the rich resources and multilayered aspects of a particular place enhance the significance of performing in, or walking through, a given site. Pearson states that 'place is currently regarded as that actively worked, that brought into being.'²¹⁶ These intersections of theory are highlighted in *Promenade Locale* by the merging roles of the performer/participant/spectator through the activity of walking the streets of Castlemaine. Following Fischer-Lichte in her claim that, 'the performance came into being out of the activities of all of its participants,'²¹⁷ the aim of *Promenade Locale* was to investigate how walking has the potential to activate and transform place and one's experience of it.

Walking, once framed in a performative context, holds multiple capacities for change in relation to both participants and the places that are walked through. Aside from the ubiquitous nature of walking, the slow action confronts the busyness of modern life.

Phil Smith clarifies the important regularity of walking, as a device for a

²¹³ Edward S. Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place - World?," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (2001): 687.

²¹⁴ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 99.

²¹⁵ Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance*, 109.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

²¹⁷ Fischer-Lichte, "The Art of Spectatorship," 171.

mythogeographic tour, noting that, ‘the simple ambulatory exploration always remains as the primary and underpinning tactic.’²¹⁸ Slowing the body down and taking notice of where one is situated in time and space has wider implications for both the group and individual. De Certeau claims that: ‘To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, *to be other and to move toward the other*.’²¹⁹ One participant from *Promenade Locale* #3 observed ‘I think of my children’s experience of place and the importance of slowing down. It is lovely to again let the “space be in me.”’²²⁰

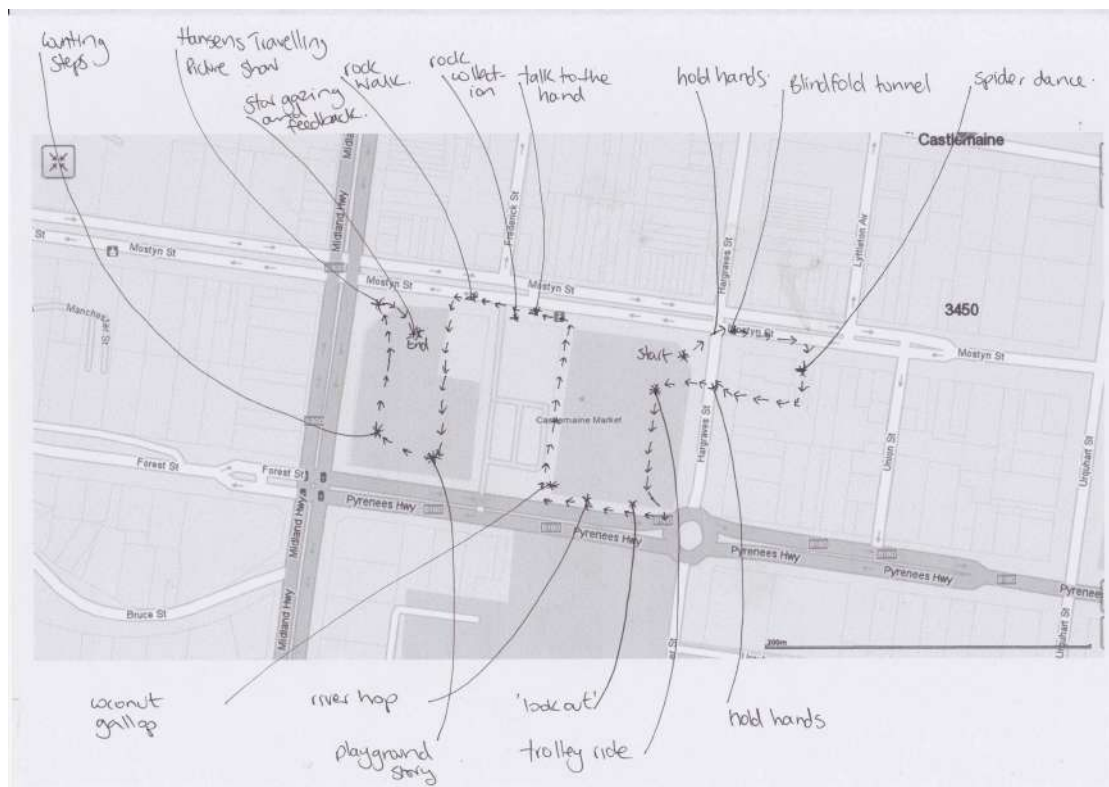


Figure 27. *Tasks*, photocopy map, 2015.

The Streets of Town

The concept of mythogeography was the method of inquiry and informed the structure and content of the ‘mis-guided tour’. In researching the regional township of

²¹⁸ Smith, "Turning Tourists into Performers," 112.

²¹⁹ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 110.

²²⁰ Participant feedback, *Promenade Locale* #3, March 2016.

Castlemaine for the project, I collected stories of local myths and legends, studied historical facts and observed architectural features, street names and local geography. I spent time looking at the people coming and going in the central shopping area, exchanging words, glances or meeting in the street. Smith explains: 'Mythogeography is a hybrid of ideas, tactics and strategies. It embraces both respectable (academic, scientific, culturally validated) and non-respectable (Fortean, antiquarian, mystical, fictional) knowledges.'²²¹

Seeking information from Castlemaine's local historical society, I was troubled to find a shortage of records or information on the Indigenous people of the area. I approached Uncle Rick Nelson, local Dja Dja Wurrung elder, hoping for some insights into the Indigenous story of Castlemaine. Although I had some monetary funds to offer in exchange, I questioned my motivations as a white woman wanting specific information to further her individual project. Uncle Rick seemed initially keen to contribute. After several failed attempts to meet and talk, I realised I was trying to fulfil personal expectations to add to the tour and it was not reasonable to ask this of Uncle Rick. I decided instead to invite him along to the tour, although unfortunately Uncle Rick was unable to attend. As the narrator, I paid appropriate respect to the Aboriginal elders during the tour referring to the past, present and future Indigenous custodianship of the land.

With the concept of the 'mis-guided tour' as the key focus, I was able to trust in any direction or detour the tour might take and was actually looking forward to diversions and disruption. This of course would only be possible if a space was created for the

²²¹ Phil Smith, *On Walking* (Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2014), 59.

participants to feel comfortable as individuals, as well as taking opportunities to jostle them a little out of their comfort zone.



Figure 28. *Promenade Locale #3*, Warm up Stretch, video still by Lisa Mills, Castlemaine, 2016.

The Tour

Promenade Locale #3 took place in autumn, in the early evening just on nightfall, and was illuminated by streetlight. The loosely designed score encouraged participant interaction and involvement, working to optimise participant's experiences in re-encountering their own everyday place. The tour worked from what was visibly obvious and overlaid it with a deeper method of observing, engaging and being in the streets of town.

