Towards an Ecological Performance Aesthetic for the Bio-Urban:

A Non-Anthropocentric Theory

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Lisa Woynarski, declare that this thesis is composed by me and that all the work herein is my own, unless explicitly attributed to others. I understand the school's definition of plagiarism and declare that all sources drawn on have been fully acknowledged. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Material drawn from sections of this thesis have been published, or are forthcoming, in the following articles:

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Abstract

As current precarious ecological conditions require urgent and multi-scalar responses, performance has an opportunity to creatively respond to the ecological situation, opening up new ways of thinking and engaging the public's imagination. Problematising differentiating practices that divide humans from 'nature', I suggest performance may highlight the interconnectedness of humans and the more-than-human world by theorising, revealing and critiquing ecological relationships. My research into an ecological performance aesthetic takes up this opportunity and conceives of new ways of critically thinking about performance. I engage a range of ecological philosophy, combined with ecodramaturgical analysis of performance, to theorise the intersection of performance and ecology. Ecodramaturgy (May 2010) combines ecocritical and applied approaches to performance with ecological ways of performance-making, and represents a critical extension to the discipline of performance studies.

Drawing on the ecomaterialism of Bennett (2010), Latour (2004), Alaimo (2013) and Barad (2012), I theorise 'nature' as a set of interconnected relationships, which disrupts the binaries between urban/nature, nature/culture, human/nonhuman. I coin the neologism the *bio-urban* to reflect the vibrancy and material agency of ecological relationships in urban settings. The focus on urban-based practice resists the rural bias present in much ecological writing (Harvey 1993b) and addresses a gap in scholarship around urban ecology in relation to performance. This research centres on a wide variety of illustrative, broadly site-based performance events, including urban gardening performances (and my own practice), walking and cycling performances, installation, live art, theatre pieces and work in places such as streets, mountains, (urban) meadows, cemeteries and rivers. I consider the way in which performance engages with the world, through the interrelated and overlapping discourses of postcolonial ecology, human geography and urban ecology.

An ecological performance aesthetic informs modes of practice, presentation and reception, within current ecological conditions. From the provocation of the bio-urban, I theorise immersion and 'environmental participation', drawing on the corporeality of our relationship to the space around us, following ecological phenomenology. I then examine *oikos* as (earthy or planetary) home and consider it in relation to dwelling, suggesting that ecological performance opens up a space for critiquing these ideas. The complex relationship between the local and global is characterised in performance through eco-cosmopolitanism (Heise 2008). Finally, I suggest a non-anthropocentric paradigm for performance, one that employs an 'ecological anthropomorphism' that accounts for the material agency of the more-than-human, as well as the human as a geophysical force (Chakrabarty 2012). The aim of the research is to articulate an ecological performance aesthetic, extending and developing the field of performance and ecology.

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Introduction

‘The success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges…on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives’ (Buell 2001: 1).

Introduction

As the effects of human influence on the earth usher in a new ecological era, performance has the opportunity to creatively engage with one of the timeliest concerns today. Ecology is not only a social-political-scientific issue; it has become a matter of cultural critique. Our daily lives are now filled with precarious and sometimes contradictory information about the ecological world, to the point that even an ordinary subject like the weather is loaded with ecological uncertainty as 'it is no longer possible to use talk about weather as an unproblematic social lubricant (are you going to say "climate change" first or will it be me?)' (Bayly 2012: 33). Pervasive images and talking points of climate change — hurricanes, flooding, hungry polar bears, rising temperatures and falling fresh water supplies — tend to dominate the ecological imagination of the popular media (Doyle 2011). This thesis suggests that theatre and performance have the opportunity to problematise, reframe and re-imagine some of these pervasive and (at times) reductive images, opening up new ways of thinking about our ecological world. I call this an aesthetic of ecological performance.

The uncertain material conditions of the ecological world have created an imperative to consider resource consumption, food supplies and the complex interrelationship between humans and the natural world more broadly, perhaps indicative of an 'ecological' turn in thinking. The arts (including theatre and performance) are not exempt from this ecological imperative as theatre scholar Wendy Arons (2007) asserts: 'humanity's relationship to the environment is an issue of urgent concern, and one that can and should be addressed by anyone engaged in critical and intellectual pursuits, including theatre artists and scholars' (93). I suggest that performance practitioners and scholars should not only engage with ecology, as all fields should; rather, they should address it because performance can offer something *distinctive* in its engagement with ecology. In the introduction to *Performing Nature* (2005), Gabriella Giannachi and Nigel Stewart describe this distinctiveness (of art in general, including performance), making the argument that it is in the intersection of ecology and the arts that both politically resistant and aesthetically interesting works are being developed. This may be 'because it is in an ecologically-oriented art that the very relationships between human beings and nature are being questioned, critiqued and even reinvented' (20). I suggest that an ecological performance aesthetic can productively critique the tension and perceived separation between humans and the more-than-human world, resisting binaries between nature and culture, nature and the urban, and human and nonhuman.

The central argument of this thesis is grounded in an ecomaterialism perspective and critiques the binary thinking that has created a sense of separation, and human exceptionalism, over the more-than-human world. I coin the neologism the *bio-urban* to suggest human

embeddedness in an ecologically vibrant world. The bio-urban deconstructs the binary between nature and the urban, contending that humans are always already in 'nature', and resists a rural-bias that is found in many ecocritical writings and environmental discourses (Harvey 1993b). Bio-urban communicates or mediates a sense of the living world within the urban environment, particularly in the context of performance. It also proposes (after Bennett 2010) that matter is not inanimate or lifeless, rather that it has agency (can produce effects) within a world made up of human/nonhuman ecological relationships or assemblages. The first characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic, I will suggest, is *immersion*. Following ecological phenomenology, immersion suggests our experience of ecological relationships stems from a point of environmental immersion, engaged in sensorial/corporeal reciprocity with the world. I will then characterise of an ecological performance aesthetic through *dwelling*, or how performance can intervene, critique or imagine alternatives to the question of how we live and relate to the ecological world. This focuses on how we dwell, considering the worldviews that underpin a sense of how we relate to the ecological world as 'home'. The third characteristic I will suggest is *eco-cosmopolitanism*, extending Heise's (2008) idea in considering how ecological relationships are present in our everyday lives, connecting us to global or cosmopolitan networks of exchange and effects, from the food we eat, to the oil we consume, to the weather. Performance practice is intertwined in these relationships, but can also clarify and critique them. Finally, I will configure this aesthetic as non-anthropocentric. Through resistance to binary-making practices, I will suggest, performance may reveal the vibrancy and capacity for agency in the more-than-human world. In this thesis, I am suggesting that performance can trouble, dissect and refract these complex ecological relationships and their underpinning assumptions. Provoked by concept of the bio-urban, I characterise an ecological performance aesthetic as *immersion*, *dwelling* (or *oikos*/home) and *eco-cosmopolitanism*, finally concluding that it is necessarily a non-anthropocentric aesthetic.

This introductory chapter aims to give context to this enquiry through discussion of the purpose and aims of this research. The field of performance and ecology will be introduced through a brief review of some of the key literature currently available. The research gap of the field will be considered in relation to the ecological context of the research, the central research questions, key concepts and the nature of the enquiry. The predominant characteristics of an ecological performance aesthetic will also be introduced along with the structure of the thesis.

This enquiry asks how performance can act as a frame of perception, and as a mediator of ecological relationships. My aim is to articulate and develop an ecological performance aesthetic through the theorising of performance practice, considering it in dialogue with ecological philosophy. I will employ a range of different thinkers, practitioners and scholars to theorise this aesthetic, all of whom are connected by the fact that they either have an explicit ecological context or contribute to ecological thinking in some way. This is by no means an exhaustive study of all ecological philosophy, as that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, I will draw on theory to examine its relation to performance practice. I employ a range of

performance and ecology scholarship (most notably from Arons, Bottoms, Chaudhuri, Cless, Heddon, Kershaw, Lavery, Mackey, May), science philosophy from Barad and Latour, as well as ecological philosophers Cronon and Soper. Cultural geographers Massey and Harvey provide useful frameworks for thinking about our relationship to space, while (ecological) phenomenologists such as Abram, Brown, Merleau-Ponty, Seamon and Toadvine interpret these relationships within an ecological context. Ecomaterialism (Alaimo, Barad, Bennett and Latour), and Morton's ecological thinking (2012) more implicitly, will provide a way of positioning performance and 'nature' within this thesis. Chakrabarty's (2012) concept of humans as geophysical forces and Heise's (2008) eco-cosmopolitanism are also heavily influential to my theorisation of an ecological performance aesthetic.

Throughout this thesis, I will also draw on a number of artists and performance-makers whose practice may be considered ecological and a selection of contemporary ecological performance. With my use of ecological performance, I am referring to both terms in the material sense. Ecologically-material refers to the material conditions of the living world, rather than using 'ecology' in a metaphorical sense as a stand-in for a generic interrelated system. Performance, in the material sense, means that it is intended as an artistic or aesthetic event, rather than describing the performative in the everyday. Broadly theatrical, I generally consider performance derived in dialogue with a space, not necessarily scripted, or containing characters or narrative. This encompasses dance, live art, music, installation art, theatrical performance, eco-activist performance and community-based performance. I take Stephen Bottoms' (2003) useful description as a starting point, which suggests:

> [V]iew everything from written plays to group-devised performances to street interventions to installation art as existing on an identifiable continuum of performance practices, and as engaging in different ways with underlying questions of site, text, spectatorship, representation, cultural context, and so on. (173)

The ecological performance practices in this thesis tend to take place at outdoor sites, outside of conventional theatre spaces, as they broadly involve direct, sensuous engagement with the living world[1]. They are site-based in that they involve a reciprocal relationship to site, actively engaging with it and disclosing ecological relationships within it. It is not always easy to define these works as I suggest the field or 'genre' is being redefined as it emerges and develops and is therefore in a certain state of flux. It is perhaps best to use an ostensive description, pointing to works that share a certain resemblance or ethos or perhaps a form of ecological thinking. In a subsequent section of this Introduction, I will give a more detailed description of ecological performance as employed within the context of this research. The ecological performance practice within the scope of this enquiry includes selected work of Fevered Sleep (2010, 2013), Arbonauts' *Biped's Monitor* (2012), Phakama's *Message in a Bottle* (2012), Sharron Switzer's *#crazyweather* (2013), NVA's *Speed of Light* (2012), Joseph Beuys' *7000*

[1] I note throughout when the practice employed departs from this form.

Oaks (1982), Platform's *Oil City* (2013), Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* (2014), Olafur Eliasson's *Ice Watch* (2014) and Baz Kershaw's Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2012–2014), as well as my own practice-based experiments. I theorise all of these works as 'doing something' in relation to ecological thinking, including (but not limited to) revealing ecological relationships, critiquing specific practices or our relationship to the more-than-human world, and/or deconstructing binaries between human/nonhuman, nature/culture. These practice examples not only illustrate my conceptual framing of an ecological performance aesthetic, they also extend, problematise and/or offer a new way of thinking to my theorisation. My conception of an ecological performance aesthetic is both descriptive of current performance practice and aspirational, providing a grounding for which further practice may be developed. This research marks the current field of ecological performance while calling forth new works, which critically and creatively engage with the human relationship to the more-than-human world.

The problem that this thesis aims to address is the lack of scholarship around the interaction of performance and ecology within a contemporary urban context. There have been a growing number of performances that have intersected with ecology, but there has not been to date, a cohesive study of an aesthetic of ecological performance, or one that particularly addresses urban-based performances. The way performance might reveal or intervene into our relationship with the more-than-human world has yet to be thoroughly interrogated and/or theorised. Bottoms (2010), in his review of Kershaw's *Theatre Ecology*, reiterates the lack of engagement with ecology, particularly within applied theatre[2]:

> Since raising broader awareness about environmental issues is arguably the most urgent task in the world today, why is it that the applied theatre sector — made up of practitioners directly and unapologetically engaged with applying drama to education, awareness-raising and/or political engagement — seems to have been comparatively slow to pick up the ecological baton? (121).

Una Chaudhuri's landmark article '"There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake": Toward an Ecological Theater' (1994), ushered in the current wave of thinking about performance as a possible mediator of the human relationship with ecology, which was followed by selected edited collections, books, conferences and journals. These works have started a broad conversation between performance and ecology. There is a need, however, to further progress the field and widen the conversation between the two concepts, in order to understand the potentialities of performance in engaging with this timely concern.

According to the World Health Organization, since 2006, over the half the world's population (54%) lives in cities and urban environments (World Health Organization 2014). Through the exploration of performance events that take place in urban spaces, I aim to theorise how ecologically vibrant relationships are mediated, made manifest or critiqued in city

[2] I consider ecological performance as 'applied' in so far as 'applied' operates as an umbrella term, concerned with practices engaged in social, political and ecological contexts.

environments, through the concept of the bio-urban. By thinking through practices that take place in the city, I am resisting a romanticised view of 'nature' as something which is 'visited' or looked upon rather than 'lived in'. For May (2005a), performance cannot only answer the question 'who are we?' but also the urgent ecological question 'where are we?'. For the majority of the population, their ecological context is in a city space. I suggest that ecological performance offers the potential to reframe relationships to the more-than-human world, questioning how we perceive ourselves in relation to the environment. With this research, I aim to contribute towards the advancement of the field of performance and ecology and create a more critical engagement with it in the academy, bringing ecology into the wider conversations of performance studies.

The Field of Performance and Ecology

In this section, I will briefly map the development of the field of performance and ecology, where I locate this research enquiry. This outline is incomplete, as specific aspects will be discussed more exhaustively in further chapters. Before reviewing some of the relevant literature in the field of ecology and performance, it is useful to state briefly how I am interpreting *ecology*. Within the context of this enquiry, ecology is used to describe the interconnected relationships of the living world. The term refers not to the biological scientific study of organisms in an environment but the way in which we as human beings relate to each other, our environment, and the more-than-human world. In *Performing Nature* (2005) Giannachi and Stewart identify this understanding of ecology in relation to arts practice:

> Ecology, the study of animals and plants, our habitat and environment, as well as the analysis of the interrelationships between us all, is therefore not only one of the most interesting and crucial tools for the interpretation of nature but also an important model for cultural observation. (20)

Ecology, in this sense, focuses on the experience of ecological relationships in our everyday lives, in lieu of ecological science.

Broadly, this field brings ecological thinking to bear on performance criticism, dramaturgy, production, and performance scholarship. It may be suggested that this relatively new field began to emerge within the academy with Una Chaudhuri's (1994) article, '"There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake": Toward an Ecological Theater', (in a special issue of *Theater* also featuring articles by Munk, Bell, Fuchs, Barnett and Rabillard) calling for a move towards an ecological theatre, as I have noted above. Since that article, scholarship in the field has been taken up by theatre and performance theorists such as Chaudhuri, Wendy Arons, Stephen Bottoms, Downing Cless, Deirdre Heddon, Wallace Heim, Baz Kershaw, Carl Lavery, Sally Mackey, and Theresa J. May, among others. Although performance and ecology has been the topic of a number of recent themed journal editions and books (for example Kershaw's 2007 *Theatre Ecology*, *Research in Drama Education*: *Environmentalism* (2012), *Performance Research*: *On Ecology* (2012), *Canadian Theatre Review* (2010), *Theatre Topics* (2007)) and conferences (Earth Matters on Stage, American Society of Theatre Research Ecology and Performance

working group, Australasian Drama Theatre and Performance Studies Association 2014 conference *Restoring Balance: Ecology, Sustainability, Performance*), it remains somewhat at the periphery of the larger theatre and performance studies discipline. In their introduction to *Readings in Performance and Ecology* (2012), Arons and May contend that the field is currently undertheorised in part because of the uneasiness of the way the two concepts fit together, both materially and ontologically (1). Performance has been considered the domain of the culture, that which separates humans from nature. The seemingly paradoxical nature of the field may be why

> at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, ecology and environment are not only underrepresented and underthematized on the Western stage, but also undertheorized in theater and performance scholarship. Representing and thematizing the more-than-human world in performance with the tools we generally bring to bear on the task seems to require, by default, reinscribing that binary divide between culture and nature, given that performance itself is always already a cultural interpretation of and overlay onto the 'natural' world. (1–2)

Although these two terms (performance and ecology) may not sit comfortably beside each other, I suggest they have a lot to offer each other. Performance studies has interdisciplinary roots making it well placed to engage with the concept of ecology. If, as Chaudhuri (1994) suggests, the western theatre is deeply entrenched in a humanist tradition, perhaps the pairing of it with ecology can draw out the ways in which humans are profoundly connected and a part of the more-than-human world. In this way, performance can offer a way to creatively engage and interpret ecology, opening up its creative possibilities and widening its accessibility. Or as Giannachi and Stewart (2005) suggest, the arts can both critique and reinvent the relationship between humans and nature, and as Kershaw (2007) contends, perhaps even collapse the culturally-inherited separation between them.

In some ways the field has developed from ecocriticism in literature. Glotfelty (1996) describes ecocriticism as 'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment… ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies' (xviii). Performance and ecology may be considered as taking an earth-centred approach to performance, viewing performance as part of the larger world which, in Glotfely's words, 'does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* interact' (1996: xix). This thinking is useful in relation to performance and ecology, and in perhaps reconfiguring the binary that relegates theatre and performance to 'culture' (as opposed to nature). Performance does not exist in a vacuum; it impacts and is impacted by the world of social-ecological systems and relationships. This field attempts to enact ecological thinking in performance, which Timothy Morton (2012) describes as 'a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings — animal, vegetable, or mineral' (7). According to May, ecological theatre and performance should not only take environmental issues as their topics and push for change, but they should awaken your senses and connect

you with the more-than-human living world or offer an experience of ecological intimacy. As Glotfelty contends about ecocriticism, 'despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it' (1996: xix), the same may be claimed of performance and ecology. The scope of the intersection is broad, with a diverse discourse emerging at disparate levels of scholarship; however, the field is held together by the shared idea that human culture in general, and theatre and performance specifically, are interconnected to the ecological-material world, 'affecting it and affected by it'.

As mentioned above, Chaudhuri's (1994) article appeared to initiate the discourse of performance and ecology within the academy, although perhaps preempted by Lynn Jacobson's 1992 article 'Green Theatre: Confessions of an Eco-reporter'[3]. In Chaudhuri's view, the ecological crisis was so profound that all disciplines, including theatre, needed to address it. She stressed the need for a more ecological theatre and emphasised the potential of non-conventional theatre as a means of intervention in environmental issues. Chaudhuri suggests that conventional theatre is in opposition to the environmental movement because of its inherently humanist and realist approach. A more ecological theatre would be one that involved the materialisation of theatrical 'nature' metaphors. However, after that article, Chaudhuri's work has focused on landscape (such as landscape plays in the manner of Gertrude Stein) and more recently on how animals in theatre manifest the relationship between humans and nature. Chaudhuri has recently returned to the specific subject of ecology with her 2014 book *Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project: A Casebook* (with Shonni Enelow). In it, Chaudhuri identifies postmodern performance strategies as fostering a more ecological theatre, rather than taking performance work out of the theatre (and into the park or forest). Chaudhuri and Enelow's Ecocide Project used a scripted play (*Carla and Lewis* 2011) to enact ideas around vibrant materialism, ecological agency and queer ecology within a theatre setting (as will be discussed further in Chapter V: *A Non-Anthropocentric Theory*). Cless (1996) disagrees with Chaudhuri's 1994 assertion, contending that the humanist tradition of the theatre does not necessarily have to be in opposition to ecology and cites many examples of conventional plays in which the natural world has a dominant role. His list includes Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard.* Cless (2012) advocates the role of the director in staging more ecological interpretations of these works or offering an ecocriticritical reading of them.

Among some of the first writings on performance and ecology was Bonnie Marranca's *Ecologies of Theater* (1996). Although Marranca sets out an aim to outline a biocentric worldview in her introduction, she employs ecology broadly as a metaphor for theorising performance. She contends that using climate and geographical metaphors (such as landscape) as a way of

[3] Although not necessarily considered academic in the strictest sense, Jacobson was the first to publish in a theatre journal (*American Theater*) about this growing area of practice.

discussing performance can lead to a 'nonhierarchical embrace of the multiplicity of species and languages in a work, that can address the issue of rights in non-sentient being' (1996: xvi), focusing on ecological analysis of avant-garde, experimental performances. Even before this publication, Chaudhuri contests this use of metaphor, suggesting that in order for the theatre to be ecologically relevant it needs to 'turn towards the literal, a programmatic resistance to the use of nature as metaphor' (1994: 29). Arons and May (2012) further suggest that this use of metaphor works to reinscribe the separation between theatre and nature, as 'the use of "ecological" for rhetorical purposes tends merely to sanitize the term while eschewing its political as well as its material-ecological implications' (3). Within the field, and within this thesis, both terms are used in the material sense.

For Kershaw (2007), an ecology of performance is one that subverts the culturally-inherited separation between humans and the biosphere, and is likely to happen outside of conventional theatre spaces in an immersive, participatory, experimental form:

> Marranca, Fuchs and Chaudhuri are possibly all correct in identifying postmodern performance as a strong arena for such revisions, because its reflexivity may most crucially challenge the dualisms of modernism which have fuelled the ecological crisis, particularly those between body and mind, analysis and creativity, thought and action, spectator and participant. (316)

However, he also critiques Marranca, Fuchs and Chaudhuri's view of landscape performance and the pastoral. Both Marranca (1996) and Chaudhuri (1995) write about the landscape plays of Gertrude Stein as a way of addressing the relationship between the human and the more-than-human world. Kershaw argues that this positioning of landscape re-creates the problematic spectator/space relationship of conventional theatre. It creates spectators who gaze on the landscape as a separate 'other', rather than part of the living world which we are always already in. The concept of the pastoral, as articulated by Fuchs (1996), moves beyond the landscape view yet is still problematic in its conception of human dominion over nature. This idea and its romantic influence will be discussed in more detail in Chapter II: *Immersion*.

The field has emerged from the idea that although ecological issues are some of the timeliest concerns facing us today, which have been embraced in other creative disciplines such as architecture, fashion and design, theatre and performance remain behind. According to Arons and May (2012), ecology is not only under-represented on stage, it is also under-theorised within performance scholarship. This echoes Arons (2007) previous argument that theatre and performance scholars, for the most part, have been slow to engage with ecology. This lack of engagement may be due to the inherited separation between nature and culture or because of the lack of opportunity to cultivate ecological identities within the contemporary urban setting. Arons outlines the potential reasons for the failure to take up Chaudhuri's challenge[4]:

[4] Arons is speaking of the ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) Performance and Ecology Working Group, which she co-convened with Sarah Ann Standing in 2004.

> Was it due to the traditional conceptual separation between 'culture' and 'nature' that keeps theatre scholars trapped in binary ways of thinking about what performance is and does? Or to the urban environment in which most theatre scholars work, which keeps environmental concerns at a geographical and conceptual distance? Or to the gulf between the concrete solutions needed to avert environmental catastrophe or redress ecological harm and the kinds of ephemeral, difficult-to-measure effects of art and performance? Or, perhaps, to the presumption that the intersection of ecological concerns and theatre produces the kind of amateur, sincere, heartfelt, preaching-to-the-converted production that sophisticated members of ATHE and ASTR love to loathe (e.g., per Henry Bial's wonderful formulation, 'The Peace and Love Community Players' Original Production of 'Save the Spotted Owl' [Postshow Discussion with Yoga Circle and Group Rendition of Kumbaya to Follow]')? (Arons 2007: 93)

In a blog post on *Performance Footprint*, Bottoms (2013b) questioned if we are any further forward as a field, roughly three years on from his 'Reflecting on Environmental Change Through Site-Based Performance' AHRC-funded research project. In response to a one-day symposium at Central School of Speech & Drama (Performance and the Environment 2013), organised by Tanja Beer, Sally Mackey and myself, Bottoms felt there was little cause for 'self-congratulation in terms of "establishing a new sub-discipline"' as the concerns of the symposium 'felt very marginal to the concerns of both theatre/performance studies at large, and indeed to the study of environment/ecology' (2013b). I think this is perhaps more a question of the relationship of scholarship to social/political/ecological change. As I will suggest in a further section of this Introduction, ecological thinking (within scholarship and in general) is a critical approach that may help in grasping what climate change means to human life and how we are implicated in it in our daily lives. Theorising performance in relation to ecology then, in Morton's words, 'is important, because art sometimes gives voice to what is unspeakable elsewhere' (2010: 12). The current ecological situation, and the vastness of ecological relationships, is difficult to understand and communicate. Performance may be able to open up a different way of looking at them or foster a wordless understanding of some of the complexities of ecology. Although it appears that gaps in scholarship remain in this emerging field, this thesis positions itself to address and interrogate the gaps, helping to move forward the field, from the stance that the question of our relationship to the more-than-human world is central to both ecology and performance studies.

Bottoms writes that 'the number of different perspectives being presented [at the above mentioned symposium] demonstrated the lack of existing cohesion or agreement' (2013b). I would suggest, however, that this can be a generative position. Although there is still work to be done in interrogating the relationship between performance and ecology, recent additions are contributing towards a more nuanced and diverse field. The overlapping and interconnected theories of postcolonial ecology, critical race theory, queer ecology and ecofeminism are all being engaged with in different ways in the field. The recent *Enacting Nature: Ecocritical Perspectives on Indigenous Performance* (2014) collection provides critical readings of ecology in indigenous performance practices, critiquing the colonialist oppression of both peoples

and environments and dispelling the problematic trope of the 'eco-Indian'. May has also contributed to this dialogue with two essays (2010, 2014a) and her book *Salmon is Everything: Community-based Theatre in the Klamath Watershed* (2014b). Queer ecology has been taken up by Arons in her article 'Queer Ecology/Contemporary Plays' (2012) and by Arons and May (2013). The 2014 American Society of Theatre Research Ecology of/and/in Performance working group (convened by May, Karen O'Brien and myself) included papers on the black cultural landscape in theatre (Les Grey), queer ecology and ecofeminism (O'Brien and Trish McTighe), and vital materialist approaches to the more-than-human in performance (Susan Haedicke, Minty Donald, myself). Some of these emerging areas of the field will be addressed in more detail in further chapters. Within ecological science, diversity is a sign of a healthy ecosystem. Although the field could be expanded to include more diversity (particularly ethnic, racial and geographic in terms of scholarship) these different perspectives are perhaps a sign of growth and are helping to develop the field of performance and ecology.

Despite the fact that the field is emerging within performance studies, ecocriticism and environmental humanities, one of the gaps in scholarship is around how performance can engage with ecology through direct, sensuous experience of the living world. An ecological performance aesthetic has yet to be defined within the context of phenomenological experience of performance or the context-specific underpinnings of perception. With this enquiry I aim to contribute to the development the of field of performance and ecology in a specific direction and create further critical engagement with ecological performance within the wider theatre and performance studies discipline.

Ecological Performance

Located within performance studies, this enquiry takes ecological performance as its topic. This is a somewhat ambiguous term because it encompasses a diverse array of practices within a field that is still emerging. Within the context of this study, the term ecological performance refers to performance events and practices that engage with ecology, both *thematically* and *experientially*. In the broadest terms, ecological performance prompts the audience (or participants) to consider ecological relationships through the content, form and the experience of the performance, as well as the way in which the performance enacts ecological relationships. This could be dance, theatrical performance, applied theatre, community-based performance, eco-activist interventions, street theatre, children's theatre or live art. The term is broadly used in addition to other descriptions, such as a community-based theatre project that is also an ecological performance. This enquiry aims to mark out a clear territory for ecological performance, and by describing an aesthetic of ecological performance, provide a foundation for further investigation and practice.

With the term ecological performance, I am not referring to the recent run of 'climate change' plays in London. *The Contingency Plan* (Bush 2009), *Greenland* (National 2011), *Earthquakes*

in London (National 2010), *Protozoa* and *Oikos* (Jellyfish Theatre 2010), *The Heretic* (Royal Court 2011), *Ten Billion* (Royal Court 2012), *2071* (Royal Court 2014), *Water* (Filter 2007) and *Lungs* (Paines Plough 2014) have all told stories about climate change on stage. Downing Cless and Chantal Bilodeau have compiled an extensive list of plays that are related to climate change on the Artists and Climate Change blog[5]. In his 2014 ASTR paper for the Ecology in/and/of Performance working group, Cless divided the list of plays into three broad categories: 'Plays with Climate Change as Central Catalyst to Dramatic Story', 'Performance Pieces with Climate Change as Central Imagery or Issue' and 'Plays and Performance Pieces with Climate Change as Background' (2014: 18–19). Yet all of these categories imply climate change can and should be dramatised as a 'story' or 'issue' within text-based performance. Arons and May (2012) acknowledge the difficulty in playwrights trying to dramatise stories about climate change, the scale of which is so vast and potentially beyond human forms of measurement and comprehension, that 'even when a playwright strives to foreground ecological issues on stage, the stories are hard to contain' (4). Instead of placing the onus on the playwrights, within this enquiry I am interested in how performance enacts or reveals ecological relationships in its aesthetic, through an ecodramaturgical analysis of practice. Heddon and Mackey (2012) write about the failure of these 'climate change plays' to engage audiences in environmental thinking 'with audiences remaining unengaged and unaffected by environmental themes. Where the balance is tilted towards the emotional narratives of human relationships, those who seek sophisticated theatre addressing climate change are disappointed' (175). They align many of these plays with Mike Hulme's (2009) 'deficit model' of communicating climate change, in which the assumption is that scientists have 'the truth' that they only need to impart to the public for them to understand climate change (219). Hulme argues that this assumption is 'a deeply unhelpful way to bring science into public and political discussion. The metaphor of circularity, plurality, multiplicity, multivocality, is a much more engaging one' (in Heddon and Mackey 2012: 173). Rather than a pedagogic encounter or lecture, I take up the idea that performance can open up a new way of thinking about our relationship to ecology and the environment, through artistic and creative modes of engagement. There may be pedagogy inherent in some of this performance practice, but I suggest that it is the frame and experience of performance that may foster and enact ecological thinking.

With ecological performance, I am also not referring to work that is solely site-specific or site-based or outdoor theatre such as Shakespeare in the Park or Open Air Theatre, which generally maintain the conventions of the proscenium arch staging and often use the outdoors as a novel backdrop[6]. Although most of the ecological performance considered in this study is site-based, it is also more than site-based. Pearson and Shanks (2001)

[5] http://artistsandclimatechange.com.

[6] Evelyn O'Malley (2014) argues that outdoor Shakespeare can encompass ecodramaturgical principles, reminding us of our embeddedness in the ecologically-material world, as well as foster Bennett's concept of 'enchantment' and attentiveness to the more-than-human world.

describe site-specific performance as 'conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations, both used and disused… They are inseparable from their sites, the only contexts within which they are intelligible' (23). Engagement with ecological relationships typically necessitates an engagement with a specific local site or environment. There is an acknowledgement of the reciprocal relationship between people and place, humans and nature. However, as Hodge and Turner (2012) note, 'site' and 'place' (and I suggest 'human' and 'nature') are fluid and contested terms in arts practice and might be 'ultimately unknowable' (90). Mackey (2007) describes LIFT's allotment performance 'enquiry' *Feast* (2003–2004), which took place at allotments in South London, as ecological performance because it concerned itself with matters of the earth and 'natural' world, through seasonal change and food growing, from an 'embedded' perspective (184). Ecological performance discloses and foregrounds ecological relationships through thematic content and the form the performance takes in relation to the more-than-human world. It reinterprets and re-frames a site to uncover the ecological histories, conditions and connections, which may have broader implications. I contend that an ecological performance aesthetic sensuously immerses the audience in the more-than-human world, reveals and mediates ecological relationships both local and global, and has the potential to acknowledge the agency or vibrancy of the more-than-human.

Research Questions

In order to theorise an aesthetic of ecological performance, my enquiry has included the following research questions:

> How might performance reveal and critique ecological relationships?
>
> How might performance mediate a sense of vibrancy in the urban environment?
>
> How might an ecological performance aesthetic acknowledge the agency of more-than-human actants?
>
> What might characterise an ecological performance aesthetic?

I have approached these questions through a framework of ecological thinking, and through a range of methods: hermeneutic, practice-based and ecodramaturgical. These methods will be elaborated below in the Nature of the Enquiry section of this Introduction, although first I will address the ecological context in which these questions are situated.

The Ecological Context of the Enquiry

This thesis sits within the sometimes controversial and uncertain context of ecology. In the following, I will trace some of the popular lineage of ecology, from Rachel Carson to the scientific perspective, to how the arts in general and performance specifically might engage with ecology. I will then briefly address my own ecological context (and uncertainty) inherent in this research.

The modern environmental movement is commonly assumed to have catalysed with Rachel Carson's 1963's *Silent Spring* (Light and Rolston 2003), which worked to bridge the divide between scientists and ordinary citizens and create a movement akin to peace, civil rights and women's movements at the time.

> [T]he ecology movement in the late sixties and early seventies emboldened a new generation of thinkers and activists to argue for social and political changes…The overriding concern was that fundamental changes were needed in how we understood the value of nature and how we organize human societies accordingly. (Light and Rolston 2003: 1)

It marked one of first times in popular discourse that people began to consider the ecological consequences of new and seemingly harmless technology within the last half a century. Carson was a marine biologist and ecologist who sought to make public the alarming effects of the wide-spread use of DDT and other pesticides she was witnessing in her research. She wrote in an accessible style, using her research to reach a popular audience and asking provoking questions about the human relationship to the ecological world:

> Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species—man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world. During the past quarter century this power has not only increased to one of disturbing magnitude but it has changed in character. The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. (Carson 2000 [1963]: 23)

Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's assertion of humans as geophysical forces (2012) has echoes in Carson's claim of the profound human influence in changing ecosystems. This profound influence has led to the term Anthropocene, the geological epoch of the human (Crutzen 2002).

Our current global ecological context could be characterised as a crisis, catastrophe (Morton 2010) or emergency (Emmott 2013). A tipping point of two degrees (above pre-industrial levels) has been identified in which the impacts of climate change would be irreversible and likely devastating (Field 2014). However, as Mike Hulme (2010) argues, 'climate change is not "a problem" waiting for "a solution". It is an environmental, cultural and political phenomenon that is reshaping the way we think about ourselves, about our societies and about humanity's place on Earth' (41). Ecology should not be conflated with climate change, however, it is the grand narrative of our current ecological context and is incomprehensible without a conception of ecology. Climate change is ecological in that it requires reconsideration of the relationship between humans and the earth, how we live and how we shape and are shaped by the more-than-human world. This research engages in this kind of ecological context, including climate change, to ask questions about how performance manifests, intervenes and mediates these relationships.

Ecology is the complicated mesh of relations (Morton 2010) that make up the living world. In the biological sciences, ecology is the study of 'all interactions among living beings and

their environment… a study of patterns, networks, balances, and cycles rather than the straightforward causes and effects studies in physics or chemistry' (Callenbach 1998: 34). It is holistic in that its goal is to 'understand the functioning of whole living systems' (*ibid*), rather than individual parts. Barry Commoner wrote in 1971 that the first law of ecology is that 'everything is connected to everything else' (16) and that a holistic view is required to understand how these interrelations act in the world. This idea of ecology is extended, critiqued and applied to performance within this thesis.

Taking ecology out of the field of biological sciences and bringing it into a discourse of art and performance implies a different kind of knowledge and engagement. A creative and imaginative involvement with ecology may open it up, creating different modes of engagement, which in turn could give rise to new methodologies and new ways of making performance. For Morton (2012) ecological thought 'isn't just to do with the sciences of ecology. Ecological thinking is to do with art, philosophy, literature, music, and culture' as 'ecology includes all the ways we imagine how we live together. Ecology is profoundly about coexistence' (4). Art, philosophy and performance can reveal, question and imagine 'how we live together' in an affective way. I suggest that performance in particular can engage with this idea in a way that discloses ecological relationships and the agency of the more-than-human, and resists binaries of human and nature.

The term ecology, when applied to performance, relates to the acknowledgement of the interconnected state of the more-than-human world, as experienced in and through performance. In describing theatre ecology, Kershaw (2007) first invokes a familiar description of ecology as the interrelationships (and interdependence) of organic and non-organic factors within ecosystems and their environment (16). He then goes on to describe theatre ecology or performance ecology as therefore the interrelationships of factors within a performance system and their relationship to the environment or what Arne Naess describes as a 'relational total-field' (Kershaw 16). In other words, performance ecology is the way in which performance relates to, or engages with, ecological relationships, which surround it. It recognises the way humans are integrally connected to the earth, 'acting *in* it, rather than *on* it' (Kershaw 2009: 318).

The current ecological crisis, and my own context within it, is one of the reasons I took up this research. Although I consider myself an 'ecologically conscious' person, I am often conflicted, unsure and confused. Heddon and Mackey (2012) identify uncertainty and precarity as key states when engaging in research about environmentalism and performance. They write: 'that science is so visibly unable to offer a definitive solution to climate change prompts a new and potentially productive sensibility, the acceptance of uncertainty: of epistemology, of actions, of results, of futures' (169). They link this uncertain state to the uncertain nature of performance, particularly how multiple actants of performance (such as

audiences) might respond and experience a performance. Heddon and Mackey suggest that this uncertainty (about the science, the future, and the best way to address the ecological crisis) may be productive and well placed in performance. Robert Butler, in his 2008 blog post on Ashdenizen, argued that one of the reasons theatre was (then) reluctant to engage with climate change was because theatre and performance-makers were unsure of what to think about it. Providing a productive edge to uncertainty, Butler wrote 'but not knowing what you think about something is the perfect moment to engage with it' (2008). It is from this position that I approached this research.

Part of the ecological context of this thesis is the international travel that it has involved, which I would like to briefly address here. During the course of writing this thesis, I have flown to international conferences in New Zealand, Spain and the United States. I have struggled to reconcile these flights within my own carbon 'balance sheet' and my daily life (such as being a vegetarian, not owning a car, pairing the conferences with visiting family or holidays and purchasing offsets), but it is of course still a tension. There is perhaps a resonance with George Monbiot's assertion that 'most environmentalists — and I include myself in this — are hypocrites' (2006: xiv). I think this is in part because it is difficult to give up the luxuries of western middle class life (hot water at the touch of the button, tropical fruit available all year round, the convenience of international travel) when the results may seem minor, and widespread government policies do not seem to support a radical change in these lifestyles. Being able to travel as I have for this research is a position of immense privilege, one that I have not taken lightly. My research and thinking have benefitted greatly from exposure to different scholars and practices during my travels, which in the end, has slightly placated my ecological conscience, although I still employ an uncertainty sensibility. I will discuss the ethics and tensions of the international travel involved in both my practice-based experiments in further detail in Chapter V. Of course the way we perceive and interact with the living world is culturally dependent and ethically underpinned. In this view, this enquiry is immersed in a specific ethical, political, and ideological worldview that has been constructed from my cultural position in the world. This relative position has inevitably informed my research and writing, as much as I try to avoid an advocating voice. The tension and uncertainty present in the thesis underscore the complexity of ecology in its current context and the way in which any research that engages with it is necessarily caught up in a complicated web (or mesh) of relations. Rather than eschew this complexity and uncertainty, I was motivated to take up this research because of it. The urgency of the global ecological situation will not be helped by reductive simplifications; complexity (and perhaps confusion and conflict) can be embraced as generative concepts in imagining how we live within it. The role of conflict and complexity is echoed in Morton's (2010) concept of ecological thinking, as detailed below, which has influenced that nature of this enquiry.

The Nature of the Enquiry

This research theorises an ecological performance aesthetic through a range of conceptual, theoretical and practical research. It is hermeneutic in that it is interpretive of texts, performance practice and philosophical concepts. This may be referred to as methodology, although I prefer to call it the nature of the research enquiry.

Also central to the nature of this enquiry is the idea of ecological thinking. I draw heavily on Morton's *The Ecological Thought* (2012) and his concept of radical openness, 'to join the dots and see that everything is interconnected' (1). Morton claims that his version of the ecological thought is not just about what you think, 'it's also a matter of *how* you think' (4) and about 'thinking of interconnectedness…thinking that is ecological' (7). This kind of thinking, he suggests, is part of an ecological project but it does not take place exclusively in the mind, 'it's a practice and a process' (7). Morton also identifies art as an important avenue for ecological thinking, although all art can be considered ecological in its material form, 'ecological art, and the ecological-ness of all art, isn't just *about* something (trees, mountains, animals, pollution, and so forth). Ecological art *is* something, or maybe it *does* something' (11). This idea of ecological art 'doing something' is echoed in my treatment of performance practice examples in this thesis, as described in the first section of this Introduction. I suggest that the examples of practice within this enquiry 'do something': reveal, disclose, critique, problematise and extend thinking of ecological relationships in one way or another. I have approached the intersection of performance and ecology from this position of ecological thinking, which includes thinking about everyday relationships with the more-than-human, global capitalism, ideology and critique, philosophy, race, class, gender, access and mobility, as Morton suggests. Ecological thinking is implicit throughout this thesis, as I theorise the way in which performance practice is interconnected with the material world, and the way in which these interconnections are opened up in performance.

Drawing on methods of observation, participation and critical reflection, I position myself alternately as critical spectator/researcher/practitioner in order to provide insight and analysis, opening up the practice in a new way. It is a responsive method that sometimes involved my participation in devising, rehearsals, performance and evaluation processes and includes analysis of the experience of the practice (first and third person). I have also conducted two performance experiments to test out some central questions about the experience of the more-than-human world in performance. These experiments (*Trans-Plantable Living Room* 2013 and *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee* 2012) do not constitute the majority of my research; rather, they supplement my theorisation of other performance events and practices by providing a different context and perspective, and asking different questions towards the elaboration of an ecological performance aesthetic for the bio-urban.

In this enquiry, I also conduct what I consider an ecodramaturgical analysis of performance practice. The term ecodramaturgy was coined by Theresa J. May and is described as: 'theater and performance making that puts ecological reciprocity and community at the center of its theatrical and thematic intent' (Arons and May 2012: 4). Ecodramaturgy considers ways of meaning-making in performance and reinterprets community to include more-than-human actants, operating at the intersection of 'nature' and 'culture'. Where May applies the term to play texts, I extend it to an analysis of performance more broadly and site-based ecological performance more specifically. Ecodramaturgy is a way of thinking about the dramaturgy of ecological relationships and considers: the way the performance was made, the ecological context of the work, and the way the performance operates within a wider understanding of ecology (encompassing ideas of community, more-than-human world and the social and political context).

Combining ecocritical and applied approaches to performance, with ways of performance-making which consider ecological principles, ecodramaturgy represents a re-conceiving and possible extension of performance practice. Bringing ecological thinking to bear on performance work, I aim to set out an ecological way of theorising performance practice. I conceive of ecodramaturgy as both a practice and critical tool, building on Arons and May's (2013) concept of ecodramaturgy, which 'refers not only to the sensibilities and strategies employed by playwrights, but also to the critical approaches taken by scholars and directors as they (re)read or (re)stage works to foreground ecological themes' (181). Arons and May build on the ecocritical roots of the term and turn their attention to playwrights and readings of text. As a critical tool, Arons and May's essay in the *Contemporary Women Playwrights* (2013) collection takes an ecodramaturgical approach to a range of contemporary plays by women and pulls out some of the ways in which they engage with ecological justice, ecofeminism and queer ecology.

I, by contrast, turn to the practice of ecodramaturgy in performance-making, interrogating questions about how we make ecological performance or of how performance recognises the more-than-human as having agency or vital materiality. I focus specifically on the way the practice of ecodramaturgy works to inform an aesthetic of ecological performance (or modes of practice, presentation and reception). Within her conception of ecodramaturgy, May asks: 'What kinds of dramatic structures, characters, themes, performance venues, scenographic elements, and developmental processes produce theatrical work that fire our ecological imaginations?' (2010: 5). Within my conception of the practice of ecodramaturgy, I ask the following questions:

> How is the performance operating in the more-than-human world?
>
> How is it engaging, revealing and/or critiquing ecological relationships?
>
> How is it intersecting with site/community/environment?
>
> What kind of ecological thinking or worldview is underpinning it?

It is these questions that lead my ecodramaturgical analysis of performance practice, which forms the basis for my theorisation of an ecological performance aesthetic. I have also worked as an 'ecodramaturg', collaborating with performance-makers on how their work communicates and enacts ecological ideas, contributing research on the ecological context of the work, and on how ecological meaning is made through the frame of performance. This aspect of the practice of ecodramaturgy is not included in this thesis, although it helps inform the ecodramaturgical analysis of the examples of practice I take up.

Ecodramaturgy is aligned with other ecocritical theatre making strategies, such as Downing Cless' (2012) concept of ecodirecting. He writes: 'by drawing out ecological themes through dramaturgical research and production choices, a director can challenge those seemingly fixed interpretations and draw connections between people, places, and environments, then and now' (159). There are some echoes of this concept in my ecodramaturgical analysis; however, I do not focus on director/playwright's intention. Rather, I am interested in the way in which performance reveals the connections between people, places, environments and the more-than-human, within the aesthetic of the work. I will elaborate my specific usage of aesthetic/s in the following section.

Aesthetics

In this section, I will first consider Aesthetics as a field before moving on to the specific ecological performance aesthetic of this thesis. Within the context of this research, I will focus on a conception of aesthetic/s in relation to performance, informed by environmental/ecological aesthetics. Drawing on White's (2015) performance aesthetic composition of 'ontology, phenomenology and quality' (40), I interrogate and interpret each idea in relation to ecological performance practice, in an effort to elucidate what a theory of ecological performance might be, what it does and what its potentialities are. Aesthetics is a way of elaborating ecological performance and interrogating its ontology, using current examples of work to conceptualise and theorise its potential. From a perspective of perception and experience, I draw on phenomenology (specifically ecological phenomenology, rather than subjectivity as White conceives it) to critique the potentialities and practices of ecological performance.

Aesthetics as a Field

Discourses of Aesthetics are extensive, both in the philosophy of art and art making, as well as in the field of performance. A complete overview of the field of Aesthetics is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I will focus on drawing out what has informed Aesthetics within performance studies and how these conceptions relate to the work of this thesis. White (2013) considers an aesthetic 'as a collection of propositions about what an artwork is and how to respond to it', which he contends 'if examined in detail can tell us much more about the meanings and potential meanings of the work than an analysis that takes effects as the first

line of investigation' (11). In relation to a performance aesthetic, I refer to the philosophical concepts that underpin the work, the motifs and characteristics that identify and inform the performance practice and inform its potential meanings. Haseman and Winston (2010) refer to aesthetics within the context of applied theatre as 'a specific form of knowing but along with it, a particular type of experience, one quite different from the normal business of everyday perception' (469). While White identifies a performance aesthetic as related to 'multiple, distinctive associations of production, recognition and reception' (11).

Taking the etymology of Aesthetics as my starting point, my conception of an ecological performance aesthetic is grounded in what is perceived by the senses, the organisation of sensible material. Western philosophers, such as Baumgarten, Kant, Adorno, Dewey, Gadamer and Lyotard, have all extended, revised, and/or nuanced a theory of Aesthetics. While the history of the field of Aesthetics is not the central concern of this thesis, the relevance of some of these thinkers on contemporary understandings of Aesthetics is worth noting. White (2015) cites Kant's emphasis on subjective experience as particularly relevant to applied theatre and performance, as it relates to how 'the theories of ideology and hegemony, are concerned with how subjectivity is constituted, as a felt experience of a place in a social order' (39). Haseman and Winston (2010) point out the problematic elements of Kantian disinterest in the context of socially-engaged or applied performance, as it sets up 'a hierarchy of taste', allowing only those with education and leisure time to take up a position of aesthetic appreciation. My employment of Aesthetics as a field departs from this philosophical tradition and moves towards contemporary understandings of performance aesthetics and environmental aesthetics.

My conception of an aesthetic within this thesis relates to Koren's (2010) description of an aesthetic as 'a style or sensibility...a perceptually cohesive organisation of qualities' (21) and the philosophy of art, or ontology of art works, which underpins the idea of an ecological performance aesthetic. This aesthetic is expressed as a thesis or exegesis, 'a coherent statement of opinion, belief, or attitude relating to some of the underlying principles of art, beauty, and/or related subjects' (Koren 35), on ecological performance.

An Ecological Performance Aesthetic

As a performance aesthetic informs modes of practice, presentation and reception, I will consider these three areas in my analysis of performance work. In this thesis, I will examine the way in which ecological performance is made, experienced, identified and received. I consider works from an audience perspective, from a performance-maker's perspective, and from a researcher's perspective, covering a range of ways of thinking about ecological performance. To engage with the multiple ways in which performance operates, I theorise work I have made, seen, participated in and read about.

Drawing on Berleant (2010), I focus on perception (rather than sensation) as it informs experience, 'mediated, qualified, apprehended, and shaped by the multitude of biological, social, cultural, and material forces that are integral parts of the human world' (Berleant 5). Abram (1997) identifies participation as the defining quality of our sensuous perception within the world. He refers to participation in our sensible engagement with the more-than-human world as well as a participatory quality to being-in-the-world, participating in affective networks of influence and exchange, as I will discuss further in Chapter II. I consider this in relation to White's 'quality' aspect of his aesthetic triptych. The quality of the experience of ecological performance informs and indeed constitutes (at least partially) its aesthetic. As I predominately employ examples of site-based work which respond to and engage with the material environment, the quality of the experience relates to the sensuous engagement of the living world, theorised in relation to the political, social, cultural and material forces that Berleant refers to. After a chapter on the *bio-urban,* considered as a way of situating ecological performance within an urban environment, immersion will be theorised as characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic.

This thesis will articulate the characteristics and emergent motifs (or tropes) of an ecological performance aesthetic. An aesthetic of ecological performance is both descriptive and aspirational, as it takes inspiration and material from current practice to theorise its potential. In other words, I consider what ecological performance is and also what it could be. Lévi-Strauss (1974 [1962]) contends that 'in the case of works of art, the starting point is a set of one or more objects and one or more events which aesthetic creation unifies by revealing a common structure' (26). By considering ecological performance as a type of performance, I will reveal a common structure (or shared ways of meaning making, concepts, or underpinning ideas) in a way that opens it up to further development, rather than closes it off as a definitive and finished practice.

Ecological/Environmental Aesthetics

Although linked to the aesthetic appreciation of nature[7], I employ aesthetics in a slightly different way, referring instead to the 'style of art making and its associated consumption' (White 2013: 10), specifically the style of making, attending and experiencing ecological performance. In my conception of an ecological performance aesthetic, I eschew the theory of aesthetic distance derived from Kant, for Berleant's aesthetic engagement, starting from the position that humans are always embedded in the more-than-human world.

For Berleant (2010) aesthetics has implications beyond art or the philosophy of art. For him, the 'process of exploring aesthetics will lead well beyond the arts to what I call social

[7] Such as Carlson's (1981) idea of positive aesthetics or appreciating the beauty of nature for what it is, or Brady's (2003) re-visioning of Kantian ideas in relation to the natural environment. This research is not about beauty *per se*, rather is about ways in which art works engage with the living world and the meaning derived from that engagement.

aesthetics and concerns that implicate ethical, social, and political values' (4). Aesthetics also has ecological implications. Berleant understands aesthetic appreciation as reciprocal (119) and in that way aesthetic engagement (with art or environment) 'can be thought of as an ecological event, as a cultural ecological occurrence' (120). Art reveals patterns and forms of the perceptual environment, Berleant contends, and 'sensitizes us to different perceptual modalities and the nuances of sensory qualities' (124). It is the arts then that can enhance our perception of the world through their ability to 'educate us to the richness and depth of environmental experience' (Berleant 124).

Departing from Kant's conception of aesthetic experience, Berleant describes 'aesthetic engagement' as recognising the way in which as humans we are inseparable from the environment and our perception of it as a 'continuity' (2010: 118). 'When we do not regard ourselves as standing outside of experience, objectifying and conceptualizing its objects, then we come to recognize the initially undivided character of all experience' (2010: 119). Berleant goes on to describe the way in which this undivided character of experience is revealed through aesthetics engagement with the arts: 'this same character of experience of artistic and natural beauty is found in all environmental experience, and our encounter with the arts helps us grasp this key dimension of environment' (2010: 119). This aesthetic engagement is a way of understanding or interpreting the way in which experience is structured and made meaningful (following ecological phenomenology). Pairing this with ecodramaturgy, I analyse the way in which performance frames and engages with ecological relationships, as well as the way these relationships 'perform' in the world.

This type of ecological aesthetic can also be read as a reconfiguration of the social turn in arts practice, specifically relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2002). Rather than a social turn it is a social-ecological turn, in which the art is located in the engagement with the ecological world (which I argue also has a social dimension). Relationality is a key term in describing both the social and ecological art works as ecology is based on relationality. For Bourriaud, the art itself is located in the context of its engagement and interaction with its social, historical and/or cultural context. Although there has been much written about relational aesthetics, including many critiques (Bishop 2012, Jackson 2011), the concept of relationality may still have purchase in the context of ecological art and performance. In the recent *Culture Shift* report (Allen *et al* 2014) published by Emergence, relational aesthetics was identified as one of the common themes that emerged from mapping how artists in Wales are responding to sustainability, perhaps signalling a resurgence of the form within the context of ecological arts practice. 'The art is the process, the exchange, the development of ideas. It has a relational aesthetic' (Allen *et al* 16). Jess Allen manoeuvres relational aesthetics towards an explicit eco-activist arts practice: 'in relational art, the audience is envisaged as a community…relational art produces intersubjective encounters. Through these encounters, meaning is elaborated collectively, rather than in the space of individual consumption' (Allen, J. in Allen *et al* 2014: 29). In some ways this resists neoliberal individualism; however in other ways, a collective

response from a community can be flattening, erasing or exclusionary of difference, producing an un-emancipated response[8]. What is perhaps more useful about relational aesthetics is that it is grounded in experiential relationships. As Heddon and Mackey (2012) point out 'the experiential demands a being "in" place, rather than presuming to stand outside of or above it' (181). This concept has echoes in ecological phenomenology and its contention that meaning is relational and found in the space between the individual and the wider patterns of the living world, which the individual is a part of (Seamon 1993). Within my conception of an ecological performance aesthetic, therefore, I acknowledge this relationality with the ecologically-material world.

Morton's book, *Ecology Without Nature* (2009) subtitled 'Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics', outlines his conception of dark ecology. Morton both aligns the aesthetic experience with Romantic ecology and concedes that he cannot escape the aesthetic dimension. He deploys the aesthetic to consider form (rather than content) in ecocriticism while contending there are no 'purely aesthetic solutions to our social and political problems. It is more that the very act of scrutinizing the aesthetics of the issue at hand encourages the beginning of a critical view' (2010: 28). Simon Bayly (2012) also takes issue with the conventional image of an ecological aesthetic, as he contends that 'lurking offstage from every performance (or any other art work) that declares its ecological investment is an overwhelming sense of its underwhelming potential to act in or on the world' (33). This leads Bayly to consider representation, and perhaps performance, as insufficient for the development of an ecological aesthetic: 'even as we quote Ranciere on the emancipatory possibilities of spectatorship, there's that rising feeling that making and looking at representations might be fatally holed as a viable aesthetic strategy' (33). My conception of an ecological performance aesthetic acknowledges the insufficiency of representation to engage us in the living world and considers the way in which performance frames time, space and attention to ecological materialities, rather than representing them.

Giannachi and Stewart (2005) point to Marranca's (1996) linkage of ecology and aesthetics 'in search of newer and deeper kinds of knowledge [which] outlines a biocentric worldview' (Marranca 1996: xvi). They contend that the scope of performance as an 'epistemology of nature' is the extent to which performance allows an aesthetic engagement with nature (2005: 36). However, they posit that the possibility of a biocentric aesthetic is improbable given the objectification of nature, as well as the construction through categorisation of nature, from an aesthetic position (36–37). I suggest in this research that something like a biocentric aesthetic within performance is possible, but it is one that is non-anthropocentric and includes humans as embedded within a mesh of relationships with the more-than-human

[8] As Ranciere argues in 'The Emancipator Spectator' (2007), spectatorship based on equality would mean spectators 'who render their own translation, who appropriate the story for themselves, and who ultimately make their own story out of it' (208).

world. The objectification of nature by aesthetics is a tension when attempting to take up a non-anthropocentric position; however, this tension is part of an ecological aesthetic. 'An ecological aesthetics has to start from here', Bayly proposes, 'from this pathetic feeling of weakness and wrongness, this unhappy coincidence between sincerity and hypocrisy, naivety and critique. Not dialectic between these things, more of an incorporation' (2012: 34). As Kershaw (2007) acknowledges, our thinking about performance and ecology will be necessarily paradoxical, full of contradictions and hypocrisies, so that this incongruity becomes itself the starting point for a conception of an aesthetic.

