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PERFORMING CLIMATES

Eddie Paterson and Lara Stevens

With a Contribution from Angie Abdilla



'Performing Climates speaks brilliantly to the new zeitgeist of artistic and cultural thinking that is showing ways of living with climate change empathetically and with attention to multiple cultural knowledge systems and artistic sensibilities. Paterson and Stevens show how to live with sensitive attention to the everyday, situated inextricably between thinking, creativity and activism.'

Peter Eckersall, *City University of New York*



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Performing Climates

Performing Climates features 14 interconnected chapters exploring theatre and performance's relationship with more-than-human elements at a time of climate emergency. The book argues that Western performance – how we conceive of it, as well as how we train and educate people in and about it – needs to reorient its ways of making and thinking about itself to reconsider patterns of breakdown, decay and renewal happening on and off stage in a literal play of cells and particles. *Performing Climates* examines live performance as a *uniquely compostable artform*, formed by sonic vibrations and movements of air and matter, more-than-human elements, composition and decomposition. This book will appeal to undergraduate audiences, postgraduate scholars and performance studies colleagues, offering exciting possibilities for reconsidering theatre and performing in an age of crisis.

Eddie Paterson is Associate Professor in Creative Writing at the University of Melbourne.

Lara Stevens is Lecturer in English at Charles Sturt University, Australia.

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Author Biographies

Angie Abdilla, palawa, is Professor of Cybernetics at the Australian National University, Founder, Director of Old Ways, New and co-founder of the Indigenous Protocols and Artificial Intelligence working group (IP//AI).

Eddie Paterson is Associate Professor in Creative Writing at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of *The Contemporary American Monologue* and co-author of *Once Upon a Pixel: Storytelling and Worldbuilding in Videogames*, with Tim Williams and Will Cordner.

Lara Stevens is Lecturer in English at Charles Sturt University, Australia. She is the author of *Anti-war Theatre After Brecht* and co-editor of *Feminist Ecologies: Changing Environments in the Anthropocene*, with Peta Tait and Denise Varney.

Authors' Note

This book was written on the unceded lands of the Dhudhuroa, Waywurru, Gadigal and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and pay respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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1 Performing Climates

We are compost, not posthuman; we inhabit the humusities, not the humanities ... Beings—human and not—become with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling, in earthly worlding and unworlding.

(Haraway in Tsing et al. 2017: M45)

Living with Mess

Performance is and has always been a mess, a bloody mess as we say in Australia (and in Forced Entertainment). And that's what draws us to it. Performance is a mess of matter, climates, things, actors and affects: neither a dramatic nor postdramatic theatre but a network of dramaturgical elements; a site of birth and death, decay and renewal. Performance is a place of *composting* and mulching (and Eddie loves mulching). This book of 14 interconnected chapters, each oriented around a more-than-human element or being (ice, ants, ears, mermaids, etc.), will resituate Western theatre in relation to the biological, cellular and bacterial conditions which govern our planetary existence.

We think that Western performance – how we conceive of it as well as how we train and educate people in and about it – needs to reorient its ways of making and thinking about itself to reconsider patterns of breakdown, decay and renewal happening on- and off-stage in a literal play of cells and particles. These chapters are our way of tracing the impact of climates on our work and life in the theatre, in the garden, in our family and in the world. *Performing Climates* is a book about messy relations: relations between people of different places, histories and backgrounds; relations between human and more-than-human entities; relations between built environments and natural ones; and relations between the past, the present climate emergency and the future of the planet.

Performance is always rooted in a place with its own microclimate connected to broader systems and spheres of relation. But what does it mean to make, watch and think about performance in a climate emergency? We

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asked each other this question as we stood in a rehearsal room that was filling with bushfire smoke. Do we have the time or capacity at this moment to stand around in air-conditioned black boxes staring in wonder at the dancing dust particles in the air? Should we have racked up all those carbon miles to fly to Japan to watch a performance of robots when the country was still reeling from the fallout of the Fukushima nuclear disaster? Are we crying Lear as the world burns? As we relocated from the Australian city of Naarm (Melbourne) to the countryside, how was the changing environment altering our perception of the natural world we were (re)discovering? How did the growing pile of toys and other objects that seem to accompany having children further deepen our position as privileged settlers living on stolen Indigenous land? How might performance reengage with the messiness of the world off-stage?