In welcoming the group to the tour Ms Guide formally acknowledged that the land in which we were standing on belonged to the First Peoples of Australia, the Dja Dja

Wurrung. She openly thanked them for having us on their country.²²² Ms Guide announced her role and that of her colleague, Ms Information, in being potential guides for the evening. In a similar vein, at the introduction to their *Water Walk* (2010) tour Phil Smith and Simon Persighetti, ‘announced in detail all the guide-like actions we would *not* be performing and all the guide-like information we would *not* be sharing.’²²³ Ms Guide invited the audience to interject wherever possible and to simply be themselves.

In the fading evening light Ms Guide engaged in familiar activities in which the group could participate, as a method to generate a sense of ease and playfulness. Laughs rose up from the group, after Ms Guide initiated the beginning of the tour by swinging her arms and doing some deep squats on the pavement outside the supermarket. Others joined in, the group appearing to be quickly aware of the physical potentials of both the individual and the whole. The ‘warm up stretch’ for tours #2 and #3 was met with surprised giggles and looks of confusion between participants and I gained a sense that the tactics were at play. Participants could then begin to be open to the experiences the town might expose, through the ongoing provocations and suggested instructions. The members of the group didn’t necessarily know each other as participants only attended one tour over the course of the series. It became apparent from the outset that each task acted as a release from uncertainty into activity. As discussed in *Boundary Walks* through the lens of the threshold of inside and outside, now the threshold between performer and spectator operate in a new temporary ‘liminal’ atmosphere.²²⁴ As we set out Ms Guide voiced the invitation to

²²² I had literally embodied the concept of the ‘mis-guided’ tour guide, to become ‘Ms Guide’ for the event.

²²³ Smith, "Turning Tourists into Performers," 106-07.

²²⁴ Fischer-Lichte, "The Art of Spectatorship," 169.

participants to hold hands with the person nearest to them, as we all crossed the road. This invitation was carried through the whole tour series and was highly effective in creating group cohesion and an atmosphere of possibility, and in promoting human touch, responsibility and trust. The ostensibly timid woman whose hand I was holding called out loudly to the rest of the group, “look left, look right, look left again, now cross.”



Figure 29. *Promenade Locale* #3, Childs March, Photo Leonie Van Eyk, Castlemaine, 2016.

Ms Guide next set the imaginary task of walking through an underground tunnel in the dark. Ms Information produced strips of black material for blindfolds and began putting them on the spectator-participants. To simply *do* was an ongoing provocation throughout the event and the element of surprise was definitely a useful method over the duration of the performances. We assumed people would go along with the invitations offered, without giving them too much time to decide or the option to decline. In a sense, participants had to either surrender to the directions given or

become just observers. Of course we didn't mind if the participants didn't particularly want to walk up the street blindfolded holding a stranger's hand and being encouraged to 'scurry'. Nevertheless almost everyone on both nights was compliant in all the tasks. I sensed a certain trust had developed during the opening introductions (revealed in peoples willingness to go along with the offers), while an uncompromising yet arbitrary tone had been set. Ms Guide proceeded with a short story that took place in a public bar where the Subway stands today. The story was discovered during conversations, as I searched for material, through everyday interactions with people on the street.²²⁵

Through the spoken text I had loosely appropriated local, albeit historical, knowledge and transferred it into an active participation for creating new knowledge. This unfolded between both people and place, allowing individual imaginations to encounter and interact with the information. Blindfolded, participants laughed and clutched each other, while 'feeling' their way along the street. One person explained 'It was great to explore different modes of movement. The blindfold scurrying was the most difficult.'²²⁶ The habitual movement of walking down the street, and the expectations of a performance to 'entertain', entered another state, where participants tempered their own levels of excitement or intrigue by following the unknown trajectory of the tour.

²²⁵ "It was said that 'back in the day' a tunnel used to run under the ground from the pub to the hotel about 100 meters up the road. Men would arrive at the pub, apparently for an innocent pint, but would instead 'scurry' through the tunnel in the dark, to visit the working ladies at the hotel. They would then make it back to the pub in time for their wives to think they were still drinking beer."

²²⁶ Participant feedback, *Promenade Locale* #3, March 2016.



Figure 30. *Promenade Locale #3*, Trolley Ride, Photo Leonie Van Eyk, Castlemaine, 2016.

Discarding the blindfolds we once more held hands to cross the road over to the old school yard playground, now the supermarket car park. Ms Guide invited participants to traverse the playground, escorting each other in supermarket shopping trolleys. Time was of the essence here and I sensed the others had this same sense as Ms Information came running out of the supermarket, a train of trolleys in front of her. (We had spent some time over the previous week talking to ‘Kevin’ and his co-workers at the supermarket to make sure the trolleys would be available, but he had ultimately forgotten). Group members joined in partnership with the nearest person to hurtle across the short distance of the car park, as individuals yelped with pleasure and threw their arms up in the air. Commenting on the boundaries breached and new spaces created for and with an audience, Fischer-Lichte remarks: ‘Spectating takes place as a liminal situation. It is separated from the concerns of everyday life and

opens up the possibility of aesthetic play.²²⁷ Humour played a vital role in *Promenade Locale*, through creating openings for people to participate in doing things they wouldn't normally do in usual *or* unusual places. This had the effect of releasing group members from the construct of appropriate public behaviour, opening up to the possibility of different ways of seeing and interacting across time and space. The 'trolley ride' was an act of reclaiming space, in a performative and 'performance like' context. As one participant explained:

From my perspective it was a wonderful way to explore the old town at night, it had a hint of brazen youthfulness, hanging out in a gang, feeling lawless. Seeing the town in a new way, discovering details of spaces that will change my view of Castlemaine forever.²²⁸

Promenade Locale became an endeavour of togetherness that harnessed the transformations inherent in play and risk taking, to potentially experience a deeper connection to the everyday places of Castlemaine.



Figure 31. *Promenade Locale* #3, The Look Out, Photo Leonie Van Eyk, Castlemaine, 2016.

²²⁷ Fischer-Lichte, "The Art of Spectatorship," 169.

²²⁸ Participant feedback, *Promenade Locale* #2, March 2015.

The tour rounded the imaginary banks of Forest Creek, now Forest Street, opposite the towns sporting oval and Ms Guide funnelled the audience into the 'Look Out'. Gathered in close together under the sign, we held our hands up to our eyes as if we had binoculars and looked 'out over the gold mining boom wasteland now called Western Reserve',²²⁹ while listening to an audio track from an unrelated cricket match. Here the layering of juxtaposing sounds and vision, combined with the groups public visibility, created potentially new experiences of the observer and the observed and of what was 'real' or imagined. Being seen to be doing something 'unusual' or out of place in a small country town pushes at the boundaries of normal or accepted behaviour, and has the potential to challenge local attitudes.