My conception of an ecological performance aesthetic seeks to examine our relationship to the ecologically-material world, underpinned by a theory of ecomaterialism. My formation of this aesthetic seeks to reveal the structuring principles of ecological performance practice, or as Bourriaud refers to 'a theory of form' rather than 'a theory of art' (2002: 19), where form is considered the way the work interacts in the world. What does the sensible experience of a performance do to us, tell us or turn our attention to? How might performance critique and/or reveal how ecological relationships operate? How does the making and attending of performance implicate a worldview or conception of being-in-the-world? What ecological ideas are enacted in and through performance and how are those ideas reinforced, countered or critiqued? I will consider these questions throughout this thesis, and relate them to a number of examples of performance practice, to elaborate the ontology, phenomenology and quality of an ecological performance aesthetic.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided up into three sections, which together develop and expand my conception of an ecological performance aesthetic for the bio-urban. In the first section (Chapter I: *The Bio-Urban*), I identify a gap in performance and urban ecology and position the bio-urban as a provocation to my theory of an aesthetic, drawing on ecomaterialism. This idea informs the practice I draw on throughout the research as well as my thinking about 'nature' and ecological relationships in a contemporary urban context. The next section (Chapter II: *Immersion*, Chapter III: *Dwelling*, Chapter IV: *Eco-Cosmopolitanism*) will identify the key motifs and characteristics of an ecological performance aesthetic, with each chapter based around a central concept. In the third section (Chapter V: *A Non-Anthropocentric Theory*), I will argue that an ecological performance aesthetic is non-anthropocentric, in terms of how agency is conceived, and how binary making practices and hierarchies of beings are resisted. The intersection of performance and ecology constitutes two large areas of research; therefore, in order to keep the trajectory of the thesis clear, I will be introducing key concepts and terms throughout the chapters as they come up, as well as brief reviews of relevant related texts. In this thesis, I draw on a number of performance examples to interrogate and extend my theorisation. More information about the context and details of the main performance

practices can be found in the appendices as referred to in the text. The key argument of each chapter is briefly outlined below.

Chapter I: The Bio-Urban

The city represents a critical gap in the field of performance and ecology as well as a critical landscape for ecological thinking. As the majority of the UK (and the world population) now live in urban areas, it is crucial that we begin to think of it as part of 'nature'. Here, I will elaborate the concept that stimulates and provokes this enquiry: the *bio-urban*. My concept of the bio-urban stems from thinking about humans (and therefore the urban) as part of 'nature'. The bio-urban addresses the rural bias in ecological thinking and writing (Harvey 1993b) and deconstructs reductive binaries between human/nature and urban/rural. After briefly tracing some the dominant theories of nature, I will suggest a reframing of the concept as the dynamic and vibrant living world which is constantly changing and evolving. The bio-urban is influenced by the concept of ecomaterialism, which I will introduce in this chapter, drawing particularly on Bennett (2010), Barad (2012), Latour (2004), Ingold (2012) and Alaimo (2010). Ecomaterialism, or the idea of agency and vibrancy of the more-than-human, conceives of all matter or material as being able to create ecological effects. The city or urban environment is therefore considered part of 'nature', alive with ecological vibrancy, as much as any rural environment. This chapter will consider how site-based performances in urban settings may communicate, mediate or re-think concepts of 'nature', towards a conception of the bio-urban, considered in relation to my practice-based experiment *The Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013). Within my theorisation of an ecological performance aesthetic, I am particularly interested in foregrounding urban ecology.

Chapter II: Immersion

This chapter will consider the way in which material engagement with the living environment through the senses may reveal, reflect or critique ecological relationships. Starting with eco-phenomenology, I will explore the way May's (2005b) conception of ecological performance acts as a 'space apart' with temporal and material implications. I will then consider the way in which Cless' concept of phenomenological materialism applies to Nutshell's *Allotment* (2011–12) and Gad Weil's *La Grande Moisson* (1990). The way space is conceived within ecological phenomenology will be explored as a dialogue between David Abram and Husserl. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) embodiment and immersive environmental aesthetics will be considered to support my argument that active engagement with the ecologically-material world, framed by performance, can reveal ecological relationships. Active participation in the environment will be critiqued from the point of view of Kershaw (2007) through examples of practice including NVA's *Speed of Light* (2012) and Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2011–14). Taking Arbonauts' *Biped's Monitor* (2012) as an example, I will contend that ecological relationships can be revealed through performance which in turn work to foster a recognition of the vibrancy of the material world within an urban context. The immersive

form of the performance works to collapse separations between human and nature, as well as nature and the urban environment.

Chapter III: Dwelling

This chapter will take up the question 'how we live in the world' within an ecological context. The idea of home is central to ecological discourse as the Greek root of 'eco' is *oikos,* meaning home or dwelling place, and can be extended to include the earth as home. Here, I will explore the way in which ecological performance assumes a view (or views) of the world and home. I consider Fevered Sleep's *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* (2013) and *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013) as critiquing performance of a home as it relates to a wider planetary home. Through post-Heideggerian thought, this chapter will also discuss the way performance may reflect, reveal and refract ideas of home and dwelling, particularly considering Kershaw's Earthrise Repair Shop performance practices. Indigenous perspectives on home and dwelling will be considered as ways of critiquing western binaries between human and nonhuman as well as revealing the way colonialist oppression has had shared material effects on the environment and peoples.

Chapter IV: Eco-Cosmopolitanism

This chapter has a different structure than previous chapters in that the performance practice leads and motivates the theorisation. This is because of the way in which this chapter developed out of the pieces of performance practice. Originally conceived as bricolage, I came to realise that the practice motivated a different theoretical analysis. Rather than the multiple materialities suggested by bricolage, the tension between the local and the global in an ecological context emerged from the practice, which I identify as eco-cosmopolitan. Ecology is inherently bound up with place, community and global context: ecological performance responds to and engages with all of these relational conditions. In this chapter, the ecological effects of cosmopolitanism are considered and put it into dialogue with localism, through Heise's (2008) conception of eco-cosmopolitanism. Ecological performance offers the potential to reframe and interrogate the relationship between the local and global, and heterogeneous ecological relationships and networks revealed in performance. Water represents a kind of cosmopolitanism, as it did in *Message in a Bottle* (2012), as water knows no geographical boundaries. Taking *Ice Watch* (2014) as an example of the way eco-cosmopolitanism is enacted in performance, I consider how the piece represents a dynamic dialogue between everyday life and the global-spanning ecological effects of climate change.

Chapter V: A Non-Anthropocentric Theory

In this chapter, I will make an argument for an ecological performance aesthetic as non-anthropocentric. I will suggest that in the current ecological age of the Anthropocene, a non-anthropocentric aesthetic of performance and theatre may help contribute to what Bennett (2010) calls an 'ecological sensibility'. The geological agency of the human (Chakrabarty 2012)

requires a re-thinking towards a nuanced non-anthropocentrism, which does not dismiss the uniqueness of human agency, but rather acknowledges the range of agencies of the more-than-human and the complex interplay between them. After an explanation of agency, I suggest that one of the ways in which performance may enact a non-anthropocentrism is through 'ecological anthropomorphism'. This is anthropomorphism that disrupts the anthropocentric hierarchy through recognition of the capacity for agency and action in the more-than-human and questions binary-making practices that position humans in opposition to nonhumans. Fevered Sleep's *It's the Skin You're Living In* (2013) enacts an ecological anthropomorphism through the way it troubles distinctions between human, animal and climate. Drawing on Bennett and Latour, I consider worms as active agents capable of creating ecological effects in performance, through an analysis of my practice experiment *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee* (2012). Then, Fevered Sleep's *The Weather Factory* (2010) will be analysed as an affective metaphor for the way in which human geophysical agency may be communicated through art works. I will finally suggest the neologism *bioperformativity* to convey the way in which the more-than-human performs within the frame of performance. I consider how the ecological agency of the more-than-human agents is framed as performance within specific artworks, exemplified through the trees of Beuys' *7000 Oaks* (1982).

To conclude, I will briefly draw out some of the tensions, paradoxes and performative contradictions in this research enquiry and suggest further routes of interrogation and scholarship.

Conclusion

Although the pairing of the concepts of performance and ecology is not without uncertainty and contradictions, I suggest that there is a productive way of interrogating the tensions between them that could lead to innovative ways of conceiving performance. As Giannachi and Stewart (2005) contend, the tension is what makes it an interesting field of study, 'a hybrid and interdisciplinary subject, it is fascinating precisely because it is fraught with epistemological uncertainty and controversy, not least of all regarding the relation of the world of human culture to the wider natural world' (19). Rather than focusing on what kinds of stories should be told on stage or how best to shrink theatre's carbon footprint, my research aims to theorise how ecological relationships may be revealed and critiqued in site-based performance towards the articulation of an ecological performance aesthetic. In doing so, I characterise the concepts of immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism as part of a non-anthropocentric ecological performance aesthetic for the bio-urban.

Figure 1.
Green Stage/Plantable/Tanja Beer (2013) ***Trans-Plantable Living Room***, Bute Park, Cardiff.
Photo by Nigel Pugh.

Part One

Chapter I

The Bio-Urban

‘Acknowledging that material agency necessitates more capacious epistemologies allows us to forge ethical and political positions that can contend with numerous late twentieth century/ early twenty-first century realities in which “human” and “environmental” can by no means be considered as separate’ (Alaimo 2014: 190).

Introduction

According to the Office of National Statistics, 80% of the UK population now lives in urban areas (2012). This follows global patterns of urban migration and growth in which more than half the world's population lives in cities (World Health Organization 2014). Given the predominance and growth of cities, they represent critical landscapes for ecological thinking. Whether the city is viewed as part of 'nature', or a disconnected sphere, comes to matter to ecological urban development. David Harvey (1993b) has famously said there is nothing unnatural about New York City (28), while Jane Bennett (2010) has written about the ecologically-vibrant (or alive) assemblages that make up the power grid (25). On the surface these claims may appear slightly audacious but upon further examination I suggest they support the deconstruction of reductive binaries, working towards ecological thinking. Harvey identifies an anti-urban or rural bias in much ecological rhetoric which reinforces harmful divisions between urban/nature and human/nature, which perhaps even justifies the exploitation of 'nature' and natural resources for capitalist ends (Smith 2006). In conceptualising the entwinement of humans and nature, Harvey and Bennett (along with other ecomaterialists, designers and architects) consider humans as active participants of ecology, along with a range of other nonhuman actants and agents. In other words, humans (and their urban habitats) are as much a part of 'nature' as any 'rural' or supposed natural environment. Considering the city as part of the natural world may be crucial in reframing ideas of 'growth' and 'development'. In the following chapter, I will suggest ways in which to theorise this epistemological uncertainty and controversy within the context of performance in ecologically-vibrant urban sites.

This thesis is premised on the idea that the world is made up of a multitude of ecological relationships and that performance can creatively engage with, critique or manifest these relationships. This chapter outlines an argument for the way in which performance can mediate, re-think and communicate nature, broadly in relation to the urban environment. I formulate the *bio-urban* as a provocation to an ecological performance aesthetic, in order to address the gap in scholarship around urban ecology in performance. In an attempt to draw out a working meaning of nature within the context of this project, I will start with Kate Soper's (1995) recent dialectic: ecologically-material and ecologically-sceptical ideas of nature. In a brief overview, I will consider the ecologically-material concept of nature that has evolved in relation to the ecological crisis and seeks to correct human exploitation of its resources. This idea of nature is often conceptualised in a dichotomous relationship to the postmodern idea of nature that focuses on the ideological assumptions constructed through theories of nature (i.e. nature as a cultural construction). I will then introduce my working concept of nature within this research as influenced by ecomaterialism (Bennett 2010, Latour 2010, Barad

2012, Alaimo 2010, Ingold 2012). Jen Harvie's (2009) theory of performance re-framing the city will be discussed in dialogue with ecological performance practices that intervene in urban contexts. Further investigating how nature is mediated through performance in the urban, I suggest a conception of nature as a set of interconnected relationships and introduce the neologism the *bio-urban* to indicate the way in which ecological relationships are present in city spaces, dissolving binaries between urban/nature and therefore human/nature. *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013) will be analysed as a way performance may reflect and enact the concept of the bio-urban. I will suggest that performance may re-conceptualise humans as part of the more-than-human world and disclose ecological relationships, which in turn works to foster a recognition of the ecological agency of the city.

In brief, this chapter will argue that ecological performances in urban settings can productively critique and reconceive concepts of nature, as recent performance examples illustrate. The term 'bio-urban' will be employed to reflect the aliveness and presence of nature in urban settings. Considering ecological performance broadly in urban sites throughout this project is a way to address the anti-urban bias that Harvey identifies, the gap in scholarship around urban ecological performance specifically and the predominance of the urban experience.

The Concept of Nature

The problem lies not in the 'naturalness' of New York City, as Harvey contends (1993b: 28), but in the concept of nature itself. McKibben lamented the end of nature due to anthropogenic climate change in 1990 but the term is still widely used today. It is an ambiguous word that is often employed without clarity of meaning, yet a conception of nature underlies all environmental, ecological and sustainability issues, contains implicit assumptions about how we view the living world and informs the way we relate to it. As Harvey (1993b) suggests, nature is interconnected to the social so that there is some sense of 'nature' in all our relations with the world:

> [T]he intertwinings of social and ecological projects in daily practices as well as in the realms of ideology, representations, aesthetics and the like are such as to make every social (including literary or artistic) project a project about nature, environment and ecosystem, and vice versa. (31)

Therefore, I suggest that before we can begin to shift our thinking about ecology, it is necessary to first consider how concepts of nature inform our perception of the more-than-human world, particularly how we consider the urban environment.

At its simplest, some consider nature as environment, a backdrop and resource for human survival, such as the shallow environmentalist movement which positions conservation as solely for human benefit and use. Others conceive of humans as inherently connected and a part of nature. Perhaps, though, it is not useful to neatly divide these two positions into a binary of 'humans as part of nature' and 'nature as a separate other which provides resources for humans'. William Cronon (1996) reconfigures this dialectic as he posits 'people should

always be conscious that they are part of the natural world…[it is] no less crucial for us to recognize nonhuman nature as a world we did not create with its own independent, nonhuman reasons for being as it is' (87). Considering the way in which nature can be both of these ideas helps to interpret 'nature', which is often rhetorically employed in a number of different (sometimes contradictory) ways. Although these concepts of nature go back a generation in terms of scholarship (Cronon 1996, Harvey 1993b, Soper 1995), they are useful as a springboard to contemporary thinking, particularly post-nature ideas (Morton 2009, Latour 2010) and ecomaterialism.

Nature, besides being well-worn conceptual territory, also has historical implications. As Stacy Alaimo (2010) points out, it has been a contested idea and used as an oppressive form as 'a philosophical concept, a potent ideological node, and a cultural repository for norms and moralism against women, people of color, indigenous peoples, queers, and the lower classes' (Alaimo 2010: 4). This social and historical 'baggage' attached to the term 'nature' may support Morton's (2009) call to think of ecology without the concept of nature. Before considering this post-nature position that dismisses the concept of nature, I will briefly examine the material/postmodern dialectic that could be considered as broadly underpinning many concepts of nature. As a way of entering this discourse further and moving beyond the simple distinction offered above, this section focuses on three divergent concepts of nature: broadly, 'material nature', 'constructed nature' and 'no nature'. This is not, therefore, a definitive examination of the concept of nature, but offers a starting point for theorising how performance engages with nature.

Nature 'is at once both very familiar and extremely elusive', Soper posits in *What is Nature?* (1995), as it is a term we use regularly and with such casualness that we might assume we have a unique access to its comprehensibility; however, if pressed, most people understand that the term is so varied and complex it would be difficult to definite with certainty (1). Habgood (2002) further contends that 'an immediate problem with the word "nature" is that is has multiple and overlapping meanings' (1). Within this section, my concern is the concept of nature relating to the ecological world, rather than 'natural' as appropriate or customary, or the nature of something in an ontological sense, or natural sciences. Soper's examination of the concept of nature is a useful starting point. While acknowledging there is a difference between humans and nature, although not placing them into a hierarchy, Soper argues that this difference does not have to be a dualistic relationship. After drawing on Soper's concept(s) of nature, I will suggest that the prevailing human idea of nature as 'other' needs to be reconceived. By dissolving the binaries of human/nature and nature/culture, l contend there is a space for a concept of nature that takes the urban into account in the context of performance. For Soper, nature is defined primarily by two diverging discourses. The first is a concept that has evolved in relation to the ecological crisis and seeks to correct its exploitation by humans and is concerned with nature as 'a domain of intrinsic value, truth and authenticity' (Soper 1995: 6). The second is a postmodern concept that focuses on

the ideological assumptions constructed through ideas of nature mediated through human identity, which views 'the order of nature as entirely linguistically constructed' (*ibid*). Soper recognises that these concepts have political leanings; divergent interest groups often employ each concept. As they cannot be neatly divided into postmodern and ecological concepts, Soper prefers to refer to them as 'nature-endorsing' and 'nature-sceptical' (1995: 4).

Material Nature: The 'Nature-endorsing' Concept

The nature-endorsing concept is comprised of the idea that there is an ecological-material reality that is affected by human-induced changes to the climate. There are many criticisms of the ecological or 'nature-endorsing' concept including 'the emancipatory concerns for its rejection' (Soper 1995: 8). Soper associates this concept with ecologists and environmental movements. Within this view, however, there is still a conceptual division between humans and nature, which opens up critiques of this position as anthropocentric.

In as much as philosophies such as deep ecology strive for an alternative worldview to anthropocentrism, in a way this is a performative contradiction. We will always be limited in our relations with the world, which are perpetually mediated by a sense of self (and our bodies) and therefore inherently anthropocentric in certain ways. Although it does not necessarily follow that nature is intended for human use to the point of exploitation, nor does it mean that humans are at the centre of nature, evident by the fact that the biosphere would still function without humanity. It may still be possible to take up a view of the world that recognises value in the more-than-human, as I will suggest in Chapter V: *A Non-Anthropocentric Theory*. The Judeo-Christian concept of nature has been pinpointed as shaping anthropocentrism and a mechanistic view of nature as a resource for humans, which the nature-endorsing view is trying to correct. Referring to the Priestly version of Creation (Genesis 1-2:4), J. Baird Callicott (1989) suggests that it 'exhibits a distinct tendency toward humanism: man is created in the image of God and given dominion over the rest of creation and charged to subdue it' (138). It is this problematic idea that has been accused of being the basis of the prevailing anglo-anthropocentric worldview.

According to Soper, any discourse that involves human and nature implicitly understands nature as 'other' even when speaking of human's place within nature. There is a material ecological world influenced by human activity that is sometimes referred to as nature. Distinguishing what is part of this nature and what is not is where the epistemological uneasiness lies. I suggest this is what Gilbert Ryle (1990 [1949]) would describe as a category mistake. Nature as 'other' is a mistake of category because it is not similar to humans or anything else that exists and therefore cannot be considered in the same category or put in a binary, just as for Ryle the mind and body are very different but interrelated concepts and do not belong in the same category. It is possible to recognise a difference between

humans and nature, which still implies humans are always embedded within nature. It is a category mistake to think of humans and nature in a binary or dualism. They are different but interrelated things. Any endorsing concept of nature, therefore, requires a nuanced position in relation to the human and our place within nature.

Constructed Nature: The 'Nature-sceptical' Concept

This concept suggests that nature is a purely rhetorical concept that has no basis in material reality. There is no material 'nature', there is only the idea of it that has been constructed through cultural discourse. This view is parallel to Foucault's, who thought that 'natural' was an effect of discourse, completely constructed within a specific context (Soper 1995: 6). The use of the term 'nature' or 'natural' in this way has little or no basis in the material reality of nature. However, the impact that humans have on the material world is seemingly ignored.

Soper questions how this concept of nature takes into account the changing climate or 'ecological realities and…the task of addressing them' (1995: 8). In this age of ecological crisis, the acknowledgement of nature as a cultural construct is perhaps unhelpful in addressing global climate change and its effects. I suggest there is value in pondering this construction and acknowledging the way in which discursive practices create binaries between human/ nature' however, this position seems to ignore the crucial reality of the current ecological situation.

Soper further critiques the seeming incoherence of this concept, that seems to readily ascribe reality to 'culture' and its effects, but not 'nature' and its material implication. 'Unless we acknowledge the nature which is not a cultural formation, we can offer no convincing grounds for challenging the pronouncements of culture on what is or is not "natural"' (Soper 1995: 8). This 'nature-sceptical' concept seems to resonate with the Kantian idea of the difference between art and nature. When something is called a work of art, there is an implicit understanding that it is the work of humans and is therefore of higher value. The processes of the natural world may be far more impressive, such as Marx's example of the bee hive putting any architect to shame (Soper 1995), yet are somehow less valued or have little to no intrinsic value because they were not made by human design.

Cronon (1996) problematises the nature-endorsing and nature-sceptical dialectic by pointing to the way in which nature is both a material reality (plants, animals, landscapes) and informed and affected by how we think about it. He uses the example of Yosemite National Park in the United States; it is a material place in nature but its 'venerated status as a sacred landscape and national symbol is very much a human invention' (1996: 21). In this way, I suggest that nature can be a concept that is both a material reality and shaped and constructed by perceptions and discursive practices.

No Nature (Post-Nature)

Morton (2009) takes a deconstructionist approach to this debate, arguing that dissolving the concept of nature will be of ecological benefit. For him, a powerful theory of ecological criticism is one without the hindering rhetorical construction of nature:

> One of the ideas inhibiting genuinely ecological politics, ethics, philosophy, and art is the idea of nature itself. Nature, a transcendental term in a material mask, stands at the end of a potentially infinite series of other terms that collapse into it, otherwise known as a metonymic list: fish, grass, mountain air, chimpanzees, love, soda water, freedom of choice, heterosexuality, free markets...Nature... First, it is a mere empty placeholder for a host of other concepts. Second, it has the force of law, a norm against which deviation is measured. Third, 'nature' is a Pandora's box, a word that encapsulates a potentially infinite series of disparate fantasy objects. (14)

Morton asserts there is no productive working concept of nature and instead suggests that it is better to dismiss the term entirely. The binaries set up in current concepts of nature are hindering and reductive and in need of re-conception in order to address issues such as climate change. Discourses of nature work to rhetorically shape our understanding of the world, which calls into question the consequences of dismissing some of the language used to describe our phenomenological experience in the affective material environment. How might the dismissal of nature affect and shape an understanding of our interactions with the more-than-human world around us?

Bate (1991) disagrees with dismissing the concept of nature entirely at a time of urgent ecological crisis and contends that 'it is profoundly unhelpful to say "There is no nature" at a time when our most urgent need is to address and redress the consequences of human civilization's insatiable desire to consume the products of the earth' (56). However, Morton argues that by replacing the idea of nature with a more complex understanding of ecology and ecological relationships, the urgent crisis may be addressed more effectively. This dark ecology approach will be discussed further in Chapter III: *Dwelling*. Garrard (2014) asserts that 'it is true that what we call "nature" is often a forgotten or pastoralized remnant of human culture, but equally there can be no exclusively human history in the first place — just as all evolution is coevolution, all history is environmental' (5). He argues that the concept of nature is not just a construct, which can be dismissed, because it is intertwined with human history. There is no ahistorical nature just as human history does not exclude some sense of 'nature'. I will suggest there is space for another (re)conception of nature that underpins an ecological ethic: nature as a living world of ecological relationships with material properties, which is also influenced by the way in which we think about, frame and construct those relationships, or ecomaterialist thought.

Nature in Performance

As Chaudhuri (1994) and May (2005a) have noted, nature has often been employed as a metaphor for dramatic action within performance, particularly theatrical performance.

However, Cless (2010) posits that performance, specifically what he terms eco-theatre, can actually re-imagine and re-constitute conceptions of nature. 'The unique power of eco-theatre is the way nature is deconstructed, reconstructed and generated anew — de-alienated, reenchanted, and activated in the foreground' (12). Canonical works that have represented specific conceptions of nature include: Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Aristophanes' *The Birds*, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, to name just a few. Cless (2012) claims that the director can draw out the ecological themes or significance of a play that implicates a concept of nature. These scholars tend to employ a 'nature-endorsing' concept of nature, although the paradoxical quality of the term is often foregrounded. 'Nature is especially tricky because it is always both actuality and construct, also ever-changing in the way it is as reality and in the way it is viewed or conceived' (Cless 2010: 2). In this thesis, I consider a number of performances that do not aim to represent a concept of nature, but rather engage with nature, usually through site-based practices which reveal assemblages of ecological relationships.

Ecomaterialism

The conception of nature employed in this project is nature as a dynamic set of relationships. As Giannachi and Stewart contend in *Performing Nature* (2005), nature is 'a process of endless exchange and interactivity between the human and the other-than-human' (19). I use the terms living world or more-than-human world to indicate this concept of nature. Humans are a part of this world, but not the only part and not the only life of value. I suggest that performance can be a space to attend to these relationships to the living world. I deem them ecological relationships, as they are a set of interconnected relations, each playing its own part yet dependent on each other to make up a whole functioning living world. My theory is informed by ecomaterialism, particularly drawn from Bennett, Barad, Latour and Alaimo and their formations of the 'aliveness' of matter.

In this section, I will clarify how I am interpreting and using ecomaterialism by reflecting first upon the work of Bennett's vital materialism (2010) and its influence in my configuration of the term. Then Latour's (1993, 2010) work on animism and modernism, followed by Barad's (2003, 2007) theory of agential realism, Ingold's (2012) ecology of materials and Alaimo's (2010, 2013) new materialism will also be considered in relation to my position. I will then outline critiques of this position from Schneider (2014) and Rosenberg (2014), followed by Mel Chen's (2012) consideration of deadzones. Beyond this I will offer my own interpretation of this mode of thought in relation to my specific project of elaborating an ecological performance aesthetic, as well as considering how it differs from object-orientated ontology.

I employ the term ecomaterialism to indicate the theories of materialism with explicit ecological concerns. In a themed issue of the journal *Postmedieval* on ecomaterialism, the

editors describe it simply as 'a study of inhuman agency' (Cohen and Duckert 2013: 4). Based primarily on Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010), the editors conceive it in the journal as elemental agency, interrogating 'where matter obtains its complicated agency; where humans are not simply called upon to save, preserve, or conserve a lifeless material world (what hubris), but to recognize the life that already pulses within inorganic forces, manufactured and found objects, nature, and things' (Cohen and Duckert 2013: 3). Bennett (2013), in the same journal issue, describes it 'as an attempt to re-describe human experience so as to uncover more of the activity and power of a variety of nonhuman players amidst and within us' (2013: 109). Ecomaterialism is multi-scalar, operating as an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of nuanced positions. However, it is united in the overall aim of taking seriously the agency of more-than-human matter or materiality, towards an explicitly political ecological project. In this thesis, I am developing the term specifically in relation to urban environment (as indicated in the neologism the bio-urban, explained below) refracted through performance. By turning it towards the urban, I argue that ecomaterialism dissolves reductive dualisms and aids in the development of an ecological performance aesthetic.

As one of the most influential thinkers within ecomaterialist discourse, Jane Bennett's vital materialism is a useful starting point for this discussion. Bennett (2010) suggests that all matter has life or vibrancy and recognition of this vibrancy may change our relationship to the world and underpin an ecological ethic:

> How would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies? By 'vitality' I mean the capacity of things — edibles, commodities, storms, metals — not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own. (viii)

The theory of ecomaterialism has been developed by scholars such as Alaimo, Barad and Latour, in addition to Bennett's influential book, and is broadly based on the premise that 'if nature is to matter, we need more potent, more complex understandings of materiality' (Alaimo 2010: 2). There is an explicit political ecological agenda to ecomaterialism, as it aims (in different ways, formulated by different thinkers) to challenge binary thinking that supports the perception of the more-than-human world as something inanimate and separate from human life and that challenges human exceptionalism.

One of the most compelling aspects of ecomaterialist theories, in relation to my conception of an ecological performance aesthetic, is that the material world is conceived of as having ecological agency, or having the potential to create effects. However, it is important to note for my employment of the term that ecological effects or vibrant ecological relationships are not inherently good or positive things. Identifying these vibrant relationships entails acknowledging destructive relationships, such as the amount of resources consumed in current western lifestyles, or the plants and animals cleared to build our homes and cities, or the CO2 emitted into the atmosphere from the power we consume on a regular basis. It is because

of the acknowledgement of these affective relationships that the claims of ecomaterialism will start to shift the way we view the world and therefore may lead to more ecological ways of living or being in the world. If we understand the ways in which we are intertwined in assemblages then we may start to think and act accordingly. One question driving this thesis is: can performance examine or expose this vibrancy, particularly in urban areas?

The theory of the vibrancy and agency of material is influential to the whole of my research and will be emphasised and explicitly engaged with in specific sections of this thesis. For example, in Chapter V: *A Non-Anthropocentric Theory,* I will consider the ecological agency of the more-than-human (or 'thing-power'[9]) and Bennett's suggestion of anthropomorphism towards horizontalising hierarchies of beings. Barad's and Latour's concepts of anthropomorphism will also be theorised in relation to ecological performance practice. While some sections will make explicit reference to the relationship to ecomaterialism, it will implicitly underpin others. In Chapter III: *Dwelling*, I will examine how performance engages with the question of how we live and relate to the world, implicitly assuming that the world is made up of vibrant ecological matter with agency.

Although ecomaterialist theories have been critiqued for being 'primitive' and anthropocentric, Latour argues that acknowledging the agency/animacy of the nonhuman actually resists anthropocentrism and the bifurcation of human and nature. Latour's formation of animated matter is useful to my theory of ecomaterialism as it acknowledges the bias in the urban/nature dualism and is non-anthropocentric. For Latour (1993), the first dichotomy on which modernism[10] is premised is the conceptual separation between nonhumans (nature) and humans (culture). He further contends that nature itself is a way of organising this split:

> Nature is not a thing, a domain, a realm, an ontological territory. It is (or rather it was during the short modern parenthesis) a way of organizing the division (what Whitehead has called the Bifurcation) between appearances and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, history and immutability. (Latour 2010: 5)

He goes on to argue that the 'epistemological break' of modernism, which placed on one side 'poor archaic folks' that believed the world was 'animated by all sorts of entities and forces', with so-called rational moderns on the other side who believed in a world of inanimate matter whose causes produced effects, is at the root of the charge levied at environmentalism as being too anthropocentric (2010: 9). Through this conceit of animated matter as primitive, environmentalists are accused of anthropocentrism 'because they dare to "attribute" values, price, agency, purpose, to what cannot have and should not have intrinsic value (lions, whales, viruses, CO2, monkeys, the ecosystem, or, worst of all, Gaia)' (Latour 2010: 9). In this

[9] 'Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle' (Bennett 2010: 6).

[10] For Latour (1993), we have never been truly 'modern' but we operate on a Modern Constitution (which encompasses the postmodern).

modernist outlook, the world is a series of causes and effects, action without agency. This is a paradox, however, as even in a rational, materialist worldview, there needs to be some sense of agency, Latour argues, 'if not, there would be no possible way of discriminating causes from consequences. This is true in particle physics as well as in chemistry, biology, psychology, economics or sociology' (10). In fact, for Latour, inanimism is the most anthropocentric conception of relations between humans and the more-than-human world, as its distinction of agency as a solely human trait reinforces binaries, rather than acknowledging a multiplicity of agencies, which does not instigate a reductive alterity (2010: 11)[11]. Ecomaterialism then, as I configure it in relation to an ecological performance aesthetic, is premised on the agency of the more-than-human, and represents a way of blurring reductive dichotomies towards more ecological ways of thinking about the world.

Karen Barad's particular attention to binary-making practices is a useful extension to the ecomaterialism I employ. She draws on science studies, quantum mechanics, queer theory and philosophy in developing her theory of ecomaterialism. She comes from the position that matter needs to be reformulated to include the nonhuman in order to 'matter':

> What is needed is a robust account of the materialization of all bodies — 'human' and 'nonhuman' — and the material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked. This will require an understanding of the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, an accounting of 'nonhuman' as well as 'human' forms of agency, and an understanding of the precise causal nature of productive practices that takes account of the fullness of matter's implication in its ongoing historicity. (2003: 810).

Barad's theory of 'agential realism' configures agency as flowing in and between matter, that is discursively constructed into categories and binaries. She formulates it within a performative paradigm[12] (in contrast to representation) and understands matter as having an ongoing 'intra-activity' in which it is an active operating contributor to the becoming of the world (2003: 803). 'Intra-activity' is the way in which material interacts and phenomena emerge, rather than separating subjects from objects. 'It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful' (2003: 815). Phenomena, or matter, emerge through intra-activity (rather than interaction, which presumes a prior independent existence). She questions the very idea of 'objects' with her theory of intra-activity, which posits 'the primary ontological unit to be phenomena, rather than independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties' (2007: 333). Barad seeks to reposition the materialising

[11] In his 'An Attempt at Writing a Compositionist Manifesto' (2010), Latour replaces one dualism (human/nonhuman) for another (animism/inanimism), which may be reductive. A position that asserts the agency of some more-than-humans but not others is not accounted for in Latour's argument, nor is any distinction between nonhuman, objects, things or materials.

[12] I will discuss Barad's concept of performativity in further detail in Chapter V: *A Non-Anthropocentric Theory*.

practices that separate the categories of beings and matter including nature/culture and human/nonhuman. She does not seek to imbue the inanimate with life, but to turn our attention to the way 'things' are rendered 'inanimate' (or lacking agency) through discursive practices, rather than any essential quality they may or may not possess. Barad's position is useful to the ecomaterialism I employ as it seeks to explicitly redress the binaries constructed through our anthropocentric discursive practices. Of particular interest here is the way in which we separate the urban from nature, and how we can draw attention to the effects of constructing this dualism.

Perception of the ecological agency of the world is a key aspect of ecomaterialism as suggested by Ingold and Alaimo. In theorising an ecology of materials, Ingold (2012) proposes material relations as a meshwork or Skilled Practice Involves Developmentally Embodied Responsiveness (SPIDER), in which there is a mutual entanglement of the sentient world, the perceiver and the environment, through an extended theory of mind (437). For Ingold, the perception and relation with the sentient world is embodied, while keeping in view that 'embodiment often seems to conceal a duality between a knowing mind and an existing world under the pretense of having brought about their unification' (437). Alaimo (2010, 2013), offers a further interpretation of embodiment, contributing to ecomaterialism (or new materialism as she refers to it) a theory of 'trans-corporeality', which is the dynamic exchange between materialities including humans and their bodies, more-than-humans, ecosystems, chemicals and other operators and actants in the world (2010: 2). Trans-corporeality emphasises the movement across bodies (both human and more-than-human) as that which 'may catalyze the recognition that the environment, which is too often imagined as inert, empty space or as a resource for human use, is, in fact, a world of fleshy beings with their own needs, claims, and actions' (2010: 2). She proposes that an emphasis on the ecological relationships (which interconnect the human and more-than-human world) and the material agency of these relationships, may foster new political and ethical positions that do not epistemically separate 'human' and 'environment'. This concept of trans-corporeality is particularly relevant to my thinking on embodiment and perception, following eco-phenomenology, as I will discuss in Chapter II: *Immersion*.

Theories of ecomaterialism have been subjected to different critiques, including the potential to homogenise material with no distinction between objects, things or artefacts (Ingold 2012), collapsing of time or lack of historical materialism (Schneider 2014) and neo-primitivism (Rosenberg 2014). I will analyse the two latter critiques here, addressing their potency to my use of ecomaterialism. In a recent paper at a plenary session at the American Society of Theatre Research (ASTR) conference (2014), Rebecca Schneider critiqued 'new materialism' (particularly mentioning Barad, Bennett and Latour). Schneider points to the temporal tensions and lack of 'intervals' (or space between) in the turn towards 'objects' in new materialism. When we take seriously the agency of the more-than-human, we do so by considering 'objects'; in thinking through the lifespan of an object we 'call it' or 'hail it' as

Schneider suggests, responding to the object from our current position in time. She is interested in the space between those iterations (of relations of call and response to objects), and the 'liveness' of the interval which new materialism does not take into account. This temporal interval is of interest, she contends, because of her concern for 'an a-historicality in the new materialist turn, a potential essentialism (an essentializing of potential), a universalizing and if not anthropomorphizing then a molecularizing (read biologizing?) that can rush in at the door of a generalized animacy' (2014: 3). She cautions against the 'molecularization' of all material, contending that if we reduce matter to a molecular level, it may essentialise it, a-historisise it and vacate ideological critique. She suggests Bennett's vibrancy of 'everything' is homogenising and does not leave room for the heterogeneity of the 'temporal' drag, but can collapse time and history. This parallels Ingold's critique of not differentiating between nonhuman objects, things or materials. The judgement of new materialism (or 'the ontological turn') for Schneider, following Rosenberg (2014), is that it

> leaves the newly 'animated world' freshly devoid of historical materialism. The mantra 'everything is live' does not proffer the theatrical porous or syncopated time I argued for in *Performing Remains*, but potentially vacates all intervals, all between times, from account. (Schneider 2014: 4)

Schneider and Rosenberg seem to be suggesting that new materialism is intertwined with neoliberal capitalism which 'proffers 24/7 access to the affect factory' (Schneider 2014: 11). Seemingly ignoring the explicit political ecological projects of Bennett, Barad and Latour, Schneider easily conflates them under 'new materialism' and the 'ontological turn'. I suggest these are actually very different positions. Some ecomaterialist thinkers (such as Alaimo 2013, Barad 2003) in fact distance themselves from the ontological turn because of the lack of ideological (and capitalist) critique. Reducing ecomaterialist theories to the easy mantra 'everything is live' ignores the nuances of these theories, particularly the way in which they relate to political formations. Bennett, for example, makes an important distinction in her theory of vibrancy when she suggests that the potential for agency is distributed and not totalising (21), and interconnected to political formations (hence the subtitle of her book, 'a political ecology of things'). Although Bennett characterises the potential for agency as distributed, she does not differentiate between nonhuman 'things', objects or more-than-human life (such as plants and animals). This lack of differentiating leaves her theory open to the critique of homogenising and collapsing all matter. However, taken with Ingold's ecology of materials, ecomaterialism gains a more nuanced position.

Counter to Schneider's suggestion both Bennett and Barad account for historical materialism in their conceptions of ecomaterialism. Bennett contends that historical materialism is not the point of her project, although the social formations of humans, labour and capital distribution is relevant. She further suggests that

> because politics is itself often construed as an exclusively human domain, what registers on it is a set of material constraints on or a context for human action. Dogged resistance to anthropocentrism is perhaps the main

> difference between the vital materialism I pursue and this kind of historical materialism. (xvi)

Barad too takes into account historical materialism in asking questions about the social and political formations of materiality, which she suggests is historicising, in her interpretation of Foucault, asking how matter is configured as having its own historicity. Why is corporeal materiality the site of both biological and historical forces and oppressions? (2003: 809). She also points out that in the theory of power and the body, Foucault 'fails to offer an account of the body's historicity in which its very materiality plays an active role in the workings of power' (2003: 809). In this way, the ecomaterialism of both Barad and Bennett are not devoid of historical materialism, but rather focus on the deficiencies of such a position when taking seriously the concept of the agency of the more-than-human within an ecological context.

However, I suggest that there is a lack of a non-western historical perspective in Bennett, Barad and Latour (although Alaimo does draw on it). Postcolonial ecology has acknowledged indigenous perspectives that also consider the agency of nonhuman matter; indigenous thinking is absent from conceptions of vibrant matter and agential realism, however. Postcolonial ecological thinking is important because, as Mukherjee (2011) contends, the two fields of ecology and postcolonialism are so intertwined that they must be taken into account by scholars of either field. As ecology (or nature) is not outside history, the field 'must be able to trace the social, historical and material co-ordinates of categories such as forests, rivers, bio-regions and species' (177–178). Many indigenous epistemologies resist the bifurcation of nature and culture, or nature and history, and consider the ecological agency of the more-than-human. Vandana Shiva (2005) describes it as a continuum: 'Native American and indigenous cultures worldwide have understood and experienced life as a continuum between human and nonhuman species and between present, past, and future generations' (1). This continuum can redress the boundaries and categorisations that privilege the western conception of human that devalues the more-than-human. Postcolonial ecology will be discussed further in Chapter III: *Dwelling*. I suggest that theories of ecomaterialism are indebted to indigenous epistemologies that acknowledge the agency of the more-than-human.

Mel Chen (2012) extends ecomaterialism to include biopolitics and deadzones engaging with animacy or a set of isomorphisms such as liveness, agency, mobility and awareness (2). As a linguistic concept, Chen utilises animacy to question the distinctions between human and animal, dead and alive. 'In its more sensitive figurations, animacy has the capacity to rewrite conditions of intimacy, eliciting different communalisms and revising biopolitical spheres, or, at least, how we might theorize them' (Chen 2012: 3). Departing from Bennett, her project is not to highlight or invest 'life' into matter; rather it is to remap the very 'zones' of 'life' and 'dead', towards theorising affect within queer thinking. Schneider (2014) proposes that Chen's animacy may be a fruitful concept for performance studies, particularly in relation to Chen's experience of having mercury poisoning as she was both living with mercury and

mercury was living with her. 'If we are entered by living materials who co-live with us, then watching a film becomes a kind of cross-material co-living if not parasitism' (Schneider 7). The idea of performance materialities (or materialities in performance) as being co-live is indeed a compelling idea, which could be considered as an extension of Bennett's 'thing-power'. I will return to this idea in Chapter V, where I will suggest a theory of performance based on the ecological agency of the more-than-human.

As I have suggested, the interpretation of ecomaterialism I employ in this thesis is based on the premise of the capacity for agency in the more-than-human. Ecomaterialism questions the binary-making practices that separate human/nature and nature/urban, and examining these dividing conventions problematises their supportability due to the material effects of the more-than-human. I turn this theory towards my elaboration of an ecological performance aesthetic to consider the way in which performance may make manifest the vibrancy of the material world and in so doing, counter reductive anthropocentrism through the acknowledgement of the agency of the more-than-human, particularly in urban contexts.

Object-orientated Ontology

Ecomaterialist theories share some conceptual territory with object-orientated ontology (OOO), in that they are interested in how 'objects', 'matter' or the nonhuman has agency, and is sometimes grouped within this field of study (i.e. Rosenberg 2014). However, as Alaimo (2013) asserts, the idea of a ubiquitous 'object' 'which erases all distinctions between consumer products and living creatures' (13) and reinforces subject/object (and therefore nature/culture) binaries is problematic. This flattening of difference between objects towards equality or totalising sameness may actually run counter to ecology, as Morton argues that 'instead of reducing everything to sameness, ecological interdependence multiplies differences everywhere' (2010: 277). Alaimo also conjectures that the explicit ecological aims of ecomaterialism are lost in some theories of OOO: 'I worry that the celebration of consumer objects as fascinatingly alien functions as another diversion from, if not denial of, environmental apocalypse and mass extinction' (2013: 18). She posits that it is an object's entanglement in the dense networks of interaction that produce, consume and utilise it – and the material agency of those networks – that is of interest to ecomaterialism with political, ecological and ethical dimensions. Rosenberg (2014) calls the 'urge to objects' a colonial fantasy, which violently erases the social. This 'neo-primitivism' Rosenberg equates with neoliberal colonialism as 'the ontological turn is a kind of theoretical primitivism that presents itself as a methodological avant-garde' (2). Rosenberg is perhaps reacting to the perception of what Latour calls the 'New Age Flavour' of materialism: 'Add agency? You must be either mad or definitely marginal' (Latour 2010: 10)[13]. Nonetheless, the term 'neo-primitivism' is

[13] This position is also evident in Garrard's description of vitalism as 'largely discredited scientific belief that phenomena possess a vital spirit over and above qualities that may be described mechanistically' (Garrard 2004: 118).

loaded with the same colonialist assumptions Rosenberg critiques. By coding a turn towards objects as primitive, she may be reinforcing the reductive clichés of colonialist thinking, which Däwes (2014) suggests sustains colonialist aims by keeping indigenous people in the past, coding them as traditional, naive and uncivilised and thus unsuited for the challenges facing the contemporary world (23). The assumption that it is primitive to imbue objects with life as western thought has somehow moved beyond this, aligns with the colonialist agenda.

Other performance and ecology scholars that have drawn on different iterations of ecomaterialism as a way of highlighting and theorising the ecological potency of specific practices include: Arons (2012), Arons and May (2013), Ryan (2013), Heddon and Mackey (2012), Chaudhuri and Enelow (2014), Kramer (2012), Kershaw (2014), Donald (2014), Haedicke (2014), Beitiks (2013) and Preece and Woynarski (2015). This body of scholarship has created a fruitful discourse between performance practices and ecomaterialism, each contribution moving towards a nuanced and rigorous theorising of the intersection. My contribution within this thesis departs from this scholarship in that I apply a specific focus of ecomaterialism within urban or city environments. I theorise the way in which performance may recognise (and refract and interrogate) the vibrant materiality and ecological agency of the city, moving away from binaries towards ecological thinking. In extending ecomaterialism to the specific context of performance in urban sites, I am suggesting a reframing of the perception of nature, in which humans are part of the ecological world.

Performance in the City

In addition to ecomaterialism, my theory of an ecological performance aesthetic is particularly focused on performance practice in the urban environment, in an effort to address the lacuna of urban ecological scholarship in ecocriticism and the field of performance and ecology. I suggest that performance may reframe, or re-think the city towards the deconstruction of the urban/nature dualism. My conception of the bio-urban also relies on the performance site of the city, in an effort to move ecological performance away from the rural-bias assumption that walking through green fields[14] is somehow more 'ecological' than performance in a city. Of course, the city itself is not a new site (or partner) for performance, as there are many examples of work that incorporates, engages, re-maps or disrupts the city. The focus within the context of this research is on performance work that relates to the concept of the bio-urban, or recognises the aliveness of the living world within the built environment. The urban experience is now one of the most common as more people live in cities than in rural areas (World Health Organization 2014)[15]. This shift means that ecological understanding within

[14] Examples include Emergence's *The Walk That Reconnects* (2014) in rural Wales and *Walking* (2012) by Robert Wilson.

[15] As Massey (2007) and others point out, a lot of growth of urban centres is in the Global South, where the urban experience is one of poverty. This inequality will be considered further in Chapter IV: *Eco-Cosmopolitanism*.

an urban setting is particularly timely. According to Amin and Thrift (2002) 'each urban moment can spark performative improvisations which are unforeseen and unforeseeable' (4). Performance offers one such improvisation, in which the effects on people and places are unforeseeable, and may point to a different way of viewing the city. Performances as 'urban moments' may reframe relationships to the city and open up new ways of engaging with it.

Jen Harvie suggests in *Theatre & the City* (2009) that performance (particularly site-based performance) can reframe or re-prioritise the space of the city. She uses Critical Mass and Blast Theory's *Rider Spoke* (2007) as examples of how these events re-prioritise the road for cyclists and invert everyday hierarchies. Critical Mass is a large gathering of cyclists who meet at a designated time to ride as a group through the city once a month. In a Critical Mass event the road is no longer the sole domain of cars, with cyclists generally having to give way to them. The masses of cyclists subvert the power position of the road and reframe it for themselves, displacing the car for a more ecological mode of transport. *Rider Spoke* used bikes to take people on a kind of memory tour of the city of London, asking them to stop at certain places and listen to recordings of memories people had left or record something themselves. As this was framed as a performance, rather than just a bike ride, I suggest it gave both the time and space for participants to attend to their relationships to specific places in the city, traveling in the city and whether or not those changed in relation to bikes. Harvie also points to Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping as providing a self-reflective moment about the urban experience of consumption and climate change. For her, performance can provide a space for reflection on the current state of the world and our current lifestyles. The performative interventions of Reverend Billy work to create an opportunity to attend to our relationships with capitalist-driven spaces such as shopping centres. These moments ask the spectator or audience to consider consumer culture in a way that they are not asked on a regular basis. Reverend Billy specifically seeks to question and reposition the grand narratives that drive capitalist consumption and climate change. These anthropocentric narratives position humans at the centre of the earth and growth as the ultimate goal. Harvie posits that performance can reposition relationships to urban sites, particularly in an ecological sense.

The way performance events may intervene in the city, blurring lines between reality and fiction to political/social/cultural ends, parallels the UK-based Wrights & Sites conception of the creative pedestrian who 'engages with and changes the city, particularly using the arts — not as passive expressions of the city, but as active changings of it' (2006: 121). The arts in general and performance specifically create exchanges with the city, as a material place and networked relationships, and as a cultural gathering place and place of nature. These types of performances may be viewed through Ben Highmore's (2002) concept of 'fissures in the urban fabric' which seek to 'interrupt the homogenising and hypnotising effects of capitalist standardisation through their cultural and historical differences' (140–1). I suggest that performance can operate as a 'fissure', interrupting the hypnosis to uncover the ecological vibrancy of the city.

The Bio-Urban as the Ecology of the Urban

The above view of performance and the city, and ecomaterialism inform my conception of the bio-urban, which attempts to deconstruct the binary between humans and nature to redress the anthropocentric hubris that led to the Anthropocene and the current ecological crisis. As Bottoms (2007) suggests, not only does this binary thinking separate humans from 'nature', it also creates a hierarchy with humans at the top. 'The binary opposition of nature and culture — with its implicit privileging of the latter — persists in much of our most basic thinking, insistently setting masterful humanity apart from the rest of the earth's life forms' (in Bottoms and Goulish 2007: 19). The Cartesian dualism of human/nature also applies to popular conceptions of the urban (human's place) in opposition to nature, which may be reinforcing this dangerous anthropocentrism. As landscape architect Michael Hough (2004) contends, 'the perceptual distinction between cities and the larger landscapes beyond them has been a root cause of many social and environmental conflicts' (1). This echoes Harvey's (1993b) contention of the ideological distinction between rural and urban:

> The distinction between built environments of cities and the humanly-modified environments of rural and even remote regions then appears arbitrary except as a particular manifestation of a rather long-standing ideological distinction between the country and the city (Williams, 1973). We ignore the ideological power of that distinction at our peril, however, since it underlies a pervasive anti-urban bias in much ecological rhetoric. (3)

In order to collapse this dualism and the anti-urban bias in ecological thought, the concept of nature needs to be reconsidered to embrace the urban. In the following section, I argue that one of ways to reconceptualise the urban/nature divide is through the idea of the bio-urban. I trace some of the thinking about the relationship to the urban, nature and ecology, from urban design and architecture, to position the bio-urban as a provocation for an ecological performance aesthetic.

I offer the term bio-urban to refer to the mediating, communicating and disclosing of nature within urban environments (in this context within performance specifically), or to elaborate the way in which the city (and thus the human) is always already embedded in nature. 'Bio' comes from the Greek root meaning living or life. The bio-urban is intended to convey a sense of aliveness of the city, urban or built environment, or the living city. Incorporating ecomaterialism and Harvey's claim about the urban being natural, the bio-urban reconceives the urban as alive with ecological relationships and vibrancy. Cities are part of nature, and are often created from natural materials and can be home to more biodiversity than other areas (such as country or suburban areas). Urban green spaces, city farms and urban orchards can all provide a typically 'rural' experience of nature in the city, demonstrating the bio-urban simply. Moreover, the term also implies an interweaving and dynamic relationship between urban living and engagement with the more-than-human world. By connecting those two concepts, I am suggesting a revised notion of urbanism, one that holds a sense of nature within it and does not set up a binary between city/country or human/nature. Extending

ecomaterialism and turning towards performance, the bio-urban as an assemblage of dynamic and vibrant ecological relationships recognises the city as becoming, rather than fixed.

In the vast body of work that makes up urban studies and the study of cities, I am concerned particularly with the relationship between the urban, city space and ecology. The city I am referring to in the bio-urban is not a fixed locale or concept. As Amin and Thrift (2002) assert, 'cities have become extraordinarily intricate, and for this, difficult to generalize. We can no longer even agree on what counts as a city' (1). The urban is not just a physical description of a location, as architect Mostafavi (2010) contends; rather it is a mesh of dynamic relationships that we must be aware of, both perceptible and imperceptible, which operate across urban terrains as well as rural ones, and have local and global ramifications (29). As more than half of the world's population now live in cities of one sort or another (including 80% of the UK population according to the Office for National Statistics[16] 2012), the city has become a ubiquitous experience — 'the city is everywhere and in everything' (Amin and Thrift 2002: 1). As Heynen *et al* (2006) suggest, 'cities are dense networks of interwoven socio-spatial processes that are simultaneously local and global, human and physical, cultural and organic' (1), making them both part of nature and constructed through human means. Understanding the ways in which cities are both human-influenced and a mesh of ecological relationships may help to deconstruct binaries and consider ecological urbanism. The concept of the sustainable or green city and urban experience has been taken up by geography, architecture, urban planning and design, and sociology, while ecocriticism — performance and ecology particularly — remain slow to engage with urban ecology. It is precisely because of the accelerated growth of the city that ecological thinking in performance needs to address it. If the urban experience is quickly becoming one of the most common, it is imperative that we start to think of the city as part of nature and ecology, so that growth and development may be reframed in ecological terms. I suggest that considering the way in which the city has ecological agency may help to understand urban development in social, political and ecological terms.

It is also important to note that nature and vibrancy are not only present in green spaces or city parks, where 'nature' is inserted into urban environments. The whole of a city is part of the more-than-human world and embedded in ecological relationships (that also have ethical, social, political and community dimensions). The concept of the bio-urban is an attempt to disrupt the fixity of rural and urban distinctions while at the same time embracing a theory of ecomateriality or ecological relatedness materiality. If we consider all matter as having life or having agency in some sense, the distinctions between human-built and natural begin to

[16] The Office of National Statistics defines 'urban' by population size, density and sparsity, using 6 categories: Urban - Less Spare; Urban - Sparse; Town & Fringe - Less Sparse; Town & Fringe - Sparse; Village, Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings - Less Sparse; Village, Hamlet & Isolated Dwellings - Sparse (Pateman 2011: 7).

fall away. Consider a building, often referred to as human-made, yet all the building materials have an ecological connection or relationship. They have either come from the earth, as with wood and glass, or have been paired with natural elements such as steel and concrete. The building is not only a human-made monument of culture but an assemblage of ecologically-vibrant materials. The building itself is embedded in a number of ecological relationships including, but not limited to, the soil beneath it, the wind flowing around it, the CO2 it emits and the resources it consumes. These materials are all actants (Latour 2009) as they produce effects. Viewed in this way, Harvey's claim that there is nothing unnatural about New York City begins to make sense. I suggest that performance may be able to acknowledge and critique this vibrancy, which is often invisible in urban areas.

At the *Homing In: Aesthetics of Sustainability* (2013) symposium at Aberystwyth University, during a discussion of sustainability, one participant commented that the growth of cities was unsustainable and cities themselves were generally ecologically-damaging compared to his home in rural Wales. This constructed dichotomy between the country (read ecologically 'good') and the city (read ecologically 'bad') is unsupportable. In 1973 Raymond Williams wrote about the persistent ideas of the country and the city, suggesting that although the 'real history ha[s] been astonishingly varied, powerful feelings have gathered and have been generalised' (1993 [1973]: 1). Although the experiences of country and city living have varied widely, these ideas have catalysed in public perception and imagination as a dualism. The country is seen as 'a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue', while the city is a place of 'learning, communication, life', as well as 'noise, worldliness and ambition' (Williams 1993 [1973]: 1). These reductive and constructed binaries were evident in the speech of the symposium participant. While it is easy to recognise 'nature' in rural Wales (as with the recent *Culture Shift* report commissioned by Emergence[17]), we do not often recognise that 'nature' and ecosystems exist across large spaces, and are indeed needed to sustain life, regardless of the specific locality (Hough 2004: 12).

