A Study of the Generative Relationship Between Live Performance and Collective Remembering in Western Australian Settler Society, 1839 to 1899.

William John Louis Dunstone BA Hons (Western Australia) MA (Cambridge) MA (Essex) Dip Ed (Western Australia)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University in 2009.
Declaration:

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any other tertiary education institution.

…………………………….. (W. J. L. Dunstone)
Abstract:

This thesis makes a theoretical intervention into debates about the interrelationship of performance with remembering; and analyses performance as a specific instance of distributed collective remembering in colonial Western Australia during the period from 1839 to 1899. It brings new archival data to an analysis of the transmission of British culture through performance events in the colony. This transmission was a double process, in which performance heritage played a significant part in the development of a West Australian identification and sense of place.

The first part of the thesis delimits the topic and the interdisciplinary approach I take to it. It then conceptualises the generative links between performance and collective memory in relation to prior philosophical concepts of place and space. It next relates these concepts to social and cultural praxis, culminating with five case studies of colonial Western Australian performances.

I argue that colonial performance is symptomatic of a wider modern crisis of remembering that was embedded in specifically Western Australian matrices of gender, class, and race. The case studies analyse the function of microcosmic place-worlds enacted through doublets of imaginative thinking and future remembering, acculturation and cultural amnesia, within colonial performance.
**Contents**

*Acknowledgements*

*Abbreviations*

Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One</th>
<th>Topic and approaches</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Amateurism and community</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>A politics of colonial performance</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Case Studies: Fremantle and the Eastern Goldfields</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Case Studies: Harry Bartine and Masked Balls</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Case Study: Stage Magic and the ‘Fatima’ Illusion</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference list</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs and permissions</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements:

I am truly grateful to Helena Grehan, my principal supervisor at Murdoch University for giving me the benefit of her wise guidance and unstinting support when it was most needed. I owe so much to Helena for her excellent scholarship, generosity of mind, and attentive supervision.

I warmly thank Lenore Layman, my second supervisor at Murdoch University, for the timely insights into Western Australian history she has delivered with such good humour.

My personal thanks go to Phyllis Richards for copy-editing parts of this thesis. Any surviving lapses in the text are mine.

I am grateful to Murdoch University for the award of a Murdoch University Research Scholarship.
Abbreviations:

This thesis refers to copies of the following newspapers held on microfilm at the, State Library of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia, J. S. Battye Library of Western Australian History. Abbreviated titles are used in parentheses for references in the main text and footnotes. Titles and abbreviations (in brackets) are:

Albany Advertiser (AlbAd)
Australian Advertiser (AustAdvt.)
Coolgardie Miner (CM)
Coolgardie Pioneer (CP)
Daily News (DN)
Eastern Districts Chronicle (EDC)
Golden Age (GAge)
Hannan's Herald (HanHer.)
Herald (Herald)
Inquirer and Commercial News (Inquirer.)
Kalgoorlie Miner (KM)
Perth Gazette and West Australian Times and avatars (Gazette)
Victorian Express (VicExp)
West Australian (WAust)
West Australian Catholic Record (WACR)
West Australian Times (WAT)
Western Mail (WMail)
Introduction

In 1876, the anonymous Newcastle (now Toodyay) regional correspondent to the *West Australian Times* (30 Jun. 1876) reported: ‘of entertainments there has been a dearth, but for the ensuing week we are promised by placards that “Innes’s” Magic Lantern will cause roars of laughter.’ The presenter of the anticipated magic lantern show was James Innes. Having migrated from Britain to the colony in 1862, as a child accompanying his parents, Innes had been appointed to the lower ranks of the exclusively male colonial bureaucracy as a telegraphist at Newcastle in 1872 (Erikson 1988, 1598). His extra-mural role as part-time colonial showman exemplifies much about settler adherence to things British, which is a major theme of this thesis. As such, it is worth lingering with him for a little.

Innes’ Newcastle lantern show reflected in little, colonial men’s agency in the importation and commercial exploitation of modern industrialised technology, in this case lens technology; and in the promotion of British popular entertainments as implacements of metropolitan culture within a scattered colonial population desirous of amusements. The magic lantern was technically equipped to mediate imperialist global expansion in visual terms. Its visual effects and images of distant colonised places had the power to enthrall spectators, while its presenter’s ‘viva voce address’ (‘A Mere Phantom’ 1866, n.p.) informed and amused them.

The images projected during Lantern shows were a visual instance of the imperial enterprise to capture and calibrate the globe within an imperial narrative of

---

1 ‘A Mere Phantom’ (1866, 8) defines the mid-Victorian magic lantern as ‘an optical apparatus, furnished with lenses, for the purpose of projecting on a wall or screen enlarged images of transparent objects placed before it.’ The lantern, best known as a fairground device to ‘astonish the ignorant,’ was adapted for purposes of domestic entertainment, illustrated lectures to soldiers and sailors, and ‘conveying scientific instruction.’
industrial progress. The larger process began with the fine calibration of the lantern lenses, which had to be ‘free of scratches, spots, and air-bubbles, and should be made of the best white flint glass’ (Welsford and Sturney 1888, 157). Portable lanterns were designed for transport across the empire. Innes at Newcastle is likely to have used a lighter model, mounted on a tripod for portability, and fitted with double condenser lenses to enhance focus and visual quality. The magic lantern itself was a spectacle of masculine imperial technology.

At the domestic level, Innes’s magic lantern show typifies transmission of British imperial culture to nineteenth-century Western Australia. Such ‘home grown’ spaces of colonial performance production and cultural mediation are the subject of this inquiry. To be specific, the thesis documents information, much of it for the first time, about a diversity of popular performances in Western Australia from 1839 to 1899. It analyses Western Australian settler performance as a threshold artefact that mediated the material acculturation of a ‘unitary’ British national heritage within an emergent and highly contingent colonial political, economic, and social order. Although Ann McClintock (1995) does not address theatre, her analysis of nineteenth-century imperial and colonial spectacle underpins my understanding of performance as a mode of cultural transmission to the colony.

This thesis has a history. When I first embarked on it in 2006, I had left fulltime academic teaching and theatre work. But the effects of my accumulated work experience have carried over. It is difficult to imagine that I could have identified this topic, or written about it in this way, independently of that experience. The immediate stimulus to undertake research into nineteenth-century Western Australian performance

---

2 Double condensers consisted of ‘two plano-convex lenses mounted together in a [metal] ring […] with their flat sides innermost and the crowns of their convex sides almost touching’ (Welsford and Sturney 1888, 156).
came in the mid-1980s, when the late Philip Parsons, of Currency Press, Sydney, kindly invited me to submit entries on Western Australia for inclusion in the then forthcoming *Companion to Theatre in Australia* (Parsons 1995). Two entries, one surveying the history of theatre performance in Perth from 1829 to the present (Dunstone 1995a), and the other covering the same period for Western Australia’s regions (Dunstone 1995d), required new research in the archive of colonial newspapers held at the State Library of Western Australia, J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian History (henceforth, the Battye Library).

The research undertaken for the *Companion* entries prompted me to realise that extensive documentation of colonial performances and performers was necessary before any systematic analysis of the field could be undertaken. I spent several years at the task, which, given the Battye Library’s comprehensive microfiche holdings, was a pleasure. This immersion in colonial journalism delivered an unexpected benefit. Guided by the respective formats of the colony’s *Gazette, Inquirer, Herald*, and regional newspapers, I read beyond the immediate task of documentation, and began to grasp the extent to which colonial performance was imbricated within social matrices of gender, race, class, religion, education, and community identity; and the grand spectacle of imperial politics, industry, commerce, and even defence.

The microform embedment of performance in colonial society and its economy emerged as the focus of my research. The thesis makes a theoretical and critical intervention into the research material, bringing to it theories of performance and memory. Sometimes the research material interrogates the theories. Topographical studies by Joseph Roach (1996) and Marvin Carlson (2003) of the transmission of performance cultures are the starting points for my analysis of the historical specificity
of colonial Western Australian performance. I turn to Edward Casey (1987; 1998), Jeff Malpas (1999), and Barbara A. Misztal (2003) for their respective philosophical and sociological accounts of memory, and of place that is ontologically and phenomenologically prior to performance and memory. As stated, Mcclintock’s (1995) study of the trope of the domestic has informed my understanding of colonial race and gender politics. None of these takes performance as a subject but, in my view, their concepts have significant bearing on it.

My attempt to understand colonial settlers’ allegiance to a British ‘national’ heritage led me to interpret colonial experience through the prism of collective Anglo memory, and the perturbation of it that migration to Western Australia entailed. My readings in the philosophy and sociology of memory prompted me to examine the convergence of colonial performance and collective memory as purposive social actions, each embedded in the imperial cultural world, and each impinging on colonial capacity for self embodiment, and the imagining of Western Australia within that world.

There is scholarly justification for the topic at this time. When I began research for the two Companion entries in the mid-1980s, academe and the performing arts community knew very little about early Western Australian performance. My earlier chapter on Western Australian dramatic literature (Dunstone 1979) had barely alluded to the nineteenth-century, for want of information. The mainstream histories of Western Australia to which I turned for information scarcely acknowledged colonial live performance; in my opinion, underestimating its social and cultural significance to nineteenth-century society. Of the publications available at the time, Edmund Clifton’s (1930) journal article on entertainments in the early decades of the colony concentrates
almost exclusively on musical events.³ F. K. Crowley’s (1959, 18) short history of Western Australia simply lists ‘amateur theatrical performances’ among the pastimes enjoyed by a ‘small number of officials, landowners and merchants [who] ran the colony’s affairs.’

Today, there is at least general awareness that Western Australian performance has a colonial history. This shift is principally attributable to publication of the aforementioned Companion (Parsons 1995), which comprises researched entries on selected individuals, landmark events, play texts, performance organisations, and thematic articles. My journal articles, book chapters, and companion and encyclopaedia entries (Dunstone 1993; 1995a-d; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2009) have examined the transmission of imported British performance culture to nineteenth-century Western Australia in relation to class discrimination, embodied gender in performance, and the role of the press in colonial performance culture. David Hough (2003) lists previously documented nineteenth-century performances but attempts no historical narrative, and no critical or theoretical intervention. N. H. and N.E. Tanner (1994) are silent on the nineteenth-century history of their subject, the Garrick Dramatic and Repertory Club, Guildford (WA); whereas the Herald (11 Aug. 1880; 21 Aug. 1880) records Garrick Club performances at St George’s Hall, Perth, and again at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, in August 1880.⁴

³ The audience for music, and the provision of facilities and funding of it, continue to outstrip those for performance in Western Australia today. I surmise that music has historically been considered a socially respectable, serious artistic pursuit in Western Australia because its embodiment is more reverent, circumscribed, and circumspect than is the case with theatre, where the body is sexualised (sometimes exposed) as an object of desire that often raises a belly laugh.

⁴ The plays performed on both occasions were William Brough and Andrew Halliday’s comedy Mudborough Election (1865) and James Pilgrim’s farce Paddy Miles the Limerick Boy (1850).
Among more recent full-length studies, T. C. Stannage’s (1979, 152) democratically spirited social history of Perth refers only to the opening of ‘St George’s Theatre [sic],’ Perth, in December 1879. Stannage’s (1981) subsequent edition of a ‘new’ social history of Western Australia does not address nineteenth-century performance. Martyn and Audrey Webb’s (1993) centennial history of the city of Kalgoorlie-Boulder generously documents theatre buildings and visits by professional companies to the Eastern Goldfields during the late nineteenth century, but does not examine the embedment of amateur or professional performance in Goldfields society. More recently, historian Geoffrey Bolton (2008, 17) notes only that: ‘By 1839 a group of citizens put on the colony’s first theatrical performance, a musical farce, Love à la Militaire, before an appreciative audience.’

My thesis is organised for fluency of argument, and to maintain a balance between documentation, historical interpretation, and theoretical intervention. Chapter One delimits the topic and describes the multi-disciplinary approach I take to it. Chapter Two defines concepts of collective memory, performance, and place (with its doublet space), and identifies their convergence and divergence in notions of embodiment, embeddedness, and implacement. Chapters Three and Four relate these concepts to performance as material praxis in the broader spaces of colonial cultural production, with emphasis on the capacity of embodied performance and collective memory for self-proliferation and expansion into place.

The remaining three chapters comprise five case studies of exemplary colonial performances. Chapter Five examines relations between theatre performance and the

---

5 The building to which Stannage refers was in fact St George’s Hall. It was a multi-purpose venue fitted with a stage and proscenium arch, rather than a purpose built theatre (Dunstone 1995b).
6 I discuss the 1839 performance of Major Hort’s comedietta Love à la Militaire (1834) in Chapters Three and Four.
autonomy of cultural memory at Fremantle during the period of convict transportation from 1850 to 1868; and at the Eastern Goldfields during the gold rushes of 1890s. Chapter Six analyses placial and spatial qualities of physical performances by visiting American strong man Harry Bartine in the 1860s; and the hybrid, vorticular performances of participants at colonial masked balls in 1880. Chapter Seven is in two sections. The first discusses the interconnectedness of stage illusions, optical technology, and spiritualism. The second is an analysis of technological interventions in embodiment in ‘Fatima,’ a colonial version of a popular illusion devised at the Royal Polytechnic, London, and presented in Western Australia in 1880. The Conclusion reflects on the displacement of collective memory into artefactual performance, and the capacity for memory and performance each to ‘other’ itself. These themes and concepts link the case studies with the broader concerns of the earlier chapters. To maintain textual flow, I have assigned much of the historical documentation of performance events to the footnotes.
Chapter One: topic and approaches

Remembering the past and writing about it no longer seem the innocent activities they were once taken to be. Neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer.