Storytelling, as combined with the activity of walking in *Promenade Locale*, became an example of Michel de Certeau's use of 'demonstratives', whereby the method and aesthetics of the live performance revealed a layering of spatiotemporal relations. De Certeau explains that:

Demonstratives indicate the invisible identities of the visible: it is the very definition of a place, in fact, that it is composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers.²³⁰

In the supermarket car park I gave a brief historical account of the horse stables, which had once stood there. Hollowed out coconut shells were passed around and with their use the group were invited to gallop their horses through the old stables where the car park now stands. An intermediate confusion was quickly taken over by the acceptance of the offer 'to gallop like a horse' and we took off as a group clattering through the night sky.

²²⁹ Mandy Jean and David Moloney, "Forest Street to Forest Creek Heritage Assessment," (Mount Alexander Shire Council, 2015).

²³⁰ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.



Figure 32. *Promenade Locale #2, Galloping*, Photo Leonie Van Eyk, Castlemaine, 2015.

As we handed our metaphorical horse hooves back to Ms Information, we stood under the statue of Demeter on the top the Old Market Building. Ms Information and I had piled up a collection of different sized rocks and members of the group were asked to pick one out and carry it with them. We then headed down to Victory Park in the middle of town. Ms Guide explained that historically horses were made to gallop up the hill ahead while heavily laden. The horse with the fastest time was sold for the highest price.²³¹ Behind the group Ms Information expertly cracked a long leather whip as Ms Guide encouraged the others to make good time. The physical weight of the rocks, combined with an extract of historical knowledge and the sound of a leather stock whip, heightened the senses of participants as they ran. Physical activity was thus imprinted in the body to be potentially drawn on later as memory. Fischer-Lichte contends also that activity is the key to creating new experiences of interaction and

²³¹ "A Town Walk in Historical Castlemaine," ed. Castlemaine Historical Society Inc. (Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre, 2014).

encounter for spectator participants.²³² A Body Weather sensibility in my approach to devising the work enhances the importance of allowing the tactile senses to inform and enrich body-place relations across time.



Figure 33. *Promenade Locale #3, Carrying Rocks*, Photo Leonie Van Eyk, Castlemaine, 2016.

Inside the park we placed our rocks on the ground. As we approached the grass in front of the children's play equipment, Ms Guide invited the group to crawl along the ground on all fours and to smell the grass by altering our habitual upright position. This request was met with some trepidation as both groups experienced differing measures of discomfort and mirth, negotiating clothes and bodies. 'Energetic and intriguing and participatory,'²³³ was a description of the experience offered by one participant.

²³² Fischer-Lichte, "The Art of Spectatorship," 173.

²³³ Participant feedback, *Promenade Locale #3*, March 2016.



Figure 34. *Promenade Locale #3*, Crawling, Photo Leonie Van Eyk, Castlemaine, 2016.

Towards the close of the tour participants gathered on the blankets provided and lay down on the grass. Ms Guide invited the group to look up at the stars. At this point Ms Guide acknowledged the fact that she had missed out on the previous 60, 000 years of Indigenous history of the area. Material for the tour relied on ‘hybrid tactics’ and the creation of ‘fictional and scientific knowledges’ projected through story and activity. A mythogeographic method was developed for the duration of the tour and each spectator-participant related to it differently. As a final task Ms Guide invited the reclining group to imagine the past, present and future in this moment, then posed the question, ‘Are we in the place, or is the place in us?’ This question concludes the physical tour, but it also becomes an ongoing question, part of the larger Body Weather methodology of the research. Lingering in the liminal stage, where the boundaries of place, space and body intersect, raises possibilities for new experiences with the more-than-human. The participants rested thoughtfully for the duration of the

music and then filled out the questionnaire under flickering streetlights and with the help of torches. Ms Guide then individually thanked them for being part of the event and all stood around chatting as the group dispersed into the night.

Through active spectator participation in the performativity of *Promenade Locale*, physical imagining, movement and sound precipitated an embodiment of doing. A psychogeographic experience was potentially created through and with the performance.²³⁴ Claire Bishop sets out one of the three ongoing functions with which the participatory art of the *Promenade Locale* series was concerned. She references:

The desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation. The hope is that the newly emancipated subjects of participation will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality. An aesthetic of participation therefore derives legitimacy from a (desired) causal relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency.²³⁵

A quote from a participant, keen to offer their feedback a full six months after the performance of *Promenade Locale* #3 in September 2016, is replicated below. I think this highlights Bishop's concept of the function of participatory performance. The remembered embodiment (referred to below as 'acting things out') of both the physical and symbolic caused an altered relationship with the participant's reality.

When I was reflecting after I went on the walk and I was thinking about it afterwards, I think what was really interesting is that a lot of the things that we were doing that were just sort of silly and fun at the time, like the shopping trolleys and we pretended to be horses and galloped through the car park. But that really, that stuff really sticks, the physical movement, it kind of sticks in your mind, so for me, now when I go to the IGA car park I associate that with the fact that it was a horse stable in a way that was really...yeah once it's in your body, it's much more in your mind. The galloping and looking out over the creek flats too, imagining the races, that was pretty strong. I mean the whole thing, that whole walk and the visualizing from where we started, that

²³⁴ Smith, "Psychogeography Now," 4.

²³⁵ Claire Bishop, "Introduction," in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (London : Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel MIT Press, 2006), 12.

underground tunnel. Yeah, it's quite, I mean certain things really stick in my mind and I think those were the things when we were acting a lot of things out.

At times I could sense when the group had let go to become totally immersed in the activities of the tour. These moments were also reinforced with the help of viewing photo and video footage after the fact. These instances seemed most efficacious, where we were undertaking some sort of un-habitual physicality in relation to the everyday streets that the participants usually encountered. Participants dropped their inhibitions when involved in physical activity, experiencing something more vividly once the words had been said and movement had become the priority.

Reflections

In *Promenade Locale* the activity of walking is the link to the active spectator. Spectating is an activity, which in this work is framed as participation. It is here that Fischer-Lichte's 'transformative aesthetics'²³⁶ became alive through and with people's bodies. Activity is linked to the senses when requests are directed to the body to, for example, close ones eyes, gallop, or carry a heavy rock. This embodiment, through a dynamic physicality that involves exertion and calm, running and listening, has the potential to engage participants on a deeper level and affect the way they encounter and interact with place. Fischer-Lichte further defines the active role of the spectator,

as the capacity to perceive attentively and involve all the senses; it relies on the willingness to undergo highly diverse, even disturbing and destabilizing experiences and corresponding transformations - at times requiring the relinquishment of focused attention in order to get lost in a kind of reverie – to engage in the process of what is happening and still not lose the faculty to reflect on what one has perceived, experienced and done, even if the latter may emerge clearly only after the performance has ended.²³⁷

²³⁶ Fischer-Lichte, "The Art of Spectatorship," 176.

²³⁷ Ibid., 178.