Live performance is a form of art that explicitly engages with the climates around it, but these climates are not always well understood or even visible. While theatre has always been composed of human and more-than-human entanglements, *Performing Climates* explores interactions in performance from the micro (elemental particles) to the macro (climate change). In these rapidly changing environmental and social conditions, we need to reinterrogate the role of theatre and performance in the fabric of our global cultures. This book argues that live performance, being composed of living and dead skin cells, sonic vibrations and movements of air and matter, composition and decomposition, is a *uniquely compostable art form*. Considering performing climates in an age of crisis requires us to reenvise performance in and of decay, in and of atmospheres, and in and outside of human scale and human perception (Figure 1.1).

This book makes no apology for being a sprawling, messy book. ‘What is mess’ writes Isabelle Stengers, but ‘the irreducible and always embedded interplay of processes, practices, experience and ways of knowing and valuing that makes up our common world’ (2018: 120). We lead sprawling, messy lives. (‘We have children!’, cry the parents. ‘We are still children!’, cry the parents to their parents. Aren’t families always the messiest of relations?) *Performing Climates* mixes autobiographical stories, and the places they play out, merging them into analysis of artworks that view the natural and the synthetic as performing subjects alongside a series of images. We thank our families, particularly our two children, as well as colleagues, students and friends near and far for being part of this process. We also attempt to situate ourselves and our biases in the places we saw particular performances or events.

In this book, we try to live by our methodology. In so doing, we draw on and owe a debt to the anti-colonial methodologies of scholars such as Max Liboiron (2021), Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000), the Gay’wu Group of Women (2019), Mary Graham (1999), Irene Watson (2014), Dwayne Donald (2010) and Kim TallBear (2014), all of whom remind us that our research does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in relations to the places



Figure 1.1 Bloody Mess Empty Stage, Forced Entertainment © 2020.

Photo: Hugo Glendenning.

we live and their histories, human and more-than-human, elemental and geological. We are indebted to First Nations colleagues Angie Abdilla – who is co-author of [Chapter 14, Tree](#) – Tony Birch, Brian Martin, Latai Tau-moepeau and Alexis Wright for so generously sharing their time, thoughts and expertise during the writing of this book. We also acknowledge the deep influences of Freya [Mathews \(1991\)](#), Val [Plumwood \(1993\)](#), Deborah Bird [Rose \(1992\)](#) and Ariel [Salleh \(1997\)](#). This book would not be the same without the Plumwood Committee, particularly Africa Taylor and Plumwood Mountain itself, for the embodied lessons they have so generously offered up. We are grateful for our relationships with artists Lucy Bleach, Hanna Cormick, ¹ Maria Fernanda Cardoso, Karen Finley, Gregory Lorenzutti, Norie Neumark, Kris Verdonck and Robert Walton who have given up their time and energy to entrust us with their stories and with our serious and playful explorations of their work.

Canadian Métis scholar Max Liboiron teaches us that respectful and reciprocal relations in all modes of life, including in scholarship, begin with a recognition of the smallest particularities of the places from which we work. These places inform and infuse who we are and what we do, not necessarily in a spiritual sense, though it might be that too, but materially. Liboiron writes: ‘methodology is a way of being in the world and ways of being are tied up in obligation’ ([2021: 1](#)). Our obligation is to our teachers who show us the

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blind spots in our own thinking and ask us to tread carefully as we reconsider relations with human, more-than-human, living and nonliving elements and our place in the world.

As a consequence, we are not interested in performing what Donna Haraway calls the ‘god trick’ to assert our scholarly authority and hide our emotional, spiritual and material connection to our subject matter (1988: 581). Instead, we recognise our particular relations to performance and people. We try to acknowledge all we have learned, and continue to learn, from our parents and family, our friends and local community and Indigenous, non-Western and feminist philosophies that teach us that place-based relationality is what fosters responsibility to protect and nurture Country. Methodology matters, even and especially if it is not flawless, symmetrical or easy for us or for you, dear readers.