Peter Burke

For theater is, in whatever revisionist, futurist, or self-dissolving form—or in the most proleptic desire to forget the theater—a function of remembrance. Where memory is, theater is.

Herbert Blau

The year 1839 has been chosen as my starting point because it marks the first settler performance in the colony: an amateur presentation of Major Hort’s comédietta in two acts Love à la Militaire (1834) at Leeder’s Hotel, Perth, in July 1839 (Gazette. 13 Jul. 1839). Figure 1 shows the Freemasons’ Hotel, Perth, built on the site of Leeder’s Hotel. This thesis examines the function of those performances as purposive social actions to mediate and expand the reach and depth of colonial collective remembering beyond the colonial individual. Conversely, it asks how the mediation and expansion of collective memory in performance acted on individual remembering activities (Middleton and Brown 2005, 33).

In this first chapter, I refine the definition of the thesis topic, as a preliminary to sustained analysis, in later chapters, of the colony’s evolving attempts to imagine itself within a trope of imperial British national identity. In other words, I explore colonial Western Australia as a haunted space of performance; or, more precisely, as layered haunted spaces of millennia of Indigenous performances on the one hand, and more recent settler performances on the other. For reasons of scope, this thesis confines itself to an examination of settlers’ attempts at re-constructing their attenuated commemorative cultural links with Britain, while shaping colonial identity, and engaging with colonised territory through performance.
Joanne Tompkins’ (2006, 23) relates contemporary Australian performance with ‘the anxieties of finding a way to “settle” in a landscape that seems to defy European experience.’ Though the parallels between our work are strong, the different periods of Australian history on which we focus requires different emphases and conceptualisations. For example, the colonial period requires a more capacious definition of performance than contemporary stage plays. Moreover, there was no equivalent of a developed Australian national identity through which to imagine colonial space. Colonial Western Australia was mapped as a geodetic entity with political borders, but the landmass defied settler imagining of ‘nation’ except as a surrogate derivation of British sovereignty. The borders that confronted settlers were more likely to be demarcations between ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ land; between sites of interracial amicability, contest, and killings; and the en-gendered domestic as against its (to them) unregenerate environs. Even in the 1890s, large remote areas of colonial Western Australia remained unrecognisable and unimaginable as cultural space that might support settler identity, let alone provide the necessities of life to Europeans. David Carnegie (1898; 1989), for instance, accounts for his exploration of land to the east and north of Kalgoorlie as largely a journey through an absence of water.⁷

A preliminary remark on the colony’s capacity to engage with its British heritage is required. Throughout the nineteenth century, Western Australia lacked the critical mass of performers, writers, spectators, and theatre facilities to sustain local

---

⁷ For example (Carnegie 1898; 1989, 25): ‘On April 22nd we left the spring, steering due north—carrying in all thirty-five gallons of water, though this supply was perceptibly reduced by evening, owing to the canvas [waterbags] being new […] The class of country we encountered the first and second day can stand for the rest. Spinifex plains, undulating sand-plains, rolling sandhills, steep sand-ridges […] and dense thickets of mulga.’
commercial production. During the first three decades of settlement, amateur performances were given in hotel assembly rooms at Perth and Fremantle, at the Court House, Perth, and at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle. Other performances were given at regional hotels, Masonic Halls, in tents, and even in shop buildings on the Eastern Goldfields during the 1890s. There was no equivalent in the colony to the saloon theatres that flourished in nineteenth-century London, and still do (Davis and Emeljanow 2001, x). The temporary bijou Theatre Royal, constructed for the Royal Engineers Dramatic Corps at the Freemasons’ Hotel, Fremantle, in 1858, was the only hotel venue to function over several years. Performances were regularly given at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth (1861), the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle (1868), the Town Hall, Perth (1870), and St George’s Hall, Perth (1879), but these were multi-purpose halls. Figure 2 gives a view of the Mechanics’ Institute hall in 1870. Each in its way posed problems of sightlines, backstage facilities, acoustics, seating, and the risk of fire from the stage lighting.

The Theatre Royal, Coolgardie (1894), the Bijou Theatre, Esperance (1896), and the indoor (Cremorne) Garden Theatre, Albany (1897), were built in the regions to accommodate an influx of audiences and performers during the gold rushes of the 1890s, but the Theatre Royal, Perth (1897), was the only state of the art venue to be built during the colonial period (Dunstone 1995a; 1995d). Each was constructed after British models, but neither had sufficient longevity to surrogate London’s patent theatre and district theatre cultures. To paraphrase Casey (1987, 187), the two colonial Theatres Royal had not been in existence long enough to hold the past in place; and neither

---

8 There were exceptions to the rule in the last few years of the century: itinerant British performers such as Tom Cannam (CM. 18 Dec. 1894) stayed on to perform with visiting commercial companies on the Eastern Goldfields in the 1890s. See the case study of the Eastern Goldfields in Chapter Five for more detail.

9 Chapters Three to Five give details of temporary performance spaces.

10 British entertainer Charles Steele gave the last performance at the Freemasons’ Hotel, Fremantle, in July 1866 (Inquirer. 11 Jul. 1866).
survived long enough as a working theatre to acquire that capacity. At best, Western Australia was an importer of culture, engaging with its British performance heritage at several removes via visiting companies. Local amateurs produced plays written for London’s patent and commercial theatres, and adapted the praxis of British amateur theatre to colonial conditions. It would seem that the colonial administration entrusted its regulation of performance repertoire to the Lord Chamberlain’s prior powers to scrutinise play scripts under Britain’s Regulation of Theatres Act of 1843 (Davis and Emeljanow 2001, ix).

Before proceeding, I should reflect briefly on issues of methodology that attach to this topic. I understand methodology to be an experiential, in the sense of ‘experimental,’ process of argumentation through conceptual and theoretical interventions in the historical research data, rather than a predetermined method of procedure. As a consequence, I have organised my arguments thematically, with due regard to accurate chronological documentation. At the risk of oversimplification, Chapter Two defines terms and approach; Chapters Three and Four are concerned primarily with positioning the local in relation to the global; while the case studies in Chapters Five to Seven are mainly directed towards conceptualising historically specific data as spaces of embodied performance and commemoration. It follows that topic, content, and methodology are always interconnected in arguing this thesis.

The topic

The debate into which this topic enters has a long history. The nature of the relationship between spaces of performance and memory has been contested for millennia across a range of theories, disciplines, dramaturgies, and artistic praxes. Relationships between performance and memory have been extensively reformulated in
diverse but interconnecting questions to do with the nature of dramatic representation; the performativity of self-identification; and the embedment of performance in broader societal space. My particular contribution to the debate is to present and interpret research data concerning a body of colonial performance that has not previously been gathered for interpretation. On the basis of this research data, I examine the social and cultural structures that enabled performance and collective memory to appear and interconnect as culturally acquired categories of understanding and implacement in nineteenth-century Western Australia.

Recent decades have seen a resurgence of interest in the interconnectedness of performance and memory. Contemporary inquiry into the doublet of performance and memory tends to be interdisciplinary in scope, and directed towards analysis of the social spaces of performance production. Exemplars are Joseph Roach’s (1996) topology of the transmission of Atlantic rim theatre cultures during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks’s (2001) practice based explorations of theatre’s conjuncture with archaeology; and Marvin A. Carlson’s (2003) survey of performance as a space of ‘ghosting,’ in which embodied collective remembering of past performances and their locales inhabit the present. Jane Goodall (2000) considers the complex identity relations produced in nineteenth-century exhibitions of kidnapped Indigenous people in Australia; while Goodall (2002) analyses the ways in which popular performance engaged with ideas and tropes from the mid-nineteenth-century debate about evolutionary theory.

---

The interdisciplinary directions that characterise these recent interventions in the centuries-old debate can be attributed in part to the rise of ‘explanatory pluralism’ in contemporary intellectual culture (Kammen 1995; quoted Misztal 2003, 2), to which Barbara A. Misztal (2003) also attaches the high status of memory discourse in contemporary social sciences. Misztal (2003, 22-25) observes that historical shifts in the prestige of memory—and, I would add, of performance—‘can be linked to cultural change, seen as associated with the advancement of the means of communication and the transformation of techniques of power.’

Explanatory pluralism is germane to my argument that performance and memory converge in their re-connective capacities. For example, Casey (1987, 71-72) defines, in philosophical language, two characteristics of recollective space: these are clustering, which describes the tendency for memory to ‘coagulate around particular points or locales;’ and compression, that occurs ‘when a number of past locales become telescoped into the single locale of a given mnemonic presentation.’ These characteristics of remembered space provide starting places from which to explore the spatial motility of embodied performance. Subjects experience that motility when they traverse the interspaces between performance venues; when they witness performances of a given role by different performers; or when they attend, or present, a series of performances within a particular place. Similarly, Casey’s (1998, 331) philosophical insight that embodiment is ‘the basic stance upon which every experience and its memory depend’ enables me to describe the capacity of the dynamic performing body to perform its own potential for non-determinacy. This bodily dynamic is another mode of motility that operates within dramatic space.
In addition, the power of embodied performance to self-proliferate within social space enhances its capacity to interrogate societal attempts to control bodies by containing them within determinate _topoi_.\(^\text{12}\) This position is central, for instance, to Chapter Four, which discusses the Victorian cult of the domestic (McClintock 1995, 34-35) as it was embodied in the temporary mid-century elision of women performers from the colonial amateur stage, and the concomitant practice of male gender cross-dressing. The self-proliferating and re-connective memorial powers of the body in performance are analysed in each of the case studies. Chapter Six, for example, discusses the dynamics of embodied identity performed at fancy dress and masked balls; while Chapter Seven explores the displacement of the female body into spaces of visibility and ‘invisibility’ in the ‘Fatima’ illusion.

I position colonial experience of performance and collective memory in historical relation to a global crisis of memory in the nineteenth-century; a crisis that Barbara A. Misztal (2003, 43-44) attributes to ‘upheavals in European societies which were undergoing rapid industrialization, urbanization, and modernization, as well as [to] a new questioning of the idea of “progress.”’ Matt K. Matsuda (1996, 5) similarly identifies the emergence, in the late nineteenth century, of a discourse of memory specific to ‘a rhythm of urgency and acceleration not originating from technological developments of the time alone.’ This modern crisis of memory manifested itself in a ‘rejection of the past’ on the one hand, and in an appreciation of the past as ‘a lost mentality’ on the other (Misztal 2003, 44; citing Terdiman 1993). In effect, ‘the interpretation of people’s behaviour became notoriously problematic,’ as the ‘lost mentality’ of memory came to be reconstructed in public modes, in which memory was disembedded from the forms it had taken in traditional societies (Misztal 2003, 43).

\(^{12}\) According to Casey (1987, 331), a _topos_ ‘posits a rigid material body in place by virtue of its sheer contiguity with the inner surface of what immediately surrounds it—a strictly physical intimacy that works by close containment.’
This crisis materialised paradoxically in an allegiance to British precedent, while that precedent was frequently figured as an absence in colonial expressions of nostalgia and ennui. As early as 1843, the *Gazette* (29 Apr. 1843) editorialised: ‘Our amusements are few, in this small community, and far between.’

As Casey (1987, 2) observes, the modern crisis of memory is also a crisis of forgetting: ‘we have not only forgotten what it is to remember—and what remembering is—but we have forgotten our forgetting.’ I view colonial performance as one such delimited area of technical expertise and community engagement in which lost constructions of the past could be revisited and appreciated in present artefactual form. My strategy is to foreground colonial Western Australian performance as a discrete, intimate space of cultural memory, in which a small population of white settlers loyal to British performance culture attempted to re-negotiate communal and self-identification imaginatively and commemoratively, in response to their experiences of emigration.

Modern displacements of memory into institutions and artefacts have their creative potential. Malpas (1999, 158-74) discusses, for instance, the connection between place, memory, and subjectivity in William Wordsworth’s *Prelude* (1805), and in Marcel Proust’s *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-27). Dorothy Hewett’s play with music *The Man From Mukinupin* (1979) is an exemplar from Australian theatre more suited to this context. Hewett organises the action of her play around a dialectics of past and present that explores performance as a response to social and political crises in Western Australia. Set in the early twentieth century, in a mythical country town that is a liminal space of white rural settlement, the action of the play imbricates an historical present (Australia’s involvement in the First World War) with a past and future that are embodied in the psyche and through collective ritual. Performed citations
from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (c.1611) and *Othello* (c.1602) mediate and thematise the dialectics of the past in the present and future. The encounter/confrontation of Indigenous colonised with Anglo colonisers is an eroticised space in which the racial doubling of the two female and the two male ‘juvenile’ roles displaces historical crises of memory and guilt onto a disavowed masculine doubling of colonial conquest and fear of the feminised unknown. Chapter Four discusses the embedment of performance in a wider social crisis of colonial gender identity.