The outcome of my experience of being Ms Guide was read through witnessing the 'real time' event and analysing questionnaire responses. People's willingness to meet the unknown proceeded to challenge concepts of everyday interactions and interpretations of performance and place. The tour enriched an experience of one's everyday place, through the people who participated in and responded to the 'demonstratives' on offer. Aside from the immediate written feedback and the responses, I cannot really know what lasting effects participants took away from the tour. It was 'in the moment' or 'reverie' that I was aware of shifts in individual and group perception. The process of coming together as a group through the tour had a key influence on the experience and outcomes of each *Promenade Locale* event. In a group, participants were more likely to be provoked and empowered by each other's actions in a positive way. No one *did* interrupt to take the tour on a tangent, although I remained open and hopeful that they would. I developed and believed in a relationship of mutual trust and openness with participants that valued their experience and involvement with the work. After analysing the feedback from the spectator-participants, I concluded that the score functioned successfully as a mythogeographic tour. It aimed, 'to hyper sensitize them to the fine textures, the conflicting and multiple narratives and the accidental ironies of these places; and to provoke them to make their own interrogations of them.'²³⁸

We made and explored a new unique place through performance inside an existing one (Castlemaine) and that became an opportunity for differing encounters between

²³⁸ Smith, "Turning Tourists into Performers," 103.

performer and audience. Both audience and performer became active spectator-participants in place, through the practice of the tour.

Promenade Locale created a 'brazen youthfulness' and carnivalesque experience that was 'subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedoms.'²³⁹ The mythogeographic framework of the 'mis-guided' tour, noted throughout the chapter, became an example of Phillip's 'unruly mix' of people and place. The active experiences, full of potential through sensing and motion, challenge what we take for granted in the everyday. De Certeau's 'definition of walking as a space of enunciation' extended to include the activities of galloping, scurrying and crawling through the streets, marking out vocalisations of place through the body. One participant wrote, 'I feel to be more accepting and tolerant of our diverse human nature and culture.'²⁴⁰ This is big statement even if it was only thought of fleetingly. I would go so far as to make the claim that the possibility of imagining changing relationships between performer, spectator and place can be discovered through the performance of *Promenade Locale*.

²³⁹ M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), 7.

²⁴⁰ Participant feedback, *Promenade Locale* #2, March 2015.

Chapter 5 - Writing

Weather Writing - Taste

Bathed in light, submerged in sound and rapt in feeling, the sentient being rides the crest of the world's becoming, ever-present and witness to that moment when the world is about to disclose itself for what it is. To perceive things, then, is simultaneously to be perceived *by* them: to see is to be seen, to hear is to be heard, and so on.²⁴¹

Tim Ingold

This chapter contributes to the Writing mode of the exegesis; below I discuss how weather writing or 'weathering' is an embodied communication with multispecies and diverse material surroundings.²⁴² In the weather writing process the senses receive 'weathery' queues that are viscerally absorbed. These ongoing encounters are immediately translated into written text. Weather writing, as a tactical response to the work's propositions, dissolves boundaries of inside and outside the body. The body is able to experience the busy yet fluid in-between of transformation of many human and more-than-human body worlds.

July

The mist on my tongue exhales as steam; I formulate words in my mouth to put on the page, savouring the atmosphere, the frost. Droplets of water spring back from branches and land on my lips. I taste the dew and the silty water stirred up from the tank after a good rain.

²⁴¹ Ingold, "On Place and the Atmosphere," 12.

²⁴² There will also be an original copy of 'weather notes' on display at the Guildford Hall as part of the final exhibition in November 2017.

Part diary, part field notes, and always in situ, the writing about the weather at Block 119 has come to embody an emotional and physical communication with seasonal weathering issues relevant to this part of Australia, such as fire, drought, wind and rain. These weather and related events all affect the most basic functions of survival, quality of life, and connection to the community and country. As previously established, human activity has now become geophysical and weather changing. Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts that natural history and human history have now converged.²⁴³ This contemporary understanding of the agency of all life on Earth elicits a performative response to a wider public, conveying the urgency of climatic issues in the present day context of manmade ecological crisis, namely the Anthropocene.



Figure 35. *Tasting the Atmosphere*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

²⁴³ Chakrabarty, "Postcolonial Studies."

Living in the country at Block 119 has in the past caused no end of anxiety about the weather, in particular the rain. I often wonder what I am doing here, trying to get the land, of which I know so little, to suit my lifestyle. Here in central Victoria and totally off the grid, we are reliant and dependent, comforted and disrupted, calmed and scared, by the geographies of weather. In our shack there is very little difference between inside and outside; here we sense 'the openness of the ground, the ground as process'²⁴⁴ and the weather often comes in.

The geographical scale of temporal moments at Block 119 is both tiny and vast. Through the porous membrane of my skin I have come to realise that the weather is everything on both a local and global scale. Through the process of regular writing *with* the weather I have been able to take the time to get closer to the weather and bear witness to its impact on this small patch of earth and atmosphere. How it affects both the human and the more-than-human and in turn affects each other. In a small town the weather is what is talked about, weather gossip overheard in the bank or post office and on the radio; it is *in* everyone. Even if one is not a farmer, if rain doesn't fall from the sky for months and bush fire smoke looms on the horizon, a dry desperation fills the local voices. We are tempered and entangled by the weather.

Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen-Walker call on us to conceive of ourselves as 'weather bodies.'²⁴⁵ Adopted through the site or mode of writing, the experience of reflection and documentation becomes the visceral experience of embodiment that merges binaries of nature and culture, human and more-than-human. In performance practice weather writing becomes the performative prose. As they discuss, perceiving

²⁴⁴ Carter, *The Lie of the Land*, 4.

²⁴⁵ Astrida Neimains and Rachel Loewen Walker, "Weathering: Climate Change and the 'Thick Time' of Transcoporeality," *Hypatia* 29, no. 3 (2014).

the weather body brings home the planetary meteorological weather of global warming to past, present and future events absorbed through the everyday body in a process of *weathering*. They write, ‘the idea of weathering also invokes a certain perdurance - a getting on with, a getting by, a getting through.’²⁴⁶ This is potentially an expressed resilience of climatic shifts through paying attention to the entangled weather body and the bodies surrounding both human and more-than-human worlds.²⁴⁷ Stacey Alaimo, Karen Barad and Freya Mathews influence the thinking behind the concept of the weather body and weathering. Astrida Neimains has adapted Alaimo’s theory of transcorporeality (referred to in the Dancing chapter) to the weather body. Neimains claims that the transcorporeal body,

names the material transits between human and nonhuman bodily natures, present...in environmental toxins or other anthropogenic matters that affect all kinds of bodies and ecosystems – and hence also weather and climate patterns.²⁴⁸

Barad’s concept of the intra-activity of matter is ‘of things as perpetually *worlding*,’²⁴⁹ where bodies/matter/phenomenon are in constant change and emergence with each other. Conversely Mathew’s onto-poetics notes the visceral perception of the weather itself where words dissolve boundaries of external and internal sensation and information. ‘If one somehow managed to slip under [the] psychic skin of the world...If one stepped inside the world, in this sense, the trees and grass and rivers would no longer appear external to oneself.’²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 560.