Ours, Not Ours

We live on unceded Indigenous land. We live on the ancestral lands of the Dhudhuroa and Wayurru peoples. We live in the north-east of a southern state in Australia, in a place called Wooragee. Wooragee is said to be derived from the Dhudhuroa term for ‘peppermint tree’ or Wurritba (Blake and Reid 2002). Most likely Wooragee refers to the *Eucalyptus dives*, commonly known as the Broad-leaved Peppermint or Blue Peppermint Gum, a peppermint-scented species endemic to the stony soils of higher places in South Eastern Australia. Directly outside of our kitchen window grows a peppermint tree. However, this tree is not a peppermint gum, but a peppermint willow, *Agonis flexuosa*. The *Agonis* is a species native to a place that is around 3000 kilometres away in Western Australia. To arrive here, it has not travelled on the wind. Yet, the appearance of this tree doesn’t seem to be a random coincidence. We can only imagine that it has been grown from seed, tended and raised, transplanted and transported across the country. Perhaps it was purchased at a plant nursery nearby, and because its common English name is the peppermint tree, perhaps it was even planted here in a well-meaning but misguided gesture of recognition of the Dhudhuroa people, their language and connection to this place. Like us, the misplaced Wooragee *Agonis* lives on land that is not its own.

Let us set the scene in a different way. We are a couple with two young children. We are two middle-aged scholars, theatre nerds, one obsessive gardener, both animal lovers, settler Australians, ecofeminist philosophers and activists. We have relocated our lives to an alpine region where Traditional Owners have sustained what Australian Indigenous communities refer to as ‘Country’ for over 65,000 years. Indigenous knowledge teaches us that Country and the reciprocal relations between First Peoples and their places are bound to what settlers might see as cultural and artistic practices, but which are so deeply integrated that they are inextricable for Indigenous

cultures. As Ann McGrath and Laura Rademaker write, in the introduction to *Everywhen: Australia and the Language of Deep History*:

The land is the theater of storytelling and itself the storyteller – it provides proof, containing relics of the deep past, and it activates a living history. Words spoken or sung and dances reenacted in that landscape really matter, for there is an iterative relationship among the place, the present generations, and ancestral being. Country enhances the Indigenous sense of continuity. The land remains a creative, animating force, generating people, animals and geographies.

(2023: 15–16)

As settler Australians, we are awkwardly positioned to write about that which is both ours and not ours. Walking with and talking to Traditional Owners leads us to acknowledge that we are bound up with, nourished and indebted to Dhudhuroa Wayurru Country and its custodians, and that we are now part of the custodianship of this place, with deep and lasting responsibility and obligations (Birch 2019b).

What ancient knowledge is available to take and use for our analysis of performance is always fraught territory, and we take guidance where it is offered, act in good faith and know that at times it will be unavoidably messy. We recognise that we walk a fine line and so defer to the instructions that come with the shared knowledge in each particular instance. We are reminded that colonisation is a process of erasing language, culture and species. We arrive with the attitude that to attempt to recuperate and engage earnestly, playfully and deeply with Indigenous knowledge and to make mistakes, acknowledge and learn from Traditional Owners is better than continuing the colonial project of ignoring or eliding such knowledge because we fear being extractive or disrespectful.

In her recent novel *Praiseworthy*, Indigenous Australian author and Waanyi woman Alexis Wright writes playfully of the vital importance of listening to Indigenous people, ‘the world’s greatest human survivors’:

Extinction-less tempest people from enduring one million storms, come from the ark of infinity right down to the last baby. They were now forced to speak, and yelled that they knew a thing or two about being trodden upon, and of being more on trend than the rest of humanity about how to look after the future.

(2023: 2)

In taking up the knowledge offered by First Nations people, we acknowledge our complicity and responsibility in protecting and fairly representing that knowledge to the best of our ability (Neale 2022: 1).