Nineteenth-century Western Australia performance can similarly be understood as an historically specific response from a conservative colonial society to the disruption of its links with its ‘Home’ cultural past. Those who, like James Innes, had migrated from Britain would have experienced this cultural past directly. Those born in places other than Britain would, with few exceptions, have encountered that heritage in colonial surrogate modalities. In either case, the rupture with cultural heritage was a condition of settler migration (voluntary or as convicts) to a remote colonial space that was organised in reaction against the pursuit of modern notions of ‘progress’ in the home country. If, as Casey (1987, 2) remarks, remembering is of central concern to modern societies ‘only in unusual circumstances,’ then colonial performance emerges as one such circumstance.

Colonial performance, understood as an embodied acculturation of the spectacle of empire, inevitably involved both the remembering and forgetting of its ruptured cultural past. That ambiguity was processual, evolving over time, but it was usually

---

13 My interpretation of the trope of race and gender in the play derives something from McClintock’s (1995, 27) analysis of ‘a famous drawing (ca. 1575)’ by Jan van der Straet, portraying ‘the “discovery” of America.’ McClintock describes male imperial discourse as: ‘a scene of ambivalence, suspended between an imperial megalomania, with its fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation.’

14 This generalisation does not apply to the experiences of convict transportees.
subsumed under an avowed reverence for British precedent, more especially in the
domestic space of amateur performance. Being by convention ‘distinctly self-contained
and removed from ordinary life,’ colonial performance, though based in memory, also
manifested the double condition that Casey (1987, 1) calls ‘amnesia of anamnesia:’
forgetting what it is to forget. I return to this conundrum in my discussion of concepts
of performance and remembering in Chapter Two. I analyse it in material detail in each
of the case studies, especially those of the acculturation of performance at regional
Fremantle and the Eastern Goldfields in Chapter Five.

The subaltern cultural and political status of colonial Western Australians was
sometimes interrogated in performance. Thus, in September 1878, at the Town Hall,
Perth, an eleven-year-old Melbourne-born boy known as ‘Young Blondin, the
Australian Wonder,’ ventured out, cross-dressed as Britannia, to the centre of a slack
rope high above the floor, to divest himself of his costume down to his ‘underdress’
(WAT. 10 Sept. 1878). In a contemporary reading of this trope, the cross-dressed infant
others the female figure of empire as ‘mother’ to her colonial striplings (in several
meanings of that word). The empress ‘has no clothes,’ while the boy who strips away
his female dress embodies a threshold onto a future that does not compromise imperial
and colonial adult ‘manhood.’ This is a balancing act in more guises than the obvious
one: the parody of Britannia stripped to a boy’s underwear, ‘her’ body cross-gendered
but still out to seduce her subjects, locates imperialism and colonialism in articulated
discourses of desire, gender ambiguity, costume fetishism, and self-reflexive
performance. The boy on the rope afforded his fellow colonials an interspace from
which to laugh at the spectacle of empire and their own assigned role as its subaltern
onlookers (Dunstone 2000, 29).
The transmission of ‘Home’ culture to Western Australia was primarily a purposive action on the part of interested colonials and itinerant performers. But it was also, and inevitably, a function of geodetic space and imperial infrastructure. The implacement of performance in the colony depended fundamentally on inter-ocean shipping and inland transport, roads, and bridges, to convey performers, play scripts, equipment, animals, and ultimately incoming potential audiences, though it was never simply a matter of these things. British social and cultural praxis was transmitted to the colony from the home country (and from the eastern Australian colonies and elsewhere in the empire) along professional touring circuits that followed the ocean routes linking British colonial centres in South Africa, the Asian sub-continent, the Malay Peninsula, China, North America, and the West Indies, as well as along sea routes between Western Australia and the eastern Australian and New Zealand colonies. In this regard, local colonial performance is always to be understood at its intersection with the British performance culture that migrating settlers and touring professional companies transmitted to the colony from elsewhere in the empire.

The imperial ocean routes and colonial inland roads can be understood cartographically, as merely relational coordinates between sites. However, the experience of traversing tracts of ocean or struggling along dirt tracks, encountering storms or heat and dust, exposed settler migrants and itinerant performers to intensely particular qualities of place. In much the same way, while colonial performances were

---

15 For example, British entertainers Grace Egerton and George Case arrived at Fremantle from Melbourne via South Australia in July 1867, en route for Shanghai (Inquirer. 19 Jun. 1867; Herald 31 Aug. 1867); while ‘a large group of people’ assembled to farewell the Stanley Opera Troupe at its departure for Singapore in February 1886 (WMail. 20 Feb. 1886). The movements of the colonial Towers Family are exemplary: having arrived from South Australia in November 1876 (Gazette. 21 Nov. 1876), Frank Towers and daughter Rosa travelled on to engagements at theatres in London and Dublin, while Mrs Towers took an engagement at the Theatre Royal, Calcutta (WAT. 8 Feb. 1878). Mrs Towers drowned in the company of 11 other British actresses and actors when the barque James Service broke up on Murray Reefs, near Mandurah, about 100 kilometres south of Fremantle, in July 1878, while in transit from Calcutta, via Penang, to Melbourne (Herald. 27 Jul. 1878; WACR. 1 Aug. 1878; WAT. 30 Jul. 1878).
oriented outwards towards distant metropolitan British national culture, their amateur performances were intensely idiolocal. Research shows that local performance production in the colony remained predominantly amateur in character throughout the nineteenth century, confirming the colony’s status as a cultural importer of British professional theatre, and a settler fiefdom of British culture in general. Yet the very ‘idiolocality’ (Casey 1993, 23) of Western Australian amateurism—its being generated within, for, and by local communities—was also its strength. The idiolocal quality of performance helped to define places from each other, and provided hooks to keep memories in place. Precisely because of its local idiosyncrasies, shortcomings, and lack of glamour, amateur colonial performance acted as a form of implacement that, in Casey’s (1993, 23) philosophical language, ‘bound actual occasions into unique collocations of space and time.’ Amateur performance had a capacity for implacement in excess of settler memories of a past in Britain or elsewhere. It enabled settlers to experience the ambiguity of being ‘in place’ in the colony, and therefore in the ‘power’ of place, ‘part of its action [and] acting on its scene’ (Casey 1993, 23), but within the broader gendered imperialist space of global domination by white males.16

In theory, the sense of the local does not exhaust the placedness of performance. Indeed, idiolocality is necessarily articulated with the capacity of performance to expand into its ontological other, the social world. The self-othering capacity of performance is echoed in recent accounts of embodied collective remembering; notably, in Casey’s (1987) study of the phenomenology of remembering, and Misztal’s (2005) synoptic sociological study of theories of memory. According to Casey (1987, 173), the human body has ‘immanent-marginal presence’ in all memory, even those types of memory that ‘do not appear to include, or even to imply, a bodily stance of the

rememberer at their margin.’ Performance is an exemplary, highly specific instance of the ‘immanent-marginal presence’ of the body in memory. Performance activates and dwells in numerous types of bodily memory: motor memory; semantic memory of cues for moves; dream memory and emotional memory; primary memory of the immediate past; secondary memory of the more distant past; and so forth. The functions of embodied performance, memory, and place are strikingly parallel. To borrow Casey’s (1987, 202) words, their task is ‘that of congealing the disparate into a provisional unity’ (his italics).

If performance embodies ‘the memorial potency of place,’ as Casey (1987, 202) describes it, then the category of Western Australian colonial performance in this thesis must be compendious enough to comprise not only scripted stage plays, but stand-alone explorations of body-as-place, such as Harry Bartine’s ‘Antipodean’ stunt of walking upside-down across a ceiling at Fremantle in 1869 (Herald. 25 May 1869); the aforementioned appearance of ‘Young Blondin’ as a cross-dressed Britannia, on a slack-ropé at the Town Hall, Perth, in 1878; and the ‘Fatima’ illusion, an Australian version of the ‘Living Half-Woman,’ presented ‘in conjunction with a musical and saltatory entertainment’ by juvenile members of the Wieland Family at the Town Hall, Perth, in January 1879 (WAust. 10 Jan. 1880). By the same logic of embodied memory, the category of performance recognises vocal and dance items in varied performance programmes, including pure variety theatre; as well as masked balls and tableaux vivants that had a definite performance element. It also recognises, as an extension of performance, the robust recreational dancing in which spectators and performers characteristically joined at the conclusion of amateur performances. Accordingly,

---

17 For example, professional clowning at a series of masked balls, presented by Alfred Silvester and Minton Taylor Griffiths in Perth and Fremantle between June and August 1880, included Chang the Chinese Giant, the midget Japanese Tommy, and a hobby-horse equestrian tournament (WAust. 29 Jun. 1880; 13 Jul.1880; 16 Aug. 1880).
Chapter Six comprises case studies of Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’ as a enactment of the masculine conquest of colonised space; and the hybrid, vortical spaces of embodied identity at colonial masked balls in 1880. Chapter Seven situates the othered figure of the ‘living half-woman’ in the ‘Fatima’ illusion in triangular relationship with mid-century Spiritualism and the Victorian science of optics.

These local performances, and others like them, were ephemeral and often trivial, but equally they were enmeshed, if only marginally or tangentially, in social, cultural, political and scientific issues current in the late nineteenth-century Western world. The plays and popular entertainments are of particular interest today for the questions they raise about colonial attitudes to the past and present; as well as to representation, illusion, authenticity, and ‘the quality of the fiction dispersed into the spectacle’ in colonial performance (Blau 1992, 174).

The parallels between embodied performance and memory lead in unanticipated theoretical directions. The argument that the mental action of memory others itself through embodiment leads in turn to philosophical accounts of body-as-place, and thence to Malpas’ (1999, 11) philosophical proposition that place, and its doublet space, are prior to culture and hence to performance and memory. It is clear that an understanding of performance as collective remembering requires prior definitions of structured place and space. To this end, Chapter Two draws on Casey (1987; 1998) and Malpas (1999) to describe, in philosophical terms, concepts of place and space that are ontologically and phenomenologically prior to the spaces performance and memory.

While the topic focuses on recorded performances, the field radiates through a plexus of colonial social and cultural instruments associated with performance and
collective remembering. Social issues such as audience demographic, taste, expectations, and behaviour; the local politics of respectability and domesticity; the communal values of amateurism; and the institution of patronage materially affected local attitudes to performance. Local amateur performance praxis and ethos evolved in dialogue with colonial journalism, criticism, and commentary. The colony’s external relations with professional performance cultures in Britain and the colonies depended on the maintenance of local and global touring infrastructures, including performance venues, transport and communications, and local theatrical support trades such as printing, carpentry, painting and decorating. Each of these fields was inhabited in part by mnemonic traces of other living, or supposedly lost, performative practices that were produced by—and were constitutive of—history-making cultures elsewhere, in Britain and its colonies.

As a collective recreational pursuit, performance embodied evolving colonial cultural attachments to Britain. Peter Bailey (1978, 1) argues that the history of leisure time is ‘of particular importance in the broader exercise of reconstructing the kind of life lived by the people of the past.’ Bailey’s observations about class and leisure in Victorian Britain are particularly relevant to an analysis of performance as a leisure time pursuit in its colony of Western Australia, especially in view of the colony’s close cultural and social attachments to Britain. Following Bailey (1978, 1), I examine colonial performance not simply in terms of its own internal culture—or more properly cultures—but ‘in relation to [colonial] society as a whole and the wider patterns of social change.’ Given that colonials considered Britain to be the privileged source of culture, it might appear that the exchange between metropolis and colony was entirely one-way in the colony’s favour. But this was sometimes not so. In 1863, for instance, the Perth Amateur Dramatic Corps donated subscriptions to the value of £25 to a
colonial relief fund (totalling £850) for victims of a mining disaster in Lancashire collieries—a ‘large sum for a small and not wealthy [sic] community’ (Inquirer. 20 May. 1863).\textsuperscript{18}

**Class**

Colonial performance culture was inherently conservative in its concern to maintain the *status quo* in performance, as in society in general. Even so, the colony’s social and cultural conservatism was never internally harmonious or uncontentious. Colonial performance enacted the dynamics of a local politics of class, in which distinctions between gentry, commerce, and ‘operatives,’ or artisans, were based largely on ownership of land and calibrations of rank within the colony’s administration. From the outset, performance was a marker of class boundaries. As mentioned in the Introduction, the colony’s first settler performance was an amateur theatrical presentation, by a group of well connected colonial ‘gentlemen and ladies,’ of Major Hort’s *Love à la Militaire* (1834), before a select audience at Leeder’s Hotel, Perth, in July 1839. The same group performed two further seasons at Leeder’s Hotel in September and October 1839; and two similar programmes at Hodge’s Hotel, Perth, in August and November 1842.\textsuperscript{19} Attendance at these occasions was limited to the colonial elite; entry was by named subscription ticket only.\textsuperscript{20} Other classes were admitted at a reduced price to a dress rehearsal at Leeder’s Room on 15 October 1839, but admission

\textsuperscript{18} The Perth Amateurs donated the proceeds from a subscription season of John Madison Morton’s farce *Done on Both Sides* (1850), W.E. Suter’s farce *Sarah’s Young Man* (1850), and Thomas J. Williams’ farce *An Ugly Customer* (1860) at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, on 8 and 9 July 1863 (Inquirer. 22 July. 1863).