²⁴⁷ Kate Wright, "An Ethics of Entanglement for the Anthropocene," *Scan: Journal of Media Arts Culture* 11, no. 1 (2014).

²⁴⁸ Astrida Neimains, "Weather Writing: A Feminist Materialist Practice for (Getting Outside) the Classroom," in *Teaching with Feminist Materialisms*, ed. Peta and Treush Hinton, Pat (Utrecht: ATGENDER, 2015), 143.

²⁴⁹ Neimains and Loewen Walker, "Weathering," 560.

²⁵⁰ Freya Mathews, "Invitation to Ontopoetics: The Poetic Structure of Being.," *Australian Humanities Review* 43 (2007): 3.

The new materialist theories (vital, agential) stated here contribute to my understanding of *weathering*. Thus *weathering* and weather writing is an opening to temporal and spatial knowledge communication across bodies. The concept of *weathering* is valuable in creating connections in times of unprecedented disparity between what we as human can do in the future and what, as humans, we have already done. Performative writing thus becomes a mode of expression, of ecopoetics, which then becomes part of live performance or speaks for itself on the page.

The process of weather writing at Block 119 plays with Neimains' question: 'Could experiencing/writing our bodies as sensitive interfaces with the weather-world shift our understanding of human entanglements in climate change phenomena?'²⁵¹ I have developed my own methodology for weather writing, which archives a microcosm of temporal and spatial weather activity at a specific location. This writing is a phenomenological language; a feedback response that has come to disclose the active relationally of all things at Block 119, which are entirely involved in differing cycles of communication with each other, of life and decay, movement and stillness.

Neimanis and Loewen-Walker suggest that: 'In order to bring climate change home, it may well be that we need to recharge these experiences of transcorporeality, and remind ourselves of the fallibility of any protection.'²⁵²

The crossovers of weather writing with Body Weather, as complimentary practices, are fluid. The perception of human and more-than-human co-existence, embodiment and reflection also accompany the methods of Dancing and Walking in this research.

²⁵¹ Neimains, "Weather Writing," 145.

²⁵² Neimains and Loewen Walker, "Weathering," 563.

Together they form the juxtapositions of inquiry into the research area that I have framed as ecological practice for performance.

January

The rhythm of my breath becomes apparent as I climb hills or breathe in a hot smoky haze or the damp air of morning. I smell changes in the bush, the change in season, the approaching rain.

At Block 119 the weather affects my ability to work, to concentrate. It is pervasive inside my flesh and bones, on my breath. I am eternally outside, inside. In summer the piercing brightness and hot winds slow me down during the middle of the day and I am relegated to the shade. I put off doing things. In winter cloud cover brings the country into sharper focus, the reds and greens jump out and I move quickly around in the open, collecting wood, stamping my way around to keep warm. The sound of the winter rain on the roof opens up a space of gratitude in my stomach.

March

Sometimes the space and silence around me makes me feel lonely, I look for the little wagtail birds that come out when it is quiet. Sometimes the bush scares me, the deep unknown goings on out there. There is an owl around here that screams like a crying baby, maybe it is a Barking Owl, and a possum that growls and grunts in a nearby tree at night. I am never really physically alone; it's more in my head.

Taking notice of seasonal patterns initiated by the weather accentuates awareness of physical embodied internal and external temporal movement through space. Writing about this differing velocity in relationship to the more-than-human reveals a shared

slowness in the heat, a flurry of action in a thunderstorm, and becomes an ecological performance practice. The practice uncovers and offers the ability to critique a human relationship to place, space and more-than-human worlds. Dancer Paula Kramer writes: ‘Trees, rocks, raindrops, cars, planes, birds and dancers are thus invited to distinctly be there, operating on the same ontological plane, known and unknown to each other.’²⁵³

The seasons bring with them differing responses, some which are repeated at similar times throughout the year, some arriving earlier or later.



Figure 36. *The Hillside*, author's image, video still, Block 119, 2016.

Weather writing is a practical and communicative tool involving listening, taking notice and paying attention. Weather writing opens up the potential for understanding a political and ethical connection to place and atmosphere. As Doreen Massey puts it, we all experience ‘a plurality of days of weather’ and the multiple trajectories of

²⁵³ Paula Kramer, "Bodies, Rivers, Rocks and Trees: Meeting Agentic Materiality in Contemporary Outdoor Dance Practices," *Performance Research* 17, no. 4 (2012): 84.

weather narratives across space, bodies and worlds.²⁵⁴ Deborah Bird-Rose elaborates on the importance of ‘paying attention’ to country, as she walks through the Victoria River District where Aboriginal teacher Jessie Wirrpa is a custodian. She says: ‘Communication is the evidence and much of the substance of relationships, so it follows that one of the deepest desires of all life is to be attended to, and one of the deepest practices of participation in living systems is to pay attention.’²⁵⁵

Weathered body writing has enhanced my ability to see outside myself at Block 119. Positioned on the edge of 143 acres I take up about as much room as a small tree. I am tiny here, on a planetary scale a grain of sand, a speck. The hugeness of the night sky puts my minuscule form into focus. I can see clearly how small people are capable of huge things, of massive damage to the land, and I am complicit. Embodied writing practice makes it possible to embrace a weather world undergoing unprecedented transformations. The planet has been permanently ecologically altered, but there is the potential to hear and experience one’s body as *weathering* alongside the more-than-human. Niemains and Loewen Walker state, ‘acknowledging the agency of nonhuman natures increases the sense of our shared presence and shared making of the weather-world.’²⁵⁶ Understanding my role in this means I am able to relate differently, politically and ethically, with empathy and understanding, and it evokes a co-constitution of vulnerability. Hence, ‘we can grasp the transcorporeality of weathering as a spatial overlap of human bodies and weathery nature.’²⁵⁷ In this I am also able to draw an alliance with Bird-Rose’s ‘process of becoming rather than

²⁵⁴ Doreen B. Massey, "Some Times of Space," in *Olafur Eliasson: The Weather Project*. Edited by Susan May (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 107-118.

²⁵⁵ Bird-Rose, "Taking Notice," 99.

²⁵⁶ Niemains and Loewen Walker, "Weathering," 564.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

being'²⁵⁸ and Alaimo's transcorporeality as 'an ontological orientation that expresses the imbrications of human and nonhuman natures.'²⁵⁹ These philosophical states of awareness are tools for acknowledging a larger world-view that pays attention to relationships of reciprocity and responsibility with country, Australia and the globe. We are not separate, but are in a communicative and emergent state of becoming.

The particular temporal rhythms of Block 119 set down through weather writing, and the constant exposure to the open weather world, makes me sharply aware of the fragility and resilience of both animals and multispecies habitat. I surrender to the confusing seasons, the lack of rain, the freezing cold and the threat of fire, 'to inhabit the open is not to be stranded on the outer surface of the earth but to be caught up in the transformations of the weather-world.'²⁶⁰ The weather changes transcorporeal bodies and both weather and body become different.