Performing Climates mixes the autobiographical and analytical alongside a series of images and lyrical imaginings. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, author of *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, uses similar mixed modes as

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a means of capturing the ‘lively activities of all beings, human and not human’ that have historically been left to fabulists and non-Western storytellers (2015: v). We ask questions, tell stories and offer moments of poetic illustration and nontextual material in the hope of reckoning with being in the world with animals, rivers, rocks, plants, atmospheres, memory and spirits. Wright describes the inspection of the golden beetle (*Anoplognathus aureus*) as it moves across Country:

It seems to be imagining the world through the fine old music of the trees sing-talking back and forth while relaying all the storylines, the sounds of infinity reaching through a multitude of tracks over vast distances. It crawls through the leaf litter on the ground, along twigs, turns over soil, moves pebbles around while searching for the tiny devil mob. It finds all of those spirits with antennae that do not stop moving.

(2023: 14)

Remember the image of the misplaced peppermint tree. This image reminds us that when we sat down to write this book, we were new and returned inhabitants to the ancestral homelands of the Dhudhuroa people. Dhudhuroa Country was stolen by colonial forces in the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, its invading inhabitants became very wealthy from gold prospecting, a pattern of theft and destructive practices of extraction and agricultural mismanagement that has defined Australian colonialism and continues to this day.

Liboiron writes that settler scholarly practices can be extractive too, reading Indigenous knowledge with a quarrying mindset, mining it for what can be ‘used’ for settler-colonial purposes and self-advancement (2021: 35–37). As settlers on these lands working with Indigenous philosophy, we are accountable for building reconciliation and acknowledging the lineage of First Nations thought, as a mode of rectifying exploitative practices and regenerating place and people. Our friend and colleague, the Indigenous Australian author, scholar and activist Tony Birch confirms that ‘through an intellectual, cultural and, for some, a spiritual attachment to place and country’, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can promote collective responsibility for future ecological care (2016: 381).²

In this way, our work and life exist in what Liboiron calls a ‘place-based relationality’ (2021) after the work of Mary Graham (2009), Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015), Shawn Wilson (2008), Alex Wilson (2008) and Dwayne Donald (2012). The *Agonis* appears several times in this book. Each time it offers a new intermingling image: a tree breathing in a biodome, the symbiotic relation between fungi, bacteria and root, and a shimmering example of photosynthesis (Rose 2017), but the peppermint tree always brings us back to a place that is ours and not ours.

In exploring the meaning and shapes of performing climates, we seek solidarity with the more-than-human, memories of the past and hopes for

the future. Eddie grew up here. He is returning to an idea of ‘home’ after 22 years away. This place, Wooragee, is deeply knitted into his being and his dreams. It is a place of human and more-than-human ghosts. Eddie passed his childhood playing in this dry and spectacular bush, swimming in its creeks and planting trees along their banks – learning from Elders like the late-Bangerang (Pangerang) artist and educator, Eddie ‘Kookaburra’ Kneebone who was generous with his knowledge of Country. While Eddie holds no rightful claim over these lands, they hold a rightful claim over him.

Lara is also marked by the past and present. As the child of Sri Lankan and British immigrants, Lara’s connections to place extend from a suburb of Melbourne on the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra) river and the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung peoples to post World War II South London, and the mercantile networks of the Sri Lankan Burghers, descended from the fifteenth- to eighteenth-century Portuguese and Dutch setters of what Europeans then called Ceylon. As a child of migrants, she continues in that recent familial tradition of moving and setting down roots in places where the newcomer might be considered an outsider but who arrives with fresh eyes, open to new learning, with senses not yet blunted by habit or preconceived ideas.

Compost as Performance

The basis of this book’s conceptual framework is grounded in compost (pun intended and achieved) as a cycle of decomposition that generates something vital, rich and useful. We are interested in analysing performance not as an insulated, exclusive art form predicated on human centrality but as a process that celebrates the transformative properties of waste – bacteria, debris and breakdown – composting and mulching within a larger network of bacteria, fungi and microbes embedded in the skin, air, soil and interacting with cellular networks and atmospheric conditions ([Figure 1.2](#)).

First Nations’ knowledge and cosmologies pre-empt the Western philosophical notion of human and more-than-human co-becoming by many thousands of years. For many Indigenous artists, performance-makers and philosophers, the ideas animating this book will be old news! Concepts of relationality, the practice of making performances that centre around something other than the human, and learnings drawn from deep knowledge of a particular place and climate, is both ancient wisdom and everyday knowledge for many Aboriginal people.³ In his essay ‘Walking and Being’, Tony Birch conveys the foundational ‘connection between humans and earth’ through a Kulin creation story. In the story, the first men and women are sculpted from the clay and waters of riverbanks and creeks – humans are literally and spiritually composed of Country ([2019a](#)).