\textsuperscript{19} The September 1839 programme comprised John Payne’s drama *Charles II; or, The Merry Monarch* (1824), and Richard Brindisley Peakes’ farce *Amateurs and Actors* (1818) (Gazette. 9 Sept. 1839); the October 1839 programme included William Moncrieff’s farce *The Spectre Bridegroom* (1829), and Lord Glenfall’s farce *The Irish Tutor* (1830). For the 1842 seasons, see the *Gazette* (3 Sept. 1842; 12 Nov. 1839).

\textsuperscript{20} An advertisement for the performances on 4 September 1839 reads: ‘Ladies or gentlemen desirous of obtaining tickets are requested to apply to the undersigned [Wm. H. Scholl, Honorary Secretary]. As the number of admissions will this time be limited, an early application is desirable’ (Gazette. 20 Jul. 1839).
to the performance on the following night was by subscription only (Gazette. 12 Oct. 1839).

In an early diversification of the class basis of performance, certain ‘tradesmen and mechanics of the town’ presented an amateur performance of Edward Fitzball’s drama The Inchcape Bell; or, the Dumb Sailor Boy (1828), and William Macready’s farce The Irishman in London; or, the Happy African (1793), at Hodge’s Hotel, Perth, in December 1842 (Gazette. 17 Dec. 1842). The initiative was almost certainly linked with the foundation of a short-lived Mechanics’ Institution, led by painter Charles Foulkes at Perth in January or February 1842 (Stannage 1979, 76). T.C. Stannage notes that the new Institution had acquired a library from one of the gentry’s two book clubs, but had collapsed within a few months, either from lack of support among artisans, or because the colonial administration opposed workingmen’s communal action. Stannage adds that the proposed Institution received no land grant from the administration—probably because the administration had been given no hand in its setting up. Quite possibly, I suspect, the Chartist demonstrations of 1842 in Britain influenced both colonial parties, though in quite different directions. It is probable that Perth’s ‘tradesmen and mechanics’ presented their 1842 season of plays out of sympathy with the initiative for a Mechanics’ Institution.

The artisan performers presented only one further season of plays: Gideon John Milligen’s burletta The Beehive (1811), and John Till Allingham’s farce Fortune’s Frolics (1859), at Hodge’s Hotel, Perth, in April 1843 (Gazette. 22 Apr. 1843). The Gazette’s (29 Apr. 1843) review found ‘but partial deficiency in the scenes under our notice, and some of the characters deserved, and received well merited applause.’ Nevertheless, the review ran, the initiative was ‘to be discontinued for the present, to be
superseded [...] by the amateur corps of gentlemen, who were the originators of this source of amusement.’

Social participation in performance diversified as the century passed, largely in response to the increased number of itinerant companies and popular entertainers that visited the colony from the mid-1860s onwards. But the colonial elite continued to present amateur theatricals for select audiences into the 1890s. Government House was instrumental in continuing this tradition. For example, Valentine Elwes, brother-in-law to governor Charles Fitzgerald, organised seasons of amateur theatricals at the Court House, Perth, in July and September 1854 (Elwes. May 8. 1854). Successive governors lent their patronage to amateur performances. In particular, Sir William Robinson was patron to a coterie that presented amateur theatricals at Government House Ballroom and St George’s Hall, Perth, during his terms as governor from 1875 to 1877, 1880 to 1883, and 1890 to 1895. The Herald (25 Apr. 1868) criticised Governor John Hampton for withholding vice-regal patronage from the Theatre Comique’s performance at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, on 1 July 1868.23

Consistent with its socially conservative editorial policy, the colonial press did not report popular performances that went on among the drinking class in the colony’s many inns and taverns. Drunkenness was the avowed reason for this class censorship, though excessive drinking was usually a symptom of other social and economic distress—poverty, malnutrition, marital violence, and prostitution. Stannage (1979, 20)

---

21 Valentine Cary Elwes was the brother of Eleanora Fitzgerald (née Elwes), wife of Charles Fitzgerald, Governor of Western Australia from 1848 to 1855. The plays presented in the September 1854 season at the Court House, Perth, were Isaack Pocock’s drama The Miller and His Men (n.d.), John Stirling Coyne’s farce The Queer Subject (1837), and Joseph Ebsworth’s farce The Rival Valets (1847) (Elwes 1848-1959. n.p.).

22 For Sir William Robinson, see Parsons (1995, 38; 436; 540).

23 On that occasion, Louise Arnot’s Theatre Comique performed Edward Morton’s farce The Eton Boy (1825), James Rodwell’s comedy The Young Widow (1824), and Charles Selby’s interlude The Married Rake (1825) (Herald. 25 Jul. 1868)
records that Dr Alexander Collie, the colonial Surgeon, attributed the deaths of 28 of the colony’s poor in 1830 to drunkenness, scurvy, and dysentery. Drunkenness among workingmen was often associated with cases of aggravated assault on married women, and was a cause for legal separation under the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1863 (Stannage 1979, 116). In the 1870s, landlords were prohibited from serving ‘posted drunkards;’ while one in four cases of drunkenness heard before Perth’s Police Magistrate’s Court were brought against poor women (Stannage 1979, 116).

T. Tuckfield’s (1969) essay on the history of inns and taverns in the early years of colonisation is informative about sites, licensing laws, and licensees, but does not consider the popular entertainments and plays offered in those places. There is evidence, admittedly little, that such entertainments occurred, and that at least some were of a sustained length and worthy standard.

In alignment with an empire-wide reformist approach to domesticity (Bailey 1978, 35-42), a Temperance Society was established at Perth in 1846. The Temperance movement was a nineteenth-century imperial ‘conversion project’ of the kind McClintock (1995, 34) identifies as ‘dedicated to transforming the earth into a single […] universal standard of cultural value.’ In Western Australia, the Temperance movement promoted ‘rational’ family entertainments to counteract the social effects of excessive drinking. For example, the Temperance and Recreation Society presented an evening of music and plays at the Oddfellows Hall, Fremantle WA, in August 1868 (Herald. 5 Sept. 1868). Temperance entertainments were in effect a theatre of the ‘domestic’ that demonised the (usually male) drunkard as a racially regressive deviant

24 Stannage (1979, 116) points out that wife-beating ‘undoubtedly took place’ among the gentry, the commercial class, and artisans, but these groups were under social pressure to prevent incidents of domestic violence from coming to the notice of magistrates.

25 In Chapter Four, I discuss an all male performance of Douglas Jerrold’s nautical melodrama Black-Eyed Susan (1829) at Mr Herbert’s Federal Hotel, Fremantle, in October 1875 (Herald. 20 Nov. 1875).
from the ‘natural’ condition of the Victorian middle-class family (McClintock 1995, 34-35). Colonial society regarded drunkenness as a moral condition rather than a medical condition. The ‘Rose of Perth’ Grand Templars’ Lodge, for example, was outraged when itinerant entertainer Mr Charles Abrahams, professed teetotaller and Lodge member, was arrested for being drunk in charge of a horse and detained at Fremantle on 7 October 1876 (WAT. 10 Oct. 1876). On remand, Abrahams failed to appear for an engagement at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Guildford, on the same evening. Abrahams was physically ejected from a Quadrille Assembly at Perth on the night of 19 October 1876, after having commenced ‘an unaccountable series of spasmodic aerial gyrations […] and entered into a cabalistic converse with some hidden acquaintances conjured up in his troubled imagination’ (WAT. 20 Oct. 1876).

A ‘dangerous class’

For economic reasons, the colonial administration had successfully petitioned the British government to begin the transportation of convicts to Western Australia in 1850. Some 9200 male convicts were transported to the colony between 1850 and 1868, when Western Australia’s period as a penal settlement—the last in the empire—came to an end. Some colonial commentators interpreted this development as a potential threat to civil society; or, as I would put it, as a threat to the colony’s self-imagining cultural links with its British heritage. Reflecting class paranoia, the otherwise urbane Mrs Edward Millett (1872, 331) envisaged that the position of free settlers ‘would be very terrible’ if the British government were to withdraw financial support from a colony ‘saturated with professors of crime.’

26 Abrahams was a pianist, vocalist, dramatic reciter, and exponent of ‘Punch and Judy’ shows.

27 The imagined threat to the colony would eventuate should ‘the dangerous classes within it […] ever want bread’ (Millett 1872, 331).
In this connection, Millett (1872, 338) identified two causes of ‘matrimonial disputes’ among the colony’s lower classes during the late 1860s: ‘drunkenness among male ex-convicts, and ‘the wounded pride of the women caused by the unavoidable consciousness that the tabooed position of the convict was reflected upon his wife.’ While the Temperance movement promoted rational entertainments as an intervention in the situation of wives and husbands, there seems to have been no provision for the ‘rational’ entertainment of male convicts in detention, or for those working on ticket-of-leave in the community. Western Australia falls outside the parameters of Robert Jordan’s (2002) study of convict theatre in Australia from 1788 to 1840, but in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, it seems that performances by or for serving felons were proscribed in the West.

Further research is required before it can be known if entertainments were permitted inside the Convict Establishment at Fremantle (fig.4), or at convict camps in the hinterland. Research is also required into whether ticket-of-leave men, who could live under supervision outside prison, and expirees whose term of imprisonment had ended, were eligible to attend or take part in settler performances.28 But as Millett (1872, 329) points out, ex-prisoners who had ‘come out’ on one of the earlier ships were generally regarded more favourably among free settlers than the ‘much worse class of criminals’ who ‘composed later ‘cargoes.’ Among the earlier generation of ex-convicts, James Pearse, a well-educated expiree and ‘evidently no novice on the scene,’ performed in C. H. Hazelwood’s one-act domestic drama Harvest Storm (1850) and William Brough and Andrew Halliday’s farce The Area Belle (1864) at Fremantle in January 1869 (Herald. 23 Jan. 1869) As co-owner and editor of the Fremantle Herald,

28 Ticket-of-leave men were subject to a nightly curfew; expirees had to overcome the social stigma of having been imprisoned.
Pearce contributed significantly to the development of colonial dramatic criticism and commentary.

However, officialdom sometimes blocked the efforts of convicts and ex-convicts to improve their lot through education and recreation. In 1856, colonial Advocate General R. Birnie responded to an artisanal request for the administration to support a series of public lectures to be given at Perth: ‘I do not choose to be upheld at Home [Britain] as one who, despite warnings before and experience after, courts notoriety, and vainly strives to make the world better by polishing savages and preaching refinement to convicts’ (Inquirer. 2 Apr. 1856). Historian Rica Erickson (1983, 3) notes the historical ‘inaccessibility of research material’ on the colony’s convicts, and the difficulty even now ‘of obtaining access to important research material in police files.’

**Race**

Nineteenth-century Western Australian performance was ‘haunted’ by a racialised remembered British past. Carlson (2003, 6) observes in general that use of ‘the memory of previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena is fundamental to human cognition in general.’ Research data on colonial repertoire, stage practices, and amateur theatre culture indicate that settlers from Britain drew on memories of past British performance to make sense of new performances in the colony, but also to confront, or temporally forget, the unfamiliar place in which they found themselves. Colonial born settlers generally had to rely on memories that were mediated through performances they had encountered in the colony. Whatever the case, settler memories of local performances could at best extend two or three decades into the past; memories beyond that were of performances in Britain or elsewhere. But Indigenous ceremony, chant, and
dance had a remembering relationship with the land that was centuries old, and was evolving in the present. Nineteenth-century Western Australia was, in this sense, a layered, multiply ‘haunted’ space, in which Indigenous performances and white settler performances operated contemporaneously, but as discrete spheres of remembrance.

Out of respect for the cultural specificity of the many Indigenous language groups that were colonised in nineteenth-century Western Australia, and for the evolving practises of Indigenous performance in this century and the last, I decline to impose globalising western concepts of collective remembering and cultural surrogacy on Indigenous performance.29 Accordingly, this thesis acknowledges the continuation, in its own right, of a centuries-old tradition of Indigenous performance on ‘country’ occupied by Western Australia’s European settlers during the nineteenth century. ‘Country’ is understood here to describe land to which Indigenous Australian language groups traditionally belonged prior to European settlement, and of which present Indigenous Western Australians are the custodians.