²⁵⁸ Bird-Rose, "Taking Notice," Abstract.

²⁵⁹ Neimains and Loewen Walker, "Weathering," 563.

²⁶⁰ Tim Ingold, "Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, no 1 (2007): 19.



Figure 37. *Sky*, author's image, Block 119, 2016.

July

Skin tingles with cold, which reddens the flesh; feet scale dry rocks and harden. Skin is the permeable surface of inside and out. My skin becomes both tougher and more sensitive; body temperature rises and falls, braces and slackens.

Communication, in this instance through weather writing, is the key to expressing a process of decentring the human from 'being' in control of the weather to 'becoming' co-emergent in weather making. The aim is to take notice of a shared meaning making and a shared weather worlding, a continual communication that requires a response and one that we are responsible for, because it is part of us. Bird-Rose rightly suggests that 'if the tree falls in the forest, then the forest hears it.'²⁶¹ The world makes its own sounds and actions, humans are not the only listeners, or participants in its ecology.

²⁶¹ Bird-Rose, "Taking Notice," 102.



Figure 38. *Office Bat*, author's image, Block 119, 2015.

August

Micro bats fly around in my bedroom, they somehow get lost in the wall and exit next to my bed. I used to find this distressing and would jump up, creating barriers with blankets to shoo the animal towards the door. The easier solution now, is to simply get up when I hear the delicate whoosh of flapping wings going in circles above my head and open the door. The bat will let itself out.

September

The ground drinks the water up and the garden swells overnight: I can hear new activity at the dam, frogs going wild and kangaroos are up before anyone licking and chewing at the succulent earth. Rain is our survival here, a concept quite new to me. Of course we need rain, everyone knows that; but when it doesn't come out of the tap unconditionally I find myself thinking about it daily.

To take notice of the body as an imbrication across weather patterns means I am both consciously internal and external, physically inside and outside. I pay attention to the weather making bodies and I try to take responsibility for my weather making actions. Massey reminds us in the realisation that: ‘ “Everything is connected to everything else” can be a salutary political reminder that whatever we do has wider implications than perhaps we commonly recognise.’²⁶² Weather writing and weather worlding provide a theoretical approach to finding a voice and hearing others, a medium of communication that swings into the future, that moves alongside the weather worlds multispecies inhabitants. I perform the weather world and it performs me.

²⁶² Massey, "Some Times of Space," 107-118.

Chapter 6 - Reflections

Weathering the Anthropocene

Art... has the capacity to transcend socio-geographical boundaries and unpack some of the complexity and uncertainty of climate change... Engaging with affect is fundamental in this process as it amplifies our awareness of what we are experiencing. Art that 'moves' us transmits feelings and thoughts into something that compels us into a response. For those involved in the communication of critical environmental issues (including artists), this can be a powerful means of engagement.²⁶³

Jen Rae

The weather can be defined in terms of directional atmospheric conditions that sustain and disrupt daily life. The weather is largely responsible for the lifecycle of plants and animals, affecting all living creatures. *To* weather is to be exposed, to season, to dry, to reveal, to pass, to endure and to resist. To weather is to become visible and most importantly to undergo change. Artistic practice is responsible for seeking and uttering what cannot be expressed in spoken language alone, but also through shape and form, perception and the senses, intensity and iteration. 'Deleuze and Guattari argue, for instance, that writers speak the unsayable; painters make visible forces that previously were not, much as composers make us hear sounds that were unheard of.'²⁶⁴ In this final chapter I seek to linguistically 'weather' an articulation of Body Weather, as a mode of artistic response to the Anthropocene that has, in turn, influenced all three modes of ecological practice presented here; Writing, Dancing and Walking.

²⁶³ Jen Rae, "Art & the Anthropocene: Processes of Responsiveness and Communication in an Era of Environmental Uncertainty," (RMIT University, 2015), 66.

²⁶⁴ Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject," 172.

As previously noted, some suggest that we reject the concept of the Anthropocene, citing it as another human justification of mastery over the planet. If the word 'Anthropocene' is causing more people to take notice and act, then let's move forward. Rather than rejecting the term, effort is required to find new voices, new ways of listening and inroads into action as our response. Facing up to the Anthropocene is crucial; humans have created a geophysical predicament through unchecked industrial progress, thus creating an ever widening distance between us and the 'outside' world. It is timely now to return to Elizabeth Grosz's concept of nature as a site of impetus and openness, malleability and rich cultural exchange.²⁶⁵ Humans have become separated from the invaluable knowledge they hold and from the world outside a personal domain. A single finger cannot be pointed at the *anthropos* that is responsible for the Anthropocene. Rather is it, as Timothy Morton suggests humans' constant need and desire that keeps the wheels of destruction turning.²⁶⁶

I claim it is this 'outside' that we may re encounter, reaffirming what is inherently part of us and conversely that we part of it. The modes of Walking, Dancing and Writing have been framed as art forms that I have shown to be based in multiple relationships with 'bodies outside', both human and more-than-human.²⁶⁷ As Morton affirms, 'a human consists of nonhuman components and is directly related to nonhumans. Yet a human is not a fish.'²⁶⁸ We can no longer ignore the consequences of our humanness. I contend that practicing a sense of becoming, through ecological

²⁶⁵ Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, 97.

²⁶⁶ Morton, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying," 4.

²⁶⁷ Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, 2.

²⁶⁸ Morton, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying," 5.

practice for performance, releases a voice that speaks through the transcorporeal body. Rosi Braidotti writes:

By transposing us beyond the confines of bound identities, art becomes necessarily inhuman in the sense of non-human in that it connects to the animal, the vegetable, earthly and planetary forces that surround us...it carries us to the limits of what our embodied selves can do or endure.²⁶⁹

The Anthropocene is our issue and we must grasp its scale, taking responsibility through creative responses. Art is the communicative medium that produces images and energy for translation to a wider audience. Body Weather practice, creates a new form of visual and visceral knowledge through the performer, by making the external world (the outside) visible inside the body through movement, which is arguably imparted to an audience. As an embodied technique, Body Weather could be said to fall under the rubric of 'environmental dance', and as Nigel Stewart states environmental dance is both 'axiological and ontological.'²⁷⁰ This exegesis, through a range of Body Weather processes adapted and applied through modalities of Walking, Dancing and Writing, has sought to communicate site-specific impacts of global warming, through 'modes of relation'²⁷¹ with materialities outside of the body; thus expressing issues pertaining to the present Anthropocene.

I have offered live and documented, solo and participatory examples of ecological practice for performance that utilises the Body Weather process. I have aimed to contextualise the thinking around each work as an 'experimental site, a laboratory...of experiments in becoming.'²⁷² A Body Weather philosophy across the

²⁶⁹ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 107.