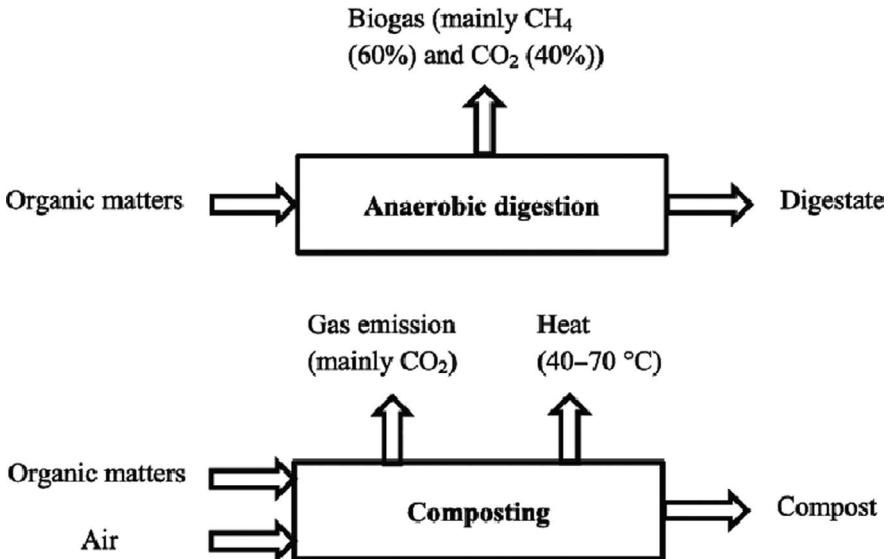


Figure 1.2 Composting.

Indeed, it is through ancient practices of listening to and caring for Country that Australian Indigenous cultures have retained the idea of an animate and lively world of interconnected systems. The Gay'wu Women write:

People might think that the land doesn't speak, nor the rivers, the animals or the winds, but they do. We feel the land, the sea, and the rivers, and they tell us many things.

(2019: xxviii)

Within knowledge systems where the lands, winds and oceans speak, the notion of performing climates requires no imaginative leap. The things that are told through the land are layered through family histories, kinships, spiritual relations, defining places that hold particular meanings or where particular practices were or should be carried out, many of which are not accessible to settlers.

In this book, we draw upon the Australian Aboriginal term Country to keep us grounded in the place we live, even when our performance examples are global.⁴ As Waanyi author Wright reminds us, ‘*We studied everything you needed to know about surviving from the biggest library in the world – country*’ (2023: 2, italics in original). We also draw on recent Western philosophical accounts of the integrated ecologies of human and more-than-human life, including concepts such as ‘vibrant matter’ (Bennett 2010), ‘intra-active’ relations (Barad 2007), ‘transcorporeality’ (Alaimo 2014), the ‘planthropocene’ (Myers 2017) and ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway 1988). Such accounts demonstrate that art and performance has the potential to

sustain Jane Bennett's 'thing-power' (2010) and to visualise networks such as what Bruno Latour calls a 'parliament of things' in which groupings of nonhumans, quasi-objects and hybrids are granted visibility and rights (1993: 145).

While we are building our three-bay composting structures, we recall Jennifer Hamilton and Astrida Neimanis arguing that composting is not only a material labour for enhancing the nutrients in the soil but also a scholarly practice. Their work attempts a reclamation of the under/unvalued or ignored foundations to environmental philosophy in feminist scholarship or the writings of other marginalised groups such as Women of Colour or Indigenous Women (2018). Following their example, we draw on and acknowledge, through citation, the undervalued work done in this field, particularly the influence of First Nations and feminist thought on theoretical and artistic modes of performing climates.