The racial basis of colonial white supremacism allowed little, or no, common ground for interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous performance in nineteenth-century Western Australia.30 In this context, it is appropriate to mention colonial attitudes to Indigenous performance, and the very rare representations of Indigenous identity in settler performance that are discussed below. Racist forms of imperialism and colonialism circulated without scrutiny in much nineteenth-century popular performance. Performance in colonial Western Australia derived its iconic

---

29 For a survey of Aboriginal theatre to 1995, see Mudrooroo (1995, 12-15); and see Adam Shoemaker (1995, 185-186) for the plays of Western Australian Nyoongar man Jack Davis AM BEM. For the present Yirra Yaakin Theatre, Perth, see www.yirrayaakin.asn.au
30 The first local play specifically to require both Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers was Katharine Susannah Pritchard’s three-act drama, Brumby Innes (written 1927; published 1940). Melbourne’s Nindethana Theatre Company gave the play its first performance in 1972 (Dunstone 1979, 191).
representational systems from hegemonic British theatre, in which stereotypes of race, gender, and national ‘character,’ and displays of bodily extremes such as disfigurements, gigantism and dwarfism, were mediated through received systems of gesture, movement, vocal delivery, costume, physiognomy, and emotion.

The collective memory work involved in colonial perpetuation of these iconic representational systems is a key focus of this thesis. Misztal’s (2003, 98) summation of the embodiedness of memory identifies ‘emotions, gestures and the whole body’ as spaces of memory. This insight into memory embodiment in performance may, for example, enhance Gay McAuley’s (1999, 235) reading of the occurrence of the performance event in the ‘organisms’ of performers and spectators. It allows me, in Chapter Six, to analyse embodied performance in both maskers and spectators at the masked balls; and in strong man Bartine and the spectators of his ‘Antipodea Feat’ of walking upside-down. An understanding of the embodiedness of both memory and performance also enriches Jacky Bratton’s (2000, 37) concept of ‘intertheatricality,’ which takes as its study ‘the elements and interactions that make up the whole web of mutual understanding between potential audiences and their players [and] the knowledge, or better the knowingness, about playing that spans a life time or more, and that is activated for all participants during a performance event.’ Bratton’s sense of the capacity of performance events to embed themselves in expansive societal action accords exactly with the stance I take in the case studies in Chapters Five to Seven.

The archive indicates that colonists were aware of, and sometimes present at, Indigenous performance. A corroboree presented to settlers by Indigenous elder Yagan and others at Perth in March 1833, was attended by the Lieutenant Governor ‘and nearly all of the respectable inhabitants of Perth, including several ladies, all of whom seemed
highly entertained’ (Gazette. 16 Mar. 1833) (the reporter’s emphasis). Probationer convict John Wroth wrote, in a letter dated September 29 1851, of returning by rush light ‘at 10 o’clock p.m. from a native Chrobbera [corroboree] about 2 miles in the bush’ near York (quoted in Erickson 1983, 33). The Inquirer (16 Oct. 1867) noticed, but did not comment on, a large gathering of Indigenous people for a corroboree that took place near Crawley, on the Swan River, on 12 October 1867. Indigenous men were occasionally present by invitation or ‘permission’ at settler performances. The Gazette (13 Jul. 1839) noted the presence of a sole Indigenous male servant among the elite audience at the first performance of ‘Love à la Militaire;’ while an Inquirer correspondent (12 Apr. 1871) explained that some ‘natives were permitted’ to attend a performance given by visiting actress Miss Adelaide Stoneham, at Moore’s Store, Dongarra, on the central west coast, in March 1871.

Such occasions notwithstanding, the colonial press rarely noticed Indigenous performance, especially following a severe deterioration of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants during the mid- to late 1830s. Bolton (2008, 11-12) attributes this deterioration in race relations to the colonial administration’s refusal to recognise Indigenous land rights; and to a ‘cycle of killings and reprisals’ by both Indigenous and settlers in consequence of ‘Aboriginal attacks on introduced livestock grazing on their traditional lands.’ In 1833, Indigenous senior lawman Midgegooroo was executed by firing squad at Perth, while his son Yagan, who had presented the corroboree at Purkis’ yard, was murdered later that year.31

31 Bolton (2008, 33-34) adds that Indigenous peoples showed a readiness to resist the settler occupation of the colony’s North West during the mid-1860s, citing their ousting of the Camden Harbour settlement; for their part, settlers killed eighteen Indigenous people at Roebuck Bay (now Broome) in reprisal for the murder of a police officer and his ‘two companions.’
While, as will become apparent, colonists felt free to perform their own race-based notions of Indigenous identity on settler-occupied ‘country,’ Indigenous people were excluded from representing themselves on the settler stage. This exclusion inevitably followed from the colonials’ preferred repertoire of successful commercial British plays, but it was more deeply rooted in a fear, endemic among white settlers, of racial degeneration.\textsuperscript{32} This was true even of those as benevolently disposed to Indigenous people as Mrs Millett (1872, 73), who acceded equivocally to her friend Khourabene’s assumption that ‘he and ourselves were on the same social level; an idea which we were fain to accept in a complimentary sense, such being evidently the intention of our visitor.’\textsuperscript{33} Mrs Millett’s stance indicates a calibrated degree of ‘mutual looking’ (Goodall 2000, 17) that also implies a degree of recognition, though not necessarily of intimacy, between races.

The archive indicates that male settlers sometimes disguised themselves as Indigenous men in public. Thus colonist Mr F. Roe performed a solo ‘Australian native’ dance as part of a settler black-face minstrel show at Guildford in June 1865 (\textit{Inquirer}. 21 Jun. 1865); while the socially eminent Mr Alexander Forrest appeared in full disguise as an Indigenous male with weapons, at a fancy dress and masked ball at Perth in July 1880 (\textit{WAust}. 30 Jul. 1880). These race cross-dressings generated complex orders of colonial looking. As white males, Roe and Forrest simply arrogated the right to represent male Indigenous subjects, thereby shaming Indigenous men with the imputation that they had no control over representations of Indigenous masculine culture. What is more, Indigenous men were excluded from viewing settler race cross-dressings. At the same time, these instances of male race cross-dressing self-reflexively

\textsuperscript{32} See, for instance, Robert Young’s (99-117) analysis of Joseph Gobineau’s (1853-55) nineteenth-century theory of racial inequality.

\textsuperscript{33} On the other hand, Edward Landor (1847, 196) adhered to the disgraceful ethnographic view that: ‘The natives of Western Australia are only superior in the scale of human beings to the Bosjemans of Southern Africa.’
turned the settlers’ gaze back onto their own disavowed transgressions of the ‘taboo against looking.’\textsuperscript{34} The crux is that Indigenous people were accorded no equality of looking in settler performance. Forrest’s succès de scandale prompted the *West Australian* (17 Aug.1880) to remark ‘how contemptuously the fair sex’ had boycotted a masked ball a few weeks later at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, ‘as if (disguised under a mask) they were afraid of unknowingly meeting an Aboriginal.’ This systemic feminising of the racial other was characteristic of white male supremacism. As far as I am aware, no male settler cross-dressed as an Indigenous woman; no female settler attempted to represent an Indigenous person on stage; and no Indigenous women attended a settler performance.

It is ironic that a colonial administration that regarded Indigenous people as historically belated, and was in conflict with them over rights to land and stock, should also introduce a threat to racial degeneration from within, represented by some 9000 male transportees. The space of performance production was one of the ways in which colonial communities sought to ‘maintain an illusion of settlement, [racial] purity, and order’ in response to these double spaces of ‘contamination’ (Tompkins 2006, 87).\textsuperscript{35} But I am wary of conflating contemporaneous Indigenous with non-Indigenous performance under the rubric of ‘nineteenth-century Western Australia.’ To do so would be to impose colonial and imperial geo-politics and constructions of place, memory, subjectivity, and time onto culturally specific Indigenous performance. For this reason, and given that the available archive offers virtually nothing on Indigenous performance, I do not document or theorise Aboriginal performance in my thesis. Even so, the adjacency of culturally distinct performance spaces on the same land is an

\textsuperscript{34} I take the phrase ‘taboo against looking’ from Tomkins cited in Goodall (2000, 17).

\textsuperscript{35} Tompkins (2006, 88-89; citing Gilman 1985, 213-14) observes that ‘most fears of […] social change in history have coincided with conservative attempts to demonize the other, linking it with sexual depravity and disease.’
invitation to think about the multiplex layering of spaces, places, and times in the historical imagining and social memory that occurred in white settler performance.

**Modalities**

If this thesis is in any way to redress the contemporary lack of knowledge about settler performance, it must employ categories of performance that reflect as accurately as possible the hybrid taxonomies and modalities of nineteenth-century colonial performance. Modes of colonial performance are difficult to categorise today, especially given the Byzantine, publicity-driven performance descriptors devised by nineteenth-century writers, managers, publicists, and publishers. Accordingly, the categories of performance that operates in this thesis include full-length and shorter British stage plays, but also popular modes of nineteenth-century performance such as clowning, rope and wire walking, trick riding, acrobatics, and optical illusions of othered bodies. Many of these have since declined, or been incorporated into twenty-first century cinematic, televisual, and electronic modes of virtual entertainment. Nineteenth-century stage magic and optical illusions have given place to contemporary *anime*, computerised film effects, and computer games; panoramas and dioramas of foreign places have been replaced by television documentary and travelogue; and ‘protean’ (or ‘quick change’) acting techniques have evolved into rapid, cross-dressed character sketches on television.

But this is only to say that past performances still haunt the present; and present haunting implies future haunting. The logic of this thesis is that past performance is a presence all too rarely recognised in contemporary Western Australian culture. The stance of the state’s contemporary performance culture towards its nineteenth-century

---

36 For instance, what taxonomy distinguished farce from its close relatives, the extravaganza and the interlude? How is a contemporary reader to know what kind of aerial performance was advertised as ‘Zamperillaerostation’ (*Herald*. 19 Jun. 1869)?
antecedents confirms Herbert Blau’s (1992, 7) observation that if we give our bodies to performance, ‘it’s well to remember […] that memory tries to forget; [that] there is something mortifying in [performance] itself that is particularly deadened when institutionalized,’ or when it turns into ‘the great compulsive scenario of rectitude.’

Traces of its nineteenth-century amateur past remain active, though scarcely recognised as such, in Western Australia’s contemporary amateur culture. This historical amnesia is reinforced by the anxiety of government funded professional companies to dissociate themselves from the marginal status attached to amateur groups.

Of course, nineteenth-century certainties about the domestic spaces of amateurism and ‘rational’ entertainment are no longer viable in today’s more complex society. However, the fact is that Western Australia’s first resident professional theatre company, the National Theatre Company at the Playhouse, Perth, was founded in 1956 through the amalgamation of the amateur Perth Repertory Club with the local Company of Four. Moreover, amateurism remains viable today, and may even represent a way forward, as it did in the colonial past. As Katharine Brisbane (2005, 356) asserts in her intervention into the debate about government funding of performance in contemporary Australia: ‘all over the country community groups are solving their problems by mutual help and without the government support to which we have for so long taught ourselves to depend.’ Just as Western Australia’s nineteenth-century amateurs responded to the perceived inadequacies of their situation, the state’s Independent Theatre Association responds on behalf of community spaces of amateur performance today.38

37 See Parsons (1995, 60; 156) the Company of Four.
Chapter Two: Concepts

It is, indeed, in and through place that the world presents itself.

J. E. Malpas

The body’s own intra-space within place is a place of anchoring, of staying put in relation to the scene remembered; it is a mainstay of memory of place.

Edward S. Casey

Paul Connerton (1989, 2) makes two general statements in his account of social remembering that are of central importance to this study of performance and memory. One is that we experience ‘our present world in a context that is caudally connected’ with our past experience. The other is that we experience our present ‘differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present.’ In this Chapter, I establish some general concepts of memory and performance from which to analyse the convergence and divergence of the remembered past with the present in the material practices of colonial performance. I then consider concepts of place and its doublet space that, it can argued, are ontologically prior to performance and memory; before discussing spaces of performance and memory as both imprinted actions and events of implacement. I conclude with a reflection on the heuristic problem of integrating philosophical inquiry with analysis of material performance data.

Convergences and divergences

Following Connerton’s discussion of social remembering (1989, 3), I argue that the appearance of performance in Western Australia presupposed a convergence of collective remembering among participants; and conversely, that settler contestations of the space of performance implied a divergence of social rememberings of the colony’s
avowed British cultural heritage.\footnote{I discuss class, race, and gender contestations of performance space in the colony in detail in Chapters Three and Four.} It also presupposes that British heritage was not simply a neutral ground onto which to project settled practices and values, but a dynamic, sometimes contested negotiation of differing versions of the past. In both cases, colonial performance and social remembering were embedded within distributions of power across matrices of class, gender, sexuality, race, religious affiliation, and generational difference. Furthermore, convergence modulated into divergence, first as the experience of migration to the colony perturbed settler remembering of British theatre as the \textit{fons et origo} of colonial theatre; and then, as empirically acculturated performance was imbricated as future remembering onto the dynamics of colonial identification, and the colony’s evolving relations with empire. It is necessary to dwell a moment on the idea of future memory.