²⁷⁰ Nigel Stewart, "Dancing the Face of Place: Environmental Dance and Eco-Phenomenology," *Performance Research* 15, no. 4 (2010): 33.

²⁷¹ Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 194.

²⁷² Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject," 175.

embodied modes of Walking, Dancing and Writing has become a physical performance language, in dialogue with the Anthropocene.

Bodies

In searching for ways for the artistic body to connect and respond to unprecedented planetary change, I put forward the concept that the dance training method of Body Weather is both an art form, a devising tool for environmental action in the performing arts, and as a way of knowing and being in the world. Body Weather is a principally relational movement training technique, through which to experience and express issues of place and climate in performance making. It also 'provides a pointer to a way of living', realised through processes of 'training, performing and daily work.'²⁷³ In other words a Body Weather approach to creating artworks takes on the worlds surrounding the body; bodies that are therefore sensitised to weather, differing terrains and climate. This sensitivity has the capacity to affect one's relationship with the everyday worlds we move through.

A foregrounding principle of Body Weather is the decentring of the 'I' and a displacement and disruption of the self. Impetus to move does not come from the centre of the dancer's body nor does it imitate particular dance forms or more-than-human entities, for example trees. 'Centres' move around the body. The middle core or torso of the body is not the structure that supports or instigates movement. In improvisation, movement travels from outside to within the body. The centre of the body can be in the leg, the neck or the little toe, even many places at once. Centres are

²⁷³ Snow, "Imaging the in-Between," 68.

constantly shifting and changing like the weather.²⁷⁴ Body Weather works to decentre the internal body and to subsume the external weather into the body.

The research has disclosed the decentring of the self and placed it in relation to the world as a performance making technique; encountering the ‘outside’ through experiments in becoming and meeting the more-than-human through the modes of Walking, Dancing and Writing. The work connects with performance philosophy, in the larger global project of decentring mankind as the master over all things, as called for by environmental philosopher Val Plumwood. Traditional European ideas about humanity and human nature have changed. We now know humanity has the power to act as a geophysical force on the planet. The challenge of the age has been, and continues to be, how to artistically interpret this knowledge to create hopeful openings and to enact responsibility. Plumwood writes:

Human-centred culture damages our ability to see ourselves as part of ecosystems and understand how nature supports our lives. So the resulting delusions of being *ecologically invulnerable*, beyond animality and ‘outside nature’ lead to the failure to understand our ecological identities and dependencies on nature.²⁷⁵

Body Weather philosophy also works towards Rosi Braidotti’s suggested ‘strategy of de-familiarization,’ that decentres the role of the human subject at the top of the hierarchy of importance. This dis-identification repositions ‘familiar and normative values...involving the loss of familiar habits of thought and representation in order to pave the way for creative alternatives.’²⁷⁶ It is my contention, as gleaned through the experience of training and performing with a Body Weather practice, that the multisensory, multidirectional and omnicultural positioning and decentring of the body

²⁷⁴ Marshall, "Dancing the Elemental Body," 61.

²⁷⁵ Plumwood, "Nature in the Active Voice," 117.

²⁷⁶ Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 88-89.

is an effective method of ecological practice for performance making, one that addresses the Anthropocene.

Multiple Bodies

Body Weather practitioners negotiate daily the borders between bodies and weather...how weather infiltrates bodies and how bodies incorporate weather. They also explore the borders between bodies and other bodies...how bodies can merge to become a kind of 'group body' is a central and persistent question.²⁷⁷

Peter Snow

I have experienced the 'group body', that Snow discusses above, in the Groundwork/Laboratory phase of workshop situations, where one becomes so immersed in a task and proximity to the other bodies, that one can hardly recognise or feel one's own body parts. It is an emotional, yet unattached state, a working together that feels and is felt through human weight, density and trust. Through the intensity of the embodied training practice of the 'group body' in live performance, the spatiotemporal slippage of performativity allows this multiple body to spill over into a differing relationality with people and place.

As cited in the performance process of *Instability*, 'checking in' with the internal weather of the body can move across practices and encourages the practitioner to reflect on internal changes, shifts in energy or breath, pulse and blood flow.²⁷⁸

Listening to and feeling one's inner weather invites comprehension of planetary

²⁷⁷ Snow, "Imaging the in-Between," 66.

²⁷⁸ McAuley, "Bodyweather in the Central Desert". 3. Fraser, "Now and Again : Strategies for Truthful Performance," 18.

weather (in all its manifestations) in and beyond the body. It involves questioning what sensations occur between inside and outside the thin membrane of the skin through the practice. Body Weather utilises spatial, atmospheric and geographical stimuli to create movement, and therefore opens up the space between inside and outside the body, where the two have the potential to meet somewhere in between. A greater awareness of the 'outside' becomes apparent, as ostensibly an experience of becoming that can promote change.

Body Weather practice holds the potential to affirm more positive relations in the Anthropocene, through becoming. Braidotti explains that 'becoming has to do with emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the 'outside'.'²⁷⁹ Body Weather is a practice of embodied perception, of being highly aware and responsive, of sensing and being sensed. In live performance the same processes of openness, external to the body, create myriad responses of reflection and projection through movement. Snow illustrates the point:

Performers are imagining and enacting at the same moment continually. It is a flicflac between the two...Imaging in this sense is an imagining and enacting of multitudes of intensities. And embodiment is precisely the process of imaging intensities of experience.²⁸⁰

There has been limited published research supporting the claim that meeting the 'outside', through a Body Weather practice, may express responses to the Anthropocene. It is possible that Australian practitioners such as Tess de Quincey, Gretel Taylor and Victoria Hunt would encourage creative development around Body Weather practice, being an effective and affective embodied conversation directed toward environmental issues of the present age. Body Weather's effects lie at the

²⁷⁹ Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject," 171.

²⁸⁰ Snow, "Performing All over the Place," 243.

intersection of energy exchange between audience and performer.²⁸¹ Body Weather, as previously discussed, becomes a transferable embodied knowledge that functions as a movement exchange between bodies, across multiple disciplines and sites. It speaks to our shared moment, which is situated within the time and place of the Anthropocene.



Figure 39. *Sensing*, Photo by Senghong Ng, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

Moving Through

I would like to return to the notion that ‘Body Weather provides a pointer to a way of living.’²⁸² I have realised this larger statement to have implications across the three modes of performance making in this research project, through interpreting the training technique of Body Weather and applying it to ecological practice in the performing arts. I have revealed it as a considerate, empathic and enacted dimension of performance making that can potentially be realised through an embodied

²⁸¹ Kershaw, "Projecting Climate Scenarios, Landscaping Nature, and Knowing Performance: On Becoming Performed by Ecology.," 8.