We must also consider the way in which reductive binaries have led to an ideology of exploitation of resources. As Smith (2006) suggests 'the positing of an external nature rationalizes and justifies the unprecedented exploitation of nature (human cum non-human), the "massive racket" that capitalism, historically and geographically, represents' (Foreword). While the development of cities has a major environmental impact, and requires outlying land to support it, cities can also be efficient at distributing resources, as 'per capital environmental impacts, across the board, decrease with increasing density' (Farr 2008: 26). City dwellers can

[17] The *Culture Shift* (2014) report surveyed artists in Wales to find out how they are responding to sustainability. It is dominated by photos of expansive skyscapes, vivid greenery, majestic windmills and flowing rivers, perhaps reinforcing the stereotype that ecological projects take place in romantic landscapes of capital N-nature.

have a lower ecological footprint that those who live in the country (Farr 2008)[18]. Cities can also be home to great biodiversity and thriving green spaces. Hough uses the example of an inner-city waterfront site that is home to a multitude of bird and marine species (although considered 'derelict' by the city). The foundational dualism of the anti-urban bias, which is often characterised as a distinction between 'natural' and 'man-made', tends to collapse when examined closely. Cities are not inherently less ecological than the country, particularly considering intensive, industrial agricultural practices in rural areas that can be ecologically damaging, including contaminating ground water and soil with fertilisers and pesticides. Farr (2008) goes so far as to vilify the American suburbs (which could perhaps be thought of as a hybrid space with romanticised 'country' values within reach of urban centres) as the cause for climate change: 'The American dream of a large house on a large lot in the suburbs is what's most responsible for cooking the planet' (26). The concept of the bio-urban refers to the breaking down of the binary in an acknowledgement that cities are part of a vibrant nature and the ecology of the more-than-human world.

Warwick Fox (2000) recognises that the built environment has not been seriously considered within most writings on environmental ethics. Rather, environmental ethics has tended to focus on the 'spontaneously self-organising' natural environment. Fox's book, *Ethics and the Built Environment*, aims to address this blind spot in environmental ethics, in which 'the fate of the "green bits" of the planet is now inextricably bound up with — indeed, effectively at the mercy of — the future of the "brown bits"' (Fox 2000: 3). The segregation of 'bits' on a map, reinforces the conceptual dualism between urban and nature. In lots of urban and built environments there are 'green bits' and indeed there are 'green bits' that have been built by humans. With the bio-urban, I am suggesting that the earth cannot be easily separated into these distinct categories, that there is always a co-mingling of spontaneous self-organising and human-influenced systems, making the 'brown bits' as ecologically-vibrant as the 'green bits'.

Sustainable[19] urbanism (or new/ecological urbanism) is a recent field that aims to reframe the relationship between humans and nature (Farr 2008: 28). It is the amalgam of urbanism and environmentalism, which has primarily been developed in architecture, building and planning (with books and a congress authored by architecture firms). The edited collection, *Ecological Urbanism* (2010), from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, considers some

[18] For example, in America by 'per unit land area, cities generate a great deal of pollution. However, on a per capita basis, city dwellers generate the least CO2' (Farr 2008: 25-26). The UK statistics also suggest that in terms of carbon emissions (especially from transport) urban populations generate less than rural ones (Pateman 2011: 51), although these figures are specific to different countries and their infrastructure.

[19] The term 'sustainable' is problematic in reference to ecology or environmentalism. Although based on concerns of economic, environmental and social sustainability, it is ambiguous and entrenched in the discourse of neoliberal capitalism. In this context it is not clear what is being 'sustained' and for whom. For example, its usage in 'Our Common Future' (the Brundtland Report 1987), also implies a level of consistency or stability not found in ecosystems or the more-than-human world.

of the tensions and challenges of ecology in consideration of the urban as a sphere of intricate political, social, cultural and economic relations, that requires multivocal responses to both current circumstances and possible futures (Mostafavi 2010: 13). Ecological urbanism is concerned with cities that can accommodate the growing urban population, in ecologically-sensitive ways, broadly through design, planning and architecture. The ecological designs are usually also made to improve social relationships and use of space, while incorporating 'nature' or natural elements (such as green roofs and living walls) into designs. However, as I will suggest below, from a design imperative, it does not go so far as to deconstruct the urban/nature binary. Through ecological design and planning, sustainable/ecological urbanism offers a useful way of thinking about ecological relevance and vibrancy in relation to the bio-urban.

Some theories of sustainable urbanism can actually reinscribe reductive binaries. Biophilia as a design principle is one of the tenets of sustainable urbanism. Based on E.O. Wilson's concept, biophilia 'is the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms' (Wilson 1993: 31). Wilson asserts that not only is 'contact' with nature good for mental health and quality of life, it is an innately human characteristic or need to be connected to the material 'natural' world. Biophilic cities address the problem in urban life of the seeming divide or separation from the 'natural' world, which we are dependent upon. As city planner Timothy Beatley (2011) argues, 'a biophilic city is a city abundant with nature, a city that looks for opportunities to repair and restore and creatively insert nature wherever it can' (2). The problem with this kind of thinking is that it can reinforce the urban/nature binary, conceiving nature as outside the city and as something that needs to be 'inserted' into it. Rather than questioning the materially differentiating practices that this binary thinking comes from, it reasserts the romantic idea of capital N-nature[20]. I am suggesting a concept of the urban that is situated within nature, with its own ecological material vibrancy. However, biophilia and sustainable or ecological urbanism share the aim of recognising the ways in which we are embedded in ecological assemblages and networks, and the need to acknowledge these within an urban context to lead to more ecological ways of living in the city.

I suggest that an ecomaterialist position rejects the distinction between urban and nature, and considers the ecological agency of things such as rubbish, electricity, metals, a plastic glove and a bottle cap, as in Bennett's words, 'thing-power arises from bodies inorganic as well as organic' (2010: 6). Bennett refers to Manuel De Landa's position that inorganic matter can self-organise, as 'inorganic matter is much more variable and creative than we ever imagined' (De Landa in Bennett 7). If inorganic matter can self-organise, then the above stated distinction between the human-built environment and the 'natural' self-organising environment is called into question. The rural bias in ecological rhetoric can fail to take into account the social and political dimensions of ecology. Ecology is not just about our relationship to what is perceived as 'natural', it is interwoven with social, ethical and political formations. Ecological

[20] There is also an essentialising taking place in biophilic thinking that can be problematic.

relationships cut across these areas, therefore thinking through our relationship with 'nature' requires engagement with these ideas. These dimensions of ecology can be hidden or made invisible when our image of nature is limited to rolling green hills or anything 'green'. Urban areas are where many of these social-political-ecological relationships play out and are engaged with in our everyday lives. As Hough (2004) suggests, an underground system of public transportation is an ecological system, and when we start to think of it as such, we may start to recognise its vibrancy, which may in turn foster an ecological sensibility. Thinking of the other ecological systems embedded in the urban may work to dissolve binaries and reframe our relationship to the more-than-human world, underpinning an ecological sensibility.

In this thesis, the concept of the bio-urban provokes an ecological performance aesthetic. It elicits and stimulates my contention that performance may expose, refract and/or challenge ecological relationships, distilled to city sites as one of the most ecologically relevant.

The Bio-Urban and Performance Practices in this Thesis

The performance practices examined in this thesis are broadly framed by the idea of the bio-urban. I suggest that performance can create a space to attend to the bio-urban, revealing and critiquing it, as well as enacting it in performance. Although there will be a broad range of work discussed within this thesis, I will primarily focus on performance practice in urban settings in order to address the current gap in scholarship about urban ecology and performance. For example, I will discuss *Biped's Monitor* (2013) in Chapter II: *Immersion*, and explicitly engage with the way the performance related to the wider city context, fostering a phenomenological experience of 'nature' in an urban environment. While the bio-urban implicitly underpins my discussion of Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2012–2014), which had both urban and rural iterations, I actively resist the binary (and privileging) of urban or rural. The bio-urban and ecomaterialism were the theoretical basis for one of my practice-based experiments, the *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013). In offering this work as an example of the bio-urban in performance, I am suggesting a way in which performance may open up imaginative possibilities as well as critique some of the assumptions around the anthropocentric paradigm of gardening.

Trans-Plantable Living Room[21]

One of the most visible examples of the bio-urban is the space of the urban garden. *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013) (Appendix A), on which I was a collaborator, was conceived to celebrate urban community food growing and to engage local groups of growers in a creative performance project. It involved three performance-makers (from the UK, Canada

[21] Some of the material in the following section was drawn on for a short co-authored paper with Bronwyn Preece, 'Trans-Plantable Living Room', being published in *Contemporary Theatre Review* (forthcoming 2015) and a co-authored (with Preece and Meghan Moe Beitiks) article in the *Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts Quarterly* magazine (2015).

and US), a community allotment with 150 volunteers (in Cardiff) and seventeen interviews with community gardeners conducted by a community-engagement coordinator based in Wales. All of these elements coalesced to create the *Trans-Plantable Living Room*. Based on a Living Stage design first realised in Australia by designer Tanja Beer, the project was part growing experiment, part tea party and part performance, taking place in Cardiff for World Stage Design 2013. The space of an outdoor living room filled with plants was grown by Riverside Community Allotment and was activated by a performance inspired by interviews with local gardeners, created by Plantable Performance Research Collective, made up of Bronwyn Preece, Meghan Moe Beitiks and myself.

This project sought to foreground the connection between people, food, urban and nature by creating an affective visual and experiential metaphor: a living room set outdoors with ordinary furniture retrofitted into containers to grow edible plants, instead of supporting solely human activity. The image of plants growing in domestic human objects questioned where plants should grow and deconstructed nature/culture and urban/nature dualisms. The performance involved hosting a tea party for plants (instead of the human audience) in the space to gesture to the agency of those plants (and the recycled furniture that housed them). It revealed some of the networks of ecological relations, and illustrated the concept of the bio-urban through urban food growing.

Trans-Plantable Living Room was interested in how an allotment performs, in the context of the current ecological situation. This includes exploring how the allotment functions as a space of resistance, resilience, control over nature, community, wellbeing and a connection to 'nature'. As Mackey (2007) has noted, allotments 'can be read as paradoxical and liminal, hovering between city and country, habitat and leisure ground, sanctuary and physical burden, private place and public space. They hold a lure of the local and a fascination of the different' (185). This inbetween space does not fit into the perception of the 'urban' and yet is not completely 'rural' either. In this way, the allotment could be seen as problematising the city/country (and public/private) binary with its 'paradoxical and liminal' qualities. The allotment is also a particular kind of garden, or what Jenny Uglow (2004) refers to as 'at one remove from farming' which is different from the other main type of garden, a pleasure garden of flowers or a carefully tended landscape manicured for physical beauty (3–4). Both types of gardens have ecological relevance and can simultaneously be considered as changing and manipulating 'nature' for human use. The 'pleasure garden' may be providing space to a host of biodiversity and useful sites for bees, birds, insects and other animals. However, it could equally be growing species of plants not suited for the climate and which may require frequent use of chemical pesticides or fertilisers or excessive amounts of water. A garden then, is not inherently 'ecological' or 'natural' nor is it necessarily a harmful human intervention into 'nature'.

Allotments and urban food growing have been identified as strategies for resilience in the current era of ecological uncertainty. As Hough (2004) suggests, 'the urban allotment garden, through the daily process of growing food, provides a realistic basis for understanding the cycle of the seasons, soil fertility, nutrition and health' (21–22), all of which increase environmental literacy or our understanding of interconnected ecological relationships. With the *Trans-Plantable Living Room*, we considered gardens not only as pragmatic mechanisms of subsistence, but also as sites of ecological resilience. These sites are not without their own set of ethical imperatives, including who has access to these sites, what kind of plants are grown, power relations, gender roles and what kind of resources are consumed in their production. As Mackey (2007) has asserted, 'historically, allotments are places that are deeply contested' (184). Most of these issues are beyond the scope of this research, although tangentially related to my focus on the way food operates as an actant, as well as how urban food growing enacts the idea of the bio-urban.

The performance project explored the relationship between food growing, community and broader land relations within an urban context, in this case the city of Cardiff. Mackey (2007) describes the performance *Feast* (2003), a LIFT performance project in a South London allotment, as an ecological performance because it 'communicated a valuing of the earth as a resource for cultivating foodstuffs and, determinedly, remained closely embedded in matters of the "natural" world' (184). Similarly, *Trans-Plantable Living Room* sought to communicate a sense of nature that values the earth as providing food and acknowledged the reciprocity of our relationship to resources. Merging notions of home and blurring distinctions between gardening and performance, indoor and outdoor, the project aimed to examine the changing role of gardening and permaculture in light of the current ecological

Figure 2.
Green Stage/Plantable/Tanja Beer (2013)*Trans-Plantable Living Room*, Bute Park, Cardiff.
Photo by Mike Medaglia.

climate from the starting point of dissolving binaries between urban/nature and human/nature. An immersive experience in an outdoor living room provided a phenomenological experience of the bio-urban, which may have highlighted the vibrancy of the living world. Similarly to *Feast*, *Trans-Plantable Living Room* engaged a local community of gardeners and growers in Cardiff and blurred the line between gardener/artist[22]. In terms of dramatic structure and modes of meaning-making in the performance, we set up a tea party pastiche. Instead of drinking tea, the performers chewed on planted parsley in tea cups and then at the end of performance, we gave out empty tea bags and seeds which the audience could plant. On the conceptual level the living room communicated the idea that we are embedded and immersed in nature: by setting it outdoors, around a tree, and modifying the furniture to house the plants, it communicated the aliveness of our living room.

Bennett (2010) considers the agency of edible matter or foodstuffs, within a theory of ecomateriality. She refers to the food as an 'operator', a term borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari. Food is an operator within an assemblage of ecomaterial: economic, transportation, pesticides, agribusiness and labour, ingredients, and sustenance are just some of the ways in which food operates. This assemblage implicates a number of people, practices and foods. For her, edible matter is an operator because it can catalyse the public, as the Slow Food movement has. Bennett suggests that food as 'materiality experienced as a lively force with agentic capacity could animate a more ecologically sustainable public' (2010: 51). Urban agriculture and the urban orchard movement[23] have begun a move towards food growing in the city, recognising how vital food production is in ecological terms and in this way animating the public.

Whether tomatoes growing on a fire escape (as in one oral history we collected for the project) or squash growing in a love seat, the act of growing food in urban areas illustrates the concept of the bio-urban. Although not a new idea by any means, more complex (and sometimes innovative) urban agriculture has been gaining popularity as of late. Ethnobotanist James Wong grows exotic crops in his garden in Croydon, encouraging 'foodies' to grow their own with his book *Homegrown Revolution* (2012). For Detroit, urban farming is helping to revitalise a devastated city. Community gardens and commercial farms alike have sprung up and people are surprised at how well suited the urban environment is for growing crops and keeping bees. Detroit could be considered quintessentially urban, with fading skyscrapers and burnt-out shop fronts, but the urban farms and gardens, many of whom give away their food for free, have rarely been vandalised (Harris 2010). These practices make visible the

[22] There are many artist gardening projects in the city, including Agnes Denes' *Wheatfield — A Confrontation* (1982) in New York City, Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape* (1965) also in New York, Encounter Art's *Little Patch of Ground* (2009) across the UK and recently Siobhan Davies' *Human/Nature* (2014) in London.

[23] See http://www.theurbanorchardproject.org for further information.

connection between food growing practices and ecology, and provide a direct relationship to food sources. The idea of the bio-urban understands the urban as part of ecology, and blurs the binaries between rural and urban by carrying out typically 'rural' practices such as farming and agriculture that can thrive in urban contexts.

There is, of course, an anthropocentric edge to gardening and urban food growing which could be read as exercising a sense of control over nature. *Trans-Plantable Living Room*, and indeed the bio-urban, could be considered as reinforcing an anthropocentric viewpoint: humans contorting and controlling nature for their aesthetic benefit, and building over nature to house the unwieldy population. Working with the gardeners at Riverside Community Allotment, I had the sense they thought of what they were doing as working with 'nature' through permaculture and 'light-touch' techniques. They feel part of the material of the garden, and a sense of reciprocity rather than control. Of course, the garden does not always do what they would like it to do — not being able to grow tomatoes in Cardiff due to blight, for example. In some sense, the idea of the urban and the garden may always be implicated by a kind of anthropocentrism, although this does not always have to be fatal to an ecological project, as I will suggest in Chapter V. Humans are agents within the mesh of living relationships, and understanding and acknowledging this may help illuminate and catalyse a political ecological project.

The *Trans-Plantable Living Room* was a metaphor and enactment of the bio-urban. It is an example of a way in which the theory of the bio-urban shaped and was shaped by the performance. Different aspects of the *Trans-Plantable Living Room* will be considered in Chapter III: *Dwelling* in which I will theorise the domestic aspect of the performance in relation to home, alongside other illustrative performance examples.

Conclusion

The pervasiveness of the nature/culture (and therefore human/nature and urban/nature) dichotomy has proven difficult to overcome, within scholarship and how we interact and think about our relationship to the more-than-human world more generally, as both nature and culture have been deeply contested terms with multiple definitions across history (Cless 2010: 2). Arons and May (2012) identify a tension that manifests in placing performance and nature in a field together, as the arts have been one of the ways social attitudes are configured and refigured, but western arts practice has conventionally been framed as an activity that separates (and elevates) humans from 'nature' (1). The tension between performance and nature seems to be evident in a considerable amount of ecological performance practice. Cless (2010) asserts that performance has been engaging with the nature/cultural dualism since ancient Greek drama, when 'even then the dualism was deadly, but now it is apocalyptic in scale' (2). Within the field of contemporary ecological performance practice, much of the work questions and critiques dominant conceptions of nature. Mediating and re-thinking the experience of nature, particularly within an urban context, has been identified in this

chapter as a provocation for the development of an ecological performance aesthetic within a contemporary context, resisting romantic notions of rurality. 'Nature' within the city (or the city as always a part of nature) has been termed the bio-urban in an effort to convey a sense of the life and vibrancy of the ecological world, from an ecomaterialist position. Performance practices theorised in this thesis are provoked by the concept of the bio-urban in order to confront and resist the reductive dualism that separates humans and the more-than-human world. My practice-based experiment, the *Trans-Plantable Living Room*, was made to interrogate and test out the concept of the bio-urban and sought to affectively enact the deconstruction of the human/nature binary within an urban context.

Part 2 of this thesis (Chapters II, III, IV) will elaborate and theorise the characteristics of an ecological performance aesthetic. Each of the chapters will consider a characteristic (and related theories) of immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism in relation to a number of illustrative examples of performance practice. Moving beyond re-conceiving nature, performance can create an active engagement with the 'nature' or the more-than-human world, from a position of being corporeally and sensuously immersed within it, as I will argue in Chapter II: *Immersion*.

Part Two

Chapter II

Immersion

‘We are not outside the ecology for which we plan — we are always and inevitably a part of it. Herein lies the charm and the terror of ecology’ (Bateson 1987 [1972]: 510).

Introduction

As I have asserted in Chapter I, contemporary urban life is often constituted in such a way that 'nature', or the more-than-human world, is regularly commodified and represented as 'other'. From designated 'green spaces' in city planning to 'natural' food labels, nature is often construed as something contrasting to human life, which must be sought out. As Tim Ingold has written, 'the distinction between environment and nature corresponds to the difference in perspective between seeing ourselves as beings *within* a world and as beings *without* it' (2000: 20). In order to break apart binaries that conceptually separate humans from nature, we need to understand our relation as one of being within the material environment. Immersion then, or being *within* a world, is necessary to move towards an understanding of ecology, an ecological sensibility and the relationship between the human and more-than-human world. It is also the premise on which ecological phenomenology is based, theorising the relational exchanges in an ecological world in which we are always already immersed. Ecological performance may also provide an ecological phenomenological experience, revealing the way in which we are immersed within multiple ecological relationships. Immersion, I will suggest, is a characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic, and provides a way of thinking about human relationships with the ecological world, which is the basis for further theorising of this aesthetic in subsequent chapters.

This chapter will explore the way in which site-based performance frames a space to mediate and foreground ecological relationships. This space is considered through reflection and analysis of an ecological performance aesthetic motif of immersion in the more-than-human world. This will include exploration of the concepts of space, temporality, environmental participation and embodiment in relation to recent ecological performance practice. I will begin with a discussion of ecological phenomenology, in which the concepts of immersion and participation are explored as the defining qualities of our relationship to the living world. Taking as my starting point Theresa J. May's (2005b) concept of the potentiality of performance to create a space that can foster 'ecological reverence', I will explore how disclosure of ecological relationships can lead towards the recognition of the human connection to the more-than-human world. Chaudhuri's conception of the materialisation of nature metaphors within the performance space will be considered with specific regard to contemporary performance practice. Then, Cless' concept of the power of performance to mediate nature through phenomenological materialism is critiqued and put into conversation with ecological phenomenology. I will contend that the power of ecological performance within the context of this study is not the literalisation of nature metaphors on stage. Rather, it is performance that immerses the audience in the living world and by doing so, discloses ecological relationships. I will then discuss embodiment (following Merleau-Ponty) and the contemporary ecological perspective of David Abram.

In this chapter, I will examine how performance can be a space where the connection between humans and the more-than-human world is cultivated or uncovered, as well as challenged and critiqued. I will suggest that this connection is foregrounded in performances that immerse the spectator (or participants) in the more-than-human world. This concept will be explored through examples of practice including Nutshell's *Allotment* (2011–12), *La Grande Moisson* (1990), Fevered Sleep's *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* (2013), NVA's *Speed of Light* (2012), Baz Kershaw's Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2011–14), and Arbonauts' *Biped's Monitor* (2012). This work will be examined through the lens of ecological phenomenology — phenomenology with a focus on interpreting ecological experiences and relations. Sensuous immersion in the living world can act as a touchstone in contemporary life, grounding us in the present moment and local place (Abram 2007: 13). This chapter will explore how performance frames this interaction in a way that may remind us of our interconnection to the mesh of ecological relationships.

I employ the term immersion to refer to our relationship to the more-than-human and to a quality of performance. In the context of this study, these immersive performances broadly happen outdoors and tend to provide direct engagement with the living world for the audience or participants — in other words environmentally immersive work, rather than practices that immerse the spectator in the 'dramatic action'. This type of immersive performance usually provides sensuous immersion in a way that conventional theatre does not tend to do. Or as Kershaw (2007) suggests, it has the ability to transform spectators into participants and in so doing bridge the perceived separation between humans and the living world (318). Immersion is identified by Jeanne Bovet (2011) as a characteristic of the sensorial perception of sound. While seeing is directional, hearing is omnidirectional, making it potentially threatening in that it is difficult to ignore. Though hearing is not my specific focus here, I suggest that sensuously immersive performance also has the potential to be threatening, and *Speed of Light* may be one example. I further suggest that direct engagement with the living world provides sensuous immersion (of more than just seeing or hearing) and has the potential to reveal ecological relationships, which may in turn redefine the relationship between humans and the more-than-human world.

Throughout this chapter, I refer to ecological phenomenology. By this I mean a specific form of phenomenology related to the experience, description, reflection and analysis of our perception and understanding of the material ecological world (or the world in its ecological aspect). As I will describe in further detail in this chapter, ecological phenomenology is employed to interpret and disclose the relationality that informs perception and understandings of ecological relationships, particularly within the frame of performance. It is a critical tool for analysing our relationship to the wider world in ecological terms. It is a variant of ecological thinking, as an ecological phenomenological position assumes that humans are embedded in an ecologically-material world, and it aims to analyse the meaning and effects of that embeddedness.

In brief then, the focus of this chapter is theorising immersion as a characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic through examples of some contemporary ecological performance practice. Immersion will be considered in relation to the claims and concepts of May, Chaudhuri, Cless, Kershaw, Merleau-Ponty and Abram. It will interrogate the ideas of performative space and the frame of performance in relation to ecology, embodiment, participation and the senses in performance. All of this will lead to the synthesis of immersion in performance as a way of bridging the perceived chasm between humans and the more-than-human world.

Ecological Phenomenology

Before examining how ecological performance engages with space and theorising immersion as part of an ecological performance aesthetic, this section will discuss ecological phenomenology and the way its emphasis on the immersive nature of ecological relationships provides a theoretical grounding for thinking about ecological performance. Drawing on and extending phenomenology and ecological philosophy, ecological phenomenology considers the experience of relational exchanges with the more-than-human world, analysing interrelated ecological relationships and their effects.

> Eco-phenomenology is inspired and guided by the idea that uprooting and replacing some of modern philosophy's deeply entrenched but environmentally destructive ethical and metaphysical presuppositions can help us to combat environmental devastation at its conceptual roots. (Thomson 2009: 445)

As Thomson suggests, eco-phenomenology aims to reconfigure some long established ethical and metaphysical presuppositions in order to think ecologically. The dualism of mind/world is inherent in the modern philosophical tradition 'but phenomenologists argue that these conceptual dichotomies fundamentally mischaracterize our ordinary experience' (Thomson 446). Although the mind/body dualism is somewhat outdated, the mind/world dualism has persisted in most theories of mind (although not all). This dualism separates humans from 'nature' epistemically because it fails to acknowledge that the entanglement of mind (or sense of self) and the world is foundational to our lived experience in the material environment (Thomson 446).

Somewhat ahead of the current tide of ecological philosophy, Seamon and Mugerauer (1985) contended almost 30 years ago that we are immersed within the world and that an aim of phenomenology is to 'understand the nature of this immersion, which provides the touchstone and background for any formal, scientific consideration of environmental elements and interconnections' (3). This perspective is a key concept in the development of eco-phenomenology, which seeks to understand that relational nature of our experience in the ecological world. Understanding and critically analysing this position of immersion may provide a robust theoretical foundation for ecological ethics and political responses to the current ecological situation. I suggest that from a perspective of eco-phenomenology, performance can open up a space for embodied engagement and immersion. Performance has

the potential to reframe perception of space and the ecological relationships within the work. The frame (and space) of performance may reveal and critique ecological relationships from the point of immersion within them, from an experiential perspective of ecology. Perhaps initiating the more recent wave of eco-phenomenology writings, David Abram (1997) draws on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, and refers to the body as the material locality of our intersection with the living world. It is this embodied experience of the more-than-human world that discloses ecological relationships and may foster a sense of ecological identity that has the potential to reconceptualise our relationship to the more-than-human. By disclose, I am referring to revealing or making manifest different aspects of ecological relationships, in performance specifically. These relationships are often made invisible or veiled in some way in daily life. Disclosure then, in phenomenological terms, implies an opening up or clearing away to reveal immanent relations. As I will argue, performance can uniquely facilitate this disclosure, through immersion, participation in the environment and the quality of attention it can produce.

The field of ecological phenomenology, also referred to as eco-phenomenology, is a relative new and emerging field. While phenomenology has been broadly integrated into fields of study outside philosophy, from anthropology to architecture to geography to nursing, ecological phenomenology is still in its infancy (Brown and Toadvine 2003: xi). Key texts on the subject include *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology* (Seamon 1993), *The Spell of the Sensuous* (Abram 1997), and the more recent *Eco-Phenomenology* (Brown and Toadvine 2003). For Brown and Toadvine, philosophy in general can help clarify the ethical and metaphysical assumptions/understandings about the world around us and uncover why we feel 'unease' about the current environmental crisis (2003: x). Phenomenology is in a unique position to communicate and reveal the value of the experience of ecology and of being in the living world, rather than to quiet the experience as other theoretical methods may do (2003: xii). Phenomenology's aims of 'exploring and disclosing the complexities and novelties of our experience of the world' (Brown and Toadvine 2003: xii) make it well placed to intersect with ecology. Ecology, in this context, is about exploring and disclosing the interrelationship between organisms and their environment (or world). According to Brown and Toadvine, in Husserl's call for a return 'to the things themselves', phenomenology's emphasis is on the experience of the thing itself (in this case the earth or nature) which positions it to express ecological value. Eco-phenomenology then makes a double claim: first, to understand the complexities of current ecological conditions necessitates phenomenological methods and understandings; and, second, that in a phenomenological analysis of our ecological situation, phenomenology comes to be a philosophical ecology (Brown and Toadvine 2003: xiii).

Thomson identifies the eco-phenomenology 'motto' as 'back to the Earth itself' (448), a variation of Husserl's saying, 'back to the things themselves'. The meaning is twofold; the earth as material or concern of phenomenology and that 'eco-phenomenology is for the sake of the earth' (Thomson 448). However, the meaning of 'the earth' provides a problematic

tension in relation to the ethical aims of eco-phenomenology. Thomson positions this as a tension between naturalistic ethical realism (following Nietzsche) and transcendental ethical realism (following Heidegger). The former could be called an ethics of life, premised on the idea that ontologically, good and evil are justifiably based on life-giving or life-destroying properties (Kohak 1993: 31). Thomson asserts that this basis for an ecological ethics may be too generalised to be applicable to real-world ecological conflicts and in its effort to preserve life as such, may actually devalue human endeavours such as art, literature, culture and religion (Thomson 452). Rather, a transcendental ethical realism based on Heideggerian thought that has its basis in metaphysics may be appropriate for ecological ethics. In a reaction against resourcism (or viewing 'things' and the more-than-human as resources to be utilised as efficiently as possible), this position advocates attunement to Heidegger's 'being as such', in which we understand the limitations of our perception of other beings/entities and acknowledge they have meaning and value beyond what we are capable of conceptually understanding (Thomson 456). In this ethical conception it then follows that once entities are understood, we will approach them in an environmentally sensitive and responsible way. This position, I suggest, is open to the same critique as naturalistic ethical realism in that it may be too generalised to be applicable to resolving real-world ecological tensions and conflicts. Further critique of ecological thinking based on Heideggerian thought will be included in Chapter III: *Dwelling*.

It has been argued that the English Romantic movement greatly influenced the development of ecological phenomenology. Coletta (2001b) suggests the Romantics wrote about the experience of ecology rather than the science of ecology. As he suggests, in their *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802* (2013), Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote not only about the human experience in nature but also about the experience of nature as a being itself, such as the feeling of a tree branch as it hangs from a tree. This 'romantic ecology' linked environmental and social issues and imagined nature as a 'being'. This approach was a predecessor of phenomenology as Wordsworth 'helps us to embody the earth in our experience of it' (Coletta 2001b: 79). In romantic ecology meaning was in the relationship between the living world and human beings. John Clare wrote about a phenomenological ecology that was 'lived', with relationships and experiences examined in conjunction with the specifics of a place or environment (Coletta 2001a: 84). Personal experience was the foundation of knowing for the Romantics. In Clare's poetry, all objects have being but we cannot perceive the relationships between beings as they are not a sensory phenomenon. However, cultural works, such as art and literature, can mediate those relationships, allowing them to be experienced in some form, if not directly sensed (Coletta 2001a: 85). The romantic influence on ecological phenomenology conceived a new way of perceiving the living world and the ecological relationships within it. By taking ecology out of the realm of biology and into creative imagining, it was made more accessible and relatable to people not necessarily versed in biological/ecological sciences. The relatable nature is important to cultivating an ecological sensibility and an understanding of human impact on ecological relationships.

Of course, the Romantic tradition was deeply rooted in entrenched class divides where nature appreciation was viewed as something open to those with education (i.e. white, wealthy men) to truly appreciate it, with John Clare as one the of only 'working class' Romantic poets. Politics, culture, class, gender, religion, worldview, accessibility and social issues are so bound up with ideas of 'nature', it is in all likelihood impossible to engage with the concept unencumbered. Politics have been played out in the construction of our concept and relationship to nature: commodity and capitalisation of landscape, class and access to resources, human rights versus land rights and climate change, just to name a few. For Kershaw (2007), not only is the romantic tradition problematic in its elitist, imperialist conceptions but also in its problematic positioning of landscape and the sublime (309). This view of the natural world as the landscape (and nature as sublime) creates spectators that look upon the landscape as a separate object, instead of viewing themselves as acting within it. The influence of the landscape perspective on theatre is evident in the writings of Marranca and Chaudhuri (Kershaw 2007: 316). The creation of spectatorship of the natural world is what Kershaw suggests perpetuates the ecological crisis rather than addresses it:

> Spectatorship of a squirrel – or a character, or a subject – in a landscape in the theatre is inevitably caught up in this process of detaching the agent from its environment, and thus reduces the chances of insight into the environment of the agent and therefore of the agent itself in biocentric terms. (309)

The separation created by this view of landscape hinders our understanding of being immersed in the more-than-human world. In this way, the intersection of theatre, performance and ecological phenomenology may offer an alternative to the scientific reduction of nature and ecology. This alternative conception of nature is one that bridges the perceived divide between nature and humans, dissolving dualisms and understanding that humans are immersed in the ecologically-material world. Brown and Toadvine refer to this conception as 'remembering the earth' that collective amnesia has forgotten (xx). This perceptual detachment or amnesia that divides humans from 'nature' is at the centre of a contemporary western worldview and has a great influence on the perception of the living world and way in which the current ecological situation is viewed. Brown and Toadvine point to the traditional assumptions of scientific naturalism, capitalism, Cartesian dualism, Christianity and patriarchy among others as the source of the detachment (xix). Performance then, as a form of culture, may manifest and illuminate the ways in which our lived, ecological experience is affective and heterogeneous, interconnected to the material world.

Ecological phenomenology has more recently been taken up by the design discipline, particularly landscape architecture (Seamon 1993). This was under the assumption that if this way of perceiving ecology was adopted by designers, then the structures or landscapes they designed would be more responsive to ecology, particularly the living environment of a specific place. Seamon describes why a phenomenological approach to ecology is relevant, not only to design, but to being in the world:

> Phenomenological ecology supposes that beneath the seeming disorder and chaos of our world and daily life are a series of underlying patterns, structures, and relationships and processes that can be described qualitatively. (Seamon 1993: 16)

In describing these underlying patterns and relationships, we widen our knowledge of the world outside ourselves. According to Seamon, meaning is relational and found in the space between the individual and the wider patterns of the ecological world, of which the individual is a part. He also describes eco-phenomenology as seeing the world in a 'more perceptive, multi-dimensioned way' (16). Referring to the ecological knowledge 'outside ourselves', Seamon seems to be describing a type of ecological identity. Ecological identity is a way of perceiving the world and yourself in relation to it, a way of acknowledging your role within the mesh of ecological relationships, a shift to a non-anthropocentric worldview. I suggest that an ecological identity may be fostered through attending to or revealing ecological relationships within the frame of performance.

The way of seeing and interpreting within theories of eco-phenomenology is through finding meaning in the underlying ecological structures of perception. Riegner (1993) characterises this approach as a new way of seeing (and interpreting) the familiar or everyday world. He describes it as seeking to 'experience the whole as it comes forth through the parts' (212) in order for the familiar, living world to take on new meaning. This, however, is also the challenge: to see the everyday from a new perspective (212). For Ingold (2000) showing or disclosing is a powerful tool in recognising the human relationship to the living world. Showing something means that it is perceived through the senses of the person being shown to: 'It is, as it were, to lift a veil off some aspect or component of the environment so that it can be apprehended directly' (Ingold 2000: 21–22). Similarly, for Toadvine (2009), mediating nature requires an 'expressive gesture' as 'nature, therefore, is precisely what discloses itself through our expressive acts, and as requiring such expression for its disclosure' (15). I suggest that performance is one such expressive act, as it can reveal the mesh of interconnected relations we might call 'nature' and act as mediator of larger ecological relations, complexities and systems.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that ecological relationships can be made known, or perhaps disclosed, in and through performance. Performance in this sense functions as a way of showing, as Ingold contends, 'art gives form to human feeling' and that its form is related to how we perceive the world (2000: 23). He further suggests that art is guided by 'the specific orientations, dispositions and sensibilities that we have acquired through having had things pointed out or shown to us' (Ingold 2000: 23). Performance is both shaped by and works to shape our relationship to the more-than-human world, in which we are immersed. Art in general, and performance more specifically, can uncover metaphysical and ethical assumptions about our relationship to the living world, which eco-phenomenology takes as its subject. I

will return to eco-phenomenology later in this chapter with discussions on Merleau-Ponty's embodiment and 'flesh', Abram's concept of participation and Kershaw's immersion.

A Place Apart

This section explores the place and space of performance and its relationship to ecology. Starting with May's (2005b: 356) conception of performance space as a 'place apart' where one may consider ecological relationships, I suggest that this space may acknowledge our immersion in the more-than-human world. Drawing on Chaudhuri's (1994) assertion of the materialisation of nature metaphors in theatre and performance, I will consider how this is manifest in performance in light of Cless' claim of phenomenological materialism. Taking Nutshell's *Allotment* (2011–2012) and Gad Weil's *La Grande Moisson* (1990) as brief examples, I will consider how these performances in the outdoor environment sensuously immerse the spectator or participant in the sights, sounds, and qualities of a specific place. I suggest ecological phenomenology as way of reading such performances that foregrounds and highlights ecological relationships, acts as a reminder of our immersion within the ecological world and may work to reconfigure the relationship between humans and environment.

For May (2005b), theatre and performance has the potential to act as a place 'apart' where performer and audience can cultivate reverence to counter the 'otherness' of the living world. Ecologically-engaged performances can provide this 'place apart' to consider ecological relationships in reverence, by employing a 'with place' approach – a paradox of ecological performance and sense of immersion (providing an 'apart' space while also working within place or specific sites). These performances offer a potentially unique opportunity to attend to ecological relationships and reposition the 'other' of the living world.

I suggest that attending to ecological relationships in performance, as a place apart, is paradoxically taking an eco-phenomenological mode of enquiry and may open up thinking about our immersive interrelation with the ecologically-material world. May writes of the potentiality of theatre (and performance) in that 'place apart':

> Cultivating reverence may be one of the most important personal acts forwarding culture change. Yet our commercially bombarded lives allow little opportunity to exercise a careful regard for people or place. Theatre has the potential to become a place apart where actors and audience participate in an encounter that gives us pause. (2005b: 355–356)

In positioning a 'place apart' in relation to immersion, I am suggesting that given the time and space to attend to ecological relationships, as revealed and manifest in performance, we may come to understand and acknowledge our immersive position in the world. The concept of this attending as reverence has problematic elements, as being reverential to the more-than-human world may reinscribe romantic ideas of the 'otherness' of 'Nature'. However, it could also be argued that the lack of respect for the more-than-human world has contributed to the current ecological crisis. Reverence as a concept is also quite vague and difficult to

measure as it is almost impossible to know whether an audience has experienced 'reverence'. However, through the lens of ecological phenomenology, the underlying structures that create ecological meaning (or disclose ecological relationships) can be interpreted and theorised. For May, the space of performance is vital to cultural change and perhaps environmental change. In its ability to be an encounter that gives us pause, theatre and performance provide the rare opportunity to attend to relationships to people and place, and the meshwork of ecology.

Space has both temporal and spatial connotations here and performance can provide both a place and time to cultivate reverence as well as clearing away other distractions. May's concept of performance space seems to suggest an opening, of both time and location, which provides the opportunity for ecological intimacy by attending to ecological relationships in the present moment. Geographer Doreen Massey calls for a re-imagining of the concept of space. In *For Space* (2005), she argues that perception and conception of space affects our perception of the world, relationships with others, politics and sense of place, and I suggest that extends to ecological relationships as well. A reconceptualised sense of space could lead towards a non-anthropocentric worldview that values an ecological sensibility. It is this concept of the space as perceptually shaping socio-ecological relationships, in performance, from a point of immersion, that I employ throughout this chapter.

The space created by theatre and performance and its relationship to ecology has been a contentious issue. The materialisation of metaphors is a key debate within the field of performance and ecology since Chaudhuri (1994) wrote about the need to develop an ecological theatre. In a move away from semiotics, where nature is not a sign or representation of human drama, Chaudhuri calls for nature to stand of itself (ecologically-material nature) and to be given agency in dramatic context. Chaudhuri argues that modern American/ European drama is firmly set in humanist tradition and is concerned only with human relationships whilst ignoring the urgent ecological situation. The plays that do take into account the more-than-human world use it as a metaphor for human drama. Examples include Chekhov's *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard*, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These ecological metaphors are so embedded into the aesthetics of modern realist drama that their potential for ecological-material meaning can be invisible. She suggests the literalisation or materialisation of nature metaphors in order to create an ecological theatre. Taking the form of performance, rather than the content, as my point of departure, I suggest that it is performance that offers an experience of ecological-material relationships that can create a move towards the ecological. While Chaudhuri calls for the materialisation of metaphors, I suggest performances that literally explore and provide an experience of ecological relationships are a more appropriate form for engaging with the ecological crisis.

May broadly agrees with Chaudhuri that theatre has the potential to be a point of intervention for ecological issues through ecocriticism; although, she emphasises the importance of addressing socio-political issues, such as race and poverty, which are perpetually bound up

with ecological issues. She suggests that the field of ecodrama[24] is opened up to include works that not only take environmental issues as their content but also work that cultivates a sense of interconnection and heightens our sensory awareness of the more-than-human world (2005a). Drawing on this idea of cultivating an (ecological) sense of interconnection and sensory engagement, I contend that it is site-based performance that may fruitfully address these ecological questions.

For Downing Cless (2010), all postmodern theatre is also post-nature and has been suffering from eco-hubris, or 'excessive zeal to control or dominate nature' (4). Following on from Chaudhuri and May, Cless argues that the strength of ecological theatre and performance is phenomenological materialism or its ability to help audiences find 'real' things in nature (such as actual gardens or animals) in a world of 'hyper-simulation' (6). He asks the question: how do we (theatre-goers, theatre-makers, playwrights) translate sensorial experience in nature into theatrical constructions? Within the context of this enquiry, I suggest that the 'natural' sensorial experience is mediated, rather than translated, by site-based performance that offers an active sensorial engagement with its ecology.

Cless' concept of phenomenological materialism speaks to the potentiality and strengths of theatre, and indeed performance, in that it seeks direct engagement with the environment and experience in the more-than-human world. If, as Cless suggests, theatre can connect audiences to 'real' ecological relationships in nature, it would seem appropriate to do this through an active engagement of these relationships. If the aim of an ecological theatre is to foster a connection to, for example, an actual garden, then a performance in the actual garden would seem the most fitting. Such was the case with the performance of Nutshell's *Allotment* (2011–2012)[25], which took place in an actual working allotment (Inverleith Allotments) during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2011 and 2012. The space allowed for the quirks of an actual working allotment to influence and contribute to the performance. The audience sat on garden stools between working plots, while the performance involved planting and tending different plants as part of the narrative of the troubled relationship of two sisters.

In some ways, this performance did exactly what Chaudhuri called to avoid by using nature as a representation (or theatrical metaphor) for human-centred drama. Taking place in an actual allotment does not necessarily prevent 'nature' *per se* or the garden specifically from being read as a sign or symbol. At times the allotment seemed to function as a novel background to the play, reinforcing the sense of separation from the living world. As Heddon and Mackey (2012)

[24] Ecodrama is used broadly to refer to performance practice concerned with ecology. May often refers to text-based work specifically but I would suggest it is similar to what I refer to as ecological performance.

[25] *Allotment* also won the CSPA (Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts) Fringe award in 2011, which considers sustainable production methods and sustainability themes.

point out 'a human relationship narrative was central to this production, not sustainability issues, and the allotment-actant (with all its billions of other actants) simply offered a cosy, site-relevant setting for a contrasting dark story' (175). In other ways, it provided an earthly grounding to the story that allowed it to be read on another level (i.e. the story was not only about the relationship between two sisters but their broader relationship to the plants and land they tended, the act of the growing provided an anchor in troubling personal times). By being in the allotment, the history of allotments as well as ecological context of the work is present (if not always explicitly engaged). Either way, the audience was immersed in the sights, sounds, and smells of a world of plants, earth, worms and water. It even rained during the performance I attended, yet that did not seem to bother the audience. The immersion of the senses within the allotment space was part of the frame of the performance.

Mackey (2007) has also written about another allotment performance, LIFT's *Feast* (2003–2004) which took place at a South London allotment. She suggests that through engaging with the workings of the allotment (growing food and serving it in a performance feast), a clearer ecological engagement was fostered in the space:

> The pragmatic, taken-for-granted place was re-envisioned and seen anew by the participants: the familiar was destabilised. Through such performance disruptions, this reviewing of a known and tended place appeared to change the assumptions and perceptions of those usually inhabiting the space. (187)

In the performance project, Mackey suggests that the everyday quality of the allotment was re-imagined and perceived differently within the frame of performance. Ecological performance then may reveal the way in which everyday places are imbued with dynamic ecological relationships, foregrounded, celebrated and critiqued by performance that engages in those relationships.

In theorising performances that sensuously immerse and engage the audience in the living world, Cless suggests that the sensorial experience of nature should be translated into existing theatrical constructions. If these constructions are deeply embedded in a humanist theatrical tradition as Chaudhuri contends, however, they are unlikely to be read or experienced by an audience as phenomenological materialism. The construction of the audience/performer relationship within the theatre means that when 'nature' is brought within the space, it may be 'othered' or read as a representation, either way reinscribing the divide between humans and the more-than-human world. Of course the representation of nature within theatrical construction may be of value, although it is not the focus of this research enquiry. If it is phenomenological materialism that ecological theatre and performance is aiming for, I suggest it can be most effective when applied to performances that take place in site-based environments, works that relate to local spaces and provide an opportunity for people to actively engage with the ecological-material world, or reveal the way in which we are already immersed in ecological relationships.

Artist/activist Gad Weil's planting of a wheat field on the Champs Elysées in Paris for *La Grande Moisson* (1990) was a performance that exposed immersive ecological relationships within an experience of the material world. Weil organised French farmers to transplant wheatfields, farm animals and farm equipment to the Paris city centre and installed/planted them during the night. The wheatfields and farmers occupied the space all day and at sunset, a large tractor ploughed the fields. It was the experience of a growing wheatfield in which people could immerse themselves in that was used to reveal the (mostly invisible) plight of French farmers, within an urban context. I suggest that it was this experience of being sensuously engaged in the sight, smell, texture and other sensations of the wheatfield that made the piece successful amongst Parisians[26] (Rosenblatt 2000: 8). A further example of May's 'place apart', the wheatfield was a material space and opportunity for direct engagement with farming practices in the middle of Paris. It disrupted the conventional use of the Champs Elysées (transportation, consumption, tourist attraction, advertising) and this disruption was expected to annoy and inconvenience Parisians. It was a surprise when the piece was embraced and people seemed to enjoy the disruption, stopping to experience the wheatfields and interact with them (Rosenblatt 2000).

It was perhaps the embodied experience of being in a wheatfield that made the connection between rural farming and urban life. Cities depend on surrounding rural area for agriculture and this was a way of drawing on this ecological relationship that all Parisians and supposed 'rural' farmers alike are implicated in. This invisible relationship between food production and food consumption was amplified in the piece. As I suggested above, ecological phenomenology is an additional phenomenological framework through which to experience performance. Through ecological phenomenology the ecological-material world is directly engaged, which may be able to reinvent and re-imagine the constructed/perceived separation between humans and the more-than-human world and analyse how our experience of ecology is mediated and disclosed to us.

Ecological performance may provide a space 'apart' to reveal the material relationality and immersion in place, ecology and the city. All of these examples of performance practice provide a space for sensuous immersion in the sights, sounds and smells of the more-than-human world. *Feast* and *La Grande Moisson* also amplified the ways in which we are always already immersed in ecological relationships (agricultural in both cases), even if they are rendered invisible in urban contexts. By bringing 'nature-based' experiences to the city, these works also help to deconstruct the binaries between urban/nature, disclosing the way the city is within nature and experiences of nature in the city (or the bio-urban) through eco-phenomenology.

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[26] Rosenblatt wrote about this piece in *Time* magazine, although referring to it as a protest staged by farmers rather than a performance. He writes of the police presence during the installation of the wheatfields, expecting anger from Parisians, who instead 'ran toward them [the wheatfields] and began to stroll in the fields' (8).

Embodiment

This section takes the concept of embodiment as its focus. Performance is an embodied medium (Garner 1994), and in a sense, bodies sharing space is one aspect that differentiates performance from other mediums. Merleau-Ponty's embodiment, which evolved into the idea of the 'flesh' in his later writings, will be considered through an ecological lens, particularly in relation to Abram's interpretation. Fevered Sleep's *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* (2013) will be taken as an example of the way performance may cultivate a sensitivity to being in the living world, while Violeta Luna's work will be theorised as engaging the 'ecological body'.

Abram writes in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1997) of the more-than-human world and why direct, sensuous engagement with the ecologically-material world is important for the recognition of ecological relationships:

> Direct sensuous reality, in all its more-than-human mystery, remains the sole solid touchstone for an experiential world now inundated with electronically-generated vistas and engineered pleasures; only in regular contact with the tangible ground and sky can we learn how to orient and to navigate in the multiple dimensions that now claim us. (1997: x)

Abram may be gesturing towards Heidegger's conception of *technodasein* (or the idea that humans are 'enframed' by technology, which may also be techno-phobia) with the reference to 'electronically-generated vistas and engineered pleasures' which will be discussed and critiqued in a subsequent chapter (Chapter III: *Dwelling*). I suggest that by applying this 'solid touchstone for an experiential world' to performance it makes a case for ecologically-engaged and immersive performance. It is performance that can amplify this 'solid touchstone' to the living world. In this way, immersion within performance is intimately connected to the concept of embodiment.

Abram (1997) refers to the body as the material locality of our intersection with the living world. It is this embodied experience of the natural world that cultivates a sense of interconnection with it. For Abram, when we are attentive to our experience as affective bodies (rather than 'intangible minds'), we become sensitised to exchanges with the countless other bodies in the world and 'find ourselves alive in a listening, speaking world' (1997: 86). This parallels May's assertion of performance as a space to cultivate ecological identity, revealing the 'aliveness' of the world around us. Performance can create a space for this embodied quality of attention. For Alaimo (2013) embodiment has a political and ethical dimension as '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 endeavor' (16–17). She suggests that it is in the contact between humans and the more-than-human that political and ethical possibilities exist (2010: 2). Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality described in Chapter I, in which it is understood that humans are always already 'intermeshed' in the ecologically-material world, highlights the inseparability of the human and the more-than-human world or 'the environment' (2010: 2). There is an

ethical and political edge to recognising the ecological vibrancy of the material world, as it requires a reformulation of 'value' and behaviour related to the more-than-human, which ecological performance necessarily engages with.

The concept of embodiment within phenomenology comes from Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2007 [1962]). He was responsible for shifting the focusing of phenomenology to encompass the bodily experience in relation to the perception of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, we are all bodies in the world, always both sensible and sensitive. This is not to say that we are mere mechanistic bodies; rather, our bodies facilitate and mediate experience and perception of the world. Merleau-Ponty's conception of embodiment does not describe a Cartesian dualism between mind and body, but rather an intimate unity where there is not one without the other. From embodiment in the world, Merleau-Ponty's thinking has also been configured as a grounding for ecological philosophy (Harney 2007, Toadvine 2009, Abram 1997). Harney (2007) elaborates an ecological interpretation in Merleau-Ponty's unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), suggesting the embodied intentionality, grounded in biological processes, is 'shared by humans and nonhuman organisms alike' (Harney 2007: 133). By effectively deconstructing the human/nonhuman binary, Merleau-Ponty sets the ground work for an ecological philosophy. Harney argues that his shift from discussing the concept of the body to 'flesh of the world' suggests that intentionality is shared by the whole of the more-than-human world. While I am not convinced by the claim of intentionality (I suggest instead that the more-than-human world shares a capacity for agency, following ecomaterialism), the flesh of the world has potentially relevant implications for ecological thought and performance.

Merleau-Ponty's later concept of the flesh can be seen as a development of his concept of embodiment. He configures the flesh as *exemplar sensible*, and as an element of being:

> The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old 'element', in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea. (1968: 139)

This elemental quality of the flesh is understood as a material communication, where material includes a corporeal aspect interconnected with a 'thinking' individual or idea. Merleau-Ponty also theorises an affective relationship between our bodies and the world as influencing each other, as 'once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside' (1968: 136). This correspondence between the inside and outside has ecological implications. Acknowledging the affective quality of our bodies in the world and the exchange between them could be read as a parallel with ecomaterialism and a world made up of vibrant human/nonhuman assemblages (after Bennett 2010, after Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Ingold (2012) specially links the flesh with ecology, renaming it meshwork, in which, in his words, 'the "flesh" of phenomenology is unified with the "web of life" of

ecology' (437). The flesh recognises the relationality and interconnectedness of the world which is disclosed through experience.

A further aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thought that has influenced ecological philosophy is the contention that humans are a part of the world, belonging to it and generating the social world (Moran 2000: 403). This assertion seems to parallel Abram's reference to the 'more-than-human world'. As the phrase indicates, humans are part of the world in fundamental ways, as are nonhumans. Humans may generate the social world of culture (although I suggest culture is embedded in nature in Chapter V), but they do not generate the world *per se*. The phrase also asserts a human uniqueness as the only species to cultivate artistic, literary, cultural, spiritual realms of being. There are a multitude of species outside of the human that are also fundamentally part of the world, hence the term 'more-than-human world'. Ecologically, this idea is important in resisting environmental fascism or romantic nostalgia for a time before 'humans'. Acknowledging human influence on the world as a key operator is necessary then, in order to understand it and open up the possibility of change.

As mediums of perceptual engagement, senses are fundamental to concepts of embodiment and immersion. According to Abram (2007), our body and senses have been severed in the contemporary modes of perception, following the legacy of Copernicus and Descartes. Abram points to the historical moment of Copernicus proving the earth revolves around the sun rather than the other way around. This revelation meant that although it seemed to the senses that the sun revolved around the earth, the senses were not able to discern the truth and therefore could not be trusted, creating 'a profound schism between the sensing body and the reflective, thinking intellect' (Abram 2007: 13). For Abram, engagement (or re-engagement) with the sensuous world (from this dramatic undermining of the senses) is imperative to the development of an ecological ethic. For him, virtual and non-material worlds such as cyberspace have rendered the material, sensible world tedious and inconsequential. This techno-phobia has some problematic undertones associated with Heidegger's *technodasein* (or the idea that technology is changing the nature of being), which will be discussed further in Chapter III: *Dwelling*. While fear of progress and a blanket rejection of technology seem shortsighted and somewhat reactionary, it cannot be denied that contemporary (western) society does not necessarily prioritise sensuous engagement with the ecologically-material world. Fostering sensitivity to the world around us seems imperative in addressing the ecological crisis.

Fostering this sensitivity was the aim of Fevered Sleep's performance/installation *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* (2013) (Appendix B) at the Young Vic Theatre, London. The piece involved one actor (accompanied by a dog) describing different experiences, images, tastes, smells of the more-than-human world in a stream of consciousness. These experiences and images included passages such as 'There are boys kicking a curled-up hedgehog like a football', and 'The smell of rain falling on hot tarmac' (Fevered Sleep 2013). Videos of shifting skyscapes

were presented on all four walls of the theatre, encompassing the audience, while the performer stood on chalk tiles in the middle of the room. Cylindrical lights on poles of different heights were spread out on stage with softly glowing light and the dog slept soundly on a blanket beside the performer. A soundtrack of birdsong and string instruments accompanied the text and imagery. Small projections of water were played on upright chalk tiles. By presenting subtly changing images of the sky, water and light that slowly shifted, Fevered Sleep asked the audience to alter their perception and awaken a sensitivity to the subtle changes of the living world: to listen a little bit more attentively, to watch a little bit more closely and generally to attend to the experience of mediatised nature. Director David Harradine hoped that this increased sensitivity would carry on after the performance so that the audience would leave the theatre with a new awareness of their surroundings (Harradine 2013). They might look beyond the skyscrapers to the actual sky and take notice of the quietly moving cloud patterns, or the smell of rain on the concrete sidewalk, or the feel of a chilly breeze on exposed flesh. Of course, measuring this kind of reaction in an audience would be extremely challenging, particularly over long periods of time. However, it seems to parallel May's (2007) description of eco-theatre, which she asserts awakens some kind of sensible understanding in an audience so that when they leave the theatre the world seems more alive.

Figure 3. Laura Cubitt in Fevered Sleep (2013) ***Above Me The Wide Blue Sky***. Photo by Matthew Andrews, courtesy of Fevered Sleep.