Remembering is futural only when something is remembered as ‘a projection from the past that is itself subject to remembering \textit{simpliciter} or remembering-that’ (Casey 1987, 63). The futurity of remembering in performance cannot be explained as replication: since no action can be passively re-enacted ‘by isomorphic representation of position or form’ (Casey 1987, 17), it follows that the operation of future remembering in performance cannot serve to mimic or copy previous action. To take an historical instance, the Elwes Family papers (1854; 1959) document dimensions of future remembering entailed in presenting a play in Perth in the mid-1850s.\footnote{See Chapter One note 14.} The organisers, all of them men, had first to assemble a committee, sponsors, performers, and crew; locate equipment, paraphernalia, and a venue; rehearse the requisite skills; and then build each new performance on elements of those prior. In that sense, colonial performance always had multiple remembered future dimensions that may or may not have been realised, according to circumstance. As an example of the contingencies...
besetting projected performances, the *Inquirer* (29 Aug. 1855) reflected on a proposed season of Amateur Theatricals in the year following the Elwes initiatives: ‘so many plans have been proposed, adopted, and then abandoned, that we are almost afraid to state what plays will be performed, where they will be performed, or when the Theatricals will take place.’

Performance and remembering also converge at the conceptual level as social actions in which behaviours are *rational*; that is, when they can be related to ‘some intention or purpose that is additional to the mere behaviour’ involved (Malpas 1999, 93). It may seem equivocal to speak of theatre as rational social action when it is so often obsessed with its own ‘fascination-effect’ (Blau 1992, 73). But to do so points the way, as Herbert Blau puts it, to an interrogation, in performance and theory, ‘of theater [sic] in its own problematic, [that is] the reality of representation and the immanence of illusion’ (Blau 1992, 73). That problematic goes to the heart of an understanding of spaces of colonial performance production and remembering. Nineteenth-century colonial apologists for amateur theatre were aligned with the temperance movement and the promoters of artisan education in advocating rational performance as a social category. Colonial proponents of rational entertainment generally justified it on moral grounds as a socially corrective intervention against drunkenness and untutored ignorance in the lower classes. In Britain, rational social action was invested in a Victorian politics of domesticity that valorised the family and education as bulwarks against mass industrial unrest and mass agitation for parliamentary reform. Enculturated domesticity flourished in Western Australia, but political dissent there was minor in comparison with Britain. No doubt, a thinly scattered population, an agrarian economy, and the confinement of property ownership to an elite militated against concerted resistance in the colony. In fact, Western Australia remained a Crown colony.
administered by an appointed elite from 1829 until 1870, when a new constitution provided for a Legislative Council, part elective and part nominated. Limited franchise responsible government was proclaimed in October 1890 (Chate et al. 1991, 20 and 26).\(^1\) There was no organised mass politics on which to pin performance as dissent in the colony.

*Remembering*

Collective remembering takes multiple rational forms in performance. Misztal (2003, 10) defines remembering as an active process that ‘submits the past to a reflective awareness, and […] permits, by highlighting the past’s difference to the present, the emergence of a form of critical reflection and the formation of meaningful narrative sequences.’ While both remembering and habit memory can be understood as recurrent efforts ‘to reconstruct and sustain societal stability,’ the active, reflective process of remembering differentiates it from non-cognitive habit memory, which alone of all forms of memory summons the past *as* present into the present (Misztal 2003, 10). It follows that Herbert Blau’s (1996, 382) dictum: ‘Where memory is, theater [*sic*] is,’ may be rephrased as: ‘Where *remembering* is, theater is.’ I will continue to use the term memory as a general category, just as Misztal, Casey, and Malpas do.

In her definition of memory, Misztal (2003, 10) adopts narrative as a descriptor for sequential organisations of memory. However, I am concerned with remembering in and through performance. A crucial difference is to be observed here: while performance and narrative may each take verbal forms, performance is primarily non-verbal and embodied. Remembering is variously embodied in performance through

\(^1\) Franchise for the re-constituted Legislative Council depended on ‘property ownership [and] period of residency;’ and excluded ‘women, Aborigines, Asians, Africans, traitors, felons, and the insane’ (Chate et al. 1991, 20). Franchise under provisions for responsible government in 1890 was restricted to men of ‘at least modest property’ (Bolton 2008, 57); but was extended to ‘some women’ in 1899 (Bolton 2008, 76).
transformative gestures, postures, gait, vocal delivery, and acquired physical skills and techniques. These corporeal actions perform performance as embedded and embodied remembering. They are non-verbal ‘texts’ that signify, among other things, the participants’ agency as performers. Spectator participants, too, are able to demonstrate an agency in ‘mutual looking’ between themselves and their performers. I bracket these embodied modalities of remembering in order to differentiate their transformative power in performance from their instrumental and procedural function in everyday life. An historical instance will ground the discussion.

American performer Minton Naylor Griffiths, who arrived in Western Australia in March 1880 with the Silvester Family (Inquirer. 16 Mar. 1880), typifies the multi-remembering colonial performer. He was adept at accents, stump orations, and patter songs; a competent clown and comic actor, for whom Clay M. Greene had written a farcical sketch, ‘The Evening Party’ (Inquirer. 18 May. 1880); while, as an ‘experienced entrepreneur and promoter of social reunions,’ he jointly managed with Professor Silvester a series of masked and fancy dress balls at Perth and Fremantle in mid-1880 (Inquirer. 28 May. 1880). Griffiths went independent in September 1880, presenting a version of the famous Pepper’s Ghost illusion at St George’s Hall, Perth, (WAust. 3 Sept. 1880), from which Silvester publicly dissociated himself (WAust. 7 Sept. 1880). He then toured the southern districts, at least as far as Bunbury, with vocalist and actress Miss Eldred, before being attacked in 1881 for his adverse criticism

42 Here, I distinguish non-verbal, embodied vocal techniques of breathing and projection from

the verbal content of dialogue.

43 The action of ‘mutual looking’ could modulate into scorn. A review of a performance of
excerpts from Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice (c.1596) by a group of newly arrived
settlers at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in December 1876, ridiculed among other things the performers’ regional accents: ‘A seccund Dan’l; a Dan’l; a Joo;’ and ‘Now, hinfindel, I ‘ave thee on the ‘ip’ (WAT. 19 Dec. 1876).
of Geraldton’s Amateur Dramatic Company (*VicExp*. 23 Mar. 1881; *WAust*. 1 Apr. 1881).44

I have so far addressed the convergences of memory and performance, but their differences are just as important to this thesis. Crucial distinctions can be drawn between memory and performance in relation to ‘the refactory facticity of objects [that is] set over against’ them, and is ‘powerfully reactive’ against them (Casey 1993, 237). Memory and performance differ from each other in much the same way that memory differs from imagination; that is, with regard to ‘the degree of familiarity they entail, their positing of content as existing or not, and their comparative corrigibility’ (Casey 1987, ix). This insight opens onto other understandings of the imbrication of performance with memory. It enables us, for instance, to understand performance as a familiar place, one that, in Casey’s (1978, 191) terms, ‘we are apt to remember—to hold and keep in mind.’

The colony’s makeshift and renovated places of performance provide ample instances of remembering as familiarisation. The sometimes maligned Mechanic’s Institute Hall, Perth, was rendered familiar to audiences and performers by virtue of its longevity as a venue, beginning in 1857.45 On the other hand, Waldock’s Hall, Hannans (now Kalgoorlie-Boulder), where a scratch all-male Popular Concert Party offered a minstrel show and two farces in September 1895, was in temporal terms a raw,

---

44 Griffiths and Miss Eldred appeared at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Bunbury in October 1880. The house was ‘thin’ and the performance came to a premature end due to Miss Eldred’s indisposition (*WAust*. 22 Oct. 1880).
45 The foundation stone of the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, was laid in 1851. The Amateur Theatrical Corps were the first to use the Hall as a makeshift performance venue for a season of plays in February 1857. The plays were Tom Taylor’s comedietta *To Oblige Benson* (1843), J.B. Buckstone’s farce *The Irish Lion* (1838), and William Brough’s farce *No.1 Around the Corner* (1854). Patriotic J. Walsh, ‘artist, Perth,’ painted a view of Sebastopol as the drop scene (*Gazette*. 30 Jan. 1857).
unfamiliar place (HanHer. 16 Sept. 1895). Hannans itself had come into existence only two years earlier, following the discovery of gold at the site in 1893. Figure 3 illustrates the main street of Hannans a year later. Waldock’s Hall was an instance of future memory projecting remembered needs for a theatre building, in this case to cater for the rapidly increasing Goldfields population. Thus, the hall acquired at least a temporary familiarity from the performers’ and audiences’ prior experiences of places of performance. As Casey (1987, 192) observes, bodily attunement is a condition of familiarity. I would add that familiarity with either of the two aforementioned Halls also involved social and cultural attunement to generic performance spaces with which participants felt ‘sympathetic at some very basic level’ of remembered experience (Casey 1987, 192).

It appears from all that has been argued so far, that remembering is a necessary condition of performance. However, dramatic performances of remembering, or of its doublet amnesia, construct actions of remembering and forgetting according to dramaturgical discourse, as distinct from their structures in everyday life. Thus Shakespeare’s ‘All the world’s a stage’ (As You Like It. 2. 7. 139) signifies an action of future remembering within a self-reflexive rhetorical discourse of theatrum mundi. But the space of remembering folds both inwards on a specific performance, and outwards (as future remembering) to successive interpreters of Jaques’ role. The form of words itself can also be displaced as future memory onto dramatic parody, as in F.C. Burnand’s ‘All the world’s a stage, a Shakespearian fact. / And everyone in it does naught else but act.’ As we well know, Jaques’ line can be yet further displaced as

---

46 The Popular Concert Party comprised local men performers on tour form the Eastern Australian colonies. They performed Charles Dance’s burletta The Bengal Tiger (1837), and an unattributed farce Shaving Made Easy (HanHer. 16 Sept. 1895).

47 The quoted lines are from F.C. Burnand’s burlesque tragi-comedy Villikins and His Dinah (1856).
future memory onto extra-dramatic common parlance. Each displacement entails slippage and layering of rememberings.

**Place**

Place remains something that surrounds, but no longer as an airtight, immobile, diaphanous limit. It is the event of envelopment itself.

Edward Casey

Place emerges as a third key concept in my thesis, although until I began to read in philosophy I would not have supposed so. The notion that human experience, thought, action, and identity are in some way tied to place is central to the thinking of philosophers Casey and Malpas, to whom this thesis is clearly indebted. Malpas (1999) discusses remembering as human attachment to place, with an eye to Casey’s (1998, xi) description of the ‘concrete, multiplex, experiential aspects of the place-world;’ and, more significantly, to Casey’s (1998) historical account of contemporary revalorisations of place and space by Luce Irigaray (1993), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988), Jean-Luc Nancy (1991), and others. Casey (1998, 341-42) posits the emergence of a ‘new kind of space’ in which to ‘spread out in places’ is to depart from ‘the early modern legacy of [undifferentiated] res extensa,’ and to inhabit space that is ‘heterogeneous and open, genuinely spaced-out.’ It is by extending into places that space ‘attains poignancy and plenitude and that qualitative diversity and ample discernibility that signal the implacement of space itself.’

These revalorisations of place and space raise several questions that are central to this thesis. Does the contemporary ‘disinterment’ of place and space (Casey 1998, 339) indicate, or provoke, possible re-conceptualisations of performance and memory? And how, in retrospect, is colonial performance to be positioned within the material
transactions between early modern concepts of place and space and their contemporary re-valourisations? In empirical terms, how can performance have contributed to the project to implace colonial space in newly proclaimed and occupied Western Australia? I address the first of these questions here, and the second and third in subsequent chapters.

The notions of place, and of space that subtends place, are basic to a theoretical understanding of memory and performance insofar as memory and performance are social actions that generate affective, imagined, restored ‘worlds.’ At the theoretical level, the dependence between mind, body, and place—a relation in which ‘the mind itself is constituted through its interaction and involvement with the objects and events that surround it’ (Malpas 1999, 11)—is fundamental to an understanding of performance and memory, and of their interdependent relation. At the level of event, place is everywhere prior to performance and memory. Two notions require clarification at this point: one is that place itself, and especially body as place, is to be understood as event, rather than as a simple presenter of itself and of things; the other, that follows from the first, is that performance embodies place as event.

It is timely to consider the ontological primacy of place and space to performance and memory. Place is everywhere implied but not specifically conceptualised in, for example, Misztal’s (2003) study of social structures of memory; and in Roach’s (1996) topology of Atlantic rim performance cultures—both admirable and informative works. Pearson and Shanks (2001) account for the conjuncture of performance and archaeology primarily in diachronic terms. However, place is

---

48 My notion of restored worlds derives from Richard Schechner’s concept of performance as ‘restored behaviour’ (1985: 36-37).
49 For instance, memory that seems timeless involves time that is ‘convoluted or folded time, a folding or recycling of past moments or experiences. As conjuncture between the person
immanent in Casey’s (1987, 184) conceptual ‘topology of the remembered,’ in which memory is embedded and embodied in place; and place *implaces* itself in memory. Malpas (1999, 13) similarly argues on conceptual grounds for an ‘intimate connection between person and place’ that exceeds mere contingency:

> There is good reason to suppose that the human relationship to place is a fundamental structure in what makes possible the sort of life that is characteristically human, while also being determining, in some way that requires clarification, of human identity.