²⁸² Snow, "Imaging the in-Between," 68.

encountering, outside of the self. This type of becoming is a technique in openness that embraces agentic materialities like the weather as a way of seeing and hearing more deeply. I liken the practice to what Plumwood calls for, in relation to finding a reciprocal movement language embedded in the more-than-human world. 'It's a matter of being *open to experiences of nature as powerful, agentic and creative, making space in our culture for an animating sensibility and vocabulary*'²⁸³ (italics in the original).

The physical conversation leading into awareness of complex multiplicities of the more-than-human happens when body and place move together. To combine Min Tanaka and Peter Snow's performative terms, transformation of relations occurs when body and place 'roll around' in a constant 'flicflac' with the outside. This discourse grapples in often contradictory and paradoxical ways with the human relationship to place, in a more dynamic state of light, dark and many shades of the in-between. Moving from becoming, through ecological practice for performance, to the greater overall implications of the project, I suggest the extended concept of becoming-with,²⁸⁴ as a final statement in the realisation of being performed by ecology.

²⁸³ Plumwood, "Nature in the Active Voice," 126.

²⁸⁴ Haraway, "When Species Meet," 257. Kate Wright, "Becoming-With," *Living Lexicon for the Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014).



Figure 40. *Hold On*, Photo by Denniz Lim, Melaka, Malaysia, 2016.

Vision

The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another.²⁸⁵

Donna Haraway

It has been my intention to develop the propositions of the exegesis through an examination of the performance processes herein. The underlying theory has informed the philosophical approach to devising performance that responds to and embodies the ecological turbulence of the Anthropocene. To claim accountability for human need and desire is a positive objective, although the key is to also acknowledge being responsible for its ramifications. Responsibility, sought through the ecological

²⁸⁵ Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 586.

practice modes presented here, promotes sensitivity to the world outside the body. It also comes with enlivened processes of listening, openness and trust in human capability for action. The establishment of a body-based practice may be Anthropocentric and we cannot pretend to be other than that. Certainly this research demonstrates that we are able to feel and respond to the more-than-human world in a way that can cause change in a destructively unbalanced relationship.

During the experience of devising and performing these very different performance works alone and for an audience, I have applied different aspects of theory to each work. However there is a common thread across them all, in that each has a similar reach of human and more-than-human place relations. The performances crisscross and traverse each other in approach and sensibility, producing multilayered and unfixed outcomes.

We are performed by the ecology that surrounds us in multiplicity, as individuals, part of small groups and enfolded in the larger grouping known as humanity. As individuals and group members we have to adapt to changes. However, I want to state clearly that to adapt well does not mean to absolve the lifestyle choices that have resulted in the Anthropocene. The works offered here are experiments in openness, in perception and in trust, of our role as humans who belong and need to belong. To respond to the world with openness is to be responsible. I seek to enhance the capability of myself to act responsibly with caution and care. Partially through a willingness to participate with the more-than-human world, and partially knowing that I always already am, enables me hopefully to have some effect and perhaps affect, on my audience.

Through this exegesis I have claimed that ecological performance, as a communicative mode, is a vital artistic medium that enables a reflection on spatiotemporal action beyond the body, thus bringing it in to the body via the varied processes of embodiment. These performance works encapsulate processes of becoming-with, porously contained within the parameters of Walking, Dancing and Writing. Kate Wright notes, 'Becoming-with offers a metaphysics grounded in connection, challenging delusions of separation - the erroneous belief that it is somehow possible to exempt ourselves from Earth's ecological community.'²⁸⁶ We are performed by ecology in a perpetual multidimensional motion of becoming, a becoming-with place, that fails, one that trips and falls, looks simultaneously forward and backwards, one that acknowledges the privilege of perspective.

A New Home

It has only been a matter of days since we have left the shack and moved into the big new house. We spent three and a half years (half of my son's life so far) sharing a bedroom and being open to the elements of wind and cold whistling in between the tin and around the windows of our old place. Now that we have left, the rats are quickly reclaiming their space. When I go back over to clean or collect some things I realise how seeped in *us* the place is: the pictures and messages pinned to the walls, our smells lingering around in the objects. I can feel the energy of our lives hanging mid air, as if waiting for us to return. I also feel sad that a big part of our lives is over. The simple roof and walls that constituted home provided shelter, the shack's porous walls taught me how to love being outside, and I grew a thick skin for all seasons. Now the

²⁸⁶ Wright, "Becoming-With," 278.

place seems lonely and I feel like I have betrayed a friend when I visit briefly and then leave.

Breaking habits of reliance and being open to the resilience of change are significant outcomes that have made this work possible. The 'solar passive' design of the new home heats and cools by the nature of its materials. A north facing aspect utilises well thought out simplicity as its most dominant feature. The years spent in the tin and wood shack, during this project, provided a time for undoing habits of reliance on larger systems, like the power grid and water mains. This was at times an uncomfortable process, but proved invaluable in weathering a thicker skin in opposition to a society that devalues humans capacity to embrace their more-than-human tendencies, like lighting a fire, going to bed when the sun goes down and washing sparingly.

Now that I have joined with the mainstream of the Australian population (in the sense of living in a fully functional, council approved house) I am able to see clearly the transience of bad habits and what we take for granted. We are in the 'new' house with a flushing toilet, a solar battery bank and fire rated double glazed windows. The outside is firmly in its place, 'outside'. Therefore ecological practice in the forms of Dancing, Writing and Walking, defined through this research, are justified as imperative skills that keep the 'place in play.' The Anthropocene, contested and redefined, rejected and replaced, is what we have created and we must get amongst it, in meaningful ways, more than ever. This involves hearing and being together, working with all aspects of each other, our more-than-human selves, human-others, other-humans, in speed and silence, movement and stillness, separation and touch.

This research project is an argument for embodied practice, in acknowledgement of our valuable belonging to this Earth. Wright argues for integrity of a multispecies body, ‘While the body has integrity, skin breathes, and the borders between self and world are shifting and permeable. The body is also a world for others.’²⁸⁷ Ecological practice for performance, explored through Body Weather techniques in the processes and iterations stated, provides opportunities for becoming-with. It is a potential understanding of how we reciprocally perform multiple bodies that we know and bodies that we don’t know, across multiple sites, through time and space.



Figure 41. *Clouds*, author’s image, video still, Block 119, 2016.

²⁸⁷ Wright, "An Ethics of Entanglement for the Anthropocene."

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Appendix -The Roar on the Other Side of Silence

Performance and exhibition invitation.



The Roar on the Other Side of Silence

Exhibition 5pm
Guildford Hall

Performance 7pm
119 Warren Lane
Guildford

17th November

A PhD
performance outcome
by Georgia Snowball

Federation 



Directions to exhibition:
From Castlemaine travel along the Midland Hwy towards Daylesford for 12km's. The Guildford Hall is opposite the Guildford Family Hotel on the left.

Directions to performance:
Continue on Midland Hwy towards Daylesford for 4km's. Turn left into Warren Lane and continue along the dirt road for a further 1km. A guide will be there to meet you.

Please dress for the outdoors.

Enquiries: 0402 671 032