Within ecomaterialism (as described in Chapter I), the world is already alive with actants, operators and human-nonhuman assemblages. When we consider or acknowledge the vibrancy or aliveness of the things around us our worldview may shift as well as our concept of space and perception towards what Bennett (2010) refers to as an 'ecological sensibility'. Bennett suggests that sensory attunement, through the body, is necessary for the development of this sensibility: 'what is also needed is a cultivated, patient, sensory attentiveness to nonhuman forces operating outside and inside the human body' (Bennett 2010: xiv). This attunement was fostered to a certain extent in *Above Me Wide Blue Sky*, by calling attention to the sensuous experience of being in the world. In this way, the work was eco-phenomenological as it made the patterns and relationships of the ecological world visible, drawing out the ways in which we are immersed in a multitude of sensuous exchanges (from the shifting clouds, to birdsong, to badgers, to rain on concrete). The piece elucidates my contention throughout this thesis that performance may be a space for attending to ecological relationships, acknowledging their vibrancy and our immersion within the ecological mesh of relationships.

The Ecological Body[27]

Embodiment as the locus of our relationship with the world means that our body is implicated in a number of ecological relationships as well. By extending perception to include not just our objective body and its location in space but also its ecological place we might begin to think of, and experience, an ecological body.

Mexican performance artist Violeta Luna's work particularly enacts the inextricable link between body and ecology in the context of globalisation. In Luna's *NK603: Action for Performer & e-Maiz* (2014), through her body, she manifests the connectedness of the maize growing and land health to identity and indigenous Latin American culture. She examines and comments on how GMOs (genetically modified organisms)[28] have affected the health of the land in Mexico. The title, *NK603*, refers to one strain of genetically modified maize introduced in Mexico, against protests from farmers. NK603 is a Round Up® ready corn plant produced by Monsanto, a multinational biotech corporation and the largest producer of GM seeds (Monsanto 2002). It is a maize hybrid that is resistant to the herbicide Round Up (also produced by Monsanto), which means that maize crops can be sprayed with the herbicide and will not die. Historically, Mayans and other indigenous Latin American cultures have harvested maize (also known as corn), and it is foundational to their creation story as it is considered the flesh and blood of the Mayan people (Luna 2014b). The growing of maize is connected to a larger Mayan cosmology, and it is thought that

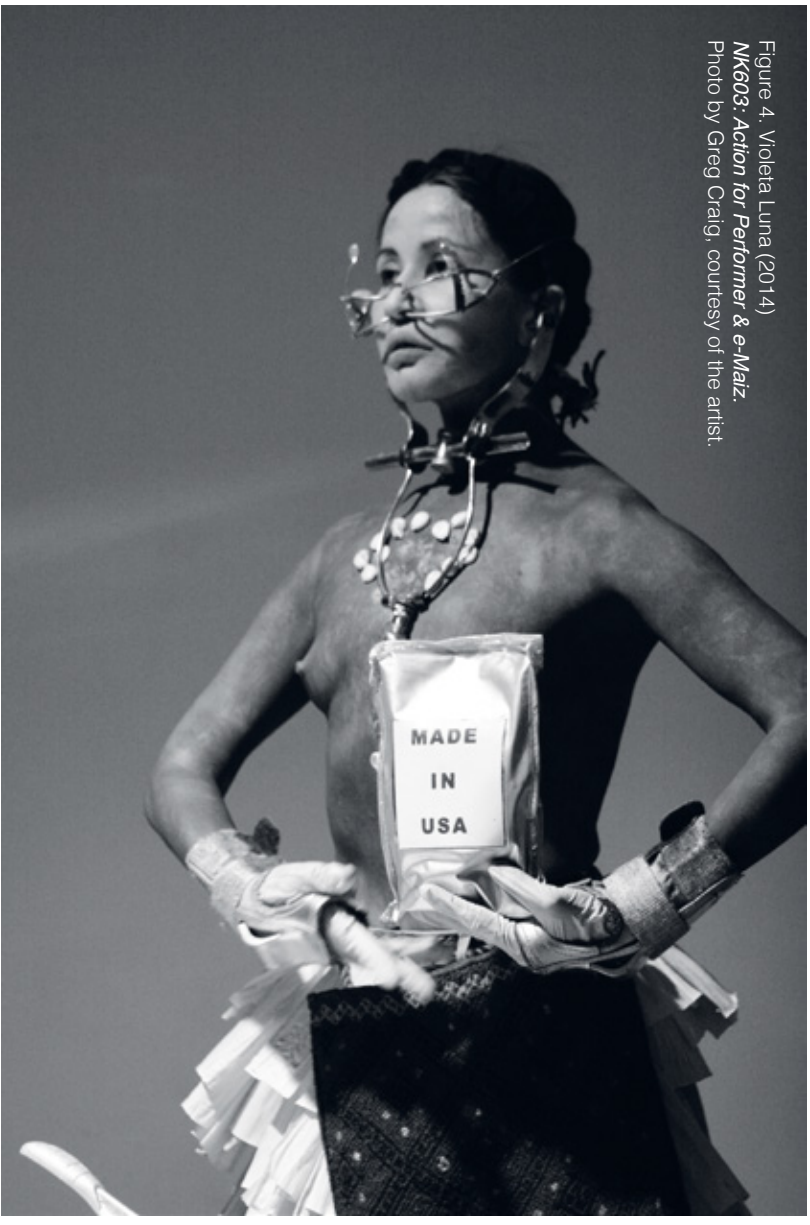

Figure 4. Violeta Luna (2014) *NK603: Action for Performer & e-Maiz.* Photo by Greg Craig, courtesy of the artist.

[27] Some of this writing in this section is being published in a short essay 'Ecological Health in Violeta Luna's *NK603: Action for Performer & e-Maiz*' in *Theatre Applied: Performing Health and Wellbeing*, eds. Baxter, V. and Low, K. (under review with editors).

[28] GMOs are broadly used to produce crop species that are drought-resistant, pesticide-resistant, have a specific appearance or specific nutritional value.

you do not cultivate maize; rather you have a conversation with it. The introduction of Monsanto and GMO technology into maize agriculture, Luna asserts, will not only result in a loss of biodiversity but has already had a profound impact on indigenous peoples and cultures, specifically in the Oaxaca region of Mexico (Luna 2014b).

Luna locates this contested site on her body. In performance, her body is the site of memory, culture and technological intervention by American corporations. The wellbeing of her body is inextricably connected to the land and its ecology. In the piece, she has a maize plant painted on her back, which highlights this inseparability. Medical tools are used to contort and prod her, and a scientist in a lab coat binds her torso in duct tape. Near the end of the performance, the tape is cut off and the painting of the maize has transferred to the duct tape bodice/bonds. The physical health of her body parallels the loss of biodiversity and genetic manipulation of the maize plants. She embodies the struggle of the maize plants themselves as well as the land and farmers. Her ecological body is implicated in the interventions into the land, in the globalisation of rural Mexico, in loss of biodiversity, heritage and culture associated with maize. The body in performance, as May (2007) suggests, reveals ecological relationships: 'foregrounding the body also brings into focus the web of social, political, economic, and ecological systems that touch our bodies' (101). Luna's work reveals the ecological body as one of tension and conflict as well as connected to vital matter. In a sense, all of our bodies are ecological in that they are located in the world, are living things and are full of living things. As Bennett (2010) reminds us, our bodies are assemblages of vibrant material with thousands of microbes and bacteria living on and under our skin.

Luna problematises the idea of the ecological body as a happy, healthy body in the world. However, some of her critique could be read as techno-phobic or nostalgic, while I suggest this idea ignores indigenous peoples use of technology in farming for centuries. It is the forces of neoliberal capitalism, which could be read as reasserting a colonialist agency particularly in regard to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the loss of biodiversity that are the targets of her piece. As Alaimo (2013) suggests, the ecological body is intertwined with social and political entanglements, which Luna amplifies in the work by revealing the effects of globalisation, colonialism and neoliberal market forces on the body that is inseparable from the ecological-material world.

Embodiment is the location of perception and immersion of the more-than-human world as it houses and facilitates sensuous experience. Immersive, ecologically-engaged performance can be an embodied experience and may foster sensitivity or attunement to the ecological world. Our bodies are ecological as they are imbedded in ecological relationships, some of which performance may reveal or disclose. I suggest immersion, from the position of sensuous

engagement and embodiment in the world, is a characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic, a phenomenological form of ecological thinking.

Immersion/Participation

Both immersion and participation are popular terms in performance studies but are being employed slightly differently here[29]. In line with eco-phenomenology, I will focus on participation and immersion in the environmental sense. By this I mean the way in which we are immersed in the ecological world and within the environment of a performance, and how we participate as active agents in the mesh of ecological relationships.

Abram (1997) identifies participation as the defining quality of our sensuous immersion with the world — participation both in the sense of our sensible engagement with the living world being a form of participation, as well as there being a participatory quality to the interplay of the senses themselves.

> If we wish to choose a single term to characterize the event of perception, as it is disclosed by phenomenological attention, we may borrow the term 'participation', used by the early French anthropologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl… particular plants, particular animals, particular places and persons and powers may all be felt to participate in one another's existence, influencing each other and being influenced in turn. (Abram 1997: 57)

We all participate in each other's being-in-the-world and when we consider this in relation to the ecology of the living world we see that we profoundly influence and are influenced by our ecological relationships. From the air we breathe to the water we drink to the sunlight on our skin, we are affected and affective. This participation could also be referred to as reciprocity or what Merleau-Ponty (2007 [1962]) terms attunement, identified as the meaningful exchange between self and the world.

Kershaw (2007) suggests that immersive, participatory performance following in the tradition of experimental performance is keenly positioned to subvert the human/environment divide. These performances deny the conventional theatre paradigm and take place outside of 'theatres'. He refers to biocentric performance, which is immersive in form, and rather than giving rise to spectators, it creates participants. These performances seem to mirror what I have previously referred to as ecological performance or performance that provides a direct experience of the more-than-human world. Kershaw suggests this is 'biocentric performance' and has the potential to reposition the human relationship to the environment:

> 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'. They might achieve this in ways that will not reverse the 'first decisive act' that led to civilisation, but which could lead humans to a fuller appreciation of how

[29] I depart from immersion and participation in performance that has written about by scholars such as Machon (2013), White (2013) and Bishop (2012).

> they are a wholly integral part of the Earth's environment, acting *in* it rather than *on* it. (2007: 318)

Performance then, which responds to and engages with the ecologically-material world, may 'suture' the perceptual human/nature dualism, understanding the immersive quality of being in the ecological world. I will discuss the way in which the human/nature binary was constructed through the 'first decisive act' (in relation to Chaudhuri's geopathology) in the next chapter. Kershaw stresses ethical immersive participation. Perhaps by ethical he is referring to immersive performance events that are conscious of the power of that immersion and participation and do not reinforce the omniscience Stephen Bottoms (in Bottoms and Goulish 2007) has suggested. For Bottoms, environmental performance (and by this I suggest he is referring to site-based outdoor performance) conceives the spectator as omniscient. Bottoms contends that this reinforces an anthropocentric paradigm: although audiences are free to move around, they are in a way exercising the anthropocentric right to 'omniscience', to see everything, which goes unquestioned by the performance and reduces the environment to merely a subject of spectatorship.

However, not all immersive performance is necessarily participatory. There are of course questions and tensions around participation in performance, particularity the ethical imperatives surrounding it (see White 2013, Alston 2013, Nield 2008). However, if Kershaw's participation is considered as participation in the living world rather than in performance, then it seems the immersive form does require participation of some kind. The immersive form of biocentric performance does require active engagement, or participation, in the environment.

Participation and immersion are connected but not interchangeable terms in this context. Participation is considered here not as participation in the drama of the performance, but participation in the more-than-human world, the material environment of the performance. Immersion in the living world requires an attentive or active participation. This attunement may be fostered by ecological performance which responds to, and interacts with, the ecological world. We are immersed in the space of the performance and then actively participate in that space.

For Kershaw, immersive, site-based performance has the potential to be a space to facilitate recognition to the extent to which we are interconnected to our environment and could therefore work to reposition the concept of nature as separate or 'other'. Kershaw's emphasis on immersion parallels Ingold's (2007) thinking, in that 'it is one thing to think about land and weather, and another to think in them' (29). In the case of ecological performance that is environmentally immersive, the frame of performance can provide the space to collapse the separation as in the case of Kershaw's Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2011–2014) (Appendix C) performance project.

Originally conceived in North Devon in 2011, it was constructed again at Performance Studies International in Leeds in June 2012, and again at the University of Warwick in 2014 for the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) conference (where I experienced it and acted as a volunteer for the piece). Kershaw describes it on the Performance Footprint blog as 'an experiment in performance conservation and regeneration founded on ecological principles' (2011) with the purpose of fostering new perceptions of environments, towards their sustainability.

The *Meadow Meander* was a trodden maze-like path in a meadow. From a bird's eye view, the shape of the path was evident. However, on the ground, from the perspective of the person experiencing it, it was simply a series of pathways unfolding before them. The pattern of the path replicated an ecological feature of the earth, which was revealed to the participants after they had meandered, held as an 'open secret' (not revealed here by Kershaw's request).

> The combined maze/labyrinth and puzzle path is also immersive: users are manifestly *in* it, contained by the clear edges of the meadow, brushed by the long grass, overlooked by the valley sides, *embodying* some of its qualities. If they think its pattern is abstract, unrepresentative of anything else, the immersive affect may be pronounced: being just there and nowhere else. But also, if they know it represents something, and especially a major ecological feature of the Earth, they acquire a 'tool' for imaginatively being beyond it. (Kershaw 2012: 15–16)

This ecological feature was mediated through its inscription on the land and then again through the performative frame of the meander. The immersive quality worked to transform spectators into participants and create an active engagement with the land. For Kershaw (2007), it is the immersive form that can 'suture' the integral connections between humans and nature. In a recent keynote by Kershaw for the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies 2014 conference, in discussion of the meander he posited

Figure 5. Earthrise Repair Shop (2014) ***Meadow Meander***, University of Warwick, Coventry. Photo by Lisa Woynarski.

'I perform the landscape and the landscape performs on me' (2014) indicating participation and reciprocity. It seems that his aim with the *Meadow Meander* was to create a biocentric performance space in which ecological relationships (such as relationships to meadows, cultivated spaces, fields, biodiversity and the larger ecological feature) could be disclosed and attended to. It required the meanderers to participate in the environment by choosing their path through the meadow, the length of their meander and the quality and speed of their meander. The walk provided a space to consider the experience (often described by participants as 'meditative') and perhaps involved trying to figure out which ecological feature the maze was mapping (as participants were only told afterwards). This 'mystery' may have resulted in a heightened awareness of an everyday meadow and may have changed the participant's relationship to it. Through the sensory and kinesthetic participation in the site, it provided an opportunity for the participants to attend to their relationship to the living world, in May's conception of performance as a space 'apart'.

Kershaw (2007) further suggests that it is the production of spectators that creates a separation between theatre and the more-than-human world. A spectator is positioned to view an object from a passive distance, placing it as something to be observed rather than something they are already a part of and therefore acting in. This is a problematic idea of landscape as discussed in the Introduction. Kershaw suggests immersive performance can work to address the separation through the conversion of spectators into participants. In Earthrise Repair Shop's *Meadow Meander*, there were no 'performers' which the 'spectators' could passively watch. The immersive nature of the piece meant that multiple senses were necessarily engaged, simply by being in the environment. Being in the environment and meandering through the maze required participation. The shift from passive spectator to active participant can reposition the natural world in relation to humans through active engagement with the performance and in turn ecological relationships. Kershaw suggests that the type of space is created by new paradigms of performance ecology that may break down binaries between performer/spectator 'to produce participants in ecologically responsive action which recognises and embraces complexity in the agency of environments' (2007: 317). Perhaps then performance is positioned as a way of dissolving binaries between humans and nature, landscape and spectator, environment and performance.

From an ecological phenomenological perspective, I suggest that it is through this experience of active engagement that ecological relationships can be disclosed through recognition of humans as an interconnected part of the natural world. I suggest that the frame of performance, and the space created within that frame, is important to the process of reimagining the human/more-than-human relationship. This is a performance that involves active engagement with the environment, allows the participant to experience the living world phenomenologically,

and creates a space in which they can attend to relationships within it. Another example of the way in which performance can engage participants actively in the environment is NVA's *Speed of Light*.

Speed of Light

Speed of Light (Appendix D) was part of the Edinburgh International Festival and conceived by Scottish environmental arts company NVA who make work in 'challenging landscapes'[30] (NVA 2013). It was commissioned by the 2012 cultural Olympiad and framed in the marketing materials as a test of endurance running and athleticism, although I suggest there are implicit ecological themes, which are the focus of this discussion. It involved a night time hike up and down the peak of Arthur's Seat, a large hill famed for its views across Edinburgh. As groups of twenty climbed up Arthur's Seat, runners in LED light suits powered by their kinetic energy made patterns on the hillside. Each hiker was given a glowing walking stick to assist them in their journey in the dark. Different patterns on the hillside made by the runners in light suits were slowly revealed as the hike was underway. *Speed of Light* involved active participation, with an emphasis on active, as it involved a three-hour hike up to the summit of Arthur's Seat. As Kershaw states above, it was acting in the environment rather than on it. However, 'to be "in" the landscape may also to be up against it' as Pearson has noted (2010: 95). The discomfort of the dark, cold hike may reveal ecological relationships as confronting the natural elements, or as Pearson contends, 'to be up against' the environment. As Abram (2011) suggests, 'feeling the polyrhythmic pulse of this place — this huge windswept body of water and stone. This vexed being in whose flesh we're entangled' (3), may work to remind us of our immersion in the living world. The polyrhythmic pulse of the wind, moon and rock of Arthur's Seat may have worked to 'suture' the perceived divide between humans and nature, body and environment. It is being immersed in these sensible elements that reminds us of our inherently interconnected relationship to the more-than-human world.

When I started the journey up Arthur's Seat I was captivated by the concept of the piece. For the first hour this continued as I was surprised and delighted by the experience of seeing the runners make light patterns, looking down at the lights from other groups of climbers and the responsive nature of my walking stick which lit up in response to my climbing. However, as the journey wore on the night got darker, colder and windier. Just before the peak, we were allocated some 'reflection time'. This twenty-minute period of silence gave us time to consider the ecological relationships of the site and take in the city. However, it was also the coldest, windiest and most uncomfortable part of the performance. Reflecting on the experience, this discomfort may have been one of the most interesting aspects of the performance: the fact that it was challenging and uncomfortable and I had to confront the elements, which as a

[30] *Speed of Light* may be considered as a development of previous work by NVA, such as *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape* (2005), which also involved a hike up a mountain at night, this time in the Isle of Skye, to witness a lights and sound installation.

city-dweller seem all too easy to avoid on most occasions. I am not suggesting a 'return to nature' position here, I am merely suggesting that confrontation with the elements (within performance) can act as a reminder of the human position within the biosphere, and from an ecological phenomenological viewpoint, disclose ecological relationships to elements that can easily be avoided in daily life.

Viewing the landscape during the reflection time allowed the city of Edinburgh to be seen in a different way. It allowed an overall perspective of landscape in a uniquely human way. Rather than a directed view, as in proscenium arch staging for example, it was an expansive view. I could see the city from a distant perspective in a way that revealed its interconnected workings while also recognising myself as part of it, finding familiar landmarks. The hike down the hill happened a lot quicker than the walk up. Motivated by the cold and fatigue, the pace was brisk. However, the darkness of the climb meant that I had to be more alert to my surroundings and thoughtful of where I stepped, especially going down hill, balancing gravity. This alertness fostered a heightened perception of Arthur's Seat and caused me to perceive the ecological elements in more detail and engage non-visual senses. The feel of the rock under my foot, the bite of the wind on my skin, the sounds of the humming walking sticks mixed with the breeze and the steps and the low chatter of other hikers. Perhaps these elements became clearer because the familiar visual landscape was no longer accessible. It was too dark to actually see the surface of the rock or the texture of the hillside although new textures and patterns were revealed through the lit-up runners and the glowing walking sticks of other hikers. These light patterns disclosed a different perspective of the landscape and coupled with the other sensuous elements, created a meditative experience of the ecological elements of the landscape. However, I doubt that this was the case for all who attended. My companions for the piece (Kristina Wong and Ian Garrett) were initially impressed with the spectacle and the technology employed in the light-up walking sticks and runner's light suits. Although

Figure 6. NVA (2012) ***Speed of Light***, Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh. Photo by Euan Myles, courtesy of the artists.

they enjoyed the view from the top, they grew fatigued and felt the journey to the bottom was anti-climatic.

The cost of the ticket (£24) could have prevented some from participating, especially since a hike up Arthur's Seat is free during the day, as well as the fact that the hike itself was rather precarious and not broadly accessible. Though the performance included disabled performers, as I witnessed wheelchair users moving in formation and generating light through the motion of their wheeling. I did not witness any disabled audience members. The idea of a normalised body (read physically able) may actually reinforce a conceptual separation between human and environment. If there is only one way to experience the performance (officially hiking up the hill), are those who are outside of that also outside the environment? The seeming ableist bias throws into relief some of the normative assumptions of participating in 'challenging landscapes', particularly in activities deemed to be closest to 'nature' such as hiking, climbing, swimming and aspects of gardening. This ableist bias can have the effect of erasing biological and physical differences and assumes there is only one 'valuable' way of relating to the landscape. This possible disabling nature of ecological performance should be kept in view and embodied relationships to the world should be considered as a range of diverse bodies and modes of relating.

When the end of the hike was in sight, the base camp, the park and the city seemed different. Re-entering the city and walking up the Royal Mile towards the centre of town, my perception of the city had shifted. The concrete felt strange under my feet. Not only had the view from the top allowed me a different perspective of the city and the landscape, the experience of the climb shifted my experience of the city.

Geoperformativity and Place

Speed of Light acted as a space for engagement within the more-than-human world. The performance worked to position the rock as a performer. I suggest this concept of geoperformativity, which David Fancy (2011) describes as 'the performative unfolding of the earth' (62–63), works to disclose ecological relations. These relations are foregrounded in *Speed of Light* through active participation in the landscape.

By being part of *Speed of Light* the hikers were in a sense part of the performance of the landscape. Viewed from below, the processions of glowing walking sticks would have looked as an equal part of the performance as the runners in light suits. When I viewed the groups ahead of me, they resembled a giant glowing caterpillar, slowly climbing up the rock. We may also consider the performance of Arthur's Seat as the volcano from its formation to extinction to a landmark and a tourist attraction. This performance is intimately connected to our experience of the landscape features and the way we interact with it. This interaction

is heightened when it happens within a performance frame and foregrounds the performance of the landscape.

Ecological performance often engages ideas of place and/or is located and created in the context of a specific place (the concept of place, as it relates to ideas of home and dwelling, will be examined in more detail in Chapter III *Dwelling)*. Environmentally-immersive performance practice that engages the senses also contributes to a conception of place, as Feld (2005) suggests, 'as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place' (179). Following Feld, sensorial perception and ideas of place are interconnected, perhaps both mediated by a concept of embodiment. Place-based practices can be ecological in that they may reveal, through experience, otherwise invisible ecological relationships.

For curator and scholar Claire Doherty, the art works that she considers as having artistic value are those which actively resist being in the right place, that 'might dismantle the apparatus of civic promotion, play with navigational systems, and even construct fictions' (2005: 9). For her, the value is not in revealing a city's history or context, but rather in revealing the ways in which these are concealed or made invisible in the city. In reference to the emergence of place-based immersive curatorial practice, and the *Thinking of the Outside* (2005) exhibition in Bristol, Doherty questions the spectacle of place: 'can the remarkable experience of encountering unexpected places override the experience of contemporary art?' (2005: 14).

Speed of Light may be one of those occasions when the 'remarkable experience' of the place overshadowed the experience of the 'art'. As one reviewer wrote, 'as with almost all of NVA's big shows, what dwarfs all performance is the place. To see Arthur's Seat in this way, on foot and at night, against a dark sienna sky, with a half slice of moon hanging, is the real "ooh and ahh" of it all' (Allan 2012). The problem with this kind of formulation is that it assumes there is a distinction between the experience of the place and the experience of the art. The performance is an experience of the place, not just the running in light suits or the hiking up the hill. Most of us would not be wandering up Arthur's Seat at night in the middle of the festival of our own accord, but even if we did, without the performance requesting the audience to interact with the place and drawing their attention to the spatial patterns of the peaks, the experience would not be the same. As was the case with *Speed of Light* and the other performance examples I draw from, immersion in place is part of the artwork, it cannot be separated from it and retain its meaning or affect. Within my elaboration of an ecological performance aesthetic, I consider the way a performance operates in the world, including the way it might reveal or critique ecological relationships, making the place — its ecological history and context — part of the performance, as is the way it renders ecological connections visible within the city.

While performance may reframe perceptions of place, or the novelty of place-based approaches may obscure the artwork, I suggest that ecological performance includes the performance of place and cannot be thought of in isolation. In other words, it is immersed in place. Arthur's Seat, although a lifeless rock in one sense, is a remainder of previous life and holds within it a nest of ecological relations. Ecological performance in and of place can create a moment to reconsider and perhaps celebrate, appreciate and critique our current place in the more-than-human world through engagement with the material environment and the enmeshed of relations within it.

Immersion in the Bio-Urban

I conclude this chapter with a final performance example that reveals the way in which environmentally-immersive performance practice may acknowledge the vibrant materiality of the more-than-human within the city (or the bio-urban).

David Howes (2005) credits Michel Serres' book *The Five Senses* as a paradigm shifting critique of phenomenology (1). 'Serres describes the urban-dwelling scholars who sit huddled over their desks, basing their notions of perception on the bit of the world they glimpse through the window' (2) as if to suggest that this is a diminished and therefore theoretically insignificant view of the world. This idea is not only problematic in the assumption that to be an urban-dwelling scholar is to be by definition somehow sequestered from the sensuous world, but also the binaries inherent in this idea that dichotomize urban and country, indoors and outdoors, nature and human, language and senses. There are still many elements to sense indoors, in the city and in human-constructed environments, whether one is a scholar or otherwise. Again we see an anti-urban bias as suggested in Chapter I.

Howes acknowledges that the ordering of the senses is very much embedded in social values and human culture. The way in which the sensuous information is experienced and communicated is socially and ideologically influenced. 'The senses are the media through which we experience and make sense of gender, colonialism and material culture' (Howes 2005: 4). Sensual information is not ahistorical and apolitical; rather it should be considered as part of cultural systems, as Howes suggests. Perception as a social phenomenon, not simply as a scientific one, can be considered within the context of ecological phenomenology. If sensual perception is embedded within a social and cultural context, then ecological values may influence perception. Howes refers to emplacement to suggest the connection between embodiment and environment:

> While the paradigm of 'embodiment' implies an integration of mind and body, the paradigm of emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment. This environment is both physical and social, as is well illustrated by the bundle of sensory and social values contained in the feeling of 'home'. (2005: 7)

Ideas of home will be discussed further in Chapter III: *Dwelling*. For the purposes of the current discussion, emplacement (or as Howes conceives it as unity between mind-body-environment) may be a useful addition to eco-phenomenology.

In June 2012 *Biped's Monitor* (Appendix E) was performed in Nunhead Cemetery in South London. The performance group Arbonauts, which means 'explorers of the trees', adapted the Italo Calvino novel *The Baron in the Trees* into an 'immersive' performance experience. Nunhead Cemetery is a large green space; a dense forest with crumbling Victorian gravestones peeking out through various flora. It has a main avenue, with the remains of a chapel (the stone structure but no roof) at the top of a hill and various walking paths throughout it. The performance programme included a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*. It began with the idea that few adults can see nature with both inward and outward senses (in Arbonauts 2012). According to Emerson, being in nature and recognising a reciprocal relationship to it, through the senses, can right this idea. I suggest that *Biped's Monitor* engaged nature in a certain sensorial dialogue within the piece.

What struck me during my experience of *Biped's Monitor* was the interplay of the environment and the performance. Entering the crumbling Victorian cemetery (one of the Magnificent Seven in London), I walked up a tree-lined avenue. A singer was stationed at each tree — an arboreal choir, creating a tunnel of sound for me to walk through. Inspired by the actual bird songs of the cemetery, the song felt improvised and responsive. A bird calls, a singer then mimics that call, which is then mirrored by another singer. At the top of the avenue,

Figure 7. Arbonauts (2012) ***Biped's Monitor***, Nunhead Cemetery, London. Photo by Lisa Woynarski.

characters inhabit the remains of a chapel, a pod hanging from a tree, tree swing and various other parts of the trails around the top of the cemetery. As I walked around the space, I could hear notes of music from one path and rhythmic chanting from the chapel, all of which were overlapping and intermixing with the everyday sounds of the forest and cemetery to create the surreal world of the performance.

Walking through the various pathways as part of the performance elicited a unique kind of attention, akin to what Ross Brown (2011) refers to as active listening (5). This active attention is broadly how we take in performance and could be considered as listening (or otherwise sensing) with alert attention. During *Biped's Monitor*, I noticed this active attention coupled with the performance response to the environment, created a sense of revealing and foregrounding the nest of living relations within the cemetery. At one point, I was following a performer down a walking path when a bird sang. The performer stopped and turned his attention to it and immediately my attention followed. The performer attended to the bird for a few minutes while it sang, as did I. If this interaction was not within a performance, my attention would not have been drawn in the same way and the bird's song may have faded into the background. The interaction and response to the dynamic nature of the cemetery fostered a more sensitive awareness of the ecological elements present within the space. Similar to *Speed of Light* and Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander,* the performance was not merely the dramatic action, but it extended to the whole experience in the place and the way it interacted within a wider context of the city. However, the work is open to the same critique as *Speed of Light* — the idea that the 'art' can be dwarfed by the novelty of the place or site.

At the top of the avenue of Nunhead Cemetary, the iconic London skyline was visible in the distance, the trees framing the view in a way that seemed to acknowledge its interconnection. The unique position of Nunhead Cemetery is interesting to consider in relation to its position within the urban setting of South London and Howes' idea of body-mind-environment unity. Rather than create a separation, the performance immersed and mediated a sense of nature without necessarily reinforcing a rural bias. Although the cemetery contains a verdant forested area, the London skyline is clearly visible from the top of the avenue, as a constant reminder that you are in the city. By transposing the setting of the novel (the romantic Italian countryside) to a cemetery in an urban area, the Arbonauts were effectively dismissing the conception of the countryside as 'natural' and the city as 'human-built'. They further exposed ecological relationships by creatively responding to and intermixing with the 'natural' features and sounds of the space and drawing out ecological elements. This worked more effectively in some points than others. For example, the character Uncle had set up a camera obscura at the end of one trail, which seemed out of place, and although audience members interacted with it, it did not interact with the space in a meaningful way. The score, the scenes in the roofless chapel and the pod suspended from the trees revealed the space as a vibrant place, full of life while in a decidedly urban setting, enacting the bio-urban. They created an (imperfect) world, or May's space apart, in which to imagine humans as part of the life in the trees, and

to attend to ecological relationships through the frame of performance and participation in the performance and the environment.

In an online audience survey done after the performance (written by myself and director Helen Galliano), some surveyed audience members identified loss or sadness as emotions invoked during the piece (see Appendix E for full responses). One response to the question of 'What connections did you make between ideas of 'nature' and the performance?' was 'death, loss, merging with nature — romantic melancholia associated with the rejection of courtly life in favour of the pastoral, irrational, feminine'. This idea of a pastoral landscape view may have been invoked for some during the performance, thereby reinforcing human/nature and spectator/space dualisms, as Kershaw suggests, despite the engagement with the site as an active partner. The pastoral and romantic ideas of 'nature' in some of the responses also point to the way in which these dualisms are so ubiquitous they are hard to overcome. The 'romantic melancholia' response also brings up gendered ideas of 'nature', problematically linking the 'irrational' and the 'feminine'. Although Calvino's novel was written in 1957, it is set in the 18th century, telling the story of a young nobleman who gives up his entitled lifestyle to live in the trees. It has a sense of 'romantic melancholia' to it, as the baron laments the loss of trees over his lifetime (due to development and 'progress') in the Italian landscape. The cemetery site may have added to the sense of loss, perhaps a reminder of our ecological bodies, entropy and the earth as a final resting place. This could also be considered as reinforcing a dangerous nostalgia, lamenting a romantic, bucolic idea of nature that likely never existed. A few of the respondents made no connection to the performance and ideas of 'nature', perhaps highlighting the multiple ways of interpreting experience and the complexities of dynamic relationships to the world.

The performance worked to engage the audience with the space, particularly through sound. Almost all the ten responses mentioned the sound or music as the most enjoyable part of the performance, echoing my experience of the active listening and attention created through the interplay of the score and everyday sounds of the cemetery. The immersive quality of the sound may have highlighted the immersive nature of our experience in the ecological world, drawing out some of the ways in which we are interconnected to our 'surroundings', perhaps fostering a sense of emplacement as Howe suggests. This sensuous immersion can be considered a form of active participation or as Kershaw suggests, a shift from spectator to participant. It may also be considered in parallel with Machon's (2009) theory of (syn)aesthetics in performance. She identifies immersive performance (such as Shunt and Punchdruck) as 'visceral performance', which engages multiple senses and situates the body as the locus of the experience (rather than the body as a mechanism for mediating sensory information for the mind) (2009: 17). In thinking of ecological performance as (syn)aesthetic, the positioning of audience as corporeal participants through active engagement with the senses, may foster recognition of the ecological reciprocity in the human relationship with the living world,

from an embodied perspective following eco-phenomenology. Sensuous immersion in the more-than-human world, through the frame of performance, can work to collapse perceived separations between performance and ecology towards a sense of emplacement, although the romantic view of capital N-Nature is difficult to overcome.

Conclusion

I have theorised immersion as a characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic through a framework of eco-phenomenology. I am suggesting that immersion (in the ecological world acknowledged in performance), has the potential to bridge the perceived divide between humans and the more-than-human world. Ecological performance can provide a spatial-temporal fissure in which we may attend to a specific place and present moment, reminding us of our interwoven relationship to the more-than-human world. We are always bodies in the ecological world, at once both sensitive and sensible.

It is through the senses that we perceive and even construct our relationship to the world. I suggest that sensuous immersion in the living world within performance can awaken and reveal complex and interdependent ecological relationships (such as where our food comes from or where our remains are laid to rest). This grounding in the sensible qualities of the living world may provide a foundation of an ecological sensibility and through performance can work towards a more sensitive perception of the world around us. The next chapter will extend this idea of immersion to consider ideas of how we live in the more-than-human world, in relation to home. The question of dwelling, which has also been conceived as foundational to eco-phenomenology (Foltz 1995, Thomson 2009, Zimmerman 1993), will be theorised as characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic.

Chapter III
Dwelling

‘Dwelling involves the process by which a place in which we exist becomes a personal world or home. Dwelling incorporates environments and places but extends beyond them, signifying our inescapable immersion in the present world as well as the possibility of reaching beyond to new places, experiences and ideas’ (Seamon and Mugerauer 1985: 8).

Introduction

Garrard (2004) identifies dwelling as a key trope in ecological literary work and writes about it as 'not a transient state; rather, it implies the long-term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual, life and work' (108). The previous chapters have identified the bio-urban as a provocation to consider the context of ecological performance work, and theorised immersion as characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic. Dwelling is based on the idea of immersion in the more-than-human world and considers the way in which we live immersed and imbricated in ecological relationships. This chapter will theorise the way in which ecological performance is underpinned by philosophical conceptions of home and dwelling. In order to address the current ecological crisis, 'we must ask what human dwelling on earth is and how it is possible to have a home' (Seamon and Mugerauer 1985: 1). In other words, the concept of dwelling asks how we live on earth, where we live and how we think about it in relation to home. These questions of how and where we live contribute to an understanding of our place within the mesh of ecological relationships. I will theorise the way in which these concepts are engaged within an aesthetic of ecological performance. The argument developed in this chapter is that ecological performance can manifest, disclose and critique ideas of home and dwelling, from western and indigenous viewpoints.

The idea of home is central to ecological discourse as the Greek root of 'eco' is *oikos*, meaning home or dwelling place. This chapter will explore the way in which ecological performance is underpinned by a view (or views) of the world and home (or *oikos*), and an extended conception of home that includes the whole planet. There are many ways of thinking about the concept of home (for example sociological, anthropological, gendered, geographical), but here I am interested specifically in ecological ways of thinking about home. This may relate to the social, ideological and political formations of home, but only in so far as they are bound up with the ecological. Therefore, this chapter will not constitute an in-depth review of ways of thinking about home. Rather I will briefly consider a number of key concepts of home all relating to ecology and dwelling, which I will then theorise in relation to specific examples of performance practice. The enquiry will be divided into three subsections, each stemming from the idea of interrogating the 'eco' of ecology. In *Oikos as Home*, I will examine the ways in which the idea of home influences ecological performance, including the work of Fevered Sleep and the *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013), and how it might reveal or productively critique the idea of home. Home is a complex and contested concept, which is imbricated in a number of discourses including place as home, domesticity and nostalgia, all of which will be briefly considered in relation to 'oikos' and ecological performance. 'Oikophila', or love of home, will be considered in relation to *Multi-Story Water* (2012–13), with the idea

that 'home on a domestic scale is inextricably bound to national and imperial geographies of home' (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 51). In the final subsection, I will consider Chaudhuri's geopathology (1995) and the concept of homelessness and deterritorialisation as a persistent idea within theatre that contributes to the perceived separation of human and nature.

Through post-Heideggerian thought, the subsequent section will scrutinise the concept of dwelling including the criticism of ecofascism and its influence on ecological thought, such as deep ecology and dark ecology. The Heideggerian concept of dwelling, which is the basis for dwelling in many ecological discourses, will be critiqued and put into dialogue with post-Heideggerian thinking by Zimmerman (1993), Lavery and Whitehead (2012) and Harvey (1996). I will then consider the dark ecology perspective on dwelling as a counterpoint to Heideggerian dwelling, by thinkers such as Morton (2009) and Žižek (1991, 2008), illustrated through the Dark Mountain Project and Stefhan Caddick's *The Nihilists* (2011). Baz Kershaw's Earth Rise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2011–14) will offer a striking example of the way in which dwelling is conceived within ecological performance, paradoxically reinforcing and resisting Heideggerian dwelling.

Indigenous perspectives on dwelling will then be considered as problematising ethnocentric and colonial assumptions of western thought. Thinkers such as Ingold (2000) and Abram (1997) have suggested that indigenous cosmologies foster a different conception of the relationship between ecology and dwelling. Through a postcolonial reading of ecocriticsm, the trope of the 'ecological Indian' will be interpreted in light of cultural projects seeking to communicate indigenous knowledge. Drawing on examples from the Inuit and First Nations peoples of Canada, the Māori of New Zealand and Australian Aboriginals, I will consider how these views of dwelling are engaged with in text-based performances. Indigenous ecology in performance critiques western perceptions of dwelling through the inseparability of humans/land/more-than-human world, non-linear conceptions of past/present/future, and ecological justice.

All of these different concepts and discourses revolve around the way we live (or dwell), and the way in which we perceive and construct our relationship to the more-than-human world. Examples of performance practice that engage, reveal and/or critique some of the above ideas will be theorised in relation to ecological thinking.

Oikos as Home[31]

The idea of home contains a number of complex, varied and contested ideas within it, some of which I will briefly outline here. Una Chaudhuri (1995) suggests that theatre can be

[31]Sally Mackey is currently researching 'home' as a performing landscape. I have assisted with her research in a minor capacity through researching and attending relevant performances and events. None of the performances mentioned in this section have come from that research.

considered a type of home: 'a specific place to be inhabited for a specific time and in a special way: not exclusively, not through ownership, but for the direct sharing of experience' (1995: 83). Dance artist Simon Whitehead suggests the body as a first kind of home:

> the body is the 'first home', and the place or the territory where we live is a 'second home', or perhaps something that is made through our heightened sense of awareness to where we are. The 'third' home is the home you discover when you start interacting with the assemblage of body and environment to produce something new. (in Lavery and Whitehead 2012:114)

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on an ecological conception of home: home as the earth in which we all live, encompassing ideas of Scruton's (2012) 'oikophilia', Chaudhuri's (1995) 'geopathology', domesticity and nostalgia. In the following, I will argue that an aesthetic of ecological performance engages with different philosophical conceptions and interpretations of home.

There are many nuanced ways of thinking about the relationship between home and ecology. In *Greenspeak* (1998), a book about the language of the green movement, Harré *et al* examine the prefix 'eco' as home. They suggest ecology as home may be closer to the 'Australian Western Desert concept of nguaia (camp, home, country, place where people are staying or could stay)' (Harré *et al* 1998: 106). For Lyotard (2000) ecology translates as 'world household', and 'oikeion' is the private sphere or 'secluded'. He suggests it speaks to something childlike within us on an unconscious level. It is not public or communicable but can be mediated by literature and art, or as I suggest, performance. While for Guattari (2008 [1989]) eco/oikos is 'house, domestic property, habitat, natural milieu' (91 n52). Geographers Blunt and Dowling (2006) consider home on difference scales, arguing that the idea of home is often not confined to a house and may be extended to 'suburb, neighbourhood, nation, or indeed the world' (29).

Thinkers within deep ecology philosophy posit a need for a shift in worldview, from anthropocentric to non-anthropocentric or biocentric (Devall and Sessions 1985). They claim this shift is necessary in order to address the ecological influence asserted by human behaviour and to prevent further environmental degradation. Consideration of the earth as home, in this sense, is what may enact this shift in worldview. I suggest that thinking of the whole earth as home is necessary to comprehend and acknowledge the intricate, global, interconnected ecological relations that make up our daily lives.

Blunt and Dowling (2006) contend that ideas of home not only extend beyond a house or household, they are also made up of 'complex socio-spatial relations and emotions' (3). For example, from a materialist feminist perspective, home and its spatial makeup historically elicited sexism and oppression. They identify three components of a critical geography of home: 'home as simultaneously material and imaginative; the nexus between home, power and identity; and home as multi-scalar' (22). All three of these aspects have resonances with

the idea of earth as home, such as a global sense of place as intersection point (Massey 1997), climate change refugees and environmental racism (Huggan and Tiffin 2010), and home on different scales (Tuan 1974). Massey (1997) suggests that a global sense of place is influenced by race, gender and social relations, as well as capitalism, which affects the so-called global mobility that characterises contemporary living. As someone who was born in Canada and has lived in South Korea and the UK, I recognise this sense of global mobility. The idea that I could make my home almost anywhere is a privileged one, of course. Cresswell (2004) uses the example of ex-patriots in Hong Kong to illustrate the different experiences of global mobility. He describes the 'ex-pats' as predominately wealthy, male and white, while by contrast, their domestic employees are primarily poorer women from developing countries (71). The ability to live, work or study on an international scale is the domain of a social class with the means to do so; it is not out of necessity or due to lack of a home. During the course of my research, I have travelled to international conferences in the United States, Spain, Scotland, Wales and New Zealand. Aside from the environmental impact of this travel (addressed in the Introduction), my sense of global accessibility (and a transnational home) is very different from that of a Filipino cleaner working in a business-class hotel in Hong Kong. These are very different forms of deterritorialisation. I am mindful that I therefore approach the idea of earth as home from a privileged position.

Oikophilia

Interpreting the idea of oikos as home, philosopher Roger Scruton (2012) describes 'oikophilia' as the love of home. According to Scruton, it is oikophilia, or eliciting a love of home, that will bring solutions to the ecological crisis. It is his contention that in order to care for or conserve something you must first love it, and that through local, small-scale initiatives motivated by a love of one's own place, the ecological crisis will be effectively addressed.

I suggest that *Multi-Story Water* (2012–13) engaged with oikophila or a 'love' of home, or at least a different perspective on home. In July 2013 I saw this alternative heritage tour, which was part of Stephen Bottom's AHRC 'Connected Communities' research and commissioned by the Environment Agency to raise awareness of flood risk areas in the Shipley area. Diverging from the brief, the site-based performance ended up being a dialogue about a community's relationship to water in different forms, from the Leeds-Liverpool canal, to the River Aire, to the flooding of the cricket pitch in Roberts Park to the history of a local housing estate built on a flood plain. Based on interviews with local residents and performed by three actors, the performance was made up of three routes — the Red, Green and Blue routes — all taking the audience through a different part of Shipley to nearby Saltaire. In each route, the audience was mostly made up of local residents. During the performance, some audience members told me little asides of knowledge about their own experience of the flooding of the River Aire, or the new art trail along the river or the controversy over the plans for a hydro-electric screw.

The performance of *Multi-Story Water* itself opened up a space for local residents to consider their home (or geographical location) of Shipley differently. An elderly couple in the audience with me, members of a historical reenactment society who were on the Green Route, and audience members who left feedback on the project's blog, all seemed to enjoy the way the performance allowed them to view their home in a new way. Some of the feedback on the blog included: 'Just wanted to say thanks for a wonderful weekend of tours around the Saltaire/Shipley area... It taught me things I didn't know about the area I've lived in 30+ years!' (in Bottoms 2013a). Anne Wooff wrote: 'It was an interesting mix of voices and points of view. I have lived in Shipley since 1971, but it showed me things and told me things I didn't know... I haven't even got memories of the flood of 2000, which was clearly a dramatic event' (in Bottoms 2013a). This response suggests that there is no one way to think of the ecological history of a place or home. For Wooff, the flooding of Shipley does not figure in her construction of home, although it was central to the alternative heritage tour. This may speak to a lack of 'ecological identity', when people do not view themselves in relation to the ecological materialities of their environment. However, the performance may have fostered a sense of ecological identity through its focus on the rivers and waterways: 'this recurring sense of surprise probably stems from the performance's reorientation of local perception around the journey of the river, rather than around more familiar road journeys' (Bottoms 2014). The response of local residents was so positive that the project continues to work in collaboration with the community to engage in discussions about the state of Shipley's waterways and has started a Friends of Bradford Beck, an organisation to help restore a buried and contaminated waterway in Shipley. In this way, the longer term effects of the project may affirm Scruton's conception of oikophilia as amplified or catalysed by performance.

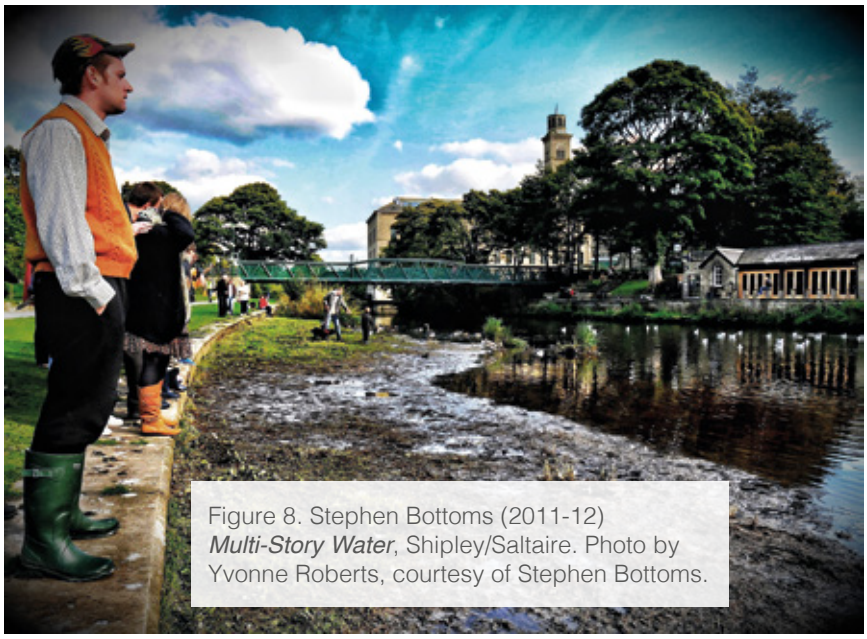

Figure 8. Stephen Bottoms (2011-12) *Multi-Story Water*, Shipley/Saltaire. Photo by Yvonne Roberts, courtesy of Stephen Bottoms.

However, oikophilia is problematic in its potential to be exclusionary, invoking what Mackey and Whybrow (2007) refer to as the 'retrospective idealism of nostalgia' (6). Scruton's focus on nostalgia and the past romanticises the rural English village with nationalistic and xenophobic undertones, by creating place-based identities that are necessarily exclusionary. This is the danger for a performance like *Multi-Story Water*, which celebrates a small English town and could elicit a dangerous localism. Massey (1997) considers the reactionary position to the 'spatial disruption' of contemporary living that has given rise to 'certain forms of nationalism, sentimentalized recovering of sanitized "heritages", and outright antagonism

to newcomers and "outsiders"' (315). *Multi-Story Water* is striking because it actively tried to problematise the 'sanitized heritage' of Saltaire (a World Heritage site itself) by offering an 'alternative heritage tour' which revealed some of the tensions around its creation and history, although at times, this became a romanticised nostalgia. For example, the Green Route performance began at Roberts Park in Saltaire, with the actor playing the parks keeper describing the fact that they have tried to keep everything in the park true to the 1870s when Titus Salt (founder of Saltaire) first built it. He describes the way Salt was a part of a Protestant tradition that considered primary colours as coming from the devil so the flowers and paint colours have all stayed in secondary colour tones to this day (Bottoms 2012). The inclusion of the flower colours seems very much like a 'heritage tour' rather than an 'alternative heritage' but the piece goes on to highlight the controversy of the hydro-electric screw and the formation of the council estate on contested land, revealing some of the less 'sanitised' aspects of Saltaire/Shipley heritage.

In order to be effective, oikophilia would need to be extended beyond just love of a local place. Otherwise, Žižek's contentions in the film *Examined Life* (Taylor 2008) about throwing things away — there is no 'away', he says in the film, it is a lie we tell to abdicate responsibility — would mean it did not matter what happened in other places, as long as one's own local area was 'clean', safe from pollution and other harmful environmental effects. Following this logic, we would only need to care about our immediate area (as Scruton's conception of home is a local village) without understanding or acknowledging the way in which our lives are entangled in a number of ecological relationships spanning the global — from our clothes, food, rubbish, among other things — evident in the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism (which will be discussed in Chapter IV). This solipsistic view is already present in much waste management, with rubbish being shipped to other countries as if once it crosses a geographical border it is no longer a problem. This is also evident in the lack of concern/action over the large floating islands of plastic waste in the oceans, such as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Ostensibly, these are not a problem because they are not considered anyone's 'home' (or not of human value). Scruton argues that localised, decentralised organisations are much more effective than larger systems of governing (he identifies as a conservative environmentalist). If responsibility was local, he suggests, we could make a lot more ecological progress in environmental management and climate change mitigation than within our current system in the UK. However, as Massey (1997) and Harvey (1996) have contended, this emphasis on localism can cause an exclusionary 'us versus them' mentality. Harvey uses the proliferation of gated communities in America to illustrate one of the potential outcomes of this kind of localism.

Further effects of this kind of localism is the exclusion of difference, which Mackey and Whybrow (2007) align with uncritiqued ideas of community, in their unpicking of the contested nature of localism, with reference to Bauman. They suggest that the tension between

the local and global and the 'amorphous space' it produces is not easily resolvable by simply reasserting belonging to a geographical locality. In fact, this belonging to specific local places can reinforce a reductive and problematic idea of 'traditional community', which invokes troubling nostalgia leading to oppressive and segregated areas, unwelcoming to 'outsiders'. 'Territorialisation, introversion, defensiveness and boundary-making that excludes difference can be all too familiarly depressing signs of more negative practices associated with located or local place' (Mackey and Whybrow 2007: 6). As with Harvey's (1996) example of the gated communities, this kind of localism can produce areas that are 'oppressive', which ghettoise those areas outside of the gates. The dangerous nostalgia underpinning these ideas is evident in Scruton's (2012) conception as he makes repeated reference to the past, somewhat idealising a time when localism (and local governance) was more pronounced in daily lives.

Home and Place

Rather than oikophila or localism, Massey's call for 'a need to build a "local" politics that thinks beyond the local…*against* localism but *for* a politics of place' (Massey 2007: 15) may be a more generative way of considering the enactment of home. Place is just one of the many concepts imbricated in ideas of home — as Cresswell (2004) suggests, 'home acts as a kind of metaphor for place in general' (24). Harvey's (1996) concept of place is as 'a discursive/symbolic meaning well beyond that of mere location' (293). Much like 'home', place is constructed socially; it is not necessarily a fixed location, but rather it is in a continuing process of becoming. For Tuan, Heidegger and Bachelard, home is the starting point for thinking about place. Cresswell contends that Heidegger's concept of dwelling as 'the ideal kind of authentic existence' (24) contributed to 'home' as a key concept in thinking about place. Tuan (1991) considers the earth as home, while for Bachelard (1994) the experiences of home frame and inform the experience of the wider world, making the way we think about home important to consider, I suggest, in concepts of how we live and our relationship to the ecological world.

The idea of home as an ideal and longed-for place of security or 'authentic' place, as suggested by the above thinkers and the concept of oikophila, is not a universal conception of home, as feminist thinker Rose (1993) reminds us. For many people, home is not a secure haven free from conflict, it can be the primary place of oppression, therefore problematising the 'claim that home provides the ultimate sense of place' (Rose 1993: 47). For many, home can be a source of distress, conflict, trauma, displacement or a sense of homelessness. Home is not an uncontested nurturing place of security, therefore problematising oikophila as a gendered, race and class-based conception.

For Cresswell (2004), drawing on Tuan, home reaches across different scales because 'by transforming the Earth into home we create places on a myriad of levels' (24). The concept that home can occur across large geographical expanses, spans of time or more intimate

settings parallels the home as imaginarily constructed, as a sense of belonging can be tied to different scales of place, from a park bench to a globalised, translational space (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 29). Localism itself does not have clearly defined borders and can span across different scales of time and space. Not just material places; images of home can be constructed through ideas of normality, intimacy, the domestic and private space. Thinking about the earth as home draws out some of the contested territory of home, much of which has ecological relevance. Thinking about the earth as home as a site of distress, conflict and trauma shares conceptual territory with dark ecology (which will be discussed later in this chapter), as the earth (or 'nature') can be considered a site of conflict, trauma and distress. Across scales of home, from nation to park bench, I suggest ecological performance can reveal and refract these various scales and localities of home, prompting us to think differently about our relationship to them. This was the case for *Multi-Story Water* as local residents shifted their perspective of 'home'. Other associations with home, such as domesticity and nostalgia, may reinforce anthropocentrism and run counter to ecological thinking, as I will suggest in the following section.

Geopathology

Chaudhuri (1995) describes the problem of place as geopathology: 'a series of ruptures and displacements in various orders of location, from the micro-to the macrospatial, from home to nature, with intermediary space concepts such as neighborhood, hometown, community, and country ranged in between' (1995: 55). Carl Lavery (2013) characterises geopathology as 'homelessness while being at home'. For Chaudhuri, the principle dislocation to which geopathology refers is the dislocation between humans and the natural world, which she contends is manifested in theatre through the reduction of 'nature' to scenery or setting (1995: 55). Accordingly, home then is both a material container for identity and a concept of entrapment, which leads to the 'desire to deterritorialize the self' (1995: 82). I suggest the idea of 'deterritorialisation of the self' has some similarities with the concept of ecological self, where identity is constructed not in relation to a material place but rather in relation to the enmeshment of living relationships, which are shifting and dynamic, not static or rooted.

Chaudhuri (1995) characterises geopathic disorders as 'the suffering caused by one's location' (58) and interrogates the idea as contributing to the anthropocentrism of theatre. She quotes Robert Pogue Harrison on Vico's account of original civilisation in reference to the 'first decisive act' (the clearing of a forest) causing the perceived separation between humans and the natural world. According to Harrison, it is in the forest that the traumatic relationship between humans and nature is played out:

> Harrison located the disastrous link, in the West's cultural imagination, between forests and human institutions, especially two that figure prominently in the discourse of geopathology: home and burial. For Vico, the clearing of the forests 'was the first decisive act, religiously motivated, which would lead to the founding of cities, natural and empire' (6). This first version of home…

> is predicated on the destruction of the woods. It brings with it both stability and loss. (Chaudhuri 1995: 75)

For Chaudhuri then, home is made up of a duality between a rooted stability in a material location or a stable identity and a kind of oppression or loss. Stability and loss are interesting to consider in light of ecological vulnerability and global climate change. Understanding the potential for ecological loss affects our worldview, as I will suggest in the final section of this chapter. Chaudhuri then connects the separation spawned from the 'first decisive act' to the way in which it has been represented within the theatre. She claims that a 'negative theatre ecology' has been enacted by the contemporary theatre, referencing the junkyards in Pinter and Mamet plays and the ashcans of Beckett plays (81). This 'negative theatre ecology' requires a separation from nature, she argues, when it is understood in the context of relating places to people, enforcing an anthropocentrism of place and home. I suggest that performance practices enmeshed with their material environment, and engaged in the question of dwelling within it, may resist this anthropocentrism.