Malpas (1999, 15) takes his case further, arguing that the ‘very appearance of things—of objects, of self, and of others—is possible only within the limits of the all-embracing compass of place.’ If this is granted, then place is a necessary condition for the appearance of performance and memory, but is not their spatial container.

> To take an empirical example, frequent laments for the lack of entertainment in the colony, especially during its first four decades, had placial significance. It is as though performance was a space for playing out the modern dromocentrism that was so often conspicuous by its absence in colonial life. It seems that the collectivity of performance was valued as a counteraction to the slow pace, deep conservatism, and isolation of colonial life, characteristics that reduced the pleasure settlers could take in the places they sought to possess through remembering. Indeed, colonists identified lack of entertainment as a condition of their anomie.\(^50\) I say more on this topic in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

\(^{50}\) This argument comes in a roundabout way from Casey’s (1998, 343 n.5) comment on television.
The catch, as Malpas (1999, 13) notes, is that the very ubiquity of place, and the diversity of discursive contexts in which it appears, indicate the degree to which the concept of place is ‘dispersed and fragmented.’ This dispersal is equally true of our empirical experience of place. Thus, it may seem bizarre to bring philosophical explanations of the concept of place to an understanding of a dispersed, nondescript body of performances specific to late nineteenth-century Western Australia. The justification is that to understand collective memory as a dimension of performance requires concepts of place and space that afford equi-primordial grounds for the praxis and problematics of performance and collective memory.\(^{51}\) Place so conceived would be at once enfolding and open, heterogenous rather than homogenous, and mobile rather than fixed.

Malpas (1999, 34) points out the limitation of reducing the notion of ‘structured’ place to the more familiar notion of place as a ‘narrowly defined [geodetic] point of location:’

Even when we think of place in very basic terms as just a particular position … that idea typically carries with it some idea of the place, the spot as necessarily possessed of enough breadth and space so as to allow us to conceive of ourselves, our very bodies, as located in that place, and as permitting us to view the world from it and so, within it, to move ourselves in order to obtain such views.

\(^{51}\) My thinking here is guided by Malpas (1999, 14).
The references here to ‘breadth’ and ‘space’ indicate that place has spatial characteristics. But space is taken in this context to indicate more than simple physical location, understood as the measurement of physical extension between co-ordinates. Malpas (1999, 35) accounts for the ‘space’ in question here largely as that which enables the capacity for relationship and mobility within and between places and subjects. No matter how basic a place is conceived to be, it remains ‘that within and with respect to which subjectivity is … established.’ His concept of place affords subjects the mobility, and hence the space, or distance, required to (re)locate themselves, bodily, visually, and mentally, in relation to other subjects, concepts, and things within that place. The non-membranous quality of place enhances the subject’s capacity to traverse the cultural and memorial thickness of place. Place has thickness analogous to the sense in which we remember ‘in the very thick of things’ (Casey, 1978, 262). In the same way, Malpas’ linking metaphor of the viewing subject embraces both perception and conception; it implies a spatial distance, or subject position, from which subjects can conceive of themselves in dynamic relation with their environs. Insofar as these environs include other subjects as well as objects, place also entails what Malpas (1999, 54) calls ‘a grasp of allotropic space as the means by which [a creature] can orient itself, from within its own subjective space, in relation to the objective space in which it is located.’ Allotropic space, in which subjects have agency, is to be distinguished from objective space. According to Malpas (1999, 54), objective space is not organised around any subjective capacities ‘but is a grasp of an extended field that is independent of any particular agent operating within it and within which no single feature or location has any precedence, in spatial terms, over any other.’

For the purposes of my argument, I define allotropic space as the space of the other. Settlers perceived much of the landmass of Western Australia, its climate, soils,
fauna, and flora in these terms. For instance, Mrs Millett (1872, 107) ascribes ‘the scattered character’ of the colony’s settlements to ‘the large intervals of sterile or dangerous country’ on which poisonous plants ‘exist in such profusion as to render the land unsafe to sheep or cattle.’ To her mind (1872, 64), female domestic labour was a potential counter-agent to the unimproved colonised other: ‘The native mahogany with which rooms are always boarded in Swan River,’ if they are boarded at all, ‘would be the handsomest flooring of any, provided that it was kept bright with constant rubbing.’ If polished floorboards served to implace British domestic economy, so did colonial performance serve to embody and embed British performance culture.

As we have seen, Malpas (1999, 34) emphasises that place is radically multi-positional: ‘any place is always itself positioned in relation to other places and provides a certain “view” of such places.’ By the same logic, any place always falls within the view from other places; which is a way of explaining the action of mutual looking in performance. But such views cannot adequately be explained in terms of the relational coordinates of optics. Place ‘can be grasped as having both a within and a without, as capable of being turned in towards its centre or out towards its periphery’ (Malpas 1999, 104). Recognition that place has the (re)flexibility to turn itself ‘inside out,’ in effect to fold in upon and out from itself, indicates the capacity of place, and of subjects that are founded on place, to be reflexive, and to self-proliferate. Performances in which bodies as place interact with place and space are acts of self-proliferation. Malpas (1999, 35) accounts for self-proliferation in terms of the connection of subjectivity with place, which indicates ‘the need to view subjectivity as tied to agency and embodied spatiality, and therefore as constituted in relation to a structure that extends beyond the subject to

---

52 Mrs Millett (1872, 109) records that, in response to the risk that poisonous plants posed to stock, ‘the Government has been obliged to employ a large force of convicts to grub up the poisonous plants to a distance of a hundred yards on each side of some of the main roads,’ in order to counteract stock losses during droving.
encompass a world of objects, events and persons.’ Inasmuch as mental content is
ordered this way, so the ordering of subjective space is connected with the ordering of a
subject’s thoughts and experiences through the operation of memory. Thus the
‘consistency and integration of memory’ is a ‘prerequisite for the possibility of
contentful thought and experience’ (Malpas 1999, 100). This linking of memory with
subjective space provides a basis for an understanding of the effects that settlers’
experience of migration had on cultural memory; and also of performance as a mode to
implace British culture within the colony. This implacement implies the motility of both
place and settler subjective space.

Implacement

Performance finds in memory certain characteristics that are consonant with its
own. One such feature is implacement, that has to do with the reconnective capacity of
memory as both place-supported, and as a place ‘wherein the past can survive and
revive’ (Casey 1987, 186-87). The tendency of place ‘to hold its contents steadily
within its own embrace’ maintains memory. Place, being internally diversified and
externally distinct from other places, while also open to them, attaches and embraces
memory (Casey 1978, 186). In this regard, place is collective, whereas sites tend to
disperse their contents.

Performance is an especially intimate collective instance of this action of taking
place. The place-worlds embodied and embedded in performance have each their own
complex internal spatial relationalities that self-reflexively enact remembering, while at
the same time they open onto, but are distinct from, the remembering social world in
which performances take place. Performance, understood as a place of remembering,
situates the remembered by displacing it onto performing bodies and artefacts such as a
play text, stage appurtenances, lighting effects, and the building, room, or other space in which it takes place.

The history of Western Australian colonial performance offers some instances of performance as remembering that are all the more striking for the unusual places in which they occurred. Place was of particular concern to members of the Bijou Troupe attached to Sloman and Smith’s Circus when they performed a special programme for the residents of the Fremantle Asylum on the afternoon of 22 June 1874 (Herald. 27 Jun. 1974). Part of the performers’ concern with place had to do with the ambience of the Asylum. Going by Mrs Millett’s (1872, 331) account of the institution, the audience would have comprised some who were infirm, some who were classified as insane, and some who were simply elderly. According to the Herald, residents of ‘both sexes’ attended ‘under the care of the warders and matrons attached to the institution.’ A programme of songs, dance, and legerdemain devised for this specific audience was presented in the Asylum’s large dining hall. A table was used as a stage. The reception was excellent, and the occasion was ‘decorous.’ How could this event, that took place in a temporary venue that was ill equipped for the purpose, before an audience who might have had little or no experience (or memory) of performance, be considered a place of remembering? The embodiment of the performance provides a possible answer. Bodies were the arc that linked the diverse experiences and memories of performers and spectators, each of whom, after all, had a body that remembered in ways specific to itself. To be embodied, as Casey (1978, 182) describes it, is to have ‘not just a point of view but a place in which [to be] situated.’ On this reading, the diverse liminal bodily experiences of those present is likely to have enriched the experience of being in place at the Asylum performance; not least for the Bijou Troupe, who presumably adapted

---

53 The occasion was sufficiently rare for the Herald (27 Jun. 1874) to commend the Bijou Troupe for providing this ‘treat.’ Sloman and Smith had already given a benefit performance for Perth’s orphanages at the Town Hall, Perth, on 8 June 1874 (Herald. 18 Jun, 1874).
their performance in response to place. The performance, I surmise, succeeded as an enactment of implacement; that is, of the multiple opening of embodied existence onto place (*pace* Casey 1978, 182).

The changing organic body was the matrix that enfolded performance and memory at the Asylum. This colonial experience is consonant with Casey’s (1987, 182) argument that ‘body is pervasive of all remembering;’ as, indeed, it also is of performance. To extend this parallel, embodied performance and remembering each take place ‘in place and nowhere else;’ such that they are inevitably place-specific, that is, both implacing and implaced, and each ‘bound to place as its own basis’ (Casey 1978, 182). But the question remains: How can it be that place is at one and the same time particular and omnilocal?54

As Casey (1998, 338) observes, place, in contrast with ‘free-wheeling’ infinite space-time, ‘presents itself in its stubborn, indeed its rebarbative, particularity.’ However, this is not to suggest that place, as enacted in performance or memory, is merely entitative and locationary—that is, conceptually confinable to a simple ‘here or there.’ As Casey (1998, 337) argues, place is something that is performative, processual and ‘eventmental;’ omnilocal, and thus unconfinable to a thing or to a simple location. The contemporary insight that place is ‘the event of envelopment itself’ (Casey 1998, 338) enables us to refresh our understanding of the placial qualities and specificities of event-based empirical memory and performances. The concrete particularity of place subtends, and makes possible, the processes of implacement, displacement, and location that occur in both memory and performance.

---

54 I understand the term ‘omnilocal’ to be an oxymoron: ‘everywhere local.’
Once again, embodiment suggests that the local is at the very least double. The corporeal relations between implemation, embodiment, and culture converge in performance and memory: ‘To be located, culture has to be embodied. Culture is carried into place by bodies’ (Casey 1996, 34). For this to be so, the body itself must be ‘enactive of cultural practices’ by virtue of its powers of ‘incorporation, habitation, and expression’ (Casey 1996, 34). However, bodies and subjects are implaced and encultured only insofar as they inhabit places that are ‘culturally informed;’ and insofar as they are ‘intelligent about the cultural specificities’ of those places (Casey 1996, 34).

If performance and memory are implaced in the physical, spatial, and mental environs of those who perform and those who remember, it is also the case that performance and memory afford places for collectively embodied imaginal and mental experience. Performance instantiates Casey’s more general observation that places are ‘qualified by their own contents, and qualified as well by the various ways these contents are articulated (denoted, described, discussed, narrated, [or performed]) in a given culture (1996, 28).’ Where memory is concerned, Casey (1987, 184) directly states: ‘Place serves to situate one’s memorial life;’ observing that, ‘memory does not thrive on the indifferently dispersed. It thrives rather on the particularities of what is properly in place: held fast there and made ones own’ (1987, 186-87).

Malpas (1999, 180) makes the general point that: ‘To have a sense of the past is to have a sense of the way in which present and future conditions are embedded within a complex “history” that cannot be grasped independently of implemation. This is so with respect to the (auto)biographical recall of past performances, as well as those past performances recalled as part of historical or communal narrative—neither of which form of recall is entirely independent of the other. The embedding of past performances
in present performance is a radical instance of such memorial embedment. To marginalise or ignore the place that is proper to past performance in contemporary performance is to diminish in turn the larger spatio-temporal place that enfolds, and adds density to, contemporary performance.

Notions of place and memory are integral to an understanding of the many imaginative and creative ways in which colonial Western Australians, and the performers who visited the colony, went about imagining Western Australia through participation in performance, and the memory work that takes place in it. This is not to say that Western Australia figured in colonial performance more than in passing. For one thing, colonial identification was historically prior to present conceptions of an Australian nation as ‘unsettled’ space that Tompkins (2006, 6) describes.\(^5\) When it did, it was in a scenic depiction of a settled site, or in ‘hits’ at local inhabitants in comic songs. For example, the renovated theatre at the Freemasons’ Hotel, Fremantle, featured a drop scene depicting a view of Perth: a ‘very pretty picture,’ according to the *Herald* (30 Aug. 1865), but ‘not a very successful representation.’ It appears from an advertisement in Perth’s *Daily News* (20 Oct. 1882) that ‘COMIC SONGS & CHOICE BALLADS’ (some targeting local figures) were a regular feature of the weekly People’s Popular Concerts, organised for the Working Men’s Institute, Perth, by entertainer and entrepreneur Charles Silvester. The behaviour of maskers at a recent ball at the Town Hall, Perth, were the butt of one such ‘amusing ballad’ sung at a People’s Concert in September 1882 (*DN*. 3 Oct. 1882).