Our concept of performing climates is far less complex and culturally significant than Indigenous Australian experiences of Country. Nevertheless, it tries to think, feel and listen to the networked relations and flows between atmospheres, technologies and complex biological systems and views these entanglements 'as' performance. *Performing Climates* aims to unsettle the deeply anthropocentric history of theatre and performance, its obsession with human drama or autobiography, its able-bodied rules and aspirations, its backgrounding of the natural world and its blindness to more-than-human agency. We interrogate what the discipline loses by ignoring the more-than-human and the nonliving. This interrogation builds on the foundational thought of many scholars working in the West who have laboured to unsettle the deeply anthropocentric history of theatre and performance, its obsession with human drama or autobiography, particularly Una Chaudhuri, Wendy Arons and Theresa J. May, Carl Lavery, Bonnie Marranca, Baz Kershaw, Astrida Neimanis, Jennifer Hamilton, Peta Tait, Denise Varney, Lisa Woyinarski, Martin Welton, Tanja Beer, Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr.

This book arises in part from Eddie's work organising *Performance Climates*, the 2016 Performance Studies international conference that took place in Naarm (Melbourne). This conference featured the landmark performance *Cut the Sky* by acclaimed Indigenous Australian dance company Marrugeku, keynotes from Richard Frankland, Rebecca Schneider, Peta Tait and Bruno Latour, and resulted in several themed journal editions (Paterson and Brown 2018; Fensham et al. 2018).⁵ Our work expands upon this groundswell of voices critiquing Western theatre and performance makings' responses to the climate emergency.

We are working against a model of Western theatre making that might be imagined as 'biospherical'. Recalling the *Spheres* Trilogy from Peter Sloterdijk (2011, 2014, 2016), biospherical theatre sees actions taking place in artificially constructed atmospheres for artistic innovation – proto-laboratories and human greenhouses – in which able-bodied actors are trained and perform within air-conditioned black boxes. Or, more tellingly, white people in

white cubes. Biospherical theatre is an enclosed Western form. It is labour intensive, carbon intensive, hierarchical, exclusive, inaccessible and extractive rather than generative of new knowledges and different ways of being with the world. It privileges the human over the more-than-human in all aspects: from theatrical architecture to traditional conservatoire theatre training, to themes, narrative trajectories, design, dramaturgy and direction, casting, consumption, rehearsal and performance style.

In this book, we further dismantle theatre and performance's historical tendency to background the natural world. We develop a model for a more expansive and inclusive theatre ecology. Key to this model are enhanced ideas of theatrical dramaturgy, including Peter Eckersall and Eddie's conception of 'slow dramaturgy' as a means of reconceiving the material conditions of the everyday world in performance such as duration, slowness, place, ambience and bodies both human and nonhuman (Eckersall and Paterson 2011; Eckersall et al. 2017; Eckersall 2024) and Lara's theorisation of 'deep dramaturgy' as an ecological form of dramaturgical practice (Stevens 2019a). Additionally, this book is informed by Angie Abdilla's work developing Country Centred Design; a methodology that centres Indigenous knowledge systems in the development of cultural protocols for the design of new technologies, artificial intelligence and immersive experiences (Abdilla et al. 2021). In *Performing Climates*, these material, ecological and technological modes are also inflected by multiscalar biological and cellular processes of growth, flow and disintegration that exist within a 'planetary performance studies' (Cervera 2017) in which each performance is a cycle with particles and debris (Bleeker and van der Tuin 2014).

Drawing on case studies that might not be necessarily recognisable to Westerners as 'theatre' or 'art', we are interested in performance as a mess of matter, atmospheres, objects, actors and affects: a *compostable art form* that exposes the encounters, transformations and breakdown of cells, of organisms, of bodies, of air, of machines and of light within emergent ecosystems. *Performing Climates* takes into account the cyclical relations and flows between atmospheres, technologies and complex biological systems and views these interactions 'as' performance (Schechner 2002). We see compost in/of performance as a means to reimagine aesthetics and reconnect theatre with climate politics. Our exploration of performing climates necessarily reckons with the climate crisis and its interconnection with the socio-cultural-cosmological fabric of our planet.

Compost as Relationality

The chapters in this book engage with some conventional performances with human actors but are just as interested in what Stacy Alaimo calls 'thinking as the stuff of the world' (2014): the travelling *Agonis* sapling; a melting iceberg; a mermaid who turns into foam; the last breath drawn; the hum of ant

air-conditioning; vibrations of voice; the throb of fungal communications; discarded cells of skin; a phallic unicorn horn; underground cathedrals and a Lego-bloom in the Pacific Ocean.