Trans-Plantable Living Room & Above Me the Wide Blue Sky

Different aspects of home are manifested, amplified and critiqued in my practice-based experiment the *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013) and Fevered Sleep's *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* (2013). Domesticity, nostalgia and geopathology can all shape the idea of home in an ecological sense, at times reductively and at others generatively. Domesticity and nostalgia are concepts enmeshed in ideas of home. Home as a domestic space, or the distinct boundaries between the public and private, is also an ethnocentric concept, according to Saunders and Williams (1988), as it has become a western cultural symbol. 'Nostalgia' as Mackey and Whybrow (2007) point out, 'literally splits…into the pain suffered (*algos*) as a consequence of being unable to fulfil the dream of return (*nostos*) to a location perceived to be "home"' (2–3). Nostalgia in modern Latin is derived from the German *Heimweh* meaning 'homesickness'. Nostalgia then is the pain of returning, or longing for, home. It has implications of temporality and the past, as well as being implicitly regressive and backwards looking, in some contexts. In the following, *Trans-Plantable Living Room* and *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* will be considered in relation to these concepts as they apply to ideas of home and ecology.

As introduced in Chapter I, ideas of domesticity and nostalgia were actively subverted in *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013), a growing performance project in Cardiff, which staged living room furniture-turned-growing containers outdoors in Bute Park (see Appendix A). The domesticity of the living room, which we referred to as 'grandmother's living room', had a quality of nostalgia about it. The floral print wing chair, the crocheted doilies, the china tea cups and mismatched saucers, the straw hats hanging on the hat rack, the old television hollowed out and planted with sprouts, framed pressed flowers, greeting cards with pictures of older women, all contributed to both the domestic and nostalgic aspects of the space. This

Figure 9. Green Stage/Plantable/Tanja Beer (2013) *Trans-Plantable Living Room*, Bute Park, Cardiff. Photo by Mike Medaglia.

echoes Cieraad's (1999) conception of domesticity being intertwined with nostalgia: 'the concept of domestic space introduces not only an inevitable historical dimension, but also a temporal dimension often clad in nostalgic images. The idea of domesticity is one of the most powerful images related to domestic space' (3). These images of nostalgia could be read as reinforcing a romantic and regressive idea of 'nature'.

This also gendered the space, which was reinforced by the fact that the core artistic team was all women, including the three performers. The concept of 'home' was, in a sense, dangerously nostalgic in a piece about climate change and urban gardening. Such domesticity could be read as a regressive sentiment, a return to simpler times if we are to mitigate the effects of climate change, romantic with xenophobic undertones as in some conceptions of oikophilia. We actively tried to disrupt this reading through the retrofitting of the furniture and through the interaction with the space in performance. The upholstery of the chairs and sofa were slashed to house plants, the dinner chairs were placed on bases of planters, books cut open to house succulents; all of which was an attempt to disturb a domestic and nostalgic reading with the infusion of 'wild', outdoor elements. However, the plants were all 'cultivated' or perhaps even domesticated for the process of building the installation. This paradoxical quality of the space may have spoken to the tensions of the human relationship with the more-than-human.

Placing the living room in the outdoors (Bute Park) under a large tree, gave the space an element of the unexpected, which hopefully created a visual narrative of a wider conception of 'home' — namely the living world. In terms of the 'first decisive act' of cutting down the forest to build homes, as Chaudhuri contends, the setting of the tree in the park may highlight this geopathology. The park is also a 'cultivated' space, in which many trees have likely been cut down to order to extend and develop the city of Cardiff. Locating a living room under a tree returns to the first decisive act and the conceptual and material dislocation of human from the more-than-human world. The 'nature' of Bute Park became the background for the piece, perhaps reinforcing the dislocation, as Chaudhuri suggests. The living room could be read as a metaphor for reversing the 'first decisive act' and returning 'home' to a tree, but it could also be read as anthropocentrically 'manipulating' and cultivating plants towards a vision of retrospective idealism.

We sought to resist or problematise the anthropocentrism and romantic idealism in performance by acknowledging the agency of the plants as co-performers in the piece. Although we set up the conceit of a tea party, we tried to subvert it through eating planted parsley out of tea cups (rather than drinking tea), hosting the plants instead of the people, and encouraging the audience to plant their own seeds. The soundtrack we used in the performance was of the gardeners' voices, speaking about their experience of gardening today which included adjusting to some of the effects of climate change. The interview clips used were not backwards looking and did not valorise the past as a time of ecological balance. Although acknowledging the domestic and nostalgic implications of the piece, we hoped to sufficiently disrupt them to reframe the idea of home within an ecological context.

Figure 10. Laura Cubitt in Fevered Sleep (2013) ***Above Me The Wide Blue Sky***. Photo by Matthew Andrews, courtesy of Fevered Sleep.

As mentioned in Chapter II, *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* (2013) was performed at the Young Vic Theatre (see Appendix B). It comprised a cross between an installation and a performance, consisting of a performer describing different experiences, images, tastes and smells in a stream of consciousness style, all revolving around people, animals and their relationship to the more-than-human world, with lines like: 'There are boys kicking a curled-up hedgehog like a football', 'The taste of coal', 'The deep black abyss of an infinite, star-studded night' and 'The smell of rain falling on hot tarmac' (Fevered Sleep 2013).

During the performance, a dog slept on a blanket beside the performer. There were moving images of the sky on all four walls that shifted and changed. About halfway through, the

performer told a story about how the rural landscape of her childhood home had changed over the years. She then repeated the descriptions from the first half of the show in reverse order, changing them to the past tense, 'There used to be…', while the sky turned dark and black clouds rolled in. A score of birdsong and string instruments accompanied the shift. The darkness invoked by this imagery referenced a quickly degrading planet, the effects of climate change and the resulting natural disasters. The text was created from interviews conducted by Fevered Sleep about people's relationship to nature and the changing ideas of home. According to the programme they were interested in the question: 'What do we really lose if we lose our connections to the non-human world that surrounds us?' (Fevered Sleep 2013). This might be considered in light of Chaudhuri's geopathology, a dislocation from nature; however, it also implies that nature is a backdrop to human action, which may surround us but we can 'disconnect' from it. Rather than conceiving of nature as something that surrounds us externally, to resist the tacit anthropocentrism, nature could be considered as a mesh of relationships in which we are always embedded, whether we sense the interconnections or not. I suggest that the piece was not about creating 'connections to the non-human world', but rather it was about revealing or increasing our sensitivity to those already existing relationships.

The shift in text from describing things as 'There is' to 'There used to be' contributed to a sense of ecological nostalgia which can be misrepresentative of history. As employed by Scruton (2012) and many others, ecological nostalgia seems to be referencing an unspecified past, where people were more connected to the land and lived in balance with the natural world. When invoked, this seems at best wishful thinking, and at worst regressive rhetoric. Of course, there are many ecological lessons to be learned from specific historical moments and many industries have sought them out (such as the popularity of organic farming, cooking 'from scratch', and growing your own food). However, a blanket nostalgia or assumption of the inherent merits of the past ignores the contested and oppressive histories of home, domesticity and labour, as well as the ecological problems of the past.

In *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky*, an idealised version of nature was presented with a rural-centric viewpoint, or the rural bias that Harvey (1996) has identified. There seemed to be several references to fields and green hills such as 'snow falling on a ploughed field' (Fevered Sleep 2013), employing the trope of Britain as 'green and pleasant land'. However, in a post-show discussion at the Young Vic, Sam Butler, the co-director, contended that as she grew up in Reading, half the references were to urban or at least suburban areas. Ecological nostalgia evoked by the references to fields, hills, children playing and trees, could be read as re-inscribing the myth of the rural landscape as a 'pure space' or rural idyll, which cannot accommodate difference. Cloke *et al* (2000) contend there is a close relation between the idea of 'home' and rurality, prevalent not only in Britain but also in rural America (among other

places) with its iconography of 'mom and apple pie' (Cresswell 2004: 114). They argue that the image of home as a rural idyll valorises a particular and normative idea of the home and domesticity. The longing or nostalgia for this particular image of home necessarily 'others' anything non-normative. In an ecological sense then, as the majority of people live in cities, realities of home are shifting. Within my conception of the bio-urban I contend that the city space is part of nature, deconstructing reductive urban/rural distinctions, and resisting a rural nostalgia.

As I have suggested throughout this thesis, performance can highlight, reveal and critique ecological relationships. In so doing, it can also dissect and amplify ecological values and assumptions, considered here in relation to ideas of home. *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky* and *Trans-Plantable Living Room* manifest and expose a type of ecological nostalgia and geopathology, while also attempting to grapple with current ecological conditions. Critiquing these ideas extends my configuration of an ecological performance aesthetic to understand the way in which performance reinscribes or counters concepts of nature, ecology and home.

Dwelling

If we begin to consider the earth as home, we also need to consider what it means to dwell here, or the question of dwelling. Dwelling, as a trope to theorise an ecological performance aesthetic, considers how we live and relate to the earth, building on the immersive perspective from Chapter II. In the following, I argue that performance may contain, refract and reframe ideas of dwelling, or how we live in relation to the ecologially-material world.

Although much contested, Heidegger's theory of dwelling is a necessary starting point for an exploration of home and dwelling, as it is still the foundation (or point of departure) for much ecological thinking on the subject. I suggest that Heidegger's concept of dwelling is useful in considering ecological performance for two reasons. First, his concept of dwelling conceives of the living world as something human beings are always immersed in and an interconnected part of. Second, he implies that dwelling is not just about 'living' somewhere — it carries with it a responsibility to 'care-for' the dwelling place or what might be considered the earth. There are also problematic aspects of this alignment including: Heidegger's privileging of the language (at the expense of the body), his idea of Germany as having a more 'authentic' relationship to dwelling and this association with the German Youth Movement and the Nazi party, and his valorising of the rural retreat. After an analysis of dwelling, these critiques will be engaged with in relation to Kershaw's Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2011–14).

In his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (2001 [1971]), Heidegger writes that to be human is to dwell on earth. Dwelling means to 'care-for' or to let something be free into its own essence. Accordingly, dwelling is letting the earth (and the complex web of relationships that

make up the earth) be free to be their own nature; dwelling is the essence of *dasein*[32] (2001 [1971]).

> Mortals dwell in that they save the earth…Saving does not only snatch something from a danger. To save really means to set something free into its own presencing. To save the earth is more than to exploit it or even wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step for spoliation. (Heidegger 2001[1971]: 148)

Ruth Irwin (2011) describes Heidegger imaging of dwelling as a call 'for a poetic aptitude for allowing ecological being to "shine forth"' (2011: 26). Heidegger, in reference to the Hölderlin poem ('Poetically Man Dwells'), argued that dwelling needed to be poetic. This poetry allowed for the disclosure of ecological being, or the way in which we are immersed in the ecological world. Heidegger felt modern society was framed by technology and there was a need for another way of dwelling on earth. As Irwin states, 'reconnecting with our landscape involves understanding the ways we are circumscribed by the environment and the way we inscribe ourselves in our ecological locale' (2011: 28). In this conception of dwelling, there is a sense that understanding a reciprocal relationship to the earth, viewing ourselves as a part of it, and creatively engaging with it will work to repair the estrangement caused by technological 'enframement'[33] and disclose our ecological being. However, there is also an implicit anthropocentrism in the language used as well, which will be addressed below.

Simon Whitehead (2012) writes, 'I agree with Heidegger when he says that home is always something in flux; it is constantly being re-experienced and reformed' (in Lavery and Whitehead 115). For Lavery and Whitehead, Heidegger's ontic concept of home as a process of becoming is useful to their concept of homing, which they suggest 'affirms one's territory as relational, a play between house, region, country, world and cosmos' (119). Whitehead and Lavery critique Heideggerian dwelling for the way in which he ignores the role of the body in relation to ecological dwelling. Heidegger's focus after his 'turn' in thinking in the 1930s was on language, particularly the role and power of poetic language. Lavery suggests this 'undervalues the materiality of the body, and, as a consequence, finishes by elevating the human being, who is now posited in theological terms as a type of steward, as the species who has the closest relationship to Being' (in Lavery and Whitehead 113). This could be seen as a dangerous anthropocentrism, as Heidegger only afforded humans the *dasein* type of being.

In his early work, Heidegger defined nature as being ready-to-hand (as in equipment) and presence-at-hand (from an observable, detached position), neither of which take into account a poetic, nor performative, engagement with natural phenomena (Matthews 2001). Ready-

[32] '*Dasein*' is Heidegger's word for the type of being that humans enact and translates best as 'being here'.

[33] Enframement or enframing translates as 'Gestell, our nihilistic, "technological" understanding of being of entities' (Thomson 2009: 453).

to-hand indicates a problematic scientific outlook in which nature is a resource for human consumption, which is reconsidered by later Heidegger after his turn in thinking (Matthews 2001). The conception of the natural world as 'ready-to-hand' implies an anthropocentric viewpoint in which nature is only of value to the extent to which it can serve the needs of humans, either as a 'ready-to-hand' tool or as a 'presence-at-hand' environ, called upon only when needed by humans and understood in relation to those needs. *Technodasein* is the technological enframing of the modern western worldview, which sees an assault on nature by technology (Matthews 2001). This technological 'enframing' of society reinforces a perceived separation between humans and nature, although both humans and nature are enslaved by technology according to Heidegger. Enframing also refers to the way, in Thomson's words, 'we tend to reduce every entity we encounter to the status of an intrinsically meaningless "resource" (*Bestand*) merely to be *optimized* as efficiently as possible' (2009: 454). Technodasein has forgotten how to dwell in sympathy with the self-emergence of the earth, which has resulted in estrangement from our earthly home or a homelessness (Matthews 2001).

For Matthews (2001), following Heidegger, this estrangement is remedied by poetic dwelling or cultivating an ecological being. Foltz (1995), a thinker who supports Heideggerian dwelling as the basis for ecological thought, identifies five central theses for Heidegger's conception of dwelling:

1. Dwelling is founded upon the poetic.
2. Dwelling occurs through conserving.
3. Dwelling upon the earth means saving the earth.
4. Dwelling constitutes the primordial character of ethics.
5. Dwelling poetically upon the earth constitutes the possibility for a genuine environmental ethic. (156)

Foltz contends that Heidegger's conception of dwelling aims to reestablish dwelling 'without retreating into a quiescent nostalgia for the pastoral and rustic' (155). However, his repeated reference to the Hölderlin poem ('Poetically Man Dwells'), his retreat to his Black Forest farmhouse, and the position that poetry is the basis of dwelling seems to point to a nostalgic, pastoral position after the Romantics. Heidegger's theory is ultimately retrospective as he contends that our current age of technological enframement has dislocated us from nature and getting back to poetically dwelling is the way to a more 'authentic' relationship with nature. His emphasis on language as disclosing the world also explicates just one type of experience and seems to be promoting a Cartesian dualism, privileging mind over body. He posits that language, the naming of things, discloses them to us, that it 'opens up and establishes the clearing of a world within which we can reside, because the world is that matrix of meaningfulness within which things can be meaningful to us' (Foltz 1995: 158). However, to name something does not bring it into being or even disclose its meaning to us. I suggest that it is the way we interact or relate to something that discloses its meaning and

therefore makes it meaningful to us. This is the case for our relationship to nature as well, the way we interact in the world (and perhaps dwell) is what makes the meaning, whether we have language for it or not, which could be aesthetically, functionally or otherwise. I suggest performance can provide the space and opportunity to consider how we interact and live in the world, or dwell.

David Harvey (1996) contends that Heidegger's concept of place-as-dwelling is problematic in contemporary urban settings. Heidegger's fear of loss of place identity led to his retreat to the Black Forest farmhouse. 'What might the conditions of "dwelling" be in a highly industrialised, modernist, and capitalist work? We cannot turn back to the Black Forest farmhouse, but what is it that we might turn to?' (Harvey 1996: 302). Retreat from the world to a rural setting in order to find a more 'authentic' connection to place, is deeply problematic. It assumes that the rural landscape is more 'authentic' in that it is more 'natural'. I contest this idea through the concept of the bio-urban, contending that the city is a place of vibrancy, a part of 'nature'.

Harvey does find in Heideggerian thought the possibility of resistance to the ambiguous, all-consuming forces of global capitalism through 'alternative constructions of place' and 'militant particularism' (1996). 'Militant particularism' enacts the politics of an 'authentic' sense of place as resistance and 'reanimates the bond between the environmental and the social' (Harvey 1996: 306) through a politics of resistance. In an ecological sense then, Heideggerian dwelling could be read as a reframing of the 'place' of the earth, resisting anthropocentrism, by considering it not a resource for human-use but a 'field of care': if humans dwell they also conserve[34] and care-for.

Heidegger and Deep Ecology

Some thinkers (Zimmerman 1993, Garrard 2004) have critiqued deep ecology as fascist, or at least susceptible to fascist application, because of its association with Heideggerian thought. This is particularly relevant in light of Heidegger's connection to the National Socialist Party and the Nazis, and his subsequent lack of apology for his brief support of Hitler. There has been much writing about this aspect of Heidegger's life and some have argued that it discredits all of his philosophical writings. For Matthews (2001), that Heidegger's philosophical concepts could have direct ideological application (or are at least open to fascist interpretation) is a result of the lack of an ethical basis of his thinking. He suggests his work concerning nature and environment should not be entirely dismissed but critically engaged with, acknowledging the context and being aware of the ethics. This response does not deny Heidegger's associations; rather a critical engagement is encouraged. However, thinkers like Foltz (1995) and Thomson

[34] Discourses of conservation are problematic, of course. What is being conserved and for whom? Conservation also seems to imply a stasis of nature, that it can (and should) stay in a particular state for an extended period of time.

(2009) contend that Heideggerian dwelling can form the basis for an environmental ethics, rather than having a lack of ethical basis as Matthews suggests. This separation between the socio-political realm and the ecological (or at least environmental) seems troublesome. I will contend in the next chapter that ecology already implicates the social and political, it cannot be considered in isolation because it is enacted in an interrelated world.

Lavery (in Lavery and Whitehead 2012) suggests that the influence of Heideggerian dwelling on deep ecology and other ecological thought is problematic in that it is essentialist:

> On the one hand, Heidegger posits homecoming as a never-ending ontological quest that transcends any attempt to substantialize it in an ontic site or place; however, on the other hand, he also tends to contradict this more open and perpetual process by equating home with an actual country, Germany. By doing so, Heidegger assumes that Germany — its landscape, language and people — has, in some metaphysical sense, a privileged and authentic relationship with dwelling. (112)

For Lavery and deep ecology philosopher Zimmerman (1993)[35], Heidegger's Nazi associations cannot be overlooked and make ecological philosophy based on his writing inherently problematic. Garrard (2004) suggests that Heidegger's 'georgic philosophy was all too congruent with the strand in Nazi ideology that stressed the relationship of German blood and soil, "*Blud und Boden*"' (111–112). Both Thomson (2009) and Garrard point out the uncomfortable links between the Nazi party and environmentalism. The Nazis were amongst the first government to actively curb the environmental impact of development, 'enacting the world's first comprehensive nature conservation and animal welfare laws' (Garrard 112). However, Garrard posits that the association of conservation and organic farming with Nazis has not led to fascism in mainstream modern environmental movements[36]. Perhaps this relationship cannot be easily settled or explained, but requires engagement because of Heidegger's influence on ecological thought. As Garrard explains 'Heidgger is important to ecocritics because he set out to "think dwelling", but in doing so became a nexus of georgic philosophy and the vast destruction wrought by German National Socialism' (113). I suggest the uneasy connection between Heidegger's political associations and ecological philosophy may help keep in focus the way ecology is intertwined with social, political and ideological formations, as well as ecological sciences, making it necessary to engage with the history and cultural context of this thinking.

Following Heidegger, for Ingold (2000) dwelling is an active engagement with place. He sees dwelling as an immersion in the environment, the world manifests and 'comes into being'

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[35] Zimmerman actually reversed his position of Heidegger's influence on ecological philosophy, and deep ecology in particular. In 1983 and 1993 he wrote articles arguing for Heideggerian thought in the development of ecological philosophy and then reversed his position with his article 'Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship' (1993).

[36] Exceptions to this claim may be the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front: although considered extremist rather than mainstream, both have been accused of employing terrorist strategies.

around the inhabitant. This is contrasted by the building perspective in which the meaning of surroundings are constructed and have to be given meaning by the inhabitant first in order to act in it (a broadly western perception). For Ingold, dwelling is an involved relationship with our surroundings underpinned by an environmental ethic and is a way of surpassing the nature/culture division. As Ingold suggests, art and storytelling, like hunting and gathering, are ways of dwelling, a form of poetic involvement. Ingold suggests a 'poetics of dwelling', referring to Heidegger's essay named for the Hölderlin poem, '…Poetically Man Dwells…' ([1971] 2001). Ingold suggests the poetics of dwelling as 'organic life, as I envisage it, is active rather than reactive, the creative unfolding of an entire field of relations within which beings emerge and take on the particular forms they do, each in relation to the others' (2000: 19)[37].

The way in which dwelling is considered in an ecological performance aesthetic is that it draws attention to the way in which we dwell and can imagine alternative conceptions of dwelling. In accordance with Ingold's theory of dwelling, he articulates performance as a form of reflection, 'far from dressing up a plain reality with layers of metaphor, or representing it, map-like, in the imagination, songs, stories and designs serve to conduct the attention of performers into the world' (2000: 56). It is in this sense then, that performance engages with the world, through the 'conducting of attention'. By resisting fixity, ecological performance that imagines alternative forms of dwelling reflects Lavery and Whitehead's idea of home as ontic, perhaps pointing to the idea of 'our place in the world' — whether that is nation, dwelling place or home — as being fluid, elastic and necessarily adaptable. The trope or concept of dwelling is evident in the way performance practice draws out questions about how we live, where we live and our relationship to our earthly home.

The Dwelling of Dark Ecology

Dark Ecology takes a different perspective on dwelling and critiques Heidegger's conception of both dwelling and 'nature'. Žižek (1991) and Morton (2009) contend that the very idea of nature is no longer relevant to our thinking about ecology. This 'dark ecology' contention suggests that there is no nature (or at least no ideal state of balance), only chaos. Žižek (1991) suggests 'we should perhaps assert that *Nature does not exist*: it does not exist as a periodic, balanced circuit, thrown off its track by man's inadvertence' (38). Critiquing Heideggerian dwelling as nostalgic and irrelevant to the contemporary world, Žižek posits that the idea that nature has an equilibrium or an ideal state has finally been rightly abandoned. In fact, rather than a re-connection to nature, as Heidegger would suggest, Žižek argues for further alienation. 'The very notion of man as an "excess" with respect to nature's balanced circuit has finally to be abandoned. The image of nature as a balanced circuit is nothing but a

[37] Since his detailed writing on the poetics of dwelling, Ingold has further nuanced and developed his position. In 2011, Ingold argued humans do not inhabit or dwell in place but rather move through place, following lines. Wayfaring, as perambulatory movement is how human beings inhabit the earth. The lines intersect and knot, becoming the meshwork (2011: 148).

retroactive projection of man…"Nature" is already in itself turbulent, imbalanced' (Žižek 1991: 38). He further suggests, in the film *Examined Life* (2008), that ecology is a new ideology and opium for the masses, a dangerous idea to perpetuate in the chaos of nature (in Taylor 2008). It is unclear if he is referring to the idea of ecology as the interconnected relations between organisms and their environment or the 'ecological movement' and environmental activism. He seems to equate this position with an oppositional stance to biotechnological developments or bio-genetics, suggesting these kinds of developments are perceived by an 'ideology of ecology' as being against nature. The dichotomy he sets up between technology and ecology/environmentalism does not seem to hold when examined in view of contemporary ecological thinking. In fact, technology that can reduce dependence on fossil fuels or carbon sequestration is often called for and lauded within environmental activism. Žižek seems to be critiquing a Heideggerian viewpoint, as he does in *In Defence of Lost Causes* (2008), as opposed to contemporary thinking, with his claims of the end of nature as the primary effect of bio-technological advancements:

> Once we know the rules of its construction, natural organisms are transformed into objects amenable to manipulation. Nature, human and inhuman, is thus 'desubstantialized', deprived of its impenetrable density, of what Heidegger called 'earth'… nature is no longer 'natural', the reliable 'dense' background of our lives; it now appears as a fragile mechanism which, at any point, can explode in a catastrophic manner. (Žižek 2008: 435)

Žižek takes up an 'oikophilic' perspective in that he concludes that love of the earth/nature in its true form is the appropriate project of an ecologist. He contends that the earth is a series of catastrophes that we need to learn to love. He outlines his position in the film *Examined Life* (2008), which was filmed in a rubbish dump in Southwark. He claims that love is not the same as idealisation; rather it is about accepting another with all their flaws, finding perfection in their imperfections, which is how we should love the world. He suggests that a 'true' ecologist loves the very rubbish dump that he is standing in (in Taylor 2008). This is an interesting qualification to consider in terms of oikophilia. Rather than love of home, he seems to be advocating a love of 'world' or 'nature' that is chaotic, turbulent and precarious.

Dark Mountain Project

Perhaps enacting a dark ecology position, the Dark Mountain Project is a network of writers and artists who are creatively responding to the current state of crisis (ecological, social and economical). 'We see that the world is entering an age of ecological collapse, material contraction and social and political unravelling, and we want our cultural responses to reflect this reality rather than denying it' (The Dark Mountain Project 2014). The project is premised on the idea of resisting the grand narrative of progress and civilisation as it has failed in the current climate of crisis. They publish books of collected prose that respond to the current age, rather than aspirational (and irrelevant) ideas of progress, and hold festivals which explore the idea of 'uncivilisation', engaging politics, philosophy, story-telling, poetry and performance. They echo Heidegger's call to dwell poetically but in a way that considers dwelling as resisting

capitalist structures of consumption and accumulation. However, in some of the events run by Dark Mountain, there is an implicit rural-bias, paralleling Heidegger's retreat to the Black Forest farmhouse. For example, their events take place in rural retreats (Carrying the Fire festival in Lanarkshire, Dark Mountain Primer course at Dartington, Prophets of Rock and Wave myth-making retreat on Dartmoor). There seems to be an idea that to 'uncivilise' or reconnect to the 'wild' means retreating to the rural environment. As thinkers such as Cronon (1996) have noted, the myth of the wild is a fallacy, as even 'wild' landscapes are influenced by human intervention. This distinction between urban and wild seems unhelpful as a response to 'ecological collapse'. In order to engage with cultural resilience, it seems that providing ways of conceiving of city life as resistant to the grand narrative of progress (such as in Detroit[38]) would be a dark ecology way of dwelling.

For Morton (2010), understanding the radical interconnectedness of the world (through the ecological thought) leads to more uncertainty, fear and even pain — in other words, a dark ecology. He asserts that 'reading poetry won't save the planet…but art can allow us to glimpse beings that exist beyond and between our normal categories' (60). A dark ecology way of dwelling, then, may be one that acknowledges the crisis situation of overlapping catastrophes: human population increases, rising CO2 levels, extraction of natural resources, species extinction and global neoliberal capitalism. All of these result in an ecological vulnerability (and therefore makes human life vulnerable). A dark ecology way of dwelling confronts these realities, through artistic means like the Dark Mountain Project, towards the potentially grim reality that human life is dependent on the more-than-human world, regardless of urban/rural distinctions. With a sense of grief, dark dwelling reasserts interdependence on a 'dying' world (Morton 2009: 185).

Figure 11. Stefhan Caddick (2011) *The Nihilists*, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Abergavenny. Photo by Nic Finch, courtesy of the artist.

Welsh artist Stefhan Caddick's work, *The Nihilists* (2011), offers a way of thinking about performance that enacts a dark ecology way of dwelling. Caddick recognises the complex and contested ethical and political systems embedded in dwelling. Starting from the premise of creating artworks that do not believe in anything, Caddick created *The Nihilists*, a site-based installation and performance on Sugar Loaf Mountain near Abergavenny, Wales. The piece included a performance by the band Team Sports, which take the environment as a score and create sounds to respond and feed back to it. Using

[38] Detroit as a city has been in rapid decline since the collapse of the auto industry and has embraced urban farming as a form of resilience (as mentioned in Chapter I).

environmental occurrences as their inspiration, they create soundscapes responsive to specific locations.

Dark ecological dwelling, in this context, is the sense of ecological finitude, environmental destruction and political inaction. Caddick contends that the micro-generation of sustainable power has an inherent moral and ethical dimension. The piece included a group of homemade wind turbines on the verge of collapse, which powered a lit up message: 'We Are All Going to Die' that flickered on and off with the wind. For Caddick, this was using 'morally superior' technologies 'which generate electricity to illuminate their futility' to communicate a bleak sense of the world (Caddick 2011). He is referring to the inefficiency of homemade wind turbines, which were generating power only to light up the 'We Are All Going to Die' sign. This points to the seeming 'futility' of technology (such as wind power) to address the continually increasing global demand for electricity and its ineffectiveness in mitigating the effects of climate change in a meaningful way, replacing one capitalist formation for another. This view of ecology is one that considers the relationship between humans and nature as destructive, entropic and meaningless. In this way, it echoes dark ecology and thinkers like Morton (2009) and Žižek (2008).

Considered from this nihilistic perspective, dark ecological dwelling recognises and acknowledges the interconnected series of relationships that implicate us all in the ecological crisis, but considers these relationships to be futile. It subverts the pastoral undertones of work that romanticises rural landscapes, taking people up mountains to achieve a sense of the sublime (such as *Speed of Light* for example). Instead, this work plots out instructions to get to Sugar Loaf Mountain and then when the audience arrives, they are confronted with a large glowing sign that says 'We Are All Going To Die'. This subverting of expectations may be what is most affective about the work.

Dark ecological dwelling tackles the question of dwelling from the point of view of a crisis, in which if humanity continues to live as we have been (in the west at least) ecological collapse and/or catastrophe is inevitable. Facing up to this, and deconstructing the myth of progress, is a dark ecological way of dwelling. Both *The Nihilists* and the Dark Mountain Project seek to rupture the happy narrative of technological advancement and confront the anomalies and inevitabilities in such a position, further extending the concept of dwelling within an ecological performance aesthetic.

Earthrise Repair Shop Meadow Meander

Baz Kershaw's performance experiment, the Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander* (2011–14) (Appendix C), as mentioned in Chapter II, asserts a model of dwelling while also critiquing pastoral and landscape perspectives. The purpose of the Earthrise Repair Shop, which is founded on ecological principles of conservation and regeneration, is to 'invent performance

environments that will generate fresh perceptions of ecosystems and how they might best be sustained' (Kershaw 2011). The *Meadow Meander* project was a way of dwelling in Southwest England while at the same time, providing a space to consider how to dwell in an ecological sense. I experienced the meander in the summer of 2014 at the University of Warwick for the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) annual conference. I also acted as a 'eco-volunteer', briefing meanderers on the guidelines of the experience.

The *Meadow Meander* was a maze-like path in a meadow in that people were invited to walk along. The pattern of the path replicated an ecological feature of the earth which was revealed after the walk[39]. The performance of the *Meadow Meander* also worked as a phenomenological mediator of the ecological features of the site. Phil Smith (2011) commented on his experience of it:

> Very quickly I was able to look around and began to notice rather large features that I had previously ignored: I was amazed to notice that there were power-lines hung across the meadow on tall poles. Through trees I glimpsed a building on a far horizon… it rained, the sun shone, the butterflies (meadow brown and cabbage white) retreated and reappeared according to the light. (Smith 2011)

The *Meadow Meander* shifted perception of the site and in this way, foregrounded the ecological relationships of the place. I suggest that it was not necessarily the walk itself,

Figure 12. Earthrise Repair Shop (2014) ***Meadow Meander***, Heronbank, University of Warwick. Photo by Lisa Woynarski.

[39] Kershaw has requested that I do not reveal the 'open secret' of which ecological feature/pattern the meander is based on.

but rather the space and performance frame provided by the walk, that disclosed the 'larger features' to Smith. The frame of performance becomes an operator, shifting perceptions of the environment.

The meander also provided space for a consideration of dwelling in Heidegger's 'caring-for' sense. Kershaw describes how the meander could offer the potential to reveal how humans might rethink the most harmful 'everyday environmental mis-performances' (2012). For Kershaw, this may happen in the paradoxical space of the meander, being at once compelling and banal. A compelling large-scale ecological phenomenon was mapped out as a somewhat ordinary walk. It is the banality of the experience that exposes the human compulsion, or what Kershaw would term 'mis-performance', to easily dismiss the global phenomenon/everyday experience. It is these compulsions that contribute to the ecological crisis and make it a difficult problem for humans to both conceive of and act to repair. Animal-specific statistics (in Warwick) represented by grains and pulses (in collaboration with Stan's Cafe) offered another manifestation of the ways in which human 'path making' on the earth influences and affects more-than-human species, literally situated at twists and turns of the meander. This parallels Ingold's (2011) contention of wayfaring as the mode of inhabiting the earth (12). Rather than an emphasis on emplaced habitation as Heideggerian dwelling might suggest, Ingold asserts that 'the path, not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather

becoming' (2011: 12). It is through movement along lines that we live and relate to the earth, or meshwork. The lines of the meander highlighted this mode of wayfaring along lines, both literal and representative. The *Meadow Meander* offered a space to both dwell and to consider a new way of dwelling (as path making) or performing in the environment.

The rural bias evident in Heidegger's adulation of the Black Forest farmhouse in his writing could also be considered in the *Meadow Meander*. In Devon, the meander was enacted in a rural landscape, gesturing towards farming practices, crop circles and land art. Both the meadow and meandering conjure up ubiquitous and generic country features, indicating the myth of the rural idyll. However, Kershaw resists some of the romantic, pastoral undertones by claiming the walk as a banal gesture. He also re-staged (or re-cultivated) the meander in an urban environment. In Leeds and Warwick, it was situated differently. No longer evoking a country walk, the meander occupied a different space within the context of an academic conference. It became a space of contemplation or quiet or boredom in an otherwise busy day. That the *Meadow Meander* could be transferred from Devon to Leeds to Warwick evidences the porosity of rural/urban distinctions and may be read as endorsing the concept of the bio-urban. It also resists the rural bias of retreating to the country for a more 'authentic' experience of dwelling.

The wider project of Earthrise Repair Shop seems to be enacting a performance of living at Kershaw's home in Devon. The idea of a repair shop for the earth evokes an ethic of care, to restore a landscape and cultivate biodiversity. As a way of resisting a dangerous localism, Kershaw references the Earthrise photograph, the first picture taken from space of the earth in colour, from a NASA spaceship, which shifted the perspective of earth. It was the first time people were able to visually comprehend the situation of the earth within the universe (or at least in relation to the moon) and coincided with the emergence of first-wave environmentalism in the late 1960s.

Although considered in a variety of ways by different thinkers, dwelling is about what it means to be human actants in the ecology of the world (or earth). Performance can engage and create a space to direct attention to or reveal different concepts of dwelling. It can also productively critique different concepts of dwelling by providing an experience of imagining alternative ways of dwelling. The Dark Mountain Project and *The Nihilists* suggest a confrontation with the 'crisis' of dwelling while Kershaw's *Meadow Meander* highlights some of the paradoxical qualities of dwelling. In this way, questions of dwelling can be theorised as a central trope of an ecological performance aesthetic. The basis of thinking about dwelling from Heideggerian thought is problematic for many reasons, as posited above, one of which is the ethnocentric conception of it, which I will discuss below. The next section will consider how indigenous perspectives on dwelling and home may throw into relief a critique of western-centric concepts of dwelling as they relate to ecology and climate change.

Indigenous Perspectives on Dwelling[40]

The previous sections have focused on ideas of 'oikos' as home and dwelling, broadly from a western perspective, as underpinning an ecological performance aesthetic. Garrard (2004) suggests that the dominant understanding of dwelling in the west is now to look to other cultures, particularly Native Americans, as '"we" apparently cannot dwell in working harmony with nature, but perhaps other cultures are able to do so' (120) leading to the trope of the 'ecological Indian'. Indigenous perspectives and postcolonial[41] ecology can problematise and critique the western-centric concepts engaged within the previous sections of this chapter, nuancing and extending dwelling as part of an ecological performance aesthetic.

Performance can be a powerful site for the intersection of ecology and postcolonialism because of the effects of cultural images and representation and the power of indigenous[42] stories. These cultural images may also throw into relief some of the ethnocentric assumptions about nature and ecology within the western academy. Indigenous ideas of home can be bound up with ideas of ecology and nature, which may offer a different way of thinking about these concepts in relation to being-in-the-world. However, this remains an undertheorised area, as Däwes suggests, 'critics have only very recently begun to explore the intersections between Indigenous cultures, ecological issues, and their cultural representations' (2014: 23). In the following section, I will briefly review some recent works of postcolonial ecology and performance, while attempting to resist the 'eco-Indian' stereotype. I will also consider the way in which specific indigenous worldviews precipitate an engagement with the more-than-human world, by reflecting on a few particular examples of indigenous ecology in performance, based on First Nations[43], Inuit and Métis peoples of Turtle Island (North America), Māori of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Aboriginal Australians. The performance examples I will draw on include works that highlight aspects of dwelling such as the inseparability of land, identity and the more-than-human (Witi Ihimeara's *Woman for Walking,* May's *Salmon is Everything*); non-linearity and the simultaneity of past, present and future (Clements' *Burning Vision*); and work that takes up ecological justice issues (Bilodeau's *Sila*). With these performances, I will consider how locating indigenous concepts of dwelling may provide a way of critiquing and/

[40] I have drawn on some of the writing in this section for a short article, 'Ecological sentinels: Indigenous heroes or colonial cliché?' (June 2015), in *RiDE: the Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* and for 'Locating an Indigenous Ethos in Ecological Performance', *Performing Ethos* (forthcoming 2015).

[41] My use of the term 'postcolonialism' here is a way of referencing a field of study around the effects of colonialism and colonisation, while mindful of the tensions inherent in the prefix of 'post'. I do not mean to suggest that we are beyond 'colonialism', but rather that the material effects and systemic mindset of imperialism is still evident today, albeit in different forms.

[42] I use the term indigenous in its global usage. When referring to specific tribes, nations, cultures, I follow the author's usage, including capitalising indigenous in direct quotations.

[43] First Nations refers to a diverse range of tribes and ethnicities of indigenous Canadian and American peoples (but not generally Inuit or Métis peoples).

or resisting the power structures, dominant historical narratives and anthropocentrism that have led to the current ecological crisis. Additionally, these examples expand an ecological performance aesthetic by acknowledging dwelling as relational, interconnected and socio-political, challenging ethnocentric ideas of time and identity. These examples depart from the other work analysed in this thesis in that they are text-based plays, written to be presented in conventional theatre spaces. This is because my access to the work has been primarily through reading the play texts. Perhaps this only emphasises the 'newness' of an indigenous ecological perspective, of course, because it points to the lack of indigenous ecological performance available in the UK.

I would like to foreground that I do not identify as indigenous. I am a white Canadian (with Belgian, Ukrainian, Polish and British heritage) who currently resides in the United Kingdom, and as such this critique of the western academy is self-reflexive[44]. I am implicated in the lacunae of critical indigenous voices being represented in the field of performance and ecology. My aim here is not to appropriate indigenous ideas or speak for any group of people; rather I want to think critically about some of the underlying ethnocentric assumptions made about ecology in relation to ideas of dwelling (how we live, how we think about home and ourselves in relation to the ecological world). Community performance artist and researcher Petra Kuppers (2014) has argued for reading strategies of transnational performance practices in indigenous/settler collaborations, specifically citing 'relational living, in the flow of history, speaking from webs of more than one voice, and attending to gaps' (5). By positioning herself in a living relationship with the performance practices she encountered, Kuppers attempts to decentre colonialist-marked methods of interpretation, of truth-seeking and performance criticism. Similarly, my own way into this research, as a non-indigenous person, is not through claims of authority, but rather through suggestions of the way relational, complex and heterogeneous ecological knowledges may offer ways of thinking about and critiquing dwelling and ecological relationships.

Many indigenous epistemologies offer a critique of western concepts of dwelling by resisting the bifurcation of nature and culture or humans and nature. Ingold (2000) suggests that certain indigenous world views foster a more reciprocal relationship with the living world. This does not mean there is not death, violence and overconsumption of resources; the cosmology of these perspectives and cultures is interesting to consider, however, in relation to ecology. Abram (1997) echoes this sentiment and cites the Navajo conception of the wind or air which holds within it ideas of mind and psyche (rather than being interior to humans as western thought conceives it). Therefore, 'the health, balance, and well-being of each person is inseparable from the health and well-being of the enveloping earthly terrain' (Abram 1997:

[44] This theorisation is open to the criticisms of re-inscribing implicit imperial values given the context of the discourse of performance and ecology, primarily developed through scholars based broadly in the western academy, which too rarely includes indigenous scholars or takes indigenous ways of knowing into account.

237). Ingold suggests that in hunter-gatherer cultures, such as the Mbuti Pygmies and the Batek Negritos of Malaysia, relations between human and non-human beings engage with one another as beings-in-the-world, not as 'disembodied minds' (as in a western perspective). The hunter-gatherer worldview then takes 'the human condition to be that of a being immersed from the start, like other creatures, in an active, practical and perceptual engagement with constituents of the dwelt-in world' (Ingold 2000: 42). Of course there is not one 'indigenous' epistemology or philosophy — there are many traditions and cultures within the ambiguous label of 'indigenous' (as well as those postcolonial peoples who do not identify as indigenous), but there are certainly some commonalities, particularly in the material effects of colonialism. Indigenous ecology is a necessary consideration in forming an ecological performance aesthetic: while resisting the eco-Indian stereotype and recognising that although indigenous peoples and cultures have avoided some of the western-centric exploitation of the more-than-human world, this is not a universalising or simplistic harmony.

The intersection of ecological thought and postcolonial theory can critically reveal the way history has been shaped by colonial assumptions about relationships to the more-than-human world. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin explain the relationship in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (2010):

> [P]ostcolonialism's concerns with conquest, colonization, racism and sexism, along with its investments in theories of indigeneity and diaspora and the relations between native and invader societies and cultures, are also the central concerns of animal and environmental studies. (6)

Ecology and postcolonialism are so connected that Pablo Mukherjee (2011) contends that each field is necessary to an understanding of the other as the 'global conditions of colonialism and imperialism (let us call it postcolonial studies) cannot but consider the complex interplay of environmental categories such as water, land, energy, habitat, migration', (177–178) which are imbricated in social and political ideas of nation, society and art, including literature, theatre and visual arts. These twin fields cannot be considered in isolation as their historical development and primary concerns are interwoven.

Anthropocentrism, environmental racism and sexism are tied to colonial assumptions grounded in a history of ecological subjugation. Huggan and Tiffin (2010) describe environmental racism (a form of ecological imperialism) as a twofold phenomenon: a sociological one that results in 'the environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalised or economically disadvantaged peoples' and the material phenomenon of transferring environmental problems to a 'foreign outlet' through the 're-routing of First World commercial waste' for example (4). With the term 'climate change refugee' being applied to the Inuit people of small Arctic islands in Alaska, and people of coastal islands in Papua New Guinea, which are being eroded by raising sea levels or becoming uninhabitable, the term 'climate change refugee' is inextricable from postcolonial discourses. These indigenous peoples, who are losing not only their home but also their traditional way of life,

are seen as 'other', foreign and distant. This reinforces what Val Plumwood (2002) refers to as hegemonic centrism. In Plumwood's interpretation, hegemonic centrism is the solipsistic and egocentric viewpoint that justifies and underpins sexism, racism and colonialism, which intersect to reaffirm each other, and have all been used historically to legitimate ecological exploitation. Plumwood contends that the idea is linked to a naturalised anthropocentrism that has historically justified European colonialism where 'foreign', indigenous people are classified as animalistic and uncivilised (as animals), enacting both racism and speciesism. The effect of this type of anthropocentrism leads to ecological injustices (such as the Alberta tar sands, land grabs, water contamination, fracking) by governments and corporations who do not take indigenous epistemologies seriously, coding them as 'primitive' and a hindrance to technology, 'progress' and capitalism. 'In assuming a natural prioritization of humans and human interests over those of other species on earth, we are both generating and repeating the racist ideologies of imperialism on a planetary scale' (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 6). I suggest that postcolonial ecology, then, offers of way of critically thinking about ethnocentric ideas of ecology and nature, as it seeks to address the underlying assumptions, hierarchies and power structures that have led to the marginalisation of indigenous people and the earth.

The effect of these assumptions is epitomised in the patronising stereotype of the 'ecological Indian', which is, I suggest, one of the ways cultural representations have reinforced colonialist ideologies. The romanticised images of the eco-Indian or eco-Aboriginal, which impose a primitive, simplistic, harmonious relationship to land and environment, have provided convenient and forceful ways of imposing agendas of displacement and marginalisation (Däwes and Maufort 2014: 12), suggesting a type of ecological nostalgia, which might also be considered as a reframing of colonial notions of 'otherness'. The patronising and reductive trope of the eco-Indian is neither historically accurate (Krech 1999) nor premised on a complex understanding of indigenous ontologies. The trope takes complex cosmologies and codes them as 'naïve' or 'rustic', effectively dismissing indigenous ecological knowledges as irrelevant or 'quaint' and perpetuating hegemonic centrism.

Although some texts and scholars (Däwes and Maufort 2014, May 2014a, 2014b, 2010, Gray 2012) have addressed the intersection of postcolonial ecology and performance, it broadly remains undertheorised. The recent landmark collection, *Enacting Nature: Ecocritical Perspectives on Indigenous Performance* (2014), is one of the first to seriously address this topic within the western academy. Based on North American and Oceania perspectives, the collection features both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars thinking through a number of different performance works. In the introduction, Däwes and Maufort acknowledge that despite the rapidly emerging field of ecological practice, there is much more theorisation needed (13). In engaging with indigenous work, the *EcoCentrix: Indigenous Arts, Sustainable Acts* (2013) exhibition at the Bargehouse at Oxo Tower Wharf in London, was presented by Helen Gilbert's (Royal Holloway) Indigeneity in the Contemporary World project, and featured a range of work from contemporary indigenous artists from around the world.

Sustainability, as a way of making art, was introduced as an aesthetic of the works: 'sustainability underpins contemporary Indigenous arts in multiple ways — in poetic demands to care for "mother earth", to share resources more equitably, to nurture today's youth and safeguard their futures' (EcoCentrix 2013). Although these are promising developments in postcolonial ecology and indigenous ecological knowledge in performance, there is undoubtedly more scholarship needed to take seriously the multivocal and complex dynamics of this area.

Dwelling in Indigenous Performance

Performance can dissect and manifest indigenous ways of dwelling, including the inseparability between humans and the more-than-human world, non-linear histories and timescales, and the consideration of ecological justice issues. The examples of performance in the following section manifest specific indigenous ecological knowledges, which inform ways of dwelling and critique western-centric concepts of ecology, nature, land, time and self. As I stated earlier, I am suggesting that indigenous ways of dwelling expand and develop an ecological performance aesthetic by acknowledging relationality, the power of stories and challenging ethnocentric ideas of time and identity.

Choctaw scholar LeAnne Howe (1999) writes of Native stories as living theatre, which make connections and interrelations between peoples, time and places, as stories are performances of histories, beliefs and epistemologies. 'Native stories are power. They create people. They author tribes' (118). Stories create, shape and reinforce ideas, cosmologies, and relations to the world, and have effects on understanding the past, present and future. Stories, then, are enacted and dramatic performances. As I have mentioned above, the examples in this section depart from the performance practice throughout this thesis in that my access (and therefore analysis) is primarily text-based and the works are narrative-based performances which broadly utilise the power of stories, as Howe suggests. May (2014) refers to stories as 'a matrix of belonging, a living tissue between past and present, between human and nonhuman communities; and in this way, stories help heal the earth and ourselves' (193). Performance is a site where these stories are shared, revealed and presented, making it a potent place to reflect on indigenous understandings of dwelling.

Scholar Hilary Halba (2014) contends that Māori playwright Witi Ihimeara's (of Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki descent) *Woman for Walking* (2000) enacts a Māori worldview of an interwoven ecosystem between human history, people and the more-than-human world (220). The Māori world, Te Ao Māori, recognises an inseparability of human and more-than-human and resists the binary of human/nature: 'human history and its relationship with the world of nature are inscribed into the self by way of whakapapa (genealogy); whakapapa charts histories of lineage — of the cosmos, elemental deities, humans and the biosphere' (Halba 2014: 219). Dwelling becomes a way of relating to the more-than-human world intimately interconnected to ideas of self and ancestry. The identity of the characters in the play, about

the relocation of a Māori family, are linked to their sense of place and the ecological relations of that place.

This sense of inseparability to the land and more-than-human world, echoes the Australian Aboriginal concept of Country, which reflects the way in which ideas of dwelling are imbricated in ideas of the social, self and more-than-human:

> Country refers to everything including the land, air, water and stories of 'Dreaming', being dynamic and multilayered, forming the rules, norms and beliefs of existence between species and humans through connecting Aboriginal peoples' back to ancestral beings from the time of creation. (Kingsley *et al* 2013: 682)

Kingsley *et al* go on to caution that the Aboriginal connection to land should not be romanticised or fall into the eco-Aboriginal trope, as it evolves over time, responding to current conditions in a complex and multi-dimensional way (682). Resisting the romantic stereotype, the idea of Country, or Caring for Country, is a responsive and active form of dwelling, grounded in an ethics of care and evolving with changing contexts and material conditions.

May and Klamath Theatre Project's *Salmon is Everything* (2014) highlights the cosmology of Klamath River people, which similarly links identity to place and the more-than-human to form a sense of what it means to relate to the ecological world. In the play, the inseparability of the people and the-more-than-human is illustrated by Julie, a Yurok-Karuk character who speaks of her people: 'they are the trees, the water, the fish. That the Salmon are brothers is not some kind of myth; the Salmon are not symbols of life, they are life.' (May and Klamath Theatre Project 44). To understand the Salmon as brothers creates a sense of dwelling that positions the more-than-human not as resource but as fellow living being. The Yurok-Karuk people fish the salmon but recognise the need to do so in a way that respects the life of the salmon and sustains the salmon population for future years. Opposition to binary-making practices that separate human/nature and human/nonhuman is also evident in this continuum of life, which echoes ecomaterialism in the questioning of these oppositional structures and hierarchies of life (Barad 2012), moving towards more ecological modes of being. This configuration of dwelling, based on a continuum of life, may redress the boundaries and categorisations that privilege the western conception of human and devalue the more-than-human, leading to ecological subjugation.

Certain indigenous cosmologies recognise the inseparability of humans, animals, weather, and other more-than-human elements within an understanding of dwelling. This does not mean a simplistic harmony as suggested by the eco-Indian cliché. Rather, that these ecological

ontologies of dwelling may offer ways of resisting western-centric, hegemonic assumptions about ecology, extractivism[45] and resourcism[46].

Burning Vision (2003), by Marie Clements, presents a Dene (a First Nations people) worldview that manifests the temporal non-linearity of dwelling. The play tells the story of the making of the first atomic bomb, tracing the history through ore. It was mined by white settlers on Dene land in the Northwest Territories of Canada, transported down the Mackenzie River, refined in Ontario before heading to test sites of the Manhattan project and finally detonating over Hiroshima. The history is not traced in a linear order; rather it connects places, people and historical moments across time and space, through a complex web of materials and relations. 'The indigenous viewpoint from which the play is written, and which it enacts, allows for simultaneity of past, present and future, in which the spirit world co-exists with the embodied world, in which nothing is inanimate' (May 2010: 7). A Japanese fisherman feels the impact of unearthing uranium in the Northwest Territories in a different time. Materials such as flour, ore, bread and water are animated over timescales, producing effects that reverberate over long distances. May refers to this as 'time-outside-of-time' in which 'the play makes visible a web of human agency that binds together places, people, and creatures' (6). Acknowledging this simultaneity opens up ways of critiquing ecological relationships and western-centric modes of dwelling, in which the animated materials and impacts of the past are felt as keenly as those in the present and future. This non-linear understanding of dwelling may foster an ethical responsibility to the future, thereby calling forth a more ecological mode of being.

In her study of Native American drama (2009), scholar Christy Stanlake identifies Native dramaturgy as frequently non-linear: 'like storytelling, Native plays often utilize a non-linear, sometimes cyclical, plot structure' (23). This non-linearity can also be a resistance to the dominant (colonialist) narrative of history, as it enacts events through an indigenous viewpoint revealing the interconnections of people, land, and more-than-humans across time and space. This concept of non-linearity may also foreground the cultural construction of timekeeping and organisation, the prioritisation of 'efficiency', which is laden with value judgments that privilege one culture over others that may organise time differently (i.e. Indian time). In *Burning Vision* linear 'western' perceptions of time are troubled through ecological conditions which call forth the past, connecting it materially with the present and future. A non-linear and relational understanding of dwelling may be able to resist or delimit neoliberal modes of timekeeping and acknowledge the material effects of current actions on the future. In this

[45] Extractivism is the view that the resources of the earth can and should be extracted for the use of humans, particular if the resource is in high-demand (Klein 2015).

[46] Resourcism, as mentioned previously, is the concept of viewing the more-than-human world as a resource for humans, and therefore assigning value solely as a 'resource'.

way, non-linearity and the inseparability of past, present and future in indigenous ecological epistemologies is a potent expansion to an ecological performance aesthetic.

A further way of considering dwelling in performance is through indigenous ecojustice issues. Maufort (2014) identifies ecojustice (the intersection of environment and social justice) as part of the aesthetics of ecology in contemporary indigenous drama. Interconnected with the non-linearity and inseparability aspects of indigenous knowledges, social justice issues are recognised as having ecological implications. If the more-than-human world is intimately intertwined with the human, and the material impacts of the past and present are felt in the future, ecological injustices, such as the exploitation of resources for humans and climate injustices, become insupportable. Ecojustice campaigns may then be considered as both a mode of resistance to dominant (western-centric) modes of dwelling and a way to conceive of alternative forms of dwelling based on social and ecological justice. Plays and performances by non-indigenous theatre-makers have addressed some timely issues of ecojustice. For example, *Oil City* (2013) by Platform and Mel Evans (part of the ArtsAdmin Two Degrees Festival, London) included a First Nations Canadian activist character who wanted to draw attention to the way in which the Alberta tar sands development[47] has effected the home, land and culture of her people. This performance will be discussed in further detail in Chapter IV.

Sila (2014) by Chantal Bilodeau (which premiered at Underground Railway Theater in Boston) considers the ecojustice issue of climate change effects on the Arctic (including opening up the Northwest Passage as an international trade route now that the ice pack has melted). The play is named after the Inuit idea of *sila*, the spiritual relationship between people, climate and ecological processes, and considers it in relation to the politics of climate change and the Arctic. Within Inuit cosmology the concept of *sila* could be translated in a number of different ways including 'a spiritual reference that is meant to contextualize the physicality of human relations within broader ecological processes like the weather' (Leduc 2010: 27). I saw a reading of this play at the Staging Sustainability conference at York University in Toronto in 2011 and again at Earth Matters on Stage symposium at Carnegie Mellon University in 2012 (for which it won the ecodrama playwriting competition). The play is set in Baffin Island in the territory of Nunavut, Canada, and features seven interconnecting storylines about the current ecological and political context of the Arctic, including an Inuit climate change activist and her family, Canadian Coast Guard officers and a visiting climate scientist.