Theatre and performance has always been a political medium, sometimes confirming the status quo and sometimes staging revolt against it. *Performing Climates* brings Western theatre into the century of the climate emergency, to make it a politically ‘relevant’ and urgent art form again. To make performance-as-usual, which is to say, to churn out the old Western classics without innovation is to perpetuate a culture that has destroyed relationality and kinship between human and the more-than-human world. Performance offers us the tools by which to reframe our relationality – to embody and show others what the world can look like without the human at the centre. It allows us to intermingle with other roots, in ways that might help to radically drive our commitment to protect what is left, to share knowledge of these delicate interconnections of our planetary existence or even to accept the redundancy of our species with grace, courage and humility.

As scholars trained in the rational, ordered, taxonomised Western tradition, with its seemingly pristine lines of demarcation, we are slowly learning to find peace in mess. We do this in order to build on a politics that rejects mastery and those clean binary shapes that obscure the sprawling realities in which we exist. As Alaimo reminds us:

The anthropocene is no time for transcendent, definitive mappings, transparent knowledge systems, or confident epistemologies. Surely those things got us into this predicament to begin with.

(2016: 3)

Performing Climates thus draws together chapters that are curious about systems of composting matter at different scales and in very different kinds of performances. However, this book does not provide any neat answers to what performance should be or look like as we move through these uncertain times of emergency. All the performances explored in this book are featured because they stage changing states of and sit in tension with biospherical models of theatre.

While writing this book, we have been thinking with the seasons and soil, setting up rat-proof composting bays, navigating the red-bellied black snakes in the vegetable patch, cleaning the gutters, yarning and working with members of the Dhudhuroa Dhargal Aboriginal Corporation to regenerate the land through cultural burning (cool burns), and avoiding the swooping masked-lapwings nesting on the dam. We tell you all this because these are the performing climates which shape our lives and work and because this is a book about the entanglement of systems, weather, particles, organisms, species and art. We agree with 20th century French composer Olivier Messiaen when he described the birds as artists ([Odle 2010](#)). We thank Alexis Wright for sharing the butterfly songlines that dance across

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Indigenous Country (2023). We invite you to read on, to think compost, to re-picture the world beyond biospherical theatre, to acknowledge place and time and connection and, above all, to enjoy the bloody mess of it all.

Notes

- 1 Hanna Cormick is of Saami ancestry and has created a performance that grapples with the complex politics of First Nations identification.
- 2 Examples of collaborative ecological work includes the Indigenous-led projects of Michael-Shawn Fletcher, Jack Pascoe, Uncle Dave Wandin (2022) and the Walbunja Rangers from the Batemans Bay Land Council (Country Needs People n.d.), which draw on Indigenous knowledge and culture to restore the health of Country since invasion and educate Western settlers through traditional fire, land-management and conservation practices.
- 3 There is no better example of this than the 2024 Venice Biennale Golden Lion award winner Archie Moore's exhibition *kith and kin*. In this expansive work, Moore hand-drew, in white chalk, a 65,000-year First Nations family tree on the black walls and ceiling of the Australia Pavilion. The work included an archive of official redacted documents showing Aboriginal deaths and incarcerations. The chalk drawing included gaping black holes and gaps that point to the violent impact of colonialism on his (and all Aboriginal) ancestry. What was infrequently reported in media coverage of the exhibition and award, however, was that Moore's family tree included nonhuman others as part of the webs of interconnection and kinship lines.
- 4 Liboiron notes that some First Nations groups refer to Land (with a capital 'L') as an animate entity and ancestor to humans (2021: 7).
- 5 We acknowledge our colleagues on the organising team of *Performance Climates*: Rachel Fensham, Paul Rae, Robert Walton, Peta Tait, Meredith Rogers, Angharad Wynne-Jones and Alyson Campbell; Melinda Hetzel and the volunteer team; and the many participants of the conference who provided much inspiration for this book. We also thank the contributors, co-editors and teams working on the 'Performance Climates' themed issues of *Global Performance Studies* (Paterson and Brown 2018) and *Performance Research* (Fensham et al. 2018).

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