The activist character is modelled on real-life Inuk climate change advocate (and Nobel Peace prize nominee) Sheila Watt-Cloutier. Within the play, we see how the Inuit are trying to raise global alarms about the melting glaciers and the effect of climate change on their culture and livelihoods. The Inuit are disproportionately affected by climate change despite their

[47] The tar sands development in Alberta, Canada, is a large-scale, carbon intensive oil extraction project that covers much indigenous land.

relatively small contribution to it. This mirrors the ecological effects of resource inequality on postcolonial nations, which generally have low carbon emissions (compared to the Global North) though they are disproportionately susceptible and endangered by the effects of climate change (DeLoughrey and Handley 2011: 26). Watt-Cloutier is an international voice of the Inuit and argues that 'the Arctic is seen as a global barometer for climate change, and Inuit are responsible sentinels that have reached out to warn the world about this important issue that interconnects all of humanity' (Cape Farewell 2013: 31). Bilodeau writes her version of the Inuit activist as an international figure trying to draw the attention of the world to the Arctic, while faced with government inaction. The behaviour and lifestyles of the western world ostensibly have profound socio-ecological impacts on the Arctic and the Inuit who live there, yet it remains a 'foreign' and distant reality while the warnings and ecological knowledge of the Inuit are ignored or overlooked by policy makers. Anthropologist Cruikshank (2004) observes that reductive assumptions of traditional ecological knowledge can be read as a recasting of colonial ideas of 'primitive superstition, savage nobility, or ancestral wisdom' that re-inscribes inequality by seeing indigenous knowledge as 'an object for science rather than as a kind of knowledge that could inform science' (21). The Canadian government seems to be ignoring the warnings of indigenous cultures about the effects of climate change in the Arctic. This could be partly because of colonial assumptions of the 'noble savage' associated with the eco-Indian trope that devalues and marginalises indigenous ecological knowledges as primitive and irrelevant to contemporary society. By the end of the play, despite dealing with death, loss and hardships, the Inuit community members realise their fight for ecological justice is far from over. This commitment may be read as an understanding of ecojustice as part of what it means to dwell, or live and relate to the world in the context of global climate change and indigenous marginalisation.

Sila presented Inuit mythology through a **'**western**'** theatrical form. The piece included the characters of a mother polar bear and her cub who enact Inuit mythology, including the story of Nanurjuk, a polar bear who went into the sky to become a star in the Orion constellation. The polar bears have their own narrative and voice, rather than just standing in as a representation of climate change (or nature). However, Inuit mythology is also used to provide a very convenient 'happy ending' to the piece, within a linear structure. In the play, Inuit goddess of the ocean and underworld Nuliajuk saves the climate scientist from drowning and gives the other human characters the strength to carry on with their lives and the campaign after personal loss, including the suicide of the activist's grandson. This use of Inuit mythology as a *deus ex machina,* that solves a key problem and brings the story to an ultimately uplifting ending, could be read as instrumentalising Inuit cosmology to service a Euro-centric storytelling form. *Sila,* then, while dramatising a critical ecojustice issue in the Arctic, does not take into account indigenous forms of knowledge in its structure, thereby possibly reproducing colonial hierarchies of knowledge, time and narrative form.

Ecological and social justice issues have long been intertwined for indigenous peoples, having faced different cycles of loss since colonisation. Scholar John Barry (2012) argues that the loss of traditional life of the Crow nation of Turtle Island, as depicted in Jonathan Lear's *Radical Hope* (2006), offers insights into ways of dealing with the possibility of ecological collapse. Lear refers to the 'narrative rupture' that occurs when 'settled and established ways of life, modes of thinking and acting collapse' (Barry 55). This collapse is not only in terms of the relationship to the ecological material world but is also psychological and social, as it disrupts worldviews. Climate change has rendered all of humanity as 'vulnerable', having to face up to the possibility of collapse. By naming this shared vulnerability, and living with it, Barry argues that we can develop resilience. Acknowledging the 'narrative rupture' can also be a strategy for thinking of new modes of being and living within the ecology of the world. Ecojustice is a one way of addressing this vulnerability, which is already keenly felt by many indigenous peoples. Understanding this as part of an ecological performance aesthetic may not only address this vulnerability be also imagine different modes of resilience, based on indigenous ecological epistemologies and concepts of dwelling.

Performance has the opportunity to engage an ecological imagination, grounded in a nuanced understanding of dwelling that is relational, complex and multivocal. Postcolonial scholars DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) argue that literature, through imaginative means, can foreground the political and ethical force of an ecological worldview informed by postcolonial theory. I suggest performance has this same opportunity to foreground indigenous modes of dwelling with political and ethical dimensions. The above examples of indigenous ecology in performance throw into relief some of the ethnocentric assumptions of contemporary views of ecology and dwelling or how relationships to the more-than-human are perceived. Dwelling as a trope of ecological literature, performance and criticism should be extended to include indigenous perspectives on how we live within the ecological world. This extension and inclusion provides a critique of the western hegemonic assumptions in ecological thinking based in continental and western philosophy and opens up an ecological performance aesthetic (and the field of performance and ecology) in a more inclusive and diverse way.

Conclusion

This chapter has theorised dwelling as a characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic, engaging with concepts of home and dwelling, from western and non-western perspectives. I have suggested that these concepts and materialities are revealed and critiqued in ecological performance. *Oikos as Home* considered some of the multiple and diverse readings of home, problematising home as a safe, domestic space or place. Through examples from Fevered Sleep and the *Trans-Plantable Living Room* (2013), I suggested that home is engaged in a variety of ways within ecological performance. Extending and developing an ecological performance aesthetic to critique romantic ideas of domesticity, nostalgia and relations to

place, performance can also call attention to the construction (and effects) of the human/nature binary through geopathology. In drawing attention to this separation, more ecological ways of thinking about 'home' may be employed to dissolve it. Considering dwelling, I started from an analysis of Heideggerian dwelling as the foundational thinking of dwelling in ecological thought, and then critiqued it through claims of fascism, privileging language over the body, and reinforcing the myth of rurality. Using the example of Kershaw's *Meadow Meander* (2011–14), I argued that ecological performance draws attention to the tensions inherent in relating to the ecological world and conceptions of dwelling. I then turned to indigenous ecology to critique and problematise western-centric concepts of dwelling. After a brief examination of the way in which some indigenous world views consider ecology and questions of dwelling, I suggested that ecological performance engages with the indigenous concepts of the inseparability of humans and the more-than-human world, non-linearity and ecological justice, ostensively through a 'western' theatrical form.

Home and dwelling are all a kind of becoming, processual, in flux. They are relational and in a constant exchange with the political, social and ethical formations of the wider world. They do not represent a fixed point in a specific location or practice. Rather, multiple practices and understandings of dwelling, living and relating to the more-than-human world can be disclosed in performance, manifesting some of the most important ecological questions of the Anthropocene. Within the context of an ecological performance aesthetic, dwelling as a key trope or leitmotif questions ideas of home and how we live and relate to ecological materialities, from the point of view of being immersed within the more-than-human world.

In the next chapter, I will consider the way in which a sense of home can be extended to a sense of planet, taking up Heise's (2008) conception of eco-cosmopolitanism, and the idea that ecological performance is engaged in multiple and diverse relations and tensions on both a local and global scale.

Chapter IV

Eco-Cosmopolitanism

‘The task of ecocriticism with a cosmopolitan perspective is to develop an understanding and critique of these mechanisms as they play themselves out in different cultural contexts so as to create a variety of ecological imaginations of the global’ (Heise 2008: 62).

Introduction: Field Notes from Cove Park

I wrote the first draft of this chapter from a creative residency at Cove Park[48] in Scotland, which inspired some of my thinking on eco-cosmopolitanism. At Cove Park, I was embedded in assemblages of local materialities, connections and ecological relations, which have far-reaching and global effects. The writing space I used was a repurposed shipping container, with a view out to Loch Long and the surrounding hills, one of which was storing Britain's nuclear submarines. Cove Park is made up of a plurality of competing identities: a rural retreat for international artists and writers, a model of sustainable living, a relic of WWII, an elitist concept, a hypocritical marketing/funding ploy, a site of performance, dangerously caught between nuclear military sites and a romantic retreat from the world. There was no internet or mobile service in the shipping container, with a faded ID number stamped on its side as a reminder of where it has travelled, yet power lines cut across the landscape and there were airplane contrails in the expanse of sky. The 'rural retreat' was still very much embedded in global networks and a diversity of ecological interrelationships, with only a pair of highland cows, a loch and some mountains as a reminder of the Scottish location.

Cove Park was also the site of a gathering of the 2010–11 AHRC network project 'Reflecting on Environment Change through Site-Based Performance' (Performance Footprint) led by Stephen Bottoms. Network members Sally Mackey and Dee Heddon organised a weekend workshop there in February 2011 to explore ideas of living with environmental change, and ecological performance and education, inviting performance responses to the site. The network asked similar questions as this thesis: what are the actual and potential relationships between site-based performance and ecology? How might site-based performance translate to global ecological thinking? I suggest this performance work at Cove Park created responsive engagement with the materialities of the site while simultaneously examining ecological conundrums global in scale, at the intersection of ecological thinking and performance.

Historian Dipesh Chakarbarty (2012) argues that ecological issues are bound up with global relations, which requires that all thinking in the current context of the Anthropocene engages with both climate change and globalisation (1). As the global effects of climate change are felt at a local level, the relationship between the local and global becomes more complex. Cove Park, a site of artistic temporary location, is a material example of these complexities and prompted my theorisation of this next aspect of my ecological performance aesthetic, both through being there and through considering the work of the Heddon/Mackey long weekend. Cove Park illustrates the way in which performance and ecology research is engaging with

[48] See http://covepark.org for further information.

these complexities because of the work that takes place there. I am suggesting that ecological performance can critique and highlight the interconnectedness of humans and environmental concerns, interrogate the tension between the local and global, and offer up new frames of thinking about and making performance. Taking this as the basic tenet and argument of the thesis, this chapter will critically engage with the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism (Heise 2008) in performance, tracing its roots and considering the way different performance events may be theorised in relation to it. As part of the overall argument of the thesis, I am suggesting eco-cosmopolitanism as an integral concept for an ecological performance aesthetic.

In this chapter, I draw on performance examples as the impetus for theoretical engagement. This strategy is different from the way performance practice is situated in other chapters. Here, the performance examples drove my thinking and theorising as they were the impetus for the evolving of my interpretation of eco-cosmopolitanism (which started out as bricolage, as I mentioned in the Introduction). In consideration of these processes, in the following, I will foreground the performance works, following them up with conceptual engagement. In reviewing the root of eco-cosmopolitanism as cosmopolitanism, the installation *#crazyweather* (2013), for example, provides a useful starting point for suggesting a relationship between performance and the cosmopolitan effects of climate change. While the Maldives underwater cabinet meeting (2009) is a performative event that illustrates the connection between postcolonialism and climate change. Further examples of performance that enact or reveal eco-cosmopolitanism include those from eco-activist group Liberate Tate and Platform's *Oil City* (2013). I will consider, particularly, Phakama's *Message in a Bottle* (2012) and the way in which water is trans-national and eco-cosmopolitan. Eco-cosmopolitanism is premised on a sense of planet as place, yet Massey (1997) and Harvey (1996) have each argued for senses of place that consider the imbricated nature of the local and global, as well as the flow of capital, cultural differences and access to global mobility. *Message in a Bottle* problematises absolute deterritorialisation as the local water projects taken on by the participants were more effective that the deterritorialised performance in London. I will also suggest that the materiality of ice in Olafur Eliasson and Minik Rosing's *Ice Watch* (2014) dissects and amplifies eco-cosmopolitan relationships and brings the material effects of climate change into everyday life. Following cultural theorist Ursula K. Heise (2008), I argue that this kind of performance research may 'highlight the imbrication of local places, ecologies, and cultural practices in global networks' (210), contributing to the development of an ecological performance aesthetic that advocates for further attention to the ecological potency of performance.

Although isolated on an island in rural Scotland, Cove Park is also embedded in global networks of exchange, or in other words, it is cosmopolitan. In the artists and writers it attracts, to its global perspective on cultural works, it is enmeshed in a number of relationships (ecological and otherwise), which extend beyond ideas of nation or locality. Such tensions between the local and global, inherent and critiqued in ecological performance, are at the heart of this chapter. As Alaimo (2010) suggests there is an ethical dimension to the mesh

of global ecological relationships: 'concern and wonder converge when the context for ethics becomes not merely social but material — the emergent, ultimately unmappable landscapes of interacting biological, climatic, economic, and political forces' (2). In relation to an ecomaterialism perspective, our ecological relationships are bound up with global social and political formations, with ethical dimensions operating on a globe-spanning scale.

From the idea of eco-cosmopolitanism as a central trope for an ecological performance aesthetic, this chapter will consider the way in which local and global tensions are engaged with in performance. The previous chapters have identified and theorised the concepts of immersion and dwelling as underpinning concepts for an ecological performance aesthetic, stimulated by the concept of the bio-urban. Building on the idea that we are immersed in a number of ecological relationships (which are dynamic and processual) and a planetary sense of home, in this chapter, I will trace a line of argument that suggests such ecological performance reveals and critiques the multitude of ways we are embedded in global more-than-human exchanges. I contend that eco-cosmopolitanism is a way of theorising these ecological relationships, in which we are always already participating. However, the concept of planetary community can also be totalising, potentially reinforcing normative and exclusionary ideas. The complex relationship between local and planetary views of place, and the human position within that relationship, is one that ecological performance engages with, manifests and critiques, suggesting that it is characteristic of an ecological performance aesthetic.

Eco-Cosmopolitanism: A Global Proposal

Cosmopolitanism

In this thesis, cosmopolitanism is not employed as a synonym of mass culture or a global idea of governance, but rather an idea that acknowledges that we all share the earth in which we live, elaborated by Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism. I begin with cosmopolitanism here as the root of eco-cosmopolitanism, and because it is pertinent to understanding our sense of world or the idea of global community. Cosmopolitanism comes from the Greek *kosmos* meaning world and *polis* meaning city. However, the idea of a world city or one-world culture is problematic in many different respects. As cultural theorist Timothy Brennan (1997) points out, the concept of cosmopolitanism can be traced back to the pre-Socratic idea of 'world community of peace' which was also present in the early Christian church and was connected to an aspirational universalism, such as with Kant's 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay' (1795) and Anacharsis Cloot's 'universal republic' (Brennan 1997: 3). Brennan identifies anti-colonial movements as the first to critique the aspirational rhetoric of cosmopolitanism, whose leaders saw it as a 'negative utopia' (4). It seems, particularly in 1997, that a 'world community' actually meant an adoption of 'American-ness' across the world, which replaced colonialism with globalisation, and which maintained the same inequalities through 'the reliance of the overdeveloped world on cheap labour, higher rates of exploitation, and

extraction of raw materials' (Brennan 5). 'Cosmopolitanism is back' according to David Harvey, writing in 2000, 'the bad news is that it has acquired so many nuances and meanings as to negate its putative role (most eloquently argued for by Held, 1995) as a unifying vision for democracy and governance in a globalizing world' (529). For Heise (2008), a contemporary notion of cosmopolitanism is about heightened global interconnectedness (57) and she describes an 'eco-cosmopolitanism' which 'reaches towards…the "more-than-human world" — the realm of nonhuman species, but also that of connectedness with both animate and inanimate networks of influence and exchange' (60–61). My interpretation of cosmopolitanism is not a totalising system of capital exchange. Rather, as iterated through eco-cosmopolitanism, it upholds and acknowledges difference and seeks to underscore the way in which we are implicated in ecological global networks, through everyday activities. I suggest a qualification to Heise's conception though; rather than connectedness to animate and inanimate networks of exchange, I suggest that all networks are animate in one way or another, following ecomaterialism (which will be elaborated further in Chapter V).

Cosmopolitanism, in relation to theatre, performance and the arts, has been theorised variously by different scholars, some of which are briefly sketched out here. For example, Jen Harvie (2009) identifies the paradoxical demands of cosmopolitanism, which she characterises as both a challenge and opportunity that 'requires us to recognise our shared, even universal, characteristics with our fellow humans globally, at the same time as we respect each other's legitimate differences' (76). On the other hand Dan Rebellato (2009) has suggested that theatre 'helps us experience our place in the cosmopolitan community' (71) through a collective audience experience. He identifies this sense of collective experience as familiar in a 'good' piece of theatre or performance, where the audience has a sense of their collectivity as a larger whole as well as their individual selves (Rebellato 72). Heise extends cosmopolitanism to recognise the more-than-human actors, suggesting that the duality between local and global is also a duality of difference and similarity. Negotiating these dualities is inherent in ecological art practice as well as the critical theories used to interrogate them. DeLoughrey and Handley (2011) posit the challenge of postcolonial ecocriticism, for example, 'to find a way to speak in ethical terms about the global and the local without reducing difference and without instituting old structural hierarchies', is also the shared challenge of addressing the global ecological crisis (25). The tension or question of the local and global sits at the heart of the current ecological situation and much performance practice.

Some of the tension in this idea of cosmopolitanism, is the way in which it erases the alterity of marginalised communities within the idea of a globalised world. Homi K. Bhaba writes of proponents of cosmopolitanism as being so preoccupied with the idea of a single, unconfined, borderless world that they ignore the differences between the 'flow' of people, and the fact that marginalised or place-less people (such as migrants, refugees or nomads) do not circulate in the same manner as capital or people with 'global mobility' (in Chakrabarty 2012: 6). The suggestion is that migrants, refugees and nomads do not have the same sense of a global

world that some theories of cosmopolitanism seem to suggest, because they do not have access to global mobility. The idea of home and place may be contested for these peoples and their 'circulation' is often politically, culturally or socially motivated. Cosmopolitanism that ignores the mobility (or lack of mobility) of marginalised peoples may render it an elitist or ethnocentric idea. For theorists that valorise cosmopolitanism, such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the concepts of circulation and deterritorialisation are fully favourable developments as they resist the idea of nation and 'the struggle against the slavery of belonging to a nation, an identity and a people' (Hardt and Negri in Chakrabarty 2012: 6). Bhaba further contends that the status of the subaltern[49] classes, within global capitalism, as insiders/outsiders complicates the cosmopolitan dream of global mobility in a world without recognised borders. The growing phenomenon of climate change refugees is an example of this further complication. Indigenous communities at risk in the Arctic, for example, or in the pacific islands, which are being eroded by rising sea levels, are not only losing their homes, ancestral lands and livelihoods, but are struggling to find countries that will open their borders to them. In this way, ecology and postcolonialism are simply and inextricably linked. Drawing on Martha Nussbaum and Kant, Harvey (2009) similarly describes a subaltern cosmopolitanism, which is premised on the idea of a cosmopolitan education that includes 'geographical, ecological, and anthropological knowledges' (97), acknowledging that any sense of cosmopolitanism must come with an understanding of the contexts that produce subaltern classes.

Within the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism, there is an understanding and acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of humans and the more-than-human in affective networks of influence. Eco-cosmopolitanism, in this sense, shares some of the aims of ecomaterialism: a sense that we are connected, through networks of exchange, to the more-than-human. From an eco-cosmopolitan perspective, Heise (2008) describes the global networks of exchange in our daily lives:

> From the food, clothes, and fuel we buy to the music and films we enjoy, the employer we work for, and the health risks we are exposed to, everyday routines for most people today are inconceivable without global networks of information and exchange. (2008: 54)

This ecological extension of cosmopolitanism is useful to consider as a foregrounding of ecological relationships within a sense of the world. While Heise asserts that literature may 'become the basis for cosmopolitan forms of awareness and community, both ecologically and culturally' or global environmental citizenship (210), I suggest that performance may facilitate or disclose this cosmopolitan awareness. I employ the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism to refer to the way in which ecological relationships are global in scale, implicating a global sense of place and a more-than-human community.

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[49] Subaltern refers to groups of peoples who are outside of the hegemonic (colonialist) power formations, socially, politically and/or geographically.

I suggest that Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism is a way of looking beyond boundaries of animate/inanimate, human/animal, or human/nature, to the ecological networks of exchange that encompass the more-than-human. A global sense of place[50], Heise argues, requires deterritorialiation as the increasingly connected globalised world necessitates the development of 'new forms of culture that are no longer anchored in place' (10), something ecological thinking needs to acknowledge. She suggests that deterritorialisation of local knowledge 'opens up new avenues into ecological consciousness' (162) towards a global ecological understanding. For her, the value of cosmopolitan discourses to an ecological project is the way in which they may facilitate thinking beyond the individual self, outside the limitations of a bounded culture, race or nation, to broader sociocultural understandings and ways of thinking (60). Heise conceives cosmopolitanism as a planetary 'imagined community' (following Anderson)[51] and explores the way in which cultural works address the perceptual ties and modes of identification with the natural world. An eco-cosmopolitan analysis, however, requires attentiveness to the current political and social conditions of specific communities, which may diminish or problematise how people may be able to envision themselves as part of a planetary community.

Eco-cosmopolitanism implies a globalised sense of place, which is an idea closely tied to capitalism (as it is responsible for globalisation). David Harvey (1993a) contends that globalisation has created competition of mobile capital, which pits places against each other and encourages them to carve out specific (and exclusionary) place-based identities. Accordingly, 'the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication' (Harvey 1993a: 4). In a sense then, cosmopolitanism may actually lead to more pronounced place-based identities, differences and a dangerous localism. Perhaps Deleuze and Guattari's (2013 [1987]) call for 'absolute deterritorialization' may be the counterpoint to place-based identity politics. Although a gesture of radical difference may be useful in this respect, it seems to ignore the material conditions of locality. This is also problematic in Heise's claim of deterritorialisation that may seem to be ignoring the material realities of specific localities (the worsening effects of climate change on the Global South, for example). The complex relationship between local and planetary views of place, and the human position within that relationship, is one that ecological performance engages with, manifests and critiques.

Eco-cosmopolitanism shares similarities with what Vandana Shiva (2005) calls 'Earth Democracy', which 'addresses the global in our everyday lives, our everyday realities, and

[50] This phrase was first employed by Doreen Massey in her 1997 essay of the same name.

[51] Anderson's (2006 [1983]) concept of imagined communities is one of a socially constructed community, 'imagined' by those who identify themselves as part of it. For him, the concept of nation was an imagined community of people who do not actually know each other but perceive themselves to be part of the identifying, shared community.

creates change globally by making change locally' (4). Her concept of earth democracy suggests a particular local/global relationship and acknowledges, like Heise, the way in which our everyday lives are part of global networks with far-reaching ecological effects. Shiva also extends the idea of community to include the more-than-human: 'Earth Democracy connects the particular to the universal, the diverse to the common, and the local to the global. It incorporates what in India we refer to as vasudhaiva kutumbkam (the earth family) — the community of all beings supported by the earth' (1). Both earth democracy and eco-cosmopolitanism call upon us to recognise our part within a global community of the more-than-human, involved in interconnected exchanges across multiple scales of time and place, and the positive and adverse effects of these relationships.

The former president of the Maldives staged a performance event to demonstrate the way in which discourses of climate change are underpinned by postcolonialism and globalisation. In 2009, then-president Mohamed Nasheed and his cabinet held a cabinet meeting underwater. Submerged and in full scuba diving gear, they signed an agreement on the ocean floor to call on all countries to curb carbon emissions. The Maldives is a low-lying island nation which, if sea levels continue to rise, could be underwater in less than 100 years (BBC News 2009). The performance event attracted media attention and created a compelling image of a phenomenon happening on an abstract time-scale. However, the goal of the performance event, which was to encourage an international agreement in Copenhagen at the UN Climate Change conference (2009), was not as popular — or successful. The demands of global capitalism and territorialisation could not be put aside at the Climate Change conference. The underwater cabinet meeting and the events at Copenhagen highlight the negotiation between the local and the global — the effects of climate change on a relatively small nation (making a relatively small contribution towards climate change), while the Global North continues to release large amounts of CO2 and resist radical carbon reductions or mitigation.

#crazyweather

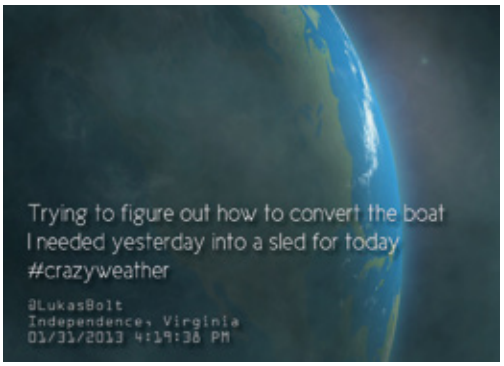

Figure 13. Sharon Switzer (2013) *#crazyweather*, composited digital video Carbon 14: Climate is Culture, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto [video still].

Cosmopolitanism invokes thinking that seeks to expand and question place-based identities at a local level. To a certain extent, our lived or phenomenological experience will happen on a local scale. 'Cosmopolitanism invites us to think of citizens of the world, of global citizens, alongside identities more locally specific to geographical placement or individual subjectivities', according to theatre scholar Nadine Holdsworth, although it is also 'about sharing the same planet and recognising the ethical obligations of healthy co-existence that this demands' (2010: 67). Ecologically, there is a tension here as the effects of global climate change appear at a local

level and may seem a remote problem, rather than a global situation. Performance may make manifest the way in which the seemingly local or isolated occurrences actually make up a larger global condition. *#crazyweather* (2013) by Sharon Switzer is an example of the way the local and global tensions productively collide within a performance work. Installed in Cape Farewell's *Carbon 14: Climate is Culture* exhibition (2013-14) at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canadian video-artist Switzer gathered together tweets[52] from around the world commenting on 'crazy' weather in different localities over the course of a year. Each tweet, such as 'Welcome to Montreal, where the weather is crazy and the seasons don't matter :D' @ aroseagirl, Montreal, Quebec, 9/19/2013 2:47:08 PM', is a Twitter user commenting on the rapidly changing or unseasonable or extreme weather in their daily lives. Twitter is only one of the intensified networks of global exchange that permeate our everyday lives. The tweets fade in and out on one screen, with the name, location, date and time of each noted below them, while a projection of the earth as seen from space (NASA's 'Blue Marble' image) slowly rotates beside them. This work might be interpreted as enacting Massey's (1997) concept of place as the amalgam of global and local social relations, which she calls 'a global sense of local' (323).

An eco-cosmopolitan reading might posit the performance as considering the way in which the more-than-human (specifically the weather) is imbricated in relationships with the human. The seemingly innocuous tweets take on a different meaning when paired with the image of the earth and the sheer number and variety of the 'crazy' weather occurrences. A larger picture and context of the global effects of climate change begins to emerge. There are high winds in Sydney and Mongolia, each noted by separate individuals. The connectedness of these individuals, through virtual space and through the material conditions of their environments, creates a sense of unsettlement, almost alarm at the sheer extremity of the weather. This sense of alarm and the banality of the tweets (about the weather, the most ubiquitous conversational material) enact some of the tension between the local and global effects of climate change evident in our everyday lives. As Kershaw (2012) contends, the banality of quotidian activities (such as commenting about the weather) makes them easy to dismiss. In isolation the tweets would be very easy to dismiss, especially in the context of the Twitter newsfeed. However, when compiled and presented in this manner, they become more compelling, telling a narrative of global environmental change.

Oil City

Another example of a performance that reveals global ecological relationships within local places is *Oil City* (2013) by Mel Evans (Appendix F). Part of the ArtsAdmin Two Degrees festival in June 2013, it was a site-specific immersive piece by Platform, taking place in and around the City of London (London's financial district), merging fictional characters with

[52] 140 character posts on the social media network Twitter (twitter.com).

real locations in a story about the actual ecologically devastating, but financially rewarding, Alberta tar sands[53]. An audience of six was asked to be intermediaries between a diverse cast of characters including a lawyer investigating an oil deal, a journalist trying to uncover the truth, a whistleblower working inside big oil, a banker trying to keep it all quiet, a Canadian activist trying to protect her people's land, and a cleaner with access to damning information. This interactive performance blurred the line between reality and fiction. The specifics of the performance were fictional but the locations and the major players (Royal Bank of Scotland, the Canadian and UK government) were and are real. The audience talked to, followed and spied on actors around the City surrounded by actual bankers, lawyers and journalists. At one point, the Canadian activist led the audience past the RBS offices and pointed out that was the place where the tar sands deal was signed. This blurring or layering of theatrical fiction with reality allowed the audience access to the issues and world of the piece in a unique way.

London, considered as a world city, is in a particularly unique position in relation to global ecological relations. In *World City* (2007), Massey argues that in a global city such as London 'there is a vast geography of dependencies, relations and effects that spreads out from here around the globe' (13), making London a nucleus of ecological and material influences and exchanges. She also points out the way in which world cities are vital to neoliberal globalisation, reflecting market formations (such as wealth inequality). Neoliberal formations are also interconnected with the way in which a world city is implicated in global relationships, ecologically responsible for seemingly far-flung effects of a material lifestyle. 'In obvious material terms London's existence depends on daily supplies from around the planet and, at the other end of the process as it were — its production of waste, its emission of carbon — its footprint is also geographically extensive' (181). Rather than simply vilifying 'the city', its global influence means it is important to think of it in ecological terms, recognising it as the bio-urban, already in the mesh of 'nature', with global-spanning effects. *Oil City* dissected only a few of these ecological effects that spread out from London, but highlighted the nature of the 'world city' and the neoliberal market forces that govern it.

The immersive structure of the piece created an investment for the audience as they were given tasks to complete and were positioned as central figures in the story. It also reframed the City, (and the city) as the audience was instructed to blend in[54] but also to be suspicious of people and to make sure we (the audience) were not followed. Innocent passers-by were scrutinised as potential suspects, buildings were seen as the home of underhanded deals; anybody could have potentially been involved. This re-framing also acted as a way of disclosing ecological

[53] The tar sands development is the world's third largest supply of oil, and through its inexhaustible consumption of resources, deforestation and the carbon emissions from oil extraction, it is one of the worst environmental projects in the world and quickly becoming Canada's largest source of carbon emissions (Grant *et al* 2013).

[54] To this effect, those not deemed to be dressed smartly enough were given office attire to wear at the beginning of the performance by the lawyer character.

relationships because in a way everyone is involved in this story. We are all consumers of oil and petroleum-based products and it is this insatiable demand that has led to the tar sands oil extraction. There are clear villains in the performance (big oil and banks) but you come away feeling that we are all accountable in some way. The dramaturgical device of having the actors play multiple roles, so that the same actor played both a banker and a cleaner for example, in part, facilitated this feeling.

During an informal chat with my fellow audience members after the performance, they said that the interactive structure made them much more invested in the issues of the piece. Not only did it raise awareness about the way oil is being extracted at great ecological expense, it provided a phenomenological experience of the story in a way no news article could. By taking place in the literal spaces where the deals are struck and financial rewards are reaped, the non-fictional circumstances took on a new significance. The performance also took a seemingly foreign problem and revealed the UK's involvement, compliance and profits. The Canadian activist told the audience a very personal story about the significance of the land of the tar sands to First Nation's people of Canada, which was commented on as being a side of the story not heard much, especially in the UK media. Sarah Ann Standing (2012) identifies this as an aesthetic of eco-activist performance of 'bringing the remote close' (153) or making visible and giving voice to things broadly considered foreign or remote. She identifies the media as a conduit between nature and the audience, although I suggest the performance itself could also be positioned in this way. My fellow audience members said they would be interested in following the real story of the tar sands after the performance as they felt they were now invested in it. I contend that this is in part because of the phenomenological, immersive experience of re-imagining the city, which foregrounded ecological relationships and exposed the connectedness of seemingly foreign environments.

Such examples of performance practice may work to foster eco-cosmopolitan thinking through their inversion of banal subjects (like the weather) and revealing of global, interconnected ecological-political-social relationships. The experience of performance helps us see ourselves as part of a larger mesh of connections, in which our everyday activities have global reverberations.

Global Environmental Citizenship

Heise refers to a potentiality of eco-cosmopolitanism as 'global environmental citizenship' (210). This concept connects ideas of human rights, ecological justice and ecosystem health in that, as Patrick Hayden suggests, 'it is clear that human rights claims are predicated on the continued existence and functioning of life-sustaining ecosystems and resources that are now under severe threats and pressures' (Hayden 2005: 121). Hayden (2005) argues that human security and ecological security are not contradictory ideals and are in fact profoundly interrelated, and are both concerns of cosmopolitanism. For Hayden, the global

conscience-raising of the environmental movement(s) has contributed to global-spanning population of civil society, operating across various sectors, connected through a shared sense of concern for human and environmental development (147). However, Hayden ultimately configures world environmental citizenship as anthropocentric, contending that 'the world environmental citizen is concerned about the common good of the human community' (147). Here, Heise's extension of community to include the more-than-human is useful in resisting the anthropocentrism of global environmental citizenship. Although, the idea of global community may still valorise a version of cosmopolitanism that ignores or erases the disproportionate effects of climate change on developing and poor peoples and places, as Chakrabarty and Bhaba point out. Hayden also points to Environment Canada's 1993 definition of environmental citizenship (one of the first definitions) as 'a personal commitment to learning more about the environment and to taking responsible environmental action' (in Hayden 147). This is problematic because it implies we have a choice to be dependent on ecosystems across local and global levels. The language of 'environmental responsibility' can be critiqued as 'shallow environmentalism' or the idea that the ecological world only has value as a resource for human life, again implying anthropocentrism. There is no human life outside of the ecological world. Heise's version of eco-cosmopolitan counters this anthropocentrism and fosters an understanding of material-ecological global networks in which we are already embedded, advocating for ways of being that acknowledge the adverse and generative effects of these networks.

Figure. 14. Liberate Tate (2010) *Licence to Spill*, Tate Gallery, London. Photo by Immo Klink. Courtesy of the artists.

Liberate Tate is an eco-activist group revealing the ecological networks of interconnectedness between the local and global, nature and culture, through their opposition to British Petroleum's (BP) sponsorship of the Tate galleries in London. They are an artist collective who create unsanctioned performance interventions at the Tate Modern and Tate Britain to draw attention to BP's social and ecological injustices. They contend that BP is using the Tate to gain social capital with the public so they will be permitted to carry out their destructive environmental practices (Liberate Tate 2012). This sponsorship of arts and culture in order to gain legitimacy in the public been called 'art washing' (Evans 2015). In June 2010, the group performed *Licence to Spill* during the Tate Summer Party, which was celebrating twenty years of BP sponsorship while oil from Deepwater Horizon was still spilling into the Gulf of Mexico. Performers dressed in black and covered by black veils carried vats of molasses with the BP logo on them and dumped them on the front steps of the Tate Britain. They spilled hundreds of gallons of molasses as 'a shocking reminder of the devastating effects of BP's spill in the Gulf' (Liberate Tate 2012: 137). Their performance

drew attention to the global impact of BP's actions (or inactions) and was a reminder of the local sponsorship of the Tate and the global effects of the consumption of fossil fuels and climate change. The work highlights the ways in which culture (and cultural institutions) are intertwined with situations like Deepwater Horizon and the Alberta tar sands. Liberate Tate's immediate and visceral works reveal the way nature and cultural institutions are imbricated in eco-cosmopolitan relationships. They are one of many groups calling for divestment from oil companies in cultural institutions and are the part of the Art Not Oil coalition[55]. This might be considered a new performance model for the idea of global environmental citizenship, one that reveals the way in which global organisations responsible for ecological injustices are intimately connected to culture.

The Eco-Cosmopolitanism of Water

Performance practice can reveal or amplify eco-cosmopolitan relationships through the tracing of the life of an element. Water, for example, has been the subject of much ecological debate, discussion and performance[56], as the vulnerability of the global water supply becomes more evident and flooding becomes more frequent and intensified, especially in the UK. Bennett (2013) situates water as 'a being with many states: solid, liquid, gaseous, hail, snow, ice, dew, wine, oil, honey, pitch, acid' (107). Its multiple dimensions make it both valuable and vulnerable, as its future depends on how humans relate to it now. Water represents a kind of cosmopolitanism, as suggested by Phakama's *Message in a Bottle* (2012) (see Appendix G), because water transgresses geographical boundaries as a global actant.

> It is estimated that by 2025 more than half of the world's population will be facing water-based vulnerability. The presence of water is essential to the creation of life and beauty; its lack leads to destruction and socio-political unrest. These realities inform *Message in a Bottle*. This project started in November 2011 and has enabled young people from six European countries to investigate, creatively and practically, how water (or the lack of it) has an impact on their lives. (projectphakama.org 2012)

The above quotation articulates the impetus for the *Message in a Bottle* project. Phakama[57] is an international youth arts organisation that uses performance to engage with social and political issues, and started in South Africa in 1996 as an offshoot of a LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre) project. During the first gathering of *Message in a Bottle*,

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[55] Platform has recently won a lawsuit against the Tate for withholding information about the exact amount of sponsorship BP gives the Tate, which has been less than 1% of its overall operational income since 2000 (platformlondon.org). The Southbank Centre has recently announced it will end its Shell sponsorship after pressure from Art Not Oil coalition. Art Not Oil is just one of many divestment movements that have emerged recently.

[56] There have also been many performances that addressed water vulnerability such as *Multi-Story Water* (2012–13), Minty Donald and Nick Millar's *Guddling About* (2013), Filter's *Water* (2007), and many more. The research project, Hydrocitizens, is a network of people doing arts-led research into water, http://www.hydrocitizens.com.

[57] Phakama means 'rise up and empower yourself' (projectphakama.org).

in November 2011, groups from six European countries met in London to explore water issues. Some of the same participants came to the second meet-up, along with many new people, which took place in June 2012 at Queen Mary University, London, and resulted in a public performance as part of Phakama's *Velela! Pop Up Festival*[58]. Involved as a Research Associate on the project, and adopting an ecodramaturgical role, I was there to facilitate reflective and critical engagement in the process and performance. I alternated between observer, interviewer, participant and facilitator. The project engaged ideas of place within a global sense of the world as well as making invisible ecological relationships visible. As I will suggest in this section, there was also a tension and paradox in the idea of the cosmopolitan within the project. In some respects the project focused on the differences between places and place-based identities, and in other ways, it excavated connections between localities and water relationships.

A key question of *Message in a Bottle* was 'how can you take a global and universal need such as water and reflect the huge range of cultural experiences of it and the difference in access to it?' In other words, how can a cosmopolitan idea of water be recognised within and through a localised experience? Before the groups from the six European countries came to London they were asked to create responses to water in their home countries. They were then asked to bring these performative responses, or documentation of the responses, to share with the

Figure 15. On an archeological fieldtrip on the banks of the Thames. Phakama (2012) ***Message in a Bottle***, London. Photo by Lisa Woynarski.

[58] See http://issuu.com/thinkgrowth/docs/velela.

group to get a sense of local water issues and the culturally different (or similar) responses to water. These projects, which usually involved direct engagement with water, enabled the participants to consider a localised involvement with their native water bodies and creatively interpret their materialities, before putting them in a global (or at least European) context within the project. What was striking in these examples was that the localised projects responded directly to local water issues and were more effective than the assemblage of mismatched scenes that made up the final public performance of *Message in a Bottle*. These responses engaged specific water bodies and people. One group initiated a clean-up of a local river while another interviewed community members about their memories and thoughts on another river. In a way, the sharing of the local projects reflected the cosmopolitan nature of water issues by finding the congruencies and overlaps between the water conditions in vastly different geographies. Perhaps problematising Heise's claim of deterritorialisation, the specificity of the local projects allowed for a more critical engagement in the subject of water vulnerability than the attempted 'deterritorialised' final performance.

Massey (1997) critiques Harvey's position of a global sense of place by questioning the ethnocentricity of globalisation, suggesting it is premised from a coloniser's view. This is particularly interesting to consider in light of the participating countries in *Message in a Bottle* and their colonial history (Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Ireland, Poland, the UK). Massey argues that a sense of place cannot be reduced to the flow of capital, or the influence of capitalism, as this misses out the race and gender conditions that affect a sense of place. Social relations and power (tied to capitalism) have a lot to do with global mobility and transnational networks of exchange. Massey cites an example of different senses of global mobility between the people on the long haul flight from London to Tokyo and the El Salvadorian refugees crowding the US border in Tijuana. Each group has a very different sense of 'global' place and mobility, based on access. Massey advocates for a sense of place as a 'meeting point', the intersection of networks of social relations and communications, happening on a much larger scale then we currently imagine, which 'allows a sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local' (1997: 322). This echoes David Held's (1995) description of globalisation as a 'stretching' of relations between societies and institutes across space and time, from which global events have an effect on local activities and local practices can have a global influence (20). The integration of the local and global is an aim for the many activist projects, with the popular slogan 'think global, act local' and was the aim of the *Message in a Bottle* project.

The local (everyday) relationships to water were revealed to be part of a global ecological network within the project, providing some sense of 'consciousness' of the links to the wider world. The participants took a water survey to establish their virtual water footprint, taking into account all the water that goes into the production of things they eat, drink, use and buy. The UK average virtual water footprint is 3412 litres/day while Portugal's is 6202 litres/day

(Kemira). These calculations and numbers surprised and frightened some of the participants by foregrounding the usually invisible relationship between everyday activities and indirect water consumption. In a reflection session near the end of the process, the participants were asked to write down some responses to different questions (see full responses in Appendix G). One question was 'Did the process help you learn more about water? How?' A few responses referred to the water footprint calculation, such as 'Yes, looking at our water footprint helped me to realize how much water I use a day and how much water is wasted and consumed by little things, such as making coffee', 'Yes, my water footprint frightened me' and 'Yes by showing me how much water I use each day'. It would seem from these responses that the water footprint calculation worked to reveal usually invisible relationships to water, provided a moment of reflection on their water usage for the participants and acted as creative material for the devising process. In this way, the process of the performance worked to uncover a surprising relationship between things like water and coffee, (it takes a lot of water to grow and process coffee, which could also account for the higher average footprint in Portugal) as well as the relationship between water and beer (again, a lot of water is used in the brewing process). It is the recognition of these localised connections that may help foster an understanding of the global position of water, their own position within global networks of water usage, as well as other ecological relationships within global networks.

Environmental education scholar, Phillip Payne (1997), developed a critical ecological ontology for environmental pedagogy 'to promote inquiry into practical, everyday actions and interactions and their socio-environmental sources and consequences' (133). As I have argued above, ecological relationships are embedded in global networks and social-political formations. Payne's pedagogy is based on a phenomenological approach 'to make self-evident one's own responsibility and accountability for environmental problems and issues' (134). This aims to create a nexus between 'self' and 'world', from a perspective of being immersed in the environment (and therefore ecological issues). Payne asked his students to trace the life of an everyday object or material or food. The investigation helped students conceive of themselves as part of the ecological world, highlighting the impact of their actions and making the environment something they are a part of, rather than something 'out there'. I suggest that the water footprint calculations did the same thing, helping participants conceptualise their relationship to water, on both a local and global scale, in their everyday lives. Stephen Emmott employs a similar strategy in *Ten Billion* (2013) in his explanation of 'hidden water':

> Hidden water is water used to produce things we consume but typically do not think of as containing water. Such things include chicken, beef, cotton, cars, chocolate and mobile phones…your cotton pyjamas take 9,000 litres of water to produce. And it takes 100 litres of water to produce a cup of coffee. And that's before any water has actually been added to your coffee. We probably drank about 20 billion cups of coffee last year in the UK. (72–74)

Tracing the ecological relationships in the production and consumption of everyday objects clarifies the way in which our localised, personal actions are globally connected. Performance

practice may provide the opportunity to do so, either in the process of developing material or as an audience member. Perhaps *Message in a Bottle* would have been more effective in its aim to highlight water vulnerability if audience members had the opportunity to understand their own embodied ecological relationship with water.

In tackling the problem of ecological problems seeming distance and separate from our everyday lives, Standing (2012) identifies bringing the remote to the local as an aspect of an aesthetic of ecoactivist performance. Groups like Greenpeace and EarthFirst! use the performance of activism (both the act of intervention and the media response to it) as a way to create a sense of understanding an eco-cosmopolitanism. *Crack the Dam* (1987) from EarthFirst! was an ecoactivist performance responding to the creation of a local dam, positioned as world news. The group hung a large banner with a picture of a crack over the dam, which made it seem like the newly constructed dam was cracked. Standing writes about the way performance can reframe place (2012: 154), making familiar that which seems distant. This local issue took on cosmopolitan status as it became world news and catalysed public pressure to the point that plans for other dams were not followed through by the American government, and EarthFirst! inspired other eco-activist performances (Standing 2012).

Standing's ecoactivist aesthetic of communicating place (the local place of water and a more global sense of place) was evident in *Message in a Bottle*. During a group research expedition to the Thames with an archeologist, London as a place spoke through the archeological artifacts found on the banks of the Thames as well as the stories that accompanied them, which eventually became dramatic material for the performance. However, through the performance, the specific materialities of the site, such as Regent's Canal, was not communicated strongly. The canal mostly formed a backdrop for the action and did not have agency in the performance. As Cless has argued within his concept of ecodirecting, nature (and natural elements) in performance have agency and 'take action, react and receive the impacts of human action, and are attacked and fight back, not unlike characters' (Cless 2012: 159). In *Message in a Bottle*, the canal did not reflect the environmental impact of human action or 'take action' even though the human impact was visible by the amount of litter floating in the canal (itself a human-constructed waterway). The participants' home countries as places were communicated through some scenes in the performance. Turkey and the Basque Country were communicated most vividly in a scene in which a man has his bathtub polished to perfection but does not dare to use it, a common occurrence in Turkey we were told, and a scene in which a farmer herded chickens into a bathtub to feed them, something done in the Basque Country. These scenes also worked to bring the remote or the foreign to the local. During the process, the sharing of these stories helped the group understand relationships to water in 'other' places. For example, during the final reflection session, in response to the question 'Did the process help you learn more about water?' one participant commented 'Yes, because learning that the Basque Country went without water for a summer really made me think that water won't be around and that we have to save it'.

It was these kinds of discoveries that enabled the exploration of both the universality and situatedness of water relationships, possibly enacting an eco-cosmopolitan viewpoint through locally/culturally specific stories and materialities.

The process of bringing together a group of young people from six countries and having them explore water vulnerability, both locally and globally, worked in some instances as a critical environmental pedagogy. In particular, this worked when they were responding to their local bodies of water and sharing them, learning about the Thames and their water footprint as part of the creative process for generating material for performance. However, from an audience perspective, the final performance did not offer a critical engagement with the local water or site and failed to reveal the multiple and diverse ways in we are intimately connected to global water usage. As Phakama has a focus on process, perhaps it is appropriate that the process was more generative and germane to the aims of the project and understanding the eco-cosmopolitanism of water, than the final performance.

Globalisation and Global Warming

Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2012) argues that any discussion of our current ecological situation must involve consideration of both globalisation and global warming or climate change. *Ice Watch* (2014) was a performance work that engaged both of these concepts, calling attention to their interconnectedness and relevance to our daily lives. Artist Olafur Eliasson and geologist Minik Rosing arranged for the transportation of 100 tonnes of Arctic ice to City Hall Square in Copenhagen, where they stood melting. 12 large pieces of ice were arranged in a circle in the city square for the public to interact with and represented the amount of ice melting every 100th of a second in the current conditions of climate change. The ice pieces used in the work had fallen off the Greenland Ice Cap and were fished out of the sea and transported in refrigerated containers to Copenhagen (Eliasson 2014).

Figure 16. Olafur Eliasson and Minik Rosing (2014) ***Ice Watch***, City Hall Square, Copenhagen. Photo by Anders Sune Berg Courtesy of the artists.

The work attempted to draw out these ecological connections between global, political, economic, cultural and social networks, demonstrating their interrelatedness to local practices. As Heise suggests, it is not a sense of place that is critical for ecological awareness but rather a sense of planet, 'a sense of how political, economic, technological, social, cultural, and ecological networks shape daily routines' (55). By giving those present the opportunity to witness Arctic ice melting, a conversation about climate change was almost inevitable. By bringing the seemingly distinct and 'foreign' effects of climate change into the realm of local, everyday life, the relationship to the Arctic ice was reframed. It was possible for the people witnessing the ice to recognise the effects of their daily lives on far-flung ecological networks, thereby manifesting certain ecological relationships. No longer an abstract idea or meaningless statistic, people could see, touch, listen to and smell what 100 tonnes of melting ice was like. This sensorial interaction with the ice made it tangible and understandable on a human scale, creating an embodied knowledge of what it means to know that the ice caps are melting. It was both a metaphor and literal illustration of the way in which human action effects climate change, particularly as the more human interaction on the translocated ice, the more the melting process sped up.

Ice Watch enacted an arrogant view of global mobility, however, with international transportation involved. The environmental impact of the transportation could be considered as undermining the ecological intention of the project. The transportation of the ice, likely having a large 'ecological footprint' contributing in itself to the raising temperatures causing further glacier melting, highlights one of the local/global paradoxes inherent in much ecological performance practice. How can we understand the global ecological effects of our actions if we do not have access to them or if that access contributes to their impact? This complex problem is something that cannot be easily justified or reduced to paralysing guilt; rather it can be interrogated within ecological performance practice (as I will discuss further in Chapter V) and engaged with in a way that generates further understanding of our enmeshment in the more-than-human world.[59]

The project contained social-political-ecological materialities of the global context in a local setting as well as highlighting the effects of the everyday networks with which we are involved. It makes the interconnectedness of eco-cosmopolitanism tangible, bringing 'distant' effects into the everyday, and by so doing, potentially shaped these relationships in a more ecologically ethical way. This work highlights and problematises some of the ways in which the local and global may be reflected in ecological performance practice.

[59] Cape Farewell has similar aims with their expeditions in which they take artists, writers, educators and scientists to the Arctic with the hope that the type of understanding about global climate change attained by the experience, and the dissemination of it through their work, will make the environmental impact worthwhile.

Conclusion

Ecological performance responds to and reflects on current local and global ecological conditions, informing modes of practice, presentation and reception. In *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008), Heise uses examples from literature that 'strive to find effective aesthetic templates by means of which to convey such a dual vision of the Earth as a whole and of the different earths that are shaped by varying cultural contexts' (210). Ecological performance may offer an aesthetic template for forms, images, stories and experiences of this eco-cosmopolitanism, while also resonating with local socio-political-ecological systems. Negotiating the complex relationship between a globalised world and local ecological conditions, ecological performance is well placed to reveal and interrogate some of the nuances of this complexity.

In this chapter, I have theorised examples of ecological performance practice in relation to eco-cosmopolitanism, analysing the way in which the complex global/local relationship is engaged with in performance. Performances such as *#crazyweather, Oil City* and the work of Liberate Tate, consider and reveal some of the ways in which local networks, practices and experiences are actually part of global ecological exchanges. Water, in *Message in a Bottle*, enacted an eco-cosmopolitan relationship, revealing the way everyday habits can have far-reaching effects, shaping concepts of place. However, this relationship was perhaps best understood on a local scale for the participants, through everyday objects and relations. The water crisis or the importance of water to live was understood by the participants through the creative process of making the performance. *Ice Watch* manifested the global materialities effected by western lifestyles. Providing an opportunity to sensorially experience ice melting (although out of 'place') created a different understanding of the seemingly foreign and distant reality of climate change, making it relevant and urgent to daily lives.

All of these works refract global ecological relationships, by elucidating different aspects and layers of global, more-than-human networks. I suggest that by acknowledging that in our everyday lives we have global ecological influence, through oil usage, water consumption or contributing carbon emissions leading to the melting of the ice caps, we may begin to address these relationships in a more informed and ethical way.

Part 2 of this thesis has considered different characteristics or tropes of an ecological performance aesthetic: immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism, provoked by the concept of the bio-urban. The next and final section of this thesis theorises a non-anthropocentric way of thinking about an ecological performance aesthetic, building on the characteristics previously developed.

Part Three

Chapter V

A Non-Anthropocentric Theory

'We especially must not make the mistake of believing that one can detach the "human" and the "natural" from the aesthetic and still maintain that we have met the challenge of ecological thinking and ecological praxis' (Kwinter 2010: 103)

Introduction

In theorising a non-anthropocentric aesthetic of ecological performance, I will suggest that performance may resist anthropocentrism by highlighting and acknowledging the capacity for agency of the more-than-human. The previous four chapters have examined characteristics or tropes of an ecological performance aesthetic, and in this chapter I will consider how an ecological aesthetic can be considered non-anthropocentric. I set forth an argument that in the current ecological age of the Anthropocene, a non-anthropocentric aesthetic of performance and theatre may help contribute to what Bennett (2010) calls an 'ecological sensibility', extending ecological thinking to performance. As I have argued in Part 2, the concepts of immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism are made manifest in performance as a way of amplifying and dissecting ecological relationships. In continuing to think ecologically, I consider how performance practice can contribute to the process of excavating the intricate interrelationships between humans and more-than-humans, and in turn, how this thought process can lead to more ecologically equitable modes of being. Drawing on Bennett and Barad, I will briefly outline how ecomaterialism may work to de-centre the human and redraw matter horizontally, reconfiguring the Great Chain of Being, and providing a useful critical framework for theorising the ways in which ecological performance can resist anthropocentrism.

Agency is not employed here as 'intention', 'choice' or audience agency as it has been positioned within immersive and participatory theatre scholarship[60]. Rather, it is configured in this thesis as the ability to produce effects and to affect, influence or to make a difference to something, not necessarily within the realm of the human. 'So agency is not something possessed by humans, or non-humans for that matter. It is an enactment', asserts Barad, 'and it enlists, if you will, "non-humans" as well as "humans"' (in Dolphijn and Tuin 2012: 55). Throughout this chapter, I will refer to three different (although connected) types of agency: material, ecological and geological, all problematising the idea of agency as a solely human property. I am not using the term to indicate consciousness or intention as it is sometimes used. With the use of material agency, I am describing that which can influence the material world through physical effects. This can range from the material agency of worms to overturn soils creating new growing conditions, to the material agency of trees in converting CO2 to oxygen or cracking the pavement with their roots. Ecological agency, related to material agency, as effects on the material world always have an ecological relationship, is more specifically applied to indicate when this ecological relation is foregrounded. Ecological agency is not only the ability to affect the material world in an ecological way, but it also

[60] See Alston (2013), White (2013), Bishop (2012).

calls attention to the complex interrelationships between humans and more-than-humans that characterise ecology. Geological agency can also call attention to these interconnected assemblages, but specifically relates to the way in which humans have made an unprecedented difference to the material-ecological world since the industrial revolution. In other words, following Chakrabarty (2012), humans now have this geological agency, which was previously reserved for large-scale geophysical nonhuman phenomena (although of course there are still more-than-human phenomena that exercise geological agency such as earthquakes, volcanic activity, wind, water and glaciers). Throughout this chapter, these descriptions of agency will be nuanced and problematised through their engagement with performance practice.

One of the ways performance may activate a non-anthropocentric ecological sensibility is through what I term 'ecological anthropomorphism'. This is anthropomorphism that disrupts the anthropocentric hierarchy through recognition of the capacity for agency and action in the more-than-human and questions binary-making practices that divide humans and nonhumans. Fevered Sleep's *It's the Skin You're Living In* (2012), a film following a man in a polar bear costume as he walks from the Arctic to his home in the city, illustrates this disruption by enacting an ecological anthropomorphism. It acknowledges the interconnections between human-animal-climate, troubling the distinctions and boundaries between them. I will also consider worms as operators that help us recognise the agency of the more-than-human through performance, as in Plantable's *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee* (2012), one of my practice experiments. Ecological anthropomorphism not only reveals the way the more-than-human is like the human, as Bruno Latour (2009) contends, it also 'gives shape to humans' or shapes human actions (160). Barad (2012) argues that nature enacts a queer performativity that radically disrupts ontological distinctions between human and 'other'. I consider queer ecology well placed to problematise and disrupt the configuration of human/nonhuman in a dichotomous relationship.

I will then consider geological agency, specifically how performance can make meaningful the idea of humans as geophysical forces (Chakrabarty 2012), thereby moving towards a non-anthropocentric aesthetic by acknowledging both the uniqueness of human agency and its interconnectedness with more-than-human life. A performance that acknowledges human's geological agency is Fevered Sleep's *The Weather Factory* (2010), as it reveals the way the weather shapes human action and identity and the way humans shape the climate. A house full of weather is an affective metaphor that appeals to the human capacity to understand the geophysical influence of human agency in the current ecological age. Relating large-scale biophysical phenomenon like weather events to a human scale is enacting an ecological anthropomorphism, but in light of Chakrabarty's theory of human agency, it is also moving beyond anthropocentrism by acknowledging how humans have taken on characteristics of more-than-human geological forces. This intermeshing of human/more-than-human agency also resists the binaries that prop up anthropocentric formations.

In the final section of this chapter, I propose that the neologism 'bioperformativity' may be used to identify this non-anthropocentric performance. Drawing on the posthuman performativity theory of Barad (2003), I suggest that bioperformativity may be a critical tool to challenge the binary constructs between human/nature and disrupt anthropocentrism, by naming the way in which the more-than-human performs. I consider how the more-than-human performs within specific artworks, exemplified through the trees of Beuys' *7000 Oaks* (1982), which I will suggest are active forces that shape human action and manifest ecological agency.

All of these critical examinations and examples of performance will contribute to establishing an ecological performance aesthetic as non-anthropocentric. Theorising a non-anthropocentric aesthetic offers an opportunity to productively critique the perceived separation between humans and the more-than-human world, providing a new way of critically thinking about performance. This, of course, is a performative self-contradiction: a human elaborating a non-anthropocentric performance aesthetic, as Bennett (2010) identifies. Kershaw (2007) also cautions that writing about theatre and performance ecology is performative as it 'could be reproducing the very pathology it wants to question: the exploitation and degradation of the Earth's environment by humankind' (300). However, I suggest this performative contradiction is a generative one as it may call attention to the way in which we as humans are inextricably embedded in the more-than-human world. By non-anthropocentric, I do not mean performance without the human, but rather performance work that acknowledges the capacity for agency in the more-than-human, does not inscribe the nature/culture binary, nor configures humans at the top of a strict, reductive hierarchy of beings within a mechanistic worldview.

A Non-Anthropocentric Performance Aesthetic

The current ecological context has prompted a resurgence in debate about the concept of 'humanness'. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2012), for example, has argued for a re-conception of our understanding of humans as geophysical forces, to recognise the influence of humans on the physical and geological processes of the earth. 'Humans, collectively,' Chakrabarty writes, 'now have an agency in determining the climate of the planet as a whole, a privilege reserved in the past only for very large-scale geophysical forces' (9). The anthropogenic effect on the climate is profound and this influence has been termed the age of the Anthropocene, the geological period of the human. What does this reconfiguration of the human do then to the supposedly humanist discipline of theatre and performance? I will suggest that it requires a re-thinking towards a nuanced non-anthropocentrism, which does not dismiss the uniqueness of human agency, but rather acknowledges the range of agencies of the more-than-human and the complex interplay between them.

Garrard (2004) claims, 'much ecocriticism has taken for granted that its task is to overcome anthropocentrism' (176). I suggest this is also the task of performance and ecology. If

the current state of the climate creates an imperative to turn towards the ecological in all disciplines, then a non-anthropocentric aesthetic of performance is needed to acknowledge the geological agency of the human and the affective agency of the more-than-human. Throughout this thesis I suggest that performance can and should open up new ways of thinking about ecological relationships. In this section, I build on my earlier interpretation of ecomaterialism (see Chapter I) and propose it as a starting point for thinking critically about a non-anthropocentric aesthetic of ecological performance. I contend that ecomaterialism, because of the immanent acknowledgement of the agency of the more-than-human, can provide a theoretical proposal for overcoming anthropocentrism.

Ecomaterialism asserts that our current conception of the nonhuman as inanimate or instrumental hinders us from engaging with the range of sensible forces, actants and agents that operate in relation to us and obstructs the development of a more ecological sensibility. In *Vibrant Matter,* Bennett suggests that all matter has life or vibrancy and recognition of this vibrancy may change our relationship to the world, as I have discussed in Chapter I. I also draw on Barad's (2003) concept of ecomaterialism, or what she refers to as 'agential realism', positioned in relation to matter. For Barad, matter is not a passive entity awaiting meaning, nor is it a static and uncontested site for theory and discourse. It is not a blank slate awaiting completion and signification from human constructions such as culture or history because 'matter is always already an ongoing historicity' (821). Matter has immanent qualities, such as the capacity of agency, that can be recognised and acknowledged by external forces but cannot be imbued because they are already there. Agential realism positions agency as flowing through dynamic matter and is concerned with the discursive modes of constructing categories and binaries (such as human/nature, animate/inanimate).

Both Barad and Bennett configure matter as having the capacity for agency as embedded in the cultural and historical unfolding of human/more-than-human life[61]. Other theorists have also argued against agency as an exclusively human quality. For example, Donna Haraway (1991) suggests the world is comprised of active agency, and acknowledging that agency in productions of knowledge 'makes room for some unsettling possibilities' (199). As I've mentioned in Chapter I, such theoretical arguments are open to debate and contention; however, I utilise them here to theorise the way in which non-anthropocentrism might be conceived within performance.

The beginning of the anthropocentric hierarchy, which separates humans from nature, has been traced back to the Great Chain of Being or *scala naturae* (Soper 1995). The centring of the human at the apex of life (just below God and other celestial beings) informed a broadly

[61] Both Bennett and Barad are influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblages and geophilosophy (1994), which takes the earth as the subject of philosophical concern. Deleuze and Guattari also consider material as matter-energy ([1987] 2013), an influential idea to vital materialist, agential realism and ecomaterialism in general.

western view of the natural world as a resource for man. I suggest thinking through the agency of human-nonhuman assemblages is needed to counter the anthropocentric egoism that has led to unprecedented environmental change. Instead of a vertical chain of being, ecomaterialism proposes a horizontality of distributive agency that reconfigures historic anthropocentrism and recognises the ecological materiality of the more-than-human.

How then do we think through distributive more-than-human agency within an aesthetic of theatre and performance? As Wendy Arons (2012) suggests, theatre and performance, because of their imaginative capacity, are ideal forms for challenging the long-established binaries that lead to faulty understandings of our relationship to the more-than-human world (566). Ecomaterialism calls for recognition of the way the more-than-human creates effects, a radical openness to the ways in which we are materially interconnected to the lively 'matter' that surrounds us. This is the ethical imperative of ecomaterialism, to open up our perception to recognise and discern the way in which the more-than-human has the capacity for agency. Performance can expose, dissect and magnify the ecological agency of the more-than-human, fostering ecological thought through perceptual openness. This openness to the capacity of the more-than-human resists anthropocentrism and challenges dominant worldviews of human hubris.

For Bennett, an ecological sensibility is one that redraws human/more-than-human relationships horizontally, acknowledging that distributive agency is usually constituted by some form of human-nonhuman confederation. Latour's (2004) concept of actant, echoes this more-than-human agency as he describes an actant as 'a term from semiotics covering both humans and nonhumans' (237). Actant, then, is used to resist the anthropocentric implications of 'actor', implying the material agency of the more-than-human as something efficacious. Actant also resists the bifurcation of human and nonhuman ontological distinctions. The differences between human and nonhuman, according to cultural theorist John Frow, need to be 'read horizontally as a juxtaposition rather than vertically as a hierarchy of being' as we live in a world where the human and the more-than-human can 'exchange properties' (Frow in Bennett 9–10). The acknowledgement of this exchangeability and decentred agency leads to a non-anthropocentric way of thinking that is, I suggest, key to an ecological performance aesthetic.

Arons and May (2012) call for a theorisation of theatre and performance that is non-anthropocentric[62] in that it does not reinscribe reductive binaries, since a performance paradigm is in a way 'always already a cultural interpretation of and overlay onto the "natural" world' (1). Therefore, any theorisation of ecological performance necessitates a re-conception of the human relationship to 'nature', engaging with the more-than-human in performance

[62] Kershaw (2007) similarly theorises biocentric performance as an alternative non-anthropocentric approach to the landscape model.

in a way that does not simply replicate anthropocentric binaries. This theorisation, they suggest, is urgent if performance is going to contribute to the reframing of ecological relationships in light of the timely ecological challenges posed by current conditions (2). This echoes Chaudhuri's (1994) assertion of the inefficacy of ecological performances which 'try to exist within a theatre aesthetic and ideology (namely, again, 19th-century humanism) that is…programmatically anti-ecological' (24). However, she also situates a productive tension between perceptions of nature and culture, 'identifying the theatre as the site of both ecological alienation and potential ecological consciousness' (25) because it is a space where conflicts between nature and culture are played out. More recently, she has argued for theatre that does not represent relationships to nature, such as climate change, but literalises and materialises the figure of the human and more-than-human in the Anthropocene (drawing on Chakrabarty) and the 'porousness and diversity of the ecological world' (Chaudhuri and Enelow 2014: 29). By contrast, I am suggesting that performance can interact with ecology through a non-anthropocentric configuration of material agency. My argument in this chapter is that this way of thinking is specifically made manifest in performance through ecological anthropomorphism and through the disclosure and amplification of human geological agency (as detailed in a further section of this chapter).

An Ecological Anthropomorphism[63]

One of the ways performance practice may recognise the capacity for agency in the more-than-human, and work towards non-anthropocentrism, is through the seeming paradox of ecological anthropomorphism. I suggest that this is an anthropomorphism that disrupts the anthropocentric hierarchy through recognition of the capacity for agency and action in the more-than-human and that questions binary-making practices. Ecological anthropomorphism not only reveals the way the more-than-human shares qualities with the human, it also shapes human action. Through the enactment of ecological anthropomorphism, the agency of the more-than-human can be acknowledged, challenging the seemingly fixed binaries between humans/nature and nature/culture. In discovering ways in which the more-than-human is 'like us', or shares similar qualities or relations, the concept of life begins to problematise distinctions between human and nonhuman. We begin to see the way in which humans are embedded in complex ecosystems, in which we are affected by the more-than-human, who are in turn affected by us. This revelation and acknowledgement can then open up more ecological modes of being-in-the-world. I suggest that performance can disrupt and disconfirm anthropocentrism by detecting and acknowledging ecological agency as something not exclusive to humans, but as something shared with more-than-human actants, agents and operators in the multiple assemblages that make up the material world. In other words,

[63] I have drawn on some of the material in this section for the article, 'A House of Weather and a Polar Bear Costume: Ecological Anthropomorphism in the Work of Fevered Sleep' in *Performance Research*, Vol. 20, No. 2: 24–32.

ecological anthropomorphism contributes to theorising a non-anthropocentric performance aesthetic.

My concept of ecological anthropomorphism does not reinforce human exceptionalism by 'projecting' human-like qualities on the nonhuman. The philosophical rejection of anthropomorphism is often related to the hubristic idea of the unique agency of humans. Bennett (2010) suggests that anthropomorphism can reveal isomorphisms (corresponding relations or forms) and reconfigure relationships horizontally, recognising the capacity for agency of more-than-human actants. As Wendy Arons (2012) asserts, 'the recognition of isomorphisms — structural likenesses and similarities — has historically been a first step toward egalitarian treatment, justice, respect, and moral and political accountability' (570). This is not to say that all things have the same kind of agency or to project a totalising sameness; rather it is to question the fixity and hierarchy of distinctions between the human and the more-than-human, nature and culture. Bennett writes that 'an anthropomorphic element in perception can uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances — sounds and sights that echo and bounce far more than would be possible were the universe to have a hierarchical structure' (99). This does not suggest that there are no differences between humans and the more-the-human; instead it questions and critiques the practices of divisions that position humans as the only beings with the capacity for agency/action.

Performance can not only open up new ways of thinking about ecology, as I've previously suggested, it can also open up a space for rethinking or challenging human/more-than-human relations and possibilities. Barad (2012) advocates anthropomorphism as a way to resist anthropocentrism 'where the human in its exceptional way of being gets to hold all the "goodies" like agency, intentionality, rationality, feeling, pain, empathy, language, consciousness, imagination, and much more' (27). She departs from Bennett as she is not suggesting strategic anthropomorphism *per se*; rather she is 'interested in troubling the assumptions that prop up the *anthropos* in the first place, including the assumed separation between "the human" and its others' (27). Using what she refers to as the 'anthropomorphic moment', she contends that it can create a space to question the presumptions of anthropocentrism rather than reinforce the projection of 'human' qualities onto the nonhuman. I suggest that the anthropomorphic moment, then, may open up the possibility of decentring the human by problematising the binary distinctions between human and the more-than-human.

A Polar Bear Costume

The Fevered Sleep film, *It's the Skin You're Living In* (2012*)* (Appendix H), is a particularly good example of ecological anthropomorphism as it reframes images of climate change to reveal the interconnectedness between humans and the more-than-human. The film takes the iconic mascot of climate change, the polar bear, and explores its connection to the human and ideas of home. A man dressed in a polar bear costume walks from the Arctic to a city,

traveling across motorways and countryside in different states of undress before arriving at his house having fully shed the costume and going about everyday life.

The film was developed through conversations between David Harradine (Fevered Sleep artistic director) and Julie Doyle, researcher in media studies and climate change at the University of Brighton. She contends that the climate change images of polar bears and melting glaciers circulating in the mass media actually distance people from climate change, making it seem a 'distant and future threat' rather than a current reality (2012: 2). The anthropomorphising in the film reminds us of how interconnected we are to the more-than-human and the way in which climate change implicates us all, from the clothes we wear to the food we eat — these things are all embedded in various ecological relationships. The film, in a sense, restates the species boundary, the interface between animal and human (and therefore, perhaps, nature and culture), suggesting porosity between the two. In the film, the boundary between man and polar bear is not clear: the polar bear and human are brought into the same dimension, challenging what Tim Ingold (2000) refers to as 'the Western view of the uniqueness of the human species…*personhood as a state of being is not open to non-human animal kinds*' (48). Perceiving the more-than-human as similar to us, having agency, rather than a distanced other, we are shown these isomorphisms and uncanny assemblages of congruities and parallels. In turn an ecological sensibility is prompted that acknowledges the ecological interdependence with the more-than-human.

The film creates a jarring effect that enacts a dislocation while simultaneously revealing interconnectedness. The man is not quite fully human because of the polar bear costume, and the bear is not really a bear because it is in an incomplete state, attached to a man. While the human remains at the centre of the film, he begins in the Arctic, alone, out of place, and

Figure 17. Fevered Sleep (2012)
It's the Skin You're Living In,
film still David Harradine (director),
courtesy of Fevered Sleep.

it is not immediately clear that it is a man and not an actual polar bear. The clinging of the costume to the man as he travels reflects the way in which the polar bear (or the more-than-human) cannot be discarded, distanced or forgotten. The film uses a split screen[64] to juxtapose images of the man-bear and the landscape, reading them horizontally. The image of the skin of the man and the costume skin of the polar bear is a visualisation of Morton's conception of the interconnectedness of all life, or as he writes: 'we have others — rather, others have us — literally under our skin' (2010: 274). Stacy Alaimo (2013) similarly suggests that the film *Plastic Seduction* (2012) by Katrin Peters, in which a woman eats an oyster wearing a plastic bottle cap as a hat, 'dramatizes a trans-corporeality in which humans ultimately consume the surprisingly dangerous objects they have produced and discarded' (20). The polar bear has a man under his skin, a metaphor perhaps for the anthropogenic influence on global climate change (in which polar bears consume other animals with high levels of toxins due to human influence) and the models of production and consumption that contribute to it.

Of course there are risks with anthropomorphising the more-than-human: reinforcing the narcissistic gaze of the human while defining the more-than-human through human-like qualities and characteristics. In some instances, anthropomorphism may not problematise the differentiating practices that separate human from nonhuman *per se*, and instead elevate a particular species or thing to a 'human-like' status. Niels Einarsson (1993) has argued this is evident in some environmentalist 'save the whale' campaigns. Instead of acknowledging the reductive binary thinking that relegates whales to a status below the human, these campaigns anthropomorphise the whale as a special and unique species deserving of human compassion and a pardon from hunting. The whale is elevated above other animals, particularly other sea-based animals that are consumed as part of the diet of the Global North[65]. In this way, the whale gains a moral defence, making their killing unpopular whatever the method or circumstances, while other animals are not afforded this defence (Einarsson). The film then runs the risk of anthropomorphising the polar bear to the extent that it gains a moral high ground without critiquing the very practices that differentiate it from the 'human'. However, the image presented of the polar bear troubles the popularised images of polar bears by dismantling the bear down to only its 'skin'. There was also a notable absence of 'actual' polar bears in the film.

Bennett also identifies superstition, the divination of nature and romanticism as further risks of anthropomorphism (120). It may be that the projection of human qualities on the more-than-human is a return to a pre-Enlightenment divination. Unqualified anthropomorphism may

[64] The film is also available as a multi-user app that plays different parts of the film on multiple mobile phone screens simultaneously (viewed 01.10.2014).

[65] Einarsson (1993) has argued that cetaceans such as whales and dolphins 'straddle the Cartesian divide between animals and humans, occupying a Pan-like role in these relations' (78) and making them neither fully and exclusively human nor nonhuman.

not be useful to an ecological sensibility in performance, as opposed to an anthropomorphism that goes beyond the narcissistic human gaze to recognise the material complexity of the more-than-human and resists the bifurcation of human/nature and nature/culture. For Bennett it is worth the risks because 'oddly enough, [it] works against anthropocentrism: a chord is struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a nonhuman "environment"' (120). Bennett does not specify exactly what this 'specific' anthropomorphism is or the nature of the 'chord' struck between human and 'thing'. I configure it as a specifically applied anthropomorphism, which questions the construction of binaries and can be ecological because it can counter, resist and reconfigure a hierarchical, anthropocentric structure of beings. By recognising the way the more-than-human other is 'like us', we also recognise that the more-than-human is not below us on a hierarchy of resources; rather, we are imbricated in relational exchanges and assemblages alongside other actants and agents, as part of the ecologically-material world. This is also distinct from the anthropomorphism of animals in popular animated films (such as Disney) in which animals stand in for human emotions and characteristics.

For Latour (2009), anthropomorphism is not only about thinking the nonhuman through characteristics of the human, but it also shapes human action. Latour draws on the etymology of the word *anthropos,* meaning human, and *morphos,* meaning shape: '*anthropos* and *morphos* together mean either that which *has* human shape or that which *gives shape* to humans' (160). The anthropomorphic can be that which structures and influences human action, or in other words has material agency. The trees of Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oaks* (1982)*,* for example, planted in urban areas as the performance, give shape to human action through the inhalation of the oxygen produced by the tree, and to the way the humans move around and interact with the trees in their locations. The capacity for agency of the more-than-human can shape the actions of the human.

Like ecological anthropomorphism, queer ecology similarly points to rigid categorical and binary distinctions as an obstacle to ecological thinking. Arons (2012) identifies queer ecology as an approach to ecocriticism that resists dualistic thinking about humans and nature, drawing on the way in which 'nature' does not maintain strict boundaries between humans and nonhuman, thus making it queer (565). Queer ecology theory contends that nature is essentially queer as it does not operate in an assumed heteronormative way. At the intersection of queer theory, ecology and evolution, the field calls for a radical re-conception of the human relationship to the ecological world. In different nuances and iterations, queer ecology calls into question the presumptive divide between human and nature, and nature and culture, in an attempt to catalyse a shift in perspective towards an ecological viewpoint or sensibility.

It's the Skin You're Living In exposes a queer ecology position by problematising bodily distinctions between human and nonhuman. Timothy Morton (2010) argues for a non-

essentialist viewpoint in parallel to queer theory, contending that 'biology shows us that there is no authentic life-form' in his project of queering of ecological criticism (275). There is no normative idea of nature as animals, cells, amoebas and others as they do not act/reproduce/perform in normative ways. Difference and diversity are ecological principles of a healthy ecosystem. Morton also suggests a type of anthropomorphism by contending that 'every life-form is familiar, since we are related to it. We share its DNA, its cell structure, the subroutines in the software of its brain' (277). Bennett points to the body as material, yet material that is 'not fully or exclusively human' (112). On a cellular or bacterial level, not only are we in a world of vital matter but we have actants and agents on and inside our bodies, thereby problematising the idea of an 'exclusively human' body. In the film, we see similarities between the man and bear suit and therefore between the man and bear. As the man walks down the motorway, his legs in the bear suit but his arms and torso free, a striking image of bodily confusion is generated. The body is not entirely human, yet it is not animal. This seeming hybridity speaks to the hybridity of all human bodies as assemblages of cells and bacteria, containing water, chalk, metal and minerals. Queer ecology is useful in challenging what we may consider categorically human or normative, opening up ways of thinking about what we share with the more-than-human.

The film also makes explicit some the discursive and material practices that separate human and nonhuman into dualisms, with detrimental ecological effects. Barad (2012) contends that nature itself enacts a queer performativity, given 'that queer is a radical questioning of identity and binaries, including the nature/culture binary' (29). Based in quantum theory, Barad's work on atoms as 'ultraqueer critters' with 'radically deconstructive ways of being' suggests an approach that does not aim to 'invite nonhuman others into the fold of queerness, but to interrogate the binaries that support the divisions that are at stake' (29–30). Her conception, like Morton's, is based on the queerness of nature and the idea of multifarious difference and diversity for a flourishing ecology. However, we should be wary, Barad warns, that examining these binary-making practices does not simply turn our attention back to the solely human element (31). The point is not to erase differences between the human and the more-than-human, but rather to consider and understand the material and ecological effects of drawing specific distinctions and boundaries. One of the ecological effects of the immutable hierarchical distinctions is the way in which climate change is distanced from our everyday lives (particularly in the Global North). As Doyle (2011) suggests, 'climate change poses fundamental questions about what it is to be a human within a rapidly changing climate and world' (8). Through the journey of the man in a bear suit, the film disrupts and dissects rigid categories that separate and distance humans from the more-than-human within the context of climate change. To be human in this context is to be interconnected to polar bears in the Arctic, cows on a farm and even cars on a motorway. The ecological effects of all these things problematise human exceptionalism, as exemplified in the film. Queer ecology, through the radical questioning of binaries and hierarchies and what it means to be 'human', may help to foster an ecological sensibility.

It's the Skin You're Living In can be considered a particularly fruitful example of ecological anthropomorphism in performance, extended through a queer ecological questioning of binary-making practices. Both of these theorisations gesture to the way in which performance may be considered non-anthropocentric, manifesting the way in which ecological agency is not exclusively human, nor is the human body exclusively human. The journey of the man in the bear suit is an affective image of the way in which climate change interconnects us all and the way in which the human/nature separation can no longer be upheld. This ecological anthropomorphism contributes to a non-anthropocentric theory of an ecological performance aesthetic.

A Performance of Worms

In the following, I consider my own performance action with worms that challenged non-anthropocentrism and the ecological agency of the more-than-human in performance. I suggest the piece, *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee* (2012) (Appendix I), enacted ecological anthropomorphism through the recognition of the worm's agency[66] as well as the geophysical agency of humans. The Plantable performance research collective (made up of Meghan Moe Beitiks, Bronwyn Preece and myself) performed with worms on November 1st, 2012 on the streets and state capitol of Nashville, Tennessee. We were in Nashville for the American Society of Theatre Research (ASTR) conference, and wanted to create a performance action to think through some of the questions for the ASTR Ecology and Performance Working Group. The performance began with us walking through the streets of downtown Nashville with a worm-like direction of movement (single-file 's' shapes). Dressed in black and carrying large red buckets full of red wiggler worms, we wound our way through a public square and then to the grounds of the State Capitol. There we encircled a large, old tree and deposited worms and soil around its base. We then watered the area to help the worms acclimatise, sang a song about worms (based on the *Garden Song* (1975) by David Mallett, which was a children's folksong rewritten to include worms in a comic fashion), placed our hands on the trunk of the tree and left one by one.

We chose red wiggler worms because they are good fertilisers for soil and would be able to provide nourishment for the tree. We learned from our research of the local area of the State Capitol maintenance staff's previous usage of the herbicide Round Up – meaning that the herbicide levels would not harm the worms, but the earth was likely in need of fertiliser. The State Capitol grounds is one of the few green spaces in the centre of Nashville, which seems to contain mostly businesses with very little residential space. Attending to the worms and

[66] Another performance featuring worms is Eco Drama's *The Worm* (2014), a children's show about vermicomposting. This show anthropomorphised worms in a way that potentially moved towards anthropocentrism rather than away from it, as the worms were singing, dancing and living in houses. The worms could be read as objects of amusement rather than vital performers to sustaining human life. Addressing the complexity of these issues for audiences aged 3–6 in a way that is engaging, while avoiding anthropocentrism, is a challenge of an ecological performance aesthetic.

trees of downtown Nashville was also stimulated by the concept of the bio-urban. Although on the surface, Nashville does not seem very 'natural', we tried to highlight the way in which there are more-than-humans performing everywhere in the city. By carrying red buckets of worms through the square, we were introducing the idea of worms to a space where they are not likely to be visible, at least on the paved streets of Nashville. On a metaphorical level, we were referencing the interdependence between worms, earth, trees and humans, within the context of the city. Considered through the bio-urban, the piece resisted constructing a binary between nature and city as we proceeded to the State Capitol and drew out the ways in which there is 'nature' in urban centres. However, it constructed an (unintended) binary between green space and non-green space (or built space). We centred our performance on a tree in a park-like area, rather than a tree within the concrete square, for example. There was a fence around most of the State Capitol grounds, which further designated it as a 'natural' bounded space, separate from the human-built spaces of the rest of the city. This is a problematic distinction and may fall into the ecological performance trend that Chaudhuri (2014) identifies as one of the roots of the ecological crisis:

> The impulse to displace eco-performance from the cultural space of theatre into the supposedly nature space of a park reproduced a discourse that has come, eventually, to be recognized as one of the very sources of our current ecological crises: the sentimental discourse of a romanticized nature, 'capital N-nature', constructed as the pristine opposite of culture. (228–29)

It was not our intention by going to the park to reinforce the binary between nature/culture. We were attempting to draw out the way in which green spaces, however hidden or ignored or segregated in the city, are important aspects of sustaining urban life. The park, in a sense, counters the narrative of capitalism by turning over 'prime real estate' to broadly

Figure 18. Plantable (2012) *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee*, Nashville. Photo by Eric Heaps.

leisure activities[67]. The state capitol is a building on a hill in the downtown core of Nashville surrounded by a park space. It is not a large park but there are trees, a walking path, fountains and garden spaces, mostly located behind the state capitol building. In this case, we did not have the choice of 'black box theatre' and were interested in site-based, interventionist performance, which allowed us to act in an unsanctioned and subversive way (subversive to the normative patterns of the city) while acknowledging the performance of the more-than-humans vital to the eco-system.

I collaborated on this project to practically engage with some of my key questions about this type of practice, such as how could we create a performance that acknowledges more-than-human participation and configures the performers as a horizontal confederation, enacting a dynamic interplay of materials and agency. After failed attempts to partner with local environmental organisations, we settled on the simple task of releasing red wiggler earthworms around a tree. The reference to trees gestures to Beuys' *7000 Oaks* (1982) and the symbolism of trees in general, which I will return to in the final section of this chapter. The performance of the worms in the earth around the tree was intended as a performance of vital matter acting in the surroundings. We considered the silence and synchronicity of the performance, which gave it a ritualistic quality and worked to cultivate a sense of recognition of the agency of the more-than-human actants in the performance and the site.

The exact material-ecological effects of the worms are unknown to us. As we remained in Nashville only a few days after the performance we could not know if the worms did in fact have any impact on the soil surrounding the tree in the state capitol. If the worms are continuing to perform as worms, their composting would enrich the soil, making it more fertile and healthy, which as a result will aid the flora and fauna of the site. This process takes a considerable amount of time and we have not been back to the site to check. Beitiks (2013) points to the acute tension in the fact that we were there for only a short period of time and that the three of us flew to Nashville for the conference, in a reflection piece we wrote for the *Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts Quarterly* magazine:

> There's a real problem with the idea of sustainability in the context of modern, urban, global life: how sustainable am I if I'm flying across the country for an eco-conference? At the same time, if I find that engaging with my cultural community face-to-face is an essential part of my work and practice, how do I balance that with my ecological intentions? (Beitiks in Beitiks, Preece and Woynarski 2013: 10)

This tension is also implicated in ideas of global mobility (as discussed in Chapter IV) and the perceived value of artist research in relation to ecological effects. The negative ecological effects of the flights are one of the ways we exercise material agency contributing towards geophysical changes, as Chakrabarty (2012) suggests. The piece highlighted the way we

[67] Soper (2008) has identified in the way in which leisure time and activities counters the capitalist grand narrative and may assist a political shift towards a more ecologically sustainable way of living.

exercised our 'geological agency' (as discussed in the following section), through domestic and international flights and through the 'planting' of worms, albeit on very different scales and with very different effects.

Latour (1999) has written about worms and his writing acts as a useful coda to this example of ecological anthropomorphism. Latour was trying to work out how trees usually found in the savanna ended up growing in the Amazonian rainforest. It turned out that worms were responsible for this seeming anomaly, through transforming the quality of the soil through their fertilisation. Latour writes that 'the only agents capable of accomplishing this are the earthworms' (1999: 76). However, it is not easy to pinpoint whether some human action had caused the worms to move towards the forest, or if the aluminium in the soil was the key operator. Bennett (2010) uses this example to illustrate how agency is disturbed or dispersed (although not necessarily equally) to the more-than-human:

> These various materialities do no exercise exactly the same kind of agency, but neither is it easy to arrange them into a hierarchy, for in some times and places, the 'small agency' of the lowly worm makes more of difference than the grand agency of humans. (Bennett 98)

Performance may highlight and extend the agency of worms, as we aimed to do with *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee,* manifesting the assemblages of human-nonhuman relations that shape the material world. The 'lowly' worm, as an operator within the interconnected mesh of living relations, reminds us that human exceptionalism should perhaps more accurately be thought of as human/more-than-human connective action. The dispersed agency of the worm may be a useful metaphor and material in performance for exposing a non-anthropocentric ecomaterialism.

Geological Agency in Performance

Theorising ecological performance as non-anthropocentric may anthropomorphise the more-than-human but it also gives shape to the *human,* as Latour (2009) suggests. Overcoming anthropocentrism does not mean dismissing or overshadowing human agency; rather, it means recognising the way in which humans and the more-than-human operate as an interconnected confederation. Part of this line of thought then is to recognise the profound influence of the human on the more-than-human in the age of the Anthropocene. In the following, I suggest that thinking through a non-anthropocentric performance aesthetic requires the recognition of geologoical agency of humans as a geophysical force in the age of unprecedented anthropogenic climate change.

Within my theorisation of an ecological performance aesthetic, I suggest that performance may be one way we can think through a reconfiguration of the human (and the more-than-human) as geophysical forces. Chakrabarty's (2012) position of reconsidering 'the figure of the human in the age of the Anthropocene, the era when humans act as a geological force on the planet, changing its climate for millennia to come' (2) needs to be taken into account

to recognise the way in which the human now exercises nonhuman agency. Chakrabarty contends that this figure of the human as geophysical force draws an analogy to more-than-human agency. Chaudhuri and Enelow (2014) identify this as 'geological agency, which operates on a scale that not only defies the imagination but also defeats the methods and modes of humanist inquiry' (25). Chakrabarty's conception of the human then already implicates the more-than-human (or the beyond-the-human) in a way that seems difficult for humans to conceive. Chakrabarty contends that the convergence of climate change and globalisation means we have the difficulty of reconceptualising human agency over diverse and multifarious scales (1). I suggest that humans as geological forces, and the scale of human agency within current ecological conditions, reasserts an ecomaterialist position by recognising the composition of humans as ecologically-vibrant materiality: humans have the power to influence the geophysical structure of the earth, shaping the biosphere and all ecological relations. We need to understand the awesome scale of this agency in order to move towards an ecological sensibility or more ecological modes of being. Performance may be able to manifest and critique this geological agency.

Žižek (2010) contends that Chakrabarty's figure of the human as a geological force does not take into account the global impact of capitalism and its contribution to the shift to the Anthropocene and the ecological agency of humans. Žižek argues that capitalist modes of production are the key to the ecological crisis and cites the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Summit as an example. While the previous year, governments across the globe hastened to respond to the financial crisis and 'save the banks': 'the panic here was absolute, a trans-national, non-partisan unity was immediately established, all grudges between world leaders momentarily forgotten in order to avert *that* catastrophe' (334). This kind of unified response was not aimed at climate change in Copenhagen because it is perceived as not (yet) threatening enough to the neoliberal capitalist agenda. Climate change is happening on a timescale beyond the realm of short-term free market calculations and projections and is not associated with urgency in our daily lives. Global capitalism then, argues Žižek, cannot be left out of the reconfiguration of human agency as geological.

According to Kate Soper (2012), the influence of capitalism is also missing from a broadly 'posthumanist'[68] position. Although she does not name ecomaterialism I suggest her critique is applicable to this theoretical position. She argues that posthumanism seems to devalue the uniqueness of human's ecological agency and human 'exceptionalism'. Broadly speaking, humans have a greater ecological influence than most other species (as Chakarbarty contends) and have the capability (indeed, the ethical imperative) to take responsibility for the effects of that agency. We are also one of the only species that are ostensibly able to mitigate the effects of climate change, furthering the 'need to resist the naturalism of those who would

[68] Soper (2012) includes in her conception of posthumanism: Haraway, Deleuze, Derrida, Singer, Wolfe, and Hardt and Negri.

assimilate human patterns of need and consumption to those of other animals, rather than highlighting critical differences – and the role of those differences both in creating, and (potentially) in resolving ecological crisis' (366). However, Bennett does not contend that all life is the same; instead she suggests that what critics of ecomaterialism would refer to as 'human exceptionalism' is not exclusively human. 'Human' agency, she argues, is always an assemblage of human-nonhuman actants. When we look closely, 'one can invoke bacteria colonies in human elbows to show how human subjects are themselves nonhuman, alien, outside, vital materiality' (120). For Soper, it is not a shift in attitude but a political and social revolution that is needed to counter the ecological crisis. Rethinking boundaries in order to foster an ecological sensibility is futile in the face of the capitalist growth imperative. Under Soper's critique of posthumanism (and by extension ecomaterialism) Chakrabarty's geological agency of humans is a useful amendment to Bennett. However, the influence of capitalism is not addressed to its fullest concern in either theorist's work. For Soper, the neoliberal agenda has impacted almost every aspect of life, including arts and education, which are now based on efficiency and growth models. What is needed is degrowth (fatal to the capitalist project) and more equitable sharing of resources globally. I contend that a profound revolution is unlikely to happen without a shift in thinking. An ecological sensibility that recognises the geological agency of the human as a critique of anthropocentrism may represent that shift.

Chakrabarty argues that art is a form that may help bring about a shift in thinking, contending that humans are not able to 'really imagine beyond a couple of generations before and after their own time', making it difficult to understand the full impact of their geological agency (12). For Chakrabarty art is a way to bring the abstract concept of climate change to a recognisable scale for humans. Artworks can expand our imagination towards a sense of understanding how the effects of human geological agency might impact on future generations (both human and more-than-human) (12). A polar bear costume, worms and a house full of weather, framed in performance, can help us understand the relational ecological and geophysical effects of both human and more-than-human agency.

A House Full of Weather

Fevered Sleep's *The Weather Factory* (2010) (Appendix J) is an example of the way in which performance enacts the imaginative possibility of geological agency on a human scale, at once anthropomorphising the weather but also disrupting binaries between human/nature and indoor/outdoor. During the inaugural season of the National Theatre of Wales, a theatre without walls, Fevered Sleep created a performance weather installation within a house in Penygroes, Wales near Snowdonia. Small groups of audience members explored the house, which was full of weather and instruments and archives relating to the measurement of weather. There was a bathroom covered with growing moss, a basement in which it was raining, a room full of wind, and one full of mist, light, and an installation of televisions playing shifting cloudscapes. Wandering freely through the house, audience members

experienced different weather conditions, measurements and documentation based on the weather of the local area. Director David Harradine interviewed local residents about the weather in north Wales for the piece, described in the following way on the company website:

> The project played with ideas that 'the weather' is not only a natural phenomenon — an effect of the relationships between the sea, the sun and the landscape — but also a human drama, a way for us to talk about ourselves and the places in which we live. (Fevered Sleep 2010)

Figure 19. Fevered Sleep (2010) ***The Weather Factory***, Fevered Sleep/National Theatre Wales, Penygroes. Photo by Jorge Lizalde, courtesy of Fevered Sleep.

By bringing the weather indoors, humans are implicated in a relationship with the weather, demonstrating how they may shape it. The wind 'installed' inside the house may be read as echoing the way in which human flights shape the gulf stream. The interrelatedness of elements is revealed in an affective way, simultaneously disrupting the domestic sphere and displacing the indoor/outdoor binary. The image of a house full of different weather conditions is a compelling metaphor for the way in which humans are affecting and shaping the climate and geological age. 'Human drama' in this instance is also more-than-human drama, as human agency has extended to the atmosphere and biosphere. By naming the weather as human drama, the performance of natural elements is anthropomorphised to reveal the way in which it is interconnected to the construction of identity and place-making. If the weather is a way of talking 'about ourselves and the place in which we live', it extends the idea of what it means to be human to an atmospheric scale. To be human is to shape the weather and climate and be shaped by it. Chakrabarty argues for a certain type of anthropomorphism, contending that in order to imagine and understand the scale of human agency in the Anthropocene, we must 'appeal to human experience' (2012: 11). I suggest that it is through dramaturgical strategies of visual imagery, metaphors and experience of imaginative possibilities that we may start to

grasp the immense scale and pervasiveness of human geological agency. By 'installing' weather in the domestic, human home, *The Weather Factory* appeals to this metaphoric capacity in order to understand the way in which the material agency of the human is changing not only our house or the place where we live, but our home in the larger planetary sense.

The weather has become a particular trope of climate change, to the point that is no longer a 'neutral' topic for conversational 'small talk' (Bayly 2012, Morton 2012). Although weather is not climate, it manifests as everyday expressions of climate activity, as something that can be experience by humans. As such, it is a powerful means of entry into a phenomenological experience and understanding of geological agency. *The Weather Factory* draws on this opening, foregrounding the weather and our relationship to it, enacting Morton's (2012) contention of climate change stripping the weather of its status of 'neutral-seeming background against which events take place' (28). The performance reframes 'the weather' and exposes some of the interconnected relationships that constitute the material world and amplifies the concept of human geological agency. By putting into relief the human influence on the weather (and how the weather shapes the human), a non-anthropocentrism emerges through the aperture provided by performance. *The Weather Factory* demonstrates the way in which performance can create affective spaces that question anthropocentrism, contributing to an ecological performance aesthetic.

Bioperformativity

In the final section of this chapter, I will suggest that the way the more-than-human performs may be referred to as 'bioperformativity'. This is to suggest a non-anthropocentric performativity of human and nonhuman materiality. Drawing on a post-Butler performativity following Elin Diamond (1996) and Karen Barad (2003), I will begin to think through the way in which frames of performance may be useful in considering more-than-human processes, actants and agency. To illustrate how bioperformativity relates to performance practice, I will consider the example of *7000 Oaks* (1982) and think through the pervasiveness of trees in ecological performance and ecological imagery. The material agency of trees and their performative framing in artworks, or in other words, their enactment of bioperformativity, may account for their pervasiveness.

Performativity

Bioperformativity addresses the way in which the more-than-human performs, based on the premise of ecomaterialism. Performativity[69] is an active word, as it creates action and

[69] With the use of the 'performativity' I am not suggesting a dichotomous relationship with theatricality or that theatre spaces cannot enact a ecomaterialism. As Chaudhuri and Enelow (2014) have argued, the theatrical black box can be a form for performing Bennett's ecomaterialism.

effects, broadly construed in relation to the human. As discussed in Chapter II, Fancy (2011) proposes the term 'geoperformativity' to describe 'the performative unfolding of the earth' (62–63). I am employing bioperformativity to suggest a performance of the more-than-human with material agency, acting in human-nonhuman assemblages. Matter is performative because it has the capacity for agency, action and can create effects. An aesthetic of ecological performance recognises the way more-than-human matter performs.

Through the invocation of performativity, I suggest that performance is constituted, and is enacted and critiqued, through structures of discourse and cultural meaning. Drawing on Langellier (1999), performativity 'highlight[s] the way speech acts have been extended and broadened to understand the constitutiveness of performance' (128). This constitutiveness points to a non-essentialism, where there is no metaphysical or ideal meaning, but rather beings and identities are constituted through action. According to Diamond (1996), thinking through performativity is 'to become aware of performance itself as a contested space, where meanings and desires are generated, occluded, and of course multiply interpreted' (4). Performativity, then, becomes a way of interpreting this 'contested space' of performance where identities and experiences are constituted.

Diamond, drawing on Austin's performative utterances[70] and Butler's corporeal performativity of identity, configures performativity as a means of interpretation and critique, 'as soon as performativity comes to rest on a performance, questions of embodiment, of social relations, or ideological interpellations, of emotional and political effects, all become discussable' (4). For Madison (1998), when performance materialises performativity it can be a form to 'problematize how we categorize who is "us" and who is "them," and how we see *ourselves* with "other" and different eyes' (282). For the purposes of this research, configuring more-than-human agency as performative allows for the problematising of categories and discussion of the underpinning elements of meaning in the performance. Bioperformativity attempts to critique and interpret the way the human and more-than-human are categorised, and constituted in performance, through the acknowledgement of more-than-human performances.

I resist the idea of performativity as being solely that which is constructed or performed through language or illocutionary force as Deleuze and Guattari suggest (2013 [1987]: 91). Rather, I draw on Barad's (2003) critique of performativity as being not about language and representation constituting reality but rather performativity as problematising the configuration of everything through discursive practices.

> Performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real…performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of

[70] Shannon Jackson (2004) notes that Austin distanced his speech-act theory from theatre, reinforcing an anti-theatrical prejudice by calling the language of theatre 'hollow and void' (in Jackson 3).

> representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve. (802)

However, as Barad (2012) later pointed out, extending the applicability of performativity to include the more-than-human (and therefore replicating anthropocentrism) is not the matter in question; instead it is the material practices of binary-making[71] which differentiate human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate and nature/culture (31). Any analysis starting with these boundaries in place does not account for the materialising effects of these discursive categorisations. In a post-Butler conception, Barad argues for the materialising not only of human bodies but also of matter, and suggests that all actors, actions and effects are not exclusively human. Considered through the paradigm of performativity, ontological distinctions are called into question, and the ecological effects of this rigid separation of human and nature are acknowledged and challenged. This concept of performativity produces a useful touchstone for the development of the concept of bioperformativity. By turning performativity towards the more-than-human, I suggest that bioperformativity attempts to address the material/materialising effects of binary-making practices that separate human/nonhuman and nature/culture, through a theory of ecomaterialism. The editors of *Nature Performed* (2003) assert that nature is performative as it is contingently involved in the interplay of signification and takes on different meanings contingent to the cultural/social/political formations (3). Bottoms (in Bottoms and Goulish 2007) has also noted, 'isn't the human relationship with nature always already performed and performative?' (19). Similarly, bioperformativity locates performance in ecological relationships between the human and more-than-human. These assemblages are performative, both within the frame of performance practice and within popular cultural imaginary.

The Performance of an Urban Oak Tree[72]

How might we think through bioperformativity, or the performative nature of the more-than-human, in practice? To begin to answer this question, I turned to the performance of trees. Beuys' *7000 Oaks* is arguably one of the most famous artworks involving the planting of trees as performance. In Kassel, Germany in 1982 Joseph Beuys planted the first of 7000 oak trees, which was intended to raise ecological awareness and renew the urban environment. The piece consisted of planting 7000 oak trees in urban areas and was completed after his death. Beuys conceived of *7000 Oaks* as a regenerative project, aimed at restoring the biosphere by planting more trees in urban areas: 'I believe that planting these oaks is necessary not only in biospheric terms, that is to say, in the context of matter and ecology, but in that it

[71] Binary-making practices include discursive distinctions, political separations and contractions of discourse.

[72] I first began to think about *7000 Oaks* in a co-authored paper for ASTR 2012 'Restorations, Actions, Ecoventions and Questions: An exploration of the potential of ecologically restorative flash mobs' (co-authored by Meghan Moe Beitiks, Bronwyn Preece and myself).

will raise ecological consciousness' (in Beuys *et al* 1982). As Beuys points out, the oak tree has material agency as it produces effects in biospheric terms: it converts CO2 to oxygen, provides a nesting space for birds, food for insects, absorbs nutrients from the soil and slowly cracks the surrounding concrete. The tree acts in a human-nonhuman assemblage, creating subtle reverberations and repercussions, both material and immaterial (such as ecological consciousness raising). Beuys locates the art and aesthetic experience in biospheric and social terms. By situating the tree as art, he draws attention to the way the tree performs and exercises material agency. To think of Beuys' work as enacting a bioperformativity is necessarily to de-centre the human and resist anthropocentrism, recognising the material agency of the more-than-human actants involved.

The performance of Beuys' oak trees is a way to consider our understanding of the agency of a tree and the compulsion to plant them within environmental movements. The ecological agency of trees is evident through their use as a recurrent symbol and popular image within ecological discourses, ecocritical writings and ecological performance works. Historian Richard Hayman (2003) contends that this fascination with trees is because of their metaphoric potential and material presence, which is paradoxically contrasted by our behaviour towards them: 'no living things have had more impact on human sensibility than trees. Trees are special. They are bigger than us both physically and metaphorically, but we couple our reverence for them with a relentless destruction of forests' (1). Not only do humans affect and exercise agency towards trees, trees influence and give shape to humans. *7000 Oaks* acknowledges trees as active matter in the biosphere and on the human, which may help facilitate an ecological sensibility. Trees also enact agency in their recurrence as an 'ecological' symbol, sometimes problematically standing in for romantic ideas of nature, leading towards the fetishisation of tree planting within environmentalism.

Deirdre Heddon (2013) has written about dismantling the romantic image of trees, as they can be site-specific performers, cartographic records, living tissues of time, points of reference in place and hybrid time species. She has specifically addressed trees as both symbol and material in *Forest Pitch* (2012) by Craig Coulthard, which involved a football match with teams made up of people newly migrated to Scotland. The pitch was in the middle of forest on the Scottish borders and was filled with commercially grown spruce trees. After the matches, native tree species were planted along the white lines of the pitch. Heddon draws out some of the inherent tensions and paradoxes in the piece such as the planting of native tree species while welcoming 'new Scots', and cutting down trees to plant less (native) trees. Ideas of nativism, nationalism and the compulsion or fetishisation of tree planting are all running through the work. Heddon also considers the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) campaign 'Plant a tree seed, save a planet' as an example of this compulsion to plant trees. The campaign instructs people to plant a seed in three easy steps: bend down, make a hole and then cover the hole (WWF), although they do ask that people choose a spot with light and space, and a native species of tree. The campaign then goes on to suggest that the planting of a seed is not

only a grand gesture towards saving the planet, but it also plants an idea: small-scale actions can fruit large-scale effects. The reductive simplification of the instructions seem to suggest that the simple act of planting a tree is key to the mitigation of the global ecological crisis. Trees take on a mythic power in this campaign: a single tree is able to undo immeasurable environmental damage. The inference seems to be that planting a tree will make up for all the other ecologically-harmful effects of current lifestyles. Here, trees are not only performing in a biophysical sense, they also perform within the construction of environmental responsibility in the public realm. Trees perform assumptions of 'doing good' where planting a tree becomes a selfless gesture with a big impact, such as in the WWF campaign. Trees perform as symbols and as material. However, artists have used the performance of planting of trees (and other plants) as affective images that problematise human and more-than-human ecological relationships.

Within the recent history of 'eco art', artists have framed the bio-processes of the more-than-human as performance. More than just large-scale earthworks or 'environmental art', these works aim to 'restore' or 'remediate' a site and/or ecosystem. Sue Spaid (2002) describes this kind of work as 'ecovention', in her book of the same name. 'Coined in 1999, the term ecovention (ecology + invention) describes an artist-initiated project that employs an inventive strategy to physically transform a local ecology' (1). For example, in 1978 artist Alan Sonfist planted a native forest in the heart of Greenwich Village, New York in an effort to draw attention to the way in which humans can restore a landscape. He called the piece *Time Landscape*. Then in 1982 Agnes Denes made *Wheatfield – A Confrontation,* also in New York, in which she grew and harvested wheat on a site of rubble from the construction of the World Trade Centre in Manhattan. In 1991 Mel Chin worked with scientists to plant a large target-shaped garden on the site of the toxic waste in Minnesota in *Revival Field*. They planted hyperaccumulator plants, which remove toxicity from soil, helping to remediate the site. In 1992 Kathryn Miller performed *Seed Bombing the Landscape,* in which she used compressed soil and native seeds molded into bomb shapes and flung them into degraded landscapes in need of vegetation. The idea was that the bombs would release the seeds into the landscape and an abundance of native flora would flourish. Beitiks (2013), writing about nonhuman performances alongside human framed art works (such as *Wheatfield – A Confrontation, Revival Field* and S*eeding Bombing the Landscape*) refers to the way the plants perform: 'In *Revival Field,* non-human entities, having presence, perform alongside human entities, through their own historicity and life cycles' (2013: 7).

In all of these works, trees and plants perform in human-nonhuman confederations that affect and shape each other. I suggest their performance is also constituted by their capacity for agency. These works also comment on urban/nature binaries, implicitly critiquing them by using the more-than-human performance as a way of examining contested sites and distinctions. The artworks frame the more-than-human performers as actants in the multifarious ecological relationships of each site. The sites demonstrate the performance

of the human in changing the ecological make-up of a place, and the performance of the human-nonhuman assemblages that are remediating or revitalising them. These assemblages are enacting material-ecological agency, or what may be termed bioperformativity.

Conclusion: Towards Ecomaterialist Performance

The age of unprecedented anthropogenic ecological change makes it necessary to think through a non-anthropocentric aesthetic in performance, one that acknowledges the distributive agency of the more-than-human, in order to facilitate an ecological sensibility. The above performance examples point to the ecologically-material agency of the more-than-human that can be read as reconfiguring human and more-than-human relations away from hierarchical verticality. We share qualities and ecological interconnectedness with an oak tree, worms, a polar bear and the weather, creating material effects and act on/with each other in dynamic relationships of ecology. Performance can manifest and magnify this ecological entanglement.

A non-anthropocentric performance aesthetic is one that redresses the interconnectedness and horizontality of the human and the more-than-human, acknowledging the capacity of both to create ecological effects. The recognition of the way the more-than-human can act and create effects, or the addition of performance to a theory of non-anthropocentrism, could be referred to as bioperformativity.

Ecological anthropomorphism is one way to recognise the similar agencies and vibrancy of the human and the more-than-human. Considering ecological anthropomorphism in performance practice is a way of contesting anthropocentrism. A man shedding a polar bear costume is a metaphor for the way vital matter is literally under our skin and for nature's queer performativity that problematises boundary-making practices while celebrating a horizontal plurality of differences. Worms are 'small agencies' that can sometimes have large-scale ecological effects. This agency can be framed in performance, such as the *Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee*, resisting anthropocentrism. An ecological anthropomorphism is one that shapes human action and recognises the geophysical agency of the human. *The Weather Factory* points to the geophysical agency of humans in shaping the climate and the way in which the climate shapes human actions and identity.

Bioperformativity, I suggest, is the performance of the more-than-human. The performance of trees in ecological imagery, and in *7000 Oaks*, recognises and theorises the agency of trees in human-nonhuman assemblages. These performances illustrate the possibility for a non-anthropocentric performance aesthetic that recognises the ecological effects of the human and more-than-human. These performances exemplify the affective metaphoric capacity of performance that may catalyse an ecological sensibility.

While the previous chapters in this thesis set up the characteristics of an ecological performance aesthetic, organised around the concepts of immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism, this chapter argued for a theory of ecological performance that is non-anthropocentric. While Parts 1 and 2 argued that performance can manifest, dissect and critique ecological relationships, with a particular focus on performance in relation to urban settings, this part considered how an ecological performance aesthetic can do this by overcoming anthropocentrism. The current ecological situation has created an imperative for performance to think beyond the human, towards an non-anthropocentrism and more ecological modes of being-in-the-world.

Conclusion

‘How can we provoke an increasingly diverse and complex discourse, one that has the purpose of inspiring ***artists*** as well as scholars?’ (Arons and May 2012: 2).

Introduction

Art has been identified as a mode of mediating ecological relationships in a way that may be relatable and understood on a human scale (Chakrabarty 2012, Guattari 2008 [1989], Hulme 2010). In this thesis I have suggested that performance specifically can mediate, refract, amplify and critique those relationships. I have theorised an ecological performance aesthetic by deconstructing the urban/nature (and nature/culture) dualism through the bio-urban, thinking through the tropes of immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism, and acknowledging the agency of the more-than-human towards non-anthropocentrism.

My research questions for this enquiry included the question of 'how might performance mediate a sense of vibrancy in a built/urban environment?' In Part 1, I theorised 'nature' from an ecomaterialist perspective, problematising the rural bias in much environmental rhetoric, and contending that the city is part of the ecological world. I focused on the bio-urban as a way to address both a lacuna in scholarship around urban ecology and the current situation of the ubiquity of the city. With the rapid growth of urban areas, it is important to start to rethink the framing of the city as solely the domain of the human-built momentum of culture (and therefore separate from nature). Considering the urban as an assemblage of human and more-than-human vibrant and dynamic relationships may help to reposition concepts of growth and development towards sustainable or ecological urbanism. The bio-urban provoked my concept of an ecological performance aesthetic — through an ecomaterialist perspective — to resist a romantic idea of capital N-Nature and to consider how ecological relationships are made manifest in performance practice in urban settings.

Another research question in this enquiry was: how might performance reveal and critique ecological relationships? In order to address this, I have theorised an ecological performance aesthetic, around the tropes of immersion, dwelling and eco-cosmopolitanism, which each suggest different ways in which performance practice makes visible, dissects and challenges ecological relationships. By making visible the ways in which we are embedded in ecological relationships, the destructive, adverse and potentially remedial effects of those relationships are foregrounded. Through ecodramaturgical analysis, I suggested performance critiques these relationships by making manifest their effects (such as our water wastage, contribution to melting ice caps, rising temperatures and hungry polar bears) and the intimate interconnections to our everyday lives. By reframing some of the pervasive and reductive images and tropes of ecology, an ecological performance aesthetic offers a different way of thinking about the relationship between humans and the more-than-human world.

The way performance fosters engagement with space and the living world was theorised through immersion. From an eco-phenomenological position, I suggested that the relationality between ecological actants, within the meshwork of the living world, is dissected and made visible in performance. This experience in the world was also characterised as participatory and embodied, both of which are amplified in performance in different ways. Building on the idea that we are always already immersed in the ecological world, I then turned to questions about dwelling, or how we live, focusing on ideas of home. Performance can elaborate and complicate questions of dwelling, materialising different ways of seeing the world as 'home'. I then critiqued the dominant western ideas of dwelling from an indigenous ecological perspective. Eco-cosmopolitanism was theorised as the way in which performance can implicate and evoke local and global ecological relationships. Exposing the extent to which the meshwork of ecology connects the local to far-flung places and people was considered in relation to water and performance.

I also asked at the beginning of this enquiry: how might an ecological performance aesthetic acknowledge the agency of more-than-human actants? In order to address this, I argued that an ecological performance aesthetic should be non-anthropocentric, suggesting ecological anthropomorphism as a way performance practice can decentre the human through the recognition of the ecological agency of the more-than-human. I suggested the term bioperformativity to acknowledge the performance of the more-than-human within the heterogeneous assemblages of the ecological world. All of these lines of argument comprise the response to my final research question: what might characterise an ecological performance aesthetic?

The artists and practices surveyed and analysed in this study are by no means comprehensive as a field of performance and ecology; rather, they offer illustrations for a theorisation of ecological performance. My aim was to describe the field of work, particularly site-based practice in an urban context, as well as to provide a framework for which further practice and research (and practice as research) can be developed.

Within this thesis, I have offered different tensions and frames for bringing ecological thinking to bear on performance. One of these tensions is the idea that any arts practice (or theoretical concept articulated by a human) can be non-anthropocentric. To some extent, art (and theory) will always be anthropocentric, because it will always be perceived, critiqued and theorised by the human. I suggest, however, that this tension can be generative and can do something as a performative self-contradiction. It can draw attention to the limitations of the human position, thereby opening up ways of thinking through the irresistible force of anthropocentrism. This is by no means a definite 'solution' to the problem of mechanistic worldviews and hierarchies, but is rather a way of interrogating some of the tensions in such an ecological position.

Although I do urge performance towards an engagement with ecological thinking, I have not aimed to attach any specific or concrete political or social positions (left/right) to the practice. Rather, I understand these engagements, following Doyle (2011), as 'present[ing] the possibility for multiple ways of perceiving, engaging and understanding' (Doyle 2011: 145). I argue for ways of facilitating an ecological sensibility so that more ecological modes of being-in-the-world may be considered. There is an inherent ideological critique in the premise of this research, though, suggesting more thinking and action is needed in all disciplines that take into consideration the complex ecological situation. This critique further suggests a rethinking of the dominant neoliberal capitalist ideology of consumption, disposal and waste, that has led to global climate change, resource inequity and depletion, and water vulnerability.

Alert to the charges of elitism and the instrumentalism of performance, I also question the political relevance of ecological performance, mindful of not over-claiming its potential to transform political and social landscapes. Although I see ecological performance as a potent critique of current social, political and ecological formations, I am wary of conclusions about its efficacy in creating change. Throughout this research, I have resisted analysing performance through any 'effectiveness' paradigms. Applying these types of paradigms to performance may be appropriate for a study engaged in social science methodology, with the tools to evaluate such 'efficacy', but it was not the aim of this research. However, an ecological performance aesthetic may provide a useful framework for a new role of performance in understanding the 'efficacy' of change as radical potential. As Soper (2012) has argued, shifting theoretical perspective is not what is needed to face the urgent ecological situation; rather we need tangible ways to work against the growth of capitalism. Under her critique, the role of performance is unclear, other than perhaps providing a 'leisure' activity to resist spending time accumulating or creating capital. However, her salient point is that it is the time to 'act'. An ecological performance aesthetic may provide a way of understanding how performance might 'act' in this timely ecological situation.

Further research

'What's next?', as Wallace Heim (2012) asks in the epilogue of *Readings in Performance and Ecology.* In thinking ahead for the field, Heim's first response is 'more', as 'encouraging more voices and perspectives will be enough to produce a dynamic diversity' (211). Diversification of the field, including the location of scholarship (broadly in the west currently), is needed. The intersectional nature of the field of performance and ecology has recently seen some fruitful scholarship that cuts across science studies, queer theory, feminism, ecomaterialism, postcolonial ecology, environmental health, urbanism, architecture and sustainable development. More of this type of research from a variety of places and voices is needed to further develop the field. In theorising an ecological performance aesthetic I endeavoured to

include multiple voices and ways of thinking about ecology. This may be a useful jumping off point for further research.

As Arons and May (2012) have identified, a diverse and nuanced discourse of performance and ecology is needed — one that provokes rigorous scholarship and new modes of practice. The feedback loop of performance scholarship and performance practice can and should draw out and inform new artistic projects as well as reflecting the most recent theoretical debates. Although not constructed as a binary, both of these things are needed for the further development of the field. We are moving towards ecological performance praxis that is informed by and engaged through practice and theory, although 'more' is still needed. Further research could be done in establishing a new paradigm for evaluating practice developed from my theorisation, to include consideration of how practice interacts with the world in an ecological context.

In this research, I have concentrated on non-theatrical settings in the bio-urban. There is potentially further research to be done on text-based plays in more conventional theatrical settings, however. The bio-urban has been my intended focus of this research: I argued that it addressed both a gap in scholarship and responded to the rapidly growing urban experience. However, in thinking about further research, the reach of some theatre plays is potentially greater than the small scale usually site-based events I have focused on, and hence could be a fruitful avenue of research, including how these works may create a space for dialogue, and/or provide imaginative possibilities for ways of thinking and relating to the world. Though, as Heddon and Mackey (2012) note, the recent 'environmental/climate change' plays have, for the most part, failed to engage audiences in a nuanced examination of ecological questions. Perhaps then 'it is the combination of artistry and reality, of aesthetics and world, that has the potential to produce affect' as Heddon and Mackey suggest (2012: 176). Extending an ecological performance aesthetic to these theatrical settings may then be a further avenue of future research.

Within the theatre, the rise of the ecological lecture play (*2071*, *Ten Billion*) seems to have anti-theatrical undertones, perhaps indicating that the ecological crisis is too important to be trivialised by 'performance'. The implicit assumption seems to be that the seriousness of the subject matter necessitates an equally 'serious' theatrical mode: the lecture. This approach misses the way in which performance facilitates a different mode of engagement, eliciting imaginative, creative and affective responses and instead may foster despair with a monolith of daunting facts, numbers and graphs. Perhaps then, thinking about ecological performance should follow Thompson's (2009) call for the end of effect, considering affective paradigms instead.

Chaudhuri and Enelow (2014) assert that climate change has to be engaged with cognitively rather than phenomenologically, as 'the only way it can be apprehended is through data

and modelling — through systems and mediations — all of which have to be processed cognitively and intellectually: have to, in short, be understood, rather than experienced, phenomenologically and temporally' (23). My research indicates that although climate change may not be able to be experienced as whole, different aspects of our relationship to the more-than-human and the current ecological situation can be experienced and made manifest in performance. Perhaps further research is needed at the intersection of climate modelling and performance, as a means of experiencing climate change phenomenologically, without instrumentalising performance, based on an ecological performance aesthetic. Alongside the science and performance projects emerging, there may be an opportunity to think through how performance may provide an experience of climate change through imaginative and affective means of engagement. As Hulme (2010) suggests, 'as a resource of the imagination, the idea of climate change can be deployed around our geographical, social and virtual worlds in creative ways' (42). Building on the theorisation of an ecological performance aesthetic developed in this thesis, further research into the way performance may mediate climate change data and information, or the way that data may inspire performance, is recommended. To this end, I am developing a practice experiment[73] that maps climate change 'data', such as rising temperatures, on to a specific location, creating a route for a silent walking performance. By walking the 'lines' of climate change data, I will be examining questions of how this kind of performance might mediate data and what kind of experience it facilitates. I am also developing further practice, including a mapping project of performances of urban ecology in London. I hope to create a digital, interactive map of these performances, reframing the city and drawing out ecological interrelationships. An audio tour of the mapped performances would then provide a different way of experiencing the city, foregrounding its ecological vibrancy.

Performance can and should embrace the 'ecological turn', as it can open up new ways of seeing the world and thinking about ecology. As I suggest, this ecological thinking engaged through performance is potentially a step towards finding ways of ecological living.

[73] I am presenting the first version of this experiment with Plantable at Earth Matters On Stage, Reno, Nevada in May 2015.

Appendices

a. Trans-Plantable Living Room

b. Above Me the Wide Blue Sky

c. Earthrise Repair Shop

d. Speed of Light

e. Biped's Monitor

f. Oil City

g. Message in a Bottle

h. It's the Skin You're Living In

i. The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee

j. The Weather Factory

Appendix A: *Trans-Plantable Living Room*

Plantable/Green Stage/Tanja Beer

World Stage Design, Cardiff, Wales: 13–14 September 2013

Collisions Festival, CSSD, London: 21 September 2013

Project blog: https://transplantablelivingroom.wordpress.com

Green Stage: http://www.greenstagetheatre.co.uk/wp/transplantable-living-room/

Video trailer: http://vimeo.com/95562183

Documentary (15 mins): http://vimeo.com/89697230

Plantable development video – Transplanted Tea Sets: http://vimeo.com/73564977

Brief Description

Trans-Plantable Living Room was a living, edible performance space, grown by community gardeners, that hosted interactive performances by international performance collective Plantable during September 2013 in Cardiff and London.

In Cardiff the living room was installed under a tree in Bute Park behind the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, as part of the World Stage Design festival and in London there was an indoor version at Central School of Speech and Drama as part of Collisions: New Research in Performance Festival.

The creative process was a collaboration between an international group of artists and community groups. A network of Cardiff-based gardeners grew plants for the space, coordinated by Sam Holt of Riverside Community Allotments. Some material for the piece was developed from a workshops with Katie Jones of Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, which explored how story-telling and imagination can help solve problems that face us today, like climate change, and feeding a growing population. The oral history interviews by Rosie Leach investigated personal narratives about gardening in Cardiff: why people garden, how gardening practices have changed over time and what role they see local, small-scale food production taking in providing food in today's fast-changing world. Ideas and material from workshops and interviews were woven together by Plantable, to create an immersive, interactive performance.

Company Information:

Plantable Performance Research Collective is a trans-national trio (Lisa Woynarski UK, Bronwyn Preece Canada, Meghan Moe Beitiks United States) examining the interface between ecological restoration, performance and community engagement. We start from the premise that the effects of climate change are, in part, due to the perceived separation between humans and the natural world. Through performance, we attempt to bridge that divide and highlight the interconnectedness of humans and the living world by literally and symbolically planting cultural memes. We posit that a struggle to connect is both a source of inspiration for our work and could lead towards mitigating the effects of climate change. We seek creative ways of tackling ethical imperatives around our current lifestyles and arts practices. Plantable strives to create low carbon impact performances and offset impacts that are necessary to the work. The performances we make are practice-

based research – we both intend to create work that has a positive ecological impact, and accompany it with vigorous academic research of ecological performance-making. (https://performanceandecology.wordpress.com/plantable/)

Green Stage:

Green Stage was founded in 2010 by Lisa Woynarski and Rosie Leach as The Green Theatre Project, to experiment with how theatre could explore and embody sustainable ideas and practice.

The company devises work around the ecological conundrums we find ourselves in. Producing performances and workshops is accompanied by an engagement with the research and ideas of others, within and outside of academic institutions. Other projects have included a devised performance, *Unplugged,* performed at Spitalfields City Farm and the Camden Green Fair at Regents Park in 2010; *Forest Tales and Urban Trails*, an immersive journey through King Henry's Walk Garden in London in 2010; and a series of workshops about theatre in green spaces. (http://www.greenstagetheatre.co.uk)

Tanja Beer:

Tanja Beer is an ecoscenographer and researcher based in Melbourne, Australia. With over 15 years of experience in stage design, she is developing a new paradigm of ecological design for performance, primarily through the Living Stage concept. She has worked with a variety of theatre companies and festivals in Australia (Sydney Opera House, Melbourne International Arts Festival, Queensland Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Arts House, The Arts Centre, Castlemaine State Festival) and overseas (including projects in London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Vienna). (http://www.tanjabeer.com)

Volunteer response: 'Debs reflects on the rain'

Posted on September 20, 2013

(https://transplantablelivingroom.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/debs-reflects-on-the-rain/)

I loved that it rained when I got round to savouring the performance in the *Trans-plantable Living Room*. That there wasn't too much light as a result, and that the circumstances gave the project I'd seen grow and bloom in the two weeks prior, an extra hint of untamed wilderness. As the performers moved about to the recorded voice of someone whom, like a flower, needed just a bit of water and direction in his life, I forgot myself and went along with that thought – drifting to the all-encompassing rhythm of the movements before me on the living stage.

The uninvited character was stealing the show, alright. The rain brought us closer together and dared give us all similar parts to play. Audience and performers embraced its presence as there wasn't much choice, but also because the whole Living Room was an irresistible invitation to accept our powerlessness over nature's exuberance and mysterious ways. An invitation delivered in the same unspoken language used by gardeners to attend to their plants: One of love rather than control, labour rather than charge, tenderness rather than force.

The rituals of gardening are open to interpretation. I'm learning to read them as displays of committed affection between plant and gardener, designed to enable as well as deepen the lives of both. The performance in the Living Room incorporated the simplicity of these rituals to the pieces of furniture turned to exquisite planters of unique character and style, elements in a lifelong cycle that can be briefly suspended only by a good ol' cup o' Tea :0)

Deborah Freire Guarani Kaiowa is a volunteer at Riverside Community Garden, part of the team who built, planted and hosted the Living Room.

Green Stage/Plantable/Tanja Beer (2013) *Trans-Plantable Living Room*, Bute Park, Cardiff.

Top photo by Nigel Pugh, others by Mike Medaglia.

Appendix B: *Above Me the Wide Blue Sky*

Fevered Sleep

Young Vic, London: 7 March–28 March 2013

Link: http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/archive/above-me-the-wide-blue-sky/

Brief Description:

Above Me the Wide Blue Sky was both a performance and installation. A single performer recalled collections of stories and descriptions gathered from people about their ideas of home and the changing landscape of that home. Dynamic skyscapes covered the four walls of the black box theatre while the audience sat in the round. Chalk bricks covered the floor with poles of light installed in between them. Film projectors lit up some of the upturned bricks with images of water. The script was a series of fragmented memories, stories and descriptions of interactions with the environment, slow moving and meditative. Half way through, the script reversed as dark clouds covered the walls. The performer recounted the memories in reverse order, changing the present tense to the past tense 'There used to be…'. The company website describes it as:

> [A] collection of stories about our deep-rooted, deeply felt, easily overlooked and profoundly important connection to the land, the sky, the sea, the weather, and the other living things that surround us. (Fevered Sleep 2013)

Company Background:

Fevered Sleep is a creative arts company that makes films, performances, installation, books and digital arts, as a regularly funded Arts Council organisation. David Harradine and Sam Butler founded the company in 1996 as co-artistic directors. David Harradine is also a Visiting Research Fellow in Interdisciplinary Practice at Royal Central School of Speech & Drama. Their work is produced in association with Fuel and has been shown across the UK and internationally. Other projects include such diverse work as *Little Universe* (2013), an outdoor touring show for children about cosmology and *On Aging* (2010), a theatre piece for adults about the nature of aging, performed by children.

Fevered Sleep (2013) ***Above Me The Wide Blue Sky***, Young Vic, London.
Photo by Matthew Andrews, courtesy of Fevered Sleep.

Appendix C: Earthrise Repair Shop *Meadow Meander*

Earthrise Repair Shop

Various 2011–2014

http://performancefootprint.co.uk/projects/earthrise-repair-shop/

Brief Description

Earthrise Repair Shop is a praxis project and living experient from Baz Kershaw. The name comes from the famous earthrise NASA photograph. The *Meadow Meander* was first grown in Devon in 2011, then again in Leeds in June 2012 as part of the Performance Studies International conference and at the University of Warwick for International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) in July 2014

For the iteration of the *Meadow Meander* at the IFTR in July 2014, Kershaw collaborated with the company Stan's Cafe to create representations of statistical information about animals using seeds and pulses. This was inspired by the Stan's Cafe show *All the People in the World,* which represented the human population of the world as grains of rice and sorted them into different piles to represent population statistics, such as the number of people who will die today or the number of people who have had plastic surgery. (http://www.stanscafe.co.uk/project-of-all-the-creatures-warwick.html)

Earthrise Repair Shop (2014) ***Meadow Meander***, University of Warwick, Coventry. Photos by Lisa Woynarski.

There were three *Meadow Meanders* on the University of Warwick campus during IFTR: one in an overgrown meadow area, one at the end of a field used for sports and one near the river. Each meander was formed based on a different elemental system. I acted as an 'eco-volunteer' or minder for the meander on the field, which was the most visible and visited meander. As a volunteer, Kershaw asked us to walk the meander and then briefed us about the concept behind the meander, and how to invite people to engage with it and collect feedback. The rules of the meander included:

– Don't step off the path — as you may be harming other life forms.

– Follow the direction of the grass as it is pressed down as the growth leans.

– It's an open secret — don't divulge the elemental system to others so they may experience the engima.

– At crossroads in the path go straight across; at Y junctions go either way.

– Other than that — you can go as fast or as slow as you like.

We also invited people to leave feedback in the form of drawing or writing, and shared the open secret with them if they cared to know it.

Appendix D: *Speed of Light*

NVA

Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh

15 August–1 September 2012

http://nvaspeedoflight.org.uk

Brief Description:

NVA's *Speed of Light* was a joint commission from the Edinburgh International Festival and the Cultural Olympiad, one of four Olympic legacy projects. The show took place in Edinburgh in August 2012 with a base camp at Holyrood Park. It has subsequently toured nationally and internationally, producing *Speed of Light* Osaka, Japan and *Speed of Light* Salford.

It involved a three-hour climb up Arthur's Seat at night. Groups of about 20 were staggered throughout the night, given safety briefings, 3 guides and a light-up walking stick. Runners in LED light suits powered by the kinetic energy of their running made large patterns on the hillside such as star shapes, circles and various combinations of the two. Along with able-bodied runners, there was a group of wheelchair users with light suits powered by the kinetic energy of their wheelchairs in a lower section of the hillside. Each hiker's walking stick was lit at the bottom with an LED and at the top with a responsive light that was motion activated. The walking stick was also equipped with an altitude sensitive speaker which started to hum and mix with different tones of other walking sticks near the top of Arthur's Seat. The walk up to the summit was a slow pace, sometimes without much sound, conveying a ritualistic sense. After a twenty-minute reflection period, just before the peak, the responsive light on the top of the walking stick was removed and placed on a wind-activated light sculpture at the peak. The walk down was far brisker with much less frequent stops to enjoy the view and lights.

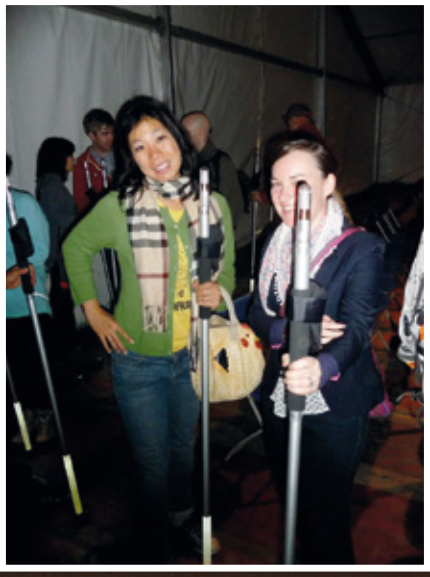
Company Background:

NVA is a Scottish arts organisation established in 1992 (nva.org.uk). NVA describe themselves as making public art work through collaborative, politically engaged practice. They usually work in 'challenging landscapes', which often involve the use of light and sound. Their work is broadly participatory (often physical participatory) and aims to explore relationships to specific sites or 'landscapes' both rural and urban. Their past work includes a permanent *Hidden Garden* in Glasgow, an urban green community space to provide 'peace' in the city, as well as harvest festivals to celebrate local food growing and large-scale light installations including one in the Isle of Skye. Their work is often expansive and ambitious and they have been awarded a number of high-profile grants and commissions, including the Cultural Olympiad legacy for *Speed of Light*.

Reviews and Reactions:

Most reviews discuss the novelty of piece, particularly the re-framing of the tourist attraction of Arthur's Seat through the night hike and the lit runners. Some reviewers felt there was something missing in the piece, that it lacked an impressive climax. A reviewer from *The Independent* wrote 'It may not quite reach the peak it intended, but there's nothing else in the festival quite like it' (Sutcliffe 2012). Other reviews noted the view from the top, particularly

at night, as one of the greatest features of the piece (Gardner 2012). For many, the scale and space of Arthur's Seat created the strongest impact of the performance (McMillan 2012, Blundell 2012). *The Herald* mentioned the performance was dwarfed by the place (Allan 2012); however, I suggest this was intentional. NVA work in contested or challenging landscapes with the aim of uncovering the underlying relations embedded in them politically, socially and ecologically. The place and scale of the landscape is very much a part of the work itself. Other reviews focused on the endurance running aspect and athleticism (and precariousness) required to both perform as a runner and hike as a participant, although not one mentioned the accessibility of the performance directly (Coles 2012, Allan 2012). Overall, there seemed to be agreement that it was a unique and effective piece (albeit in different ways).



Clockwise: Kristina Wong and Lisa Woynarski participating in ***Speed of Light*** (2012) Edinburgh.
Photo by Ian Garrett.
Lisa Woynarski and Ian Garrett as above.
Photo by Kristina Wong.
NVA (2012) ***Speed of Light***, Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh.
Photo by Alan McAteer.

Appendix E: *Biped's Monitor*

Arbonauts

Nunhead Cemetery, London

14–16 June 2012

http://arbonauts.org/event/bipeds-monitor-2013/

Brief Description:

Biped's Monitor was an immersive outdoor performance loosely based on the novel *The Baron in the Trees* by Italo Calvino, taking place at Nunhead Cemetery in South London. The story is about a young Italian aristocrat who gives up his title and decides to live in the trees, never touching the ground. His trials and tribulations (and sometimes surreal experiences) are highlighted by the effect this decision has on his family and those around him. The characters and some of the story threads from the novel were played out simultaneously in the performance while the audience was free to wander around the cemetery and the old chapel. Nunhead Cemetery is known as one of the 'Magnificent Seven' Victorian cemeteries in London. It contains a large green space and forested area with walking paths throughout, lined with crumbling Victorian gravestones. There is an old stone chapel at the centre of the cemetery with only the walls remaining. This chapel is where the finale of the performance took place. As the sun was setting, the actors gathered for a family feast, which was disrupted by Cosimo (the former baron who lives in the trees). The family then donned beak-like masks and slowly left the chapel and headed down the avenue accompanied by a haunting operatic score.

Company Background:

The Arbonauts formed in 2011 and are made up of director Helen Galliano and landscape architect and designer Dimitiri Launder. Their newest work, *The Desire Machine*, is also inspired by literary works and combines a live musical score with aerial and physical performance to create a live theatre installation. I saw a version of this work at the chapel in Nunhead Cemetery in 2014.

Audience Response:

Biped's Monitor Audience Survey from June 2012 via Survey Monkey was emailed to people who signed up for the mailing list. Questions written by Arbonauts and myself.

1. Have you been to Nunhead Cemetery before?
    - No: 9 respondents
    - Yes: 4 respondents

2. If yes, did *Biped's Monitor* change the way you viewed the space?
    - No
    - it did transform it for the night.
    - Yes
    - yes.. more magical
    - Yes, it felt like you were still there!

3. If no, are you likely to return?
    - Yes
    - yes, definitely
    - yes i love the place
    - Yes
    - Yes
    - yes
    - Would definitely like to return
    - yes

4. What connections did you make between ideas of 'nature' and the performance?
    - "Nature" was very much part of the performance. The baron in the trees...
    - The setting certainly gave you a sense of being among nature. Cosimo's reading through the window and his performance in the pod were performances I connected most with the idea of nature.
    - Missed that
    - the performance was definatelly very connected to nature. the way they were acting, moving, the actors were a bit like birds or insects in the woods...
    - The endless relentless cycle of nature as shown in the repetitious performances of the players at the dining room table; the trees growing through the roof which showed nature reclaiming the space that humans had colonised to bury their dead; link between death and return to earth/trees
    - Not many
    - death, loss, merging with nature — romantic melancholia associated with the rejection of courtly life in favour of the pastoral, irrational, femenine
    - That the natural beauty of the place provided the perfect setting for the performance
    - i didnt, sorry!
    - Thought that nature nad birds especially make me feel happy and I should remenber to remenber that
    - That nature is somehow a refuge from the difficulties of human relationships.

5. What do you remember most about the space?
    - How beautiful it was. How lush and green.
    - the roofless church

- The tree tops, the chapel
- the hanging pod and specially the little library house. brilliantly dream like.
- the silence in the cemetery, the long approach of the path to the chapel which was on an upwards incline as though you are walking heavenward (perhaps?); the crumbling grandeur of the chapel
- Eerie weather, overgrown and and unruly aspect to cemetary.
- the chapel. wanted to be included in the space but felt limited to hanging around the entrance watching
- The peace (considering it is in Central London) which made the spoken words, the music etc all the more relevant and the wonderful view of the London skyline
- the chapel and the hanging basket thing that the actors performed in
- The view acoss London , the green and the quiet. The gravestones and the churh
- The sense of having stepped into another era.

6. What thoughts or feelings were invoked during your experience of the performance?
   - Thought about how it was lovely to have so many people going round this place which is probably quite solitary most of the time.
   - A certain sadness, a feeling of loss.
   - Surreal, haunting, hypnotic, dark, sinister
   - lots. sorprised, sad at times as some seem lost, a sence of involvement with nature all around. listening to sounds. it was definitely like been transformed into a bird and taken to the trees.
   - confusion, amusement, sadness, otherwordliness/
   - Calmness,
   - frustration — felt like i'd missed the main event, but wasn't sure there had in fact been one
   - How man can be at one with nature and can use this outstanding setting for such dramatic purposes
   - I was intrigued, it was visually beautiful and magical
   - I felt very thoughtful, entanced by man in trees , amused by scientific experiments and scared at times. I loved music and singing
   - I felt I was a voyeur. The young man imprisoned in the cell, muttering Battista was hard to look at.

7. Is there anything else you'd like to add that might be useful about your experience of attending *Biped's Monitor*?
   - I particularly like the fact that you started on your own up the avenue of sounds, that really put you in the right frame of mind for the performance.
   - I felt that there could have been little more narrative in the performance. something a bit more specific going on in each space that the audience could attempt to connect.
   - No
   - i really loved finding the sorprises around the cemetery. that experience transports me somewhere else

- It wasn't that clear where the different performances were taking place — I missed one or two things sadly!
- Venue amazing and but overall performances largely lost on me. nature theatre not quite conveyed. Although didn't appreciate it was a recereation of an existing story.
- more action please. the actors seemed to have a very limited repertoire of things to do, and were often uncertain about these
- I really enjoyed the evening
- I wish I'd known the story and the characters before seeing the performance, I didnt feel like I knew what was happening, by the end of it I couldn't say I knew anything much about the story or characters except the vaguest of ideas.
- No
- A more defined sense of where the spatial barriers were. It was distracting to be reminded where to go.

8. What was your favourite element and/or moment of the performance?
    - The opera singer in the doorway of the chapel with the sunset over the London skyline.
    - The Opera singer with her back to the audience in the cloak.
    - The promenading singing people
    - walking around the cemetery finding all the different elements of the story.
    - The music and the inteaction between musicians and players; that some of the players spoke in italian
    - The start, the eerie weather, venue and singers as you walk up.
    - beautiful german lullaby + crinoline in the chapel. really felt the tragedy there
    - Waling up the avenue at the start of the performance with the actors making different noises. Set the tone perfectly for the rest of the evening. I also loved the music and the costumes.
    - Visually stunning. The walk up to the chapel at the beginning was great.
    - The music
    - I liked the guy in the hut with his questions and candles, the final moments in the chapel and the singing as we went out again.

9. What was your least favourite element and/or moment of the performance?
    - The opera singer in the doorway of the chapel with the sunset over the London skyline.
    - The Opera singer with her back to the audience in the cloak.
    - The promenading singing people
    - walking around the cemetery finding all the different elements of the story.
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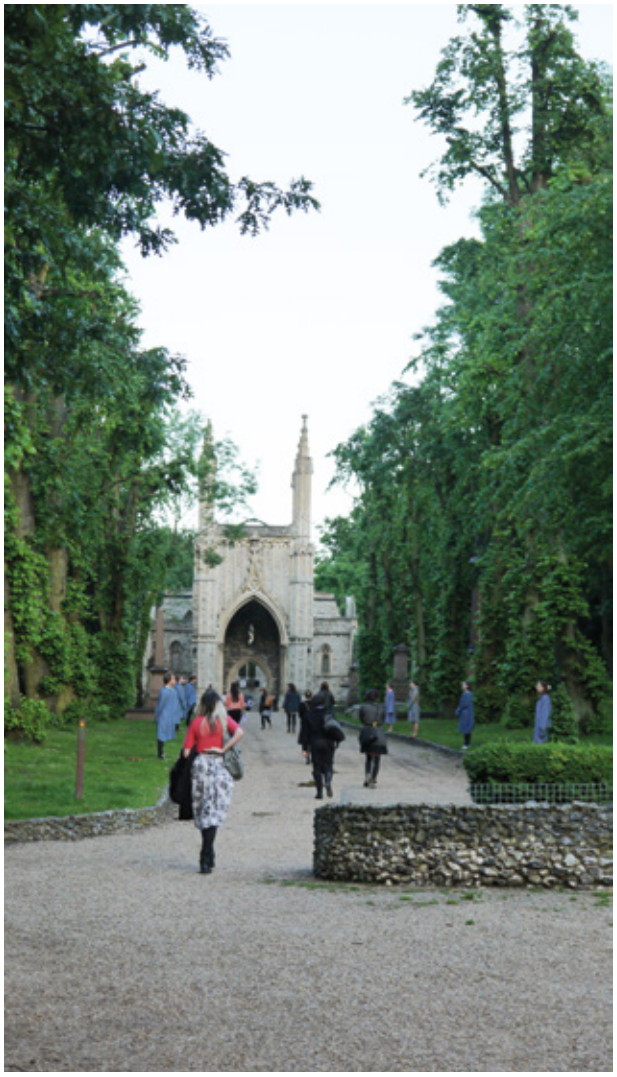


All photos by Lisa Woynarski.

Arbonauts (2012)
Biped's Monitor,
Nunhead Cemetery,
London.

Appendix F: *Oil City*

Platform (written by Mel Evans)

June 10–21, 2013

Two Degrees Festival, ArtsAdmin.

http://oilcity.org.uk/about.html

Brief Description

Oil City was a site-specific immersive piece by Platform, taking place in and around the City (London's financial district), merging fictional characters with real locations in a story about the very real ecologically devastating but financially rewarding Alberta tar sands. Before the performance, audience members received an email from the fictional lawyer character setting up the meeting. We gather in the ArtsAdmin café and were greeted by the lawyer who thanked us for coming to help him out with his case. We then followed him to his car where he gave us smart clothing to borrow (if required) in order to fit in with the City crowd. We were then dropped off at Liverpool Street Station and told to meet a journalist who had some damning information about a bank's involvement with oil companies and the tar sands development in Alberta, Canada. As we continued to meet up with clandestine characters, eavesdrop on conversations and follow key players, a picture of a large-scale conspiracy (or perhaps collusion) began to unfold.

As an audience of six we were asked to be intermediaries between three actors playing the multiple roles of the lawyer with a hunch about an oil deal, a journalist trying to uncover the truth, the whistle-blower from inside big oil, a banker trying to keep it all quiet, a Canadian First Nations activist trying to protect her people's land, and a cleaner with access to damning information. The aim of the piece was to ask critical questions about how the tar sands development was funded, who is profiting and who is losing.

Company Background:

Platform is an arts, activism, education and research organisation. They are particularly focused on the social and ecological impact of the oil industry and have developed projects to oppose oil companies funding the arts (Art Not Oil coalition), oil funding of universities (Knowledge and Power – Fossil Fuel Universities report), and an audio tour of the Tate Britain and Tate Modern, *Tate à Tate*, highlighting their oil sponsorship (with Liberate Tate). (http://platformlondon.org)

Documentation and Responses:

Video Documentation:

http://platformlondon.org/p-multimedia/oil-city-video-documentation/

Stephen Bottoms wrote a response to the piece on the Performance Footprint blog:

http://performancefootprint.co.uk/2013/11/art-and-oil-in-a-cool-climate-pt-3/

Appendix G: *Message in a Bottle*

Phakama

Queen Mary, University of London

16–30 June 2012

http://messageinabottle-euproject.blogspot.co.uk

www.projectphamaka.org

Brief Description

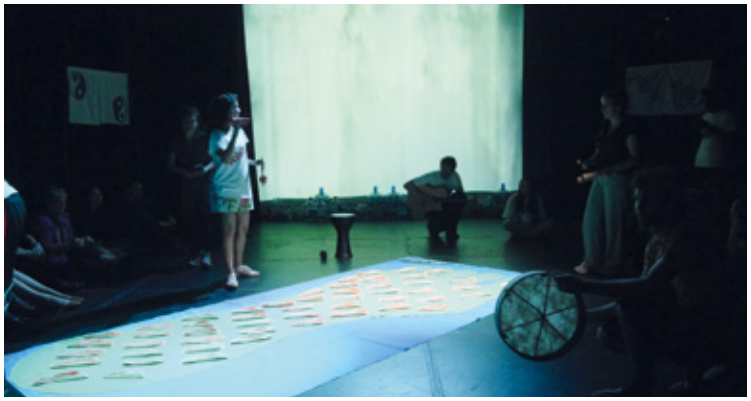
Message in a Bottle was an EU funded project facilitated by Phakama. The project involved collaboration between groups of young people (aged 15–20) from Ireland, Portugal, Poland, the Basque Country, Turkey and the UK, to creatively engage with global water vulnerability. I carried out interviews, participated in some of the rehearsal process and supported reflection of the project.

Company Background:

Phakama began in 1996 as an off-shoot of a LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre) exchange project between young people in the UK and South Africa. They are currently based at Queen Mary and have recently become a National Portfolio Organisation of the Arts Council. They use a 'give and gain' approach to making work within a non-heirachical structure, based on the idea that everyone has something to learn and share in the process, regardless of age or experience. Other work includes the *Trashcatchers Carnival* (2009–10), in which schools and community groups created costumes from rubbish for a procession in Tooting, and *The Edible Garden* (2011–14), a community garden in East London for sharing skills, stories and reciepes for life.

Reflections and Photos

Clockwise: Pirate on the canal in the ***Message in a Bottle*** (2012) finale. Participant's water footprint numbers displayed behind images of waterfalls at the beginning of the show. Bath tub admiration inspired by Turkish customs. Phakama (2012) ***Message in a Bottle***, London. All photos by Lisa Woynarski.



Message in a Bottle final reflection - Water questions

1. Did the process help you learn more about water? How?
    - Yes, educational value of water.
    - It gave me a completely different view eg: water in a creative way.
    - Yes, find more ways to preserve it!
    - The process helped me understand water is as important as any other sources of nature. But you should act according to what you criticize.
    - No.
    - I learn about to save water!!!
    - Yes, because we use water in different ways and create a performance about the importance of the water!
    - No, we haven't go too far ?? To deep through political questions about water.
    - Yes, looking at our water footprint helped me to realize how much water I use a day and how much water is wasted and consumed by little things, such as making coffee.
    - Nao propriamente...ja sabia algumas coisas que foram aburdadas, so as ui de maneira diferente!
    - Yes, it help, because I could see how important and rare water would be.
    - Yes, I learned that lack of water isn't an issue. It's the way we use it that's the problem.
    - Things about River Thames.
    - Yes, met Mike Webber and workshop with Mike.
    - Yes, the importance of water and how to reduce the consumption.
    - The fact it can represent conflict.
    - The process help me understand water is for all humans.
    - Yes more aware about water usage.
    - Yes, because learning that the Basque Country went without water for a summer really made me think that water won't be around and that we have to save it.
    - New idea.
    - Yes! Just to appreciate water more not take it for granted, because not everyone is fortunate as we are!
    - Yes by showing me how much water I use each day.
    - Yes, I realized how I use water carelessly.
    - Yes, how important it is! To appreciated the value more.
    - There was no original information for me personally. ??? Need to dig deeper and look at the social/political and cultural implications around future conflicts over water.
    - Yes. Water is also culture. -Yup! <-My words.
    - Not learned about water, learned about position of water in life mostly.
    - Water is important, water is nice.
    - Yes, my water footprint frightened me.

2. Were there things you would liked to explore and did not?
    - More about water bodies and connection to water in each country.
    - Workshops related to the conservation of water.
    - More indepth experience about all the different cultures and traditions.
    - I would like to explore other activities like dance! -> me 2!

- Visit other places.
- Science of water.
- I'm "give and gain", we never did the "gain". Me too. X2
- Go to the beach and explore that water - by being in it.
- I wanted to learn something about marketing from 'behind the scene' group.
- The canal.
- I would like to have learned more about music and drama!
- My abilities in acting.
- Attention about the installation and exploitation.
- Exercises with voice.
- The methods of the music group.
- Using water more as a material in exhibition.
- The science of water.
- The source of the canal and how does it affect the people and environment around it.
- Learn how to sing, Gain -> give and gain. -Me too.

3. What will you take back with you?
    - The ideas shared by everyone and how everyone sees WATER as something different.
    - New friends.
    - The tension between really debating/exploring the seriousness of the question and finding the appropriate performance 'text' to say something interesting, provoking and fun.
    - All memories I have this unique moment.
    - Many many many new ideas.
    - Mainly memories.
    - Bed making.
    - Ferry ?
    - More knowledge about media.
    - And I'll take you all too!
    - Memories, Friends, Love, More experience, strength to continue work more and make!
    - A small bottle of water from the holy wells of Ireland.
    - Memories and experiences.
    - Photos, beautiful bog.
    - The stuff I bought.
    - New memories, new experiences, new skills, new ways to preserve water and new techniques for saving the environment!
    - So many experiences. (Empathy...)
    - Wonderful experiences and a lot of awesome memories!
    - Experiences.
    - Other views about water. ->Me too!
    - Experiences, photos, films, memories.
    - Smiles, laughter, friends.
    - Ways to save water and to some ourselves.
    - Different media's used to project the forms of water.
    - More concern about amount of water we use daily.

- Patience.
- New me.
- Friends and music.
- A greater sense of time.
- Memories.
- Facebook friends and twitter followers.
- The idea that one day there may be wars fought over water as there are wars about oil at the moment!

4. Did the project give you new ideas? What next (for you personally or your group)?
   - Yes!!
   - Obviously.
   - Yes. The next thing is to employ what I have learned into what I want to do.
   - We need to be less selfish!
   - Yes.
   - Yes - who is our most important audience? We have to decide this.
   - Yes, work in group.
   - Yes, about music and dance I may do something.
   - Yes, it made me think about how much water I waste and how I can improve on that.
   - To make my work -flow and conflict, water forms.
   - Yes, to add more acting and performance to my music.
   - I want to become an artist.
   - Yes!
   - Yes.
   - Yes.
   - Aplicar o que aprendemos foruramente...
   - Yes, I have new ides of how I could use water not just in reality and politically but also maybe personally and mythically for showing some fun aspects.
   - Yes more creative ideas and to continue this next year!
   - Yes, musically.
   - Yes about myself.
   - Yes. I would like to organize the next reunion with all the participant countries in Portugal maybe in January! ->That's nice!
   - That's the way I like it.
   - Yes, I know how can I show global and personal issue in easy way.

5. How are you going to actively and creatively engage with your local water back home?
   - Put in a rainwater harvesting system in my home.
   - Clear the well.
   - Make a performance.
   - Make a water conscious music/song album.
   - Like I always did -> consciously.
   - I do no really.
   - Learn more about possible effects of global warming in Poland. (and share ?? Knowledge)
   - Be careful.
   - Make a performance about water!

- We hope to be able to pass on the sense of urgency in treating with the issue.
- We're going to organise a performance in our country. (Lublin)
- -and try to organise more activities/social couipept
- -re-connect with a Dle Ziemi and join our forces.
- Take a shower.
- Exhibition related to our experience's here.
- Tell everyone the importance of water by maybe putting on a big show in our area. -> Yes!
- Make a performance.
- Make a solo piece about the elements and qualities of water? Turn the shower off when not using it. -> Yes
- Try to use a balanced amount, make other people more aware!

6. If you could say one thing about water what would that be?
   - "Essential for all of us"
   - Save it!
   - Water will be a cause of conflicts.
   - A vida surgio na agua. E para un bom entendeder, meta pazaura basta...
   - Water is a battleground.
   - Essencial.
   - Flow of life.
   - Problem.
   - Power.
   - Life!
   - It gives! It takes!
   - Preserve!
   - Universal.
   - It's priceless.
   - Water is a base of life.
   - Helps most illnesses.
   - The third world war will be because of water.
   - The best link of connection...
   - Enlightening.
   - We are water.
   - Where there is water there is life.
   - Water is life.
   - Water is important! Water is nice!
   - Wet.
   - Beautiful.
   - Thought of inspiration.
   - Water is not just something we drink but it is energy and life.
   - "Water is significant"
   - It can be inspiring in a creative way.
   - "Water is nice..."
   - Keeps me fresh and happy!
   - "Consume responsibility" (in order to live we need water!)
   - Water is life!

Appendix H: *It's the Skin You're Living In*

Fevered Sleep

Film

http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/films/its-the-skin-youre-living-in/

Fevered Sleep (2012) *It's the Skin You're Living In*, installation at Collisions 2013. Photo by Lisa Woynarski.

Brief Description:

The film depicts a man in a polar bear suit, at first alone in the Arctic and then walking through the countryside eventually ending up in London. He arrives at his home and makes a cup of tea, having fullly shed the costume. The project was developed during a residency for Cape Farewell's Sea Change programme in which director David Harradine was at the University of Brighton, working with Julie Doyle.

A multi-screen installation toured around the UK in 2013, including the Collisions Festival at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Company Background:

Fevered Sleep is a creative arts company that makes films, performances, installation, books and digital arts, as a regularly funded Arts Council organisation. David Harradine and Sam Butler founded the company in 1996 as co-artistic directors. David Harradine is also a Visiting Research Fellow in Interdisciplinary Practice at Royal Central School of Speech & Drama. Their work is produced in association with Fuel and has been shown across the UK and internationally. Other projects include such diverse work as *Little Universe* (2013), an outdoor touring show for children about cosmology and *On Aging* (2010), a theatre piece for adults about the nature of aging, performed by children.

Fevered Sleep (2012) *It's the Skin You're Living In*, film still David Harradine (director), courtesy of Fevered Sleep.

Appendix I: *The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee*

Plantable Performance Research Collective

American Society of Theatre Research Conference, Nashville, Tennessee

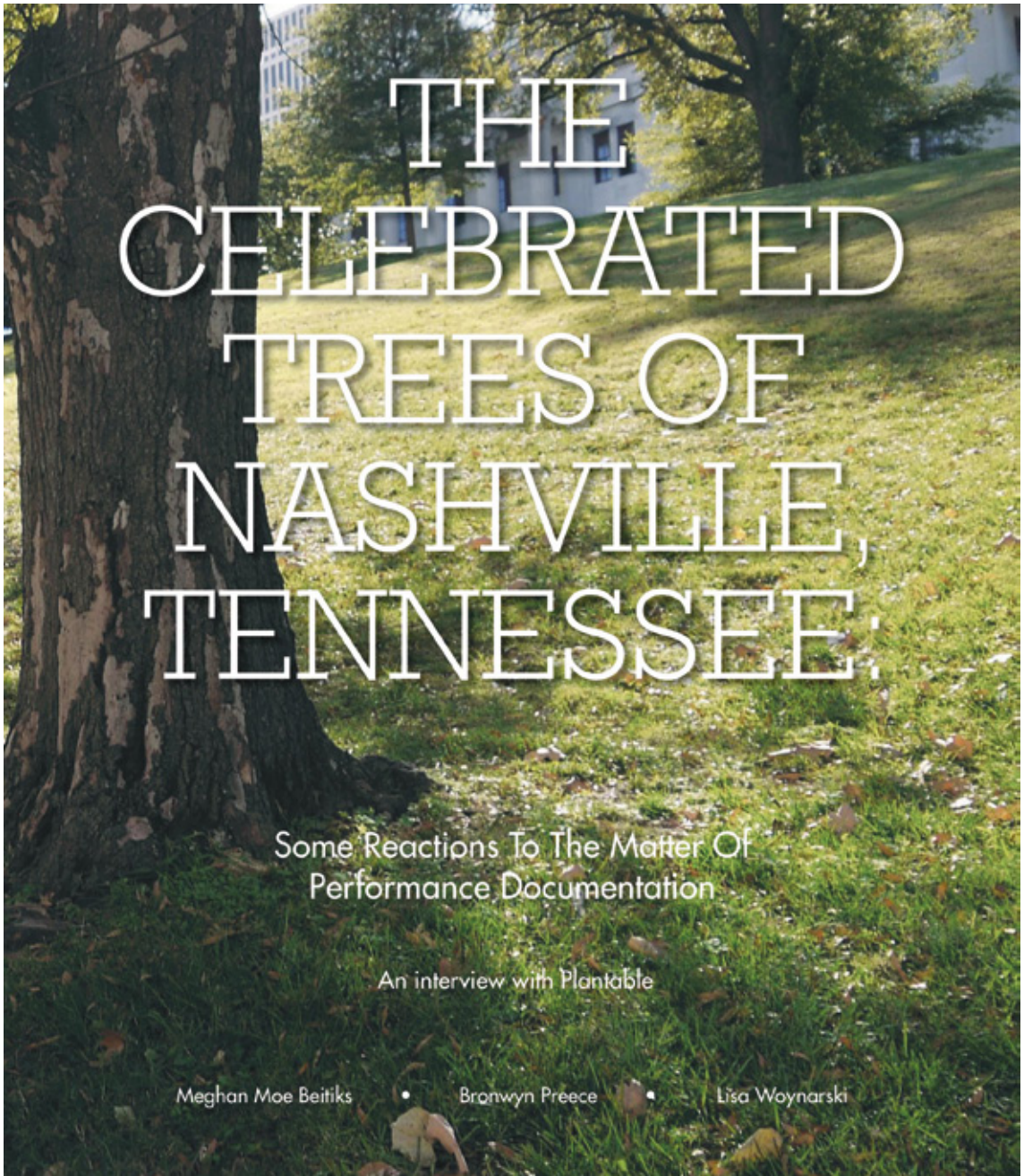
1 November 2012

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8P37KQzBWY

Brief Description:

This was a site-specific performance action that we performed on the street and State Capitol grounds in Nashville, Tennessee. The three performers moved through the streets in a 'worm-like' shape, dressed in black with red scarves and carrying red buckets of red wiggler worms. After moving through the streets, we entered the grounds of the state capitol and 'planted' the worms around a tree. We spread the worms out and placed soil over top and then watered the soil, touched the tree and left individually.

The members of Plantable (Lisa Woynarski, Bronwyn Preece and Meghan Moe Beitiks) co-wrote an article of the *Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts Quarterly* magazine (attached), which explains the project and our way of working.



On November 1st, 2012, Plantable (made up of Meghan Moe Beitiks, Bronwyn Preece and Lisa Woynarski) performed an ecological action on the streets and state capitol of Nashville, Tennessee. Part of the American Society of Theatre Research (ASTR) conference, the performance began with a procession through the streets of downtown Nashville. Carrying large red buckets full of red wiggler worms, the performers proceeded to the grounds of the State Capitol where they surrounded a tree and "planted" the worms at the base. Red wiggler worms are prized for their fertilization qualities and their ability to enrich the soil, providing nourishment for the tree. In conversation with State Capitol maintenance staff, we learned of previous, but not current, usage of RoundUp on these trees—not chemically potent enough to harm any worms involved. Amidst curious questions from onlookers, the performance sought to bring the research questions of the ASTR Ecology and Performance Working Session to a form of praxis, asking what the intersection of an ecologically positive action, performance and intervention would look like.

Left with a rather grainy YouTube video as the only form of documentation, Plantable decided that it did not sufficiently capture the 'nature' of the performance. In an attempt to further make sense of the performance, the process, and potential remediative follow-through of our actions, we have asked each other a few questions.

Pages from Beitiks, M.M., Preece, B. & Woynarski, L. (2013) 'The Celebrated Trees of Nashville, Tennessee: Some Reactions to the Matter of Performance Documentation: an interview with Plantable', *Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts Quarterly*, No.10: 6-11.

Meghan Moe Beitiks: How did you feel about swooping into Nashville and depositing worms around a tree?

Bronwyn Preece: The idea of "swooping in" was huge for me.... because we were indeed doing just that: coming in and then leaving soon after. I was particularly sensitive, in our preparation of this project, that we would not fall into the characteristic and 'oh-so-traditional' model of outside-expert-knows-best. I did not want anything that we did to seem as a commentary on or against what was happening in Nashville. I did not want us to be eschewing, negating or devaluing local knowledge of what actually was pertinently in need of remediation. I struggled with the balance between universals and site-specificities within ecological concerns and actions. Where did this and we fit within the 'Think Globally, Act Locally' paradigm?

That being said, we did endeavor to reach out and make connections with local Nashville groups, but to no avail. We did our research. We, and I felt, our action of swooping and planting stood on nobody's toes, and in the end was beautifully simplistic, evocative and moving - on a wee tiny scale.

MMB: What was your performative experience while placing worms around a tree?

BP: It was incredible! And birthed many questions in me about where the boundaries of performance and audience are and are not.

There was a sacredness (an almost unexpected byproduct) to our action -- so, so very simple while at the same time almost absurd -- that stirred me to the core. I almost cried as I planted the worms and touched the tree. I was wondering what were the contributing factors that made this so deeply stirring, and significant? Did the others feel the same? Did the tree? Did the worms? We had no audience....or did we?.....and did this matter? What struck me so very clearly with our action (and is that even the appropriate word?!) was that how effective the little things can be --that maybe all our world really needs is an amalgamation of all sorts of little things. Our performance made evident the power of little actions. I was imagining the world being flooded by little actions., The performative element was aesthetically strong and striking....and evocative.....and empowering.....and ritualistic....very much so, even though we had cognitively tried to avoid anything that could be associated with religion.....but here I was being moved by a sacred-ritualistic-remediative-performance maybe ultimately more than anything: for myself Part of the performative power of this experience was how it was not didactic in any way: neither in creation or execution or in aesthetic presentation. And it steered away from stereotypes.

BP: How did the notions of performance and bio-remediation complement and/or diverge for you in the Celebrated Trees of Nashville

Lisa Woynarski: Performance generally has a different temporality than bio-remediation. Performance is usually something short-term and impermanent while bio-remediation needs a longer timeframe to actually be effective. It can take years to restore or remediate an ecologically-damaged landscape. This was one of the key tensions for me looking back at the piece. We planted the worms in the soil but we don't know what they actually did as we were only in Nashville a few days. What we did in the performance may have had longer-term effect, if the worms were able to do their job, their composting would enrich the soil, making it more fertile and healthy, but maybe it didn't. I think performance's autonomy is what is can happen in a fleeting moment while bio-remediation is a long-term goal.

BP: Would you label this action a success?

LW: For me personally, it was a success. Although there wasn't a crowd and we debated whether it is a truly bio-remedial act (in the strictest sense), actually being in the performance, holding the worms and spreading the dirt, was effective and affecting. It created a space to attend to the ecological relationships at play in a single moment, which to me is all we can ask of ecological performance. The aesthetic frame of the performance also worked to shift my perception of that part of Nashville, the State Capitol, the worms and the trees. I began to view the city as a space for possible intervention instead of a collection of cars, streets, building and people.

LW: Do you consider this a bio-remedial performance? If not, what would you describe it as? (Does the category matter?)

MMB: I think the intention was ecological restoration. From a scientific point of view, this was not bioremediative, we did not actively remove pollutants from the soil. The piece felt like a conceptual testing ground for ecological intentionality: starting with an ecological rather than an aesthetic or conceptual idea for a piece. The question of category is an important one. I think it's good to be clear in the use of language when describing artistic action, especially when it involves territory from outside fields. At the same time, a piece should be able to stand independent of its 'category' or 'label.'

LW: Do you feel a tension between the aesthetics and the ethics of the piece?

MMB: I feel that dynamic was being constantly negotiated. There's a real problem with the idea of sustainability in the context of modern, urban, global life: how sustainable am I if I'm flying across the country for an eco-conference? At the same time, if I find that engaging with my cultural community face-to-face is an essential part of my work and practice, how do I balance that with my ecological intentions? The decision to work with worms was a large part dictated by practical and logistical constraints. Those dynamics were resolved to the best of our abilities, but there were lessons learned that I think can help us.

LW: For you, how did the performance of the tree, the worms, the state capitol and the city interact with our intentional performance?

MMB: I felt we were in constant dialogue with all of those elements, and that's one of the things I enjoyed most about the piece-- that we were constantly negotiating the needs of the surrounding landscape and fellow players without being too didactic or invasive-- I really enjoy performing for a place or an intention rather than an audience, although both of those things are present in my individual practice.

MMB: What does it mean to create an ecological work?

BP: It means interrogating labels in a day and age where media headlines bombard our everyday: distorting and rearranging and manipulating and creating what we are meant to believe and feel. For me it means having an embodied personal understanding of the word ecology -- in a metaphoric sense, in a material sense -- finding where these interpretations meet and diverge. For me, creating an ecological work means, striving to marry the divergences of meaning, while at the same time highlighting the contradictions in these terms. It means acknowledging fracture within holism.

MMB: What is the line between art and life? How do you negotiate it?

BP: I so badly want to say: Nothing.....but I am continuously faced with examples in the world around me, and in my own life (even though here there is far more symmetry between the two) where there is such a divergence between these two terms. It seems like our society allowed Descartes to smack himself smack in the middle of these terms and has polarized them in the most detrimental of ways. My best answer to this question, right now, in this day and age is PERFORMANCE. Performance is the line between art and life.

How do I negotiate it? With constant questioning and examining and awareness and a pushing and pulling, a collapsing and rebirthing of the nearness, the sameness and the farness culturally imbedded in these terms. I call myself an eARTist...and I am (of) earth....here, there is no separation.

BP: What was your experience, if any, with the following words/ notions with this project: Ritual, Humour, Absurd and Audience.

LW:

RITUAL: There was something very ritualistic about doing the whole thing. I think the fact that we were all silent and proceeded in a very determined way to the site created it. The following each other in snaking pattern to the state capitol and the synchronicity of our actions also contributed to this sense. And then the way we sang the song together. I found myself wondering how this might be related to Pagan and other nature-worshipping cultures. Are earth worms ever held up in praise for their domestic compositing ability?

HUMOUR: Was it funny? I think we had a sense of humor about a flash mob with three people. And I think worms are generally pretty funny in terms of an audience.

ABSURD: We planted worms under a tree in Nashville and called in a performance! Actually I think the worms living in our hotel room was more absurd… But then I've always been a fan of the absurd and the way it eschews normality.

AUDIENCE: I'm not sure who the audience was for the piece. When we were walking along the plaza it felt like the general public milling around were witnesses and hence the audience, but when we got to the tree in the more secluded part of the State Capitol grounds, it felt like the tree was the audience or maybe the worms when we sang them the song. Or maybe each other? Or the camera person? I personally don't subscribe to the notion that performance needs an audience to validate it.

BP: I have called Plantable a 'performance collective', you have called it a 'research collective'.....is all performance research? Or all ecological performance research? If yes, how? If not, should it be? Is there an ethical obligation that it should be in some form?

LW: Just to clarify, I call it a 'performance research collective' which maybe doesn't capture it exactly but I can't think of anything better. I think critically engaging with the world and asking questions is performing research. I also call it practice-based research because questions/theories/concepts are being investigated through artistic practice. But that is a whole other debate which we probably don't have room for here. We are interested collectively in ecological questions so I think it's all ecological performance research, but I'm still trying to figure out what that entails. We have decided to operate within certain ethical imperatives particularly around issues of positive-impact performance or work that attempts some sort of ecological repair - which I think are aspirational, not necessarily fully realized in this project. We are collectively creating performances that investigate ecological questions hence we are a 'performance research collective'.

LW: Can you describe the performance in 10 words or less?

MMB: Three women artfully deposited red worms around a single tree.

LW: How was this process different from the way you usually make work?

MMB: I don't often work collaboratively, and in the past I've started with a concept, and let the concept dictate the parameters of the work. Here we started with an intention—to create an ecologically impactful work during a brief period of time in Nashville, where none of us were based—and it was an interesting challenge to negotiate those parameters.

LW: Do you think this document has accurately portrays the nature of the performance?

MMB: I think that this document is a good depiction of the ongoing dialogue between our three different voices that eventually coalesced to create the performance—a dialogue which is inherent in the performance itself.

» » »

Plantable represents an unfolding performative dialogue, engaging in the trans-plantable interface of performance and ecology.

Images provided by the artists.

Appendix J: *The Weather Factory*

Fevered Sleep/National Theatre Wales

Penygroes, Caernarfon: 7–24 December 2010

http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/archive/the-weather-factory/

Brief Description:

Commissioned for the inaugural season of the National Theatre Wales, a theatre without walls (or no static theatre space), Fevered Sleep created a performance weather installation in a house in Penygroes, Wales near Snowdonia. Small groups of audience members collected the key from a local pub and explored the house on their own, which mixed the expectations of the domestic sphere with the outdoors. The audience was welcomed with a note in the dining room that told them to have a glass of sherry and a mince pie and explore the house. The house not only contained archival material (maps, old photographs, rock samples) of the weather conditions in Snowdonia, it also contained rooms full of weather. There was a bathroom covered with growing moss, a basement in which it was raining, a room full of wind, and one full of mist, light, and an installation of televisions playing shifting cloudscapes.

Company Background:

Fevered Sleep is a creative arts company that makes films, performances, installation, books and digital arts, as a regularly funded Arts Council organisation. David Harradine and Sam Butler founded the company in 1996 as co-artistic directors. David Harradine is also a Visiting Research Fellow in Interdisciplinary Practice at Royal Central School of Speech & Drama. Their work is produced in association with Fuel and has been shown across the UK and internationally. Other projects include such diverse work as *Little Universe* (2013), an outdoor touring show for children about cosmology and *On Aging* (2010), a theatre piece for adults about the nature of aging, performed by children.

Documentation:

Video documentation available here: https://vimeo.com/17918593

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