Malpas (1999, 19-21) attributes the ‘opacity of the notion’ of place not only to ‘our everyday familiarity with the concept,’ but to ‘a complexity and breadth of

\(^{55}\) Tompkins’ (2006, 6) use of the term unsettlement ‘recognizes that the history of settlement in Australia is both profoundly unstable and the cause of cultural anxiety.’
meaning attached to the term itself.’ Casey (1998, x) concurs: ‘just because place is so much with us, and we in it, it has been taken for granted, deemed not worthy of separate treatment.’ However, the notion of place is also complicated precisely through its close interconnection with performance and memory, in which affect, image and imagination—all notoriously difficult to pin down—play their parts.

**Subjective space and agency**

Two kinds of memory content are especially pertinent to remembering in, and about, performance. Casey (1987, 68-70) identifies them in general as ‘worldhood’ and ‘self-presence,’ adding that neither is a necessary concomitant of all remembering—or, therefore, of all remembering of performance. For present purposes, worldhood describes remembering in which spaces of performance constitute an ‘underlying field of presentation for the specific [experiential] content remembered’ (Casey 1978, 69). Since we remember embodied performances empirically, that is, from experience, the underlying field is ‘more fully worldlike than the momentary mini-worlds of imagination’ (Casey 1987, 69).

An historical example will flesh out the concept. The immediate thresholds of colonial indoor performance spaces were usually defined by a raised (and probably raked) platform stage, front-on to the audience; a scenic drop scene, tabs, and a back cloth; candle, kerosene, or gas footlights; a darkened auditorium; and bold make-up and gestures to reflect as much light as possible from the performers’ faces and bodies. The colonial rememberer of such a performance would have experienced it from a position either on the stage or in the auditorium, so that his or her self-presence was a ‘noticeable component of the object phase of remembering,’ as Casey (1987, 69)

---

56 Going by a complaint about ventilation in the *Inquirer’s* (22 Nov. 1865) review of Miss Mitchell’s entertainment at the Freemasons’ Hotel, Fremantle, in 1865, body smells and fumes from the lighting were probably ‘noticeable components’ of the performance.
describes it. In such a case, the remembering subject’s ‘own role in the experience becomes integral to the memory;’ so that a performer on stage will remember a performance in a different way from a member of an audience, each by virtue of her or his embodied self-presence in the remembered experience. This suggests that subjective spaces of remembering a performance are not adequately described in punctiform (located at seat A4 or stage left); rather, they can be more fully understood as active components in a spatial and placial dynamics. In sum, colonial performance was in heuristic relationship with colonial society; it tended towards implantment through affect rather than through direct political effect, though its social purposes and effects were real.

Concerning the structured nature of subjective space, Malpas (1999, 175) concludes that subjectivity constitutes ‘an interplay of elements, organised specifically in relation to agency,’ rather than an ‘underlying ground in which the unity of those elements is independently founded.’ Subjectivity, then, cannot be understood independently of a ‘larger structure that encompasses other subjects as well as the objects and events in the world’ (Malpas 1999, 175). Performance can be understood to constitute an analogous interplay of elements, ‘organised specifically in relation to agency’ (Malpas 1999, 175). By this reasoning, both subjectivity and performance are each embedded in ‘the dense structure of place,’ such that the structure of performance, as of subjectivity, necessarily depends on its relation to the ‘other elements within that [larger] structure and on the structure as a whole’ (Malpas 1999, 175).

The theme that human identity is in some way tied to place is central to Malpas’ (1999) study of place and experience, and it is likewise salient to my own analysis of performance in relation to memory. Malpas (1999, 1) addresses the ways in which ‘the
environment determines our thoughts and actions;’ and also the ‘much less straightforward perhaps more pervasive ways in which our relation to the landscape and environment is […] one of our own affectivity as much as of our ability to effect.’

Malpas (1999, 35) is emphatic that notions of subjectivity, sociality and alterity—all of which, I add, are the stuff of memory and theatre—must be located within the conceptual frame of place. We can expand Malpas’ insights into the interrelationship of identity and place, to argue that performance and memory, being related to subjectivity and agency, constitute purposive social actions ‘of a suitably complex sort, [that] depend on the capacity to play out possibilities in one’s mind and to fit actions and events to a history and a context’ (1999, 94). That is to say, performance and memory embodied modalities of the social and cultural ordering of mental states: ‘To be encultured is to be embodied to begin with [while] just as the body is basic to enculturation, so the body itself is always already enculturated’ (Casey 1996, 34). To be culturally embodied is to be implaced.

Malpas devotes some time to an account of memory as an instance of the organization of mental activity and the ordering of subjective space. Although he does not directly address performance, his conceptualisation of the interrelatedness of subject, agency and place is pertinent to an understanding of both performance and place as instantiations of cultural and social ordering (1999, 186). According to Malpas (1999, 92), ‘mental states—and subjectivity in general—are holistically structured,’ such that subjectivity is dependent on an articulated system of mental states, rather than being ‘some simple underlying structure around which mental states […] are organised,’ and in which they are grounded. He argues (1999, 100) that the ‘structure of the mind, and of mental content,’ and the ‘structure of the world in which the subject is located,’ are necessarily interdependent; and in turn that they are necessarily based in
place. While Malpas (1999, 36) concedes that the ordering of a particular place is ‘not independent of social ordering,’ he emphasises that place in itself cannot be conceptually reduced to a social construct: ‘Indeed, the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through space […] and so it cannot be that out of which, or solely by means of which, place is “constructed.”’ Casey (1993, 236) makes the related point that cultural analysis cannot exhaust ‘the facticity of objects set over against us’ in places. He concedes, however, that the experience ‘and even the invocation’ of place must from the outset ‘entail certain culturally specific factors of history and language’ (1993, 234).

If we accept the primacy of place to this interdependency between mind, world, and subject, then several things follow with respect to memory and performance. Place, being necessarily prior to the appearance of social process, is necessarily prior to the appearance of memory and performance. Thus, memory and performance cannot ‘be given expression except in and through place’ (Malpas 1999, 36). Being analogous to Malpas’ narrative forms, they can be understood as social processes that order mind, world, and subject. Or better: performance and memory, in their specific ways, organise images and ideas into artefactual place-worlds that interpenetrate with the social world in which remembering and performance take place. The terms of place in which Malpas formulates the interdependency between mind and world bring to the fore, by analogy, the placial and spatial characteristics by which performance and memory embody imaginal worlds. Memory and performance can be understood in this sense to interrelate as complementary, even collusive, social processes. Yet they cannot be said to be interdependent in the way that Malpas ascribes to structures of mind, world and subject. Though Blau (1996, 382), may (ex)claim: ‘Where memory is, theater is,’ it remains possible to conceive of remembering prior to, and independently of, performance.
Heuristics

No single, all-embracing theory can fully account for the range of performances to be addressed here. This has more to do with the fact that the premises of philosophical inquiry and performance theory differ, than it has to do with the simple multiplicity of performances in question. A major difference, perhaps the major difference, is that language is the medium through which disciplined philosophical reasoning seeks to stabilise models of inquiry; while ‘more promiscuously hypothetical’ sorts of experimental embodiment are the medium proper to performance (Goodall 2002, 7).

My method of proceeding, therefore, is to assemble concepts of performance, memory, and place from theories advanced by certain congenial thinkers; and to deploy these concepts as heuristics in analytical case studies of selected performances in their historical, social, and cultural environs. This procedure is multi-dimensional. I position performance and memory as social actions that, while not identical, are heuristic devices that enable an understanding of each other. I also deploy philosophical concepts of place and space, subject and agency, as heuristic devices that enable an understanding of performance or remembering. Moreover, there is a sense in which performances embody place-worlds that relate to the social world not as replication, nor as a course of action to be pursued, but as an artefactual figuring of how actions might interact when a specified dramaturgical dynamics is in place.

This procedure enables a particular way of thinking philosophically about place that ‘does not actually reflect the underlying structure’ (Malpas 1999, 155) of the performances and remembering with which this thesis deals. It is particularly suited to the analytical (re)turn to empirical concreta of individual performances in the case
studies. Heuristics is also a consistent with the premise that performance and memory each have a history. A history of colonial performance constitutes a constellation of performance places, ‘a juxtaposition of detailed sites, each asking its own questions’ (Matsuda 1996, 206), and each resisting incorporation into a single, legitimating colonial grand récit.\(^{57}\) Misztal (2003, 19) identifies ‘schools, courts, museums and the mass media’ as institutions that have shaped the history of memory; as, indeed, their interventions in performance have tended to shape its history. These two histories intersect in Western Australian colonial performance, understood as a space for the artefactual re-implacement of a national culture in response to the fragmentation and perturbation of collective memory.

The trajectory from philosophical concepts to case studies enables me to analyse specific performances as institutionalised areas of technical expertise; as purposive social actions that are grounded in subjective agency; and as colonising acts of ‘domestication.’ I follow McClintock’s (1995, 34-35) definition of ‘domestication’ as denoting both ‘a space (a geographical and architectural alignment) and a social relation to power’ that involves ‘processes of social metamorphosis and political subjection,’ particularly, though not exclusively, in nineteenth-century European constructions of gender, class, and race. While McClintock explores domesticity as a discursive strategy to control colonized indigenous populations, I focus on settler performance as a contested space of domestication for control of social and cultural crises within the settler population.

Concepts of performance, memory, and place are not deployed here as irreducible foundational principles from which to conduct the case studies. Instead,

\(^{57}\) Matsuda (1996, 4) assumes that ‘memory has a history, and that [his own] memory history of the late nineteenth century’ is distinctive from the memory history of any other period. On the legitimation of grand narratives as an ‘heuristic driving force,’ see Lyotard (1979, 27-31).
concepts and empirical data enfold one another in the case studies, such that, in their proximity and residual resistance, they test rather than replicate each other. While concepts of performance and memory, and of place itself, serve to ground, or implace, the case studies of performances, it remains the case that the performances under study cannot be exhaustively analysed in strictly conceptual terms. Performance retains an uneliminable, embodied, sensory residue that, being evanescent, precedes culture and resists (re)capture beyond its moment.

Such residual resistance to (re)capture on the part of performance can be understood, in its turn, as grounded in the primordial resistance of place to complete (re)capture. Casey (1993, 236) observes, in a discussion of wild[er]ness, that while place is appropriated ‘by and to culture,’ place resists exhaustive cultural analysis from the outset: ‘Any [conceptual] grid is [...] always too late to capture (or, rather, recapture) the many sensory arrays that wash over and around and through us in the course of experiencing even the most straightforwardly presented wild place.’ The same may be said of the resistance of performance—and of its many sensory, affective, and imaginative arrays—to exhaustive conceptualisation.

The return to the concreta of performance in the case studies goes to the question of what we can reliably know of past performances, whether that past is immediate, recent, distant, or prior to the experience of persons living. Much turns on an understanding of the limits of technological mediation and cultural summation through which performance history was, and is now, documented, annotated, and disseminated. Goodall (2002, 5) puts the matter aptly:
Performance is not only or even primarily a verbal medium and it does not necessarily engage with ideas through discursive articulation. Communication occurs as much through imagery, movement and expression, all of which leave only partial and secondary traces in the archive.

Of equal significance are the testimonial and evidentiary protocols and constraints that pertain to past performance, as specific instances of historical memory. In remembering events that occurred prior to one’s birth, we must, as Maurice Halbwachs (1980, 51) puts it, ‘rely entirely upon the memory of others, a memory that comes, not as a collaborator or completor of [one’s] own, but as the very source of what [we] wish to repeat.’ As a contemporary researcher, I therefore approach the reliability and accuracy of nineteenth-century newspaper advertisements, editorials, and commentary on performances with due caution.

A major methodological concern is to manage the interface between contemporary theories and concepts on the one hand, and empirical performance data from the nineteenth century on the other. In this respect, it is important to distinguish memory, which gives significance to the past-in-the-present, from ‘presentism,’ a critical position which effectively denies the past any significance in the present. In this regard, as Matsuda (1996, 6) observes, memory has a history; it is ‘not a generic term of analysis, but itself an object appropriated and politicized. Or, equally, nationalized, medicalized, aestheticized, gendered, bought and sold.’ Similar observations can be made in respect of the histories of those other key concepts, performance, place and space, subject and agency.58

58 With regard to place, Casey (1998, x) observes: ‘Between Aristotle and Irigaray stretch more than two millennia of thought and teaching and writing about place—a period that includes such diverse debating partners as Plotinus, Cusa and Bruno, Descartes and Locke, Newton and Leibniz, Bachelard and Foucault.’
Chapter Three: Amateurism and community

Commonplace they may be, but the accumulation of these memories has led to one result: me. Me here and now. Sometimes when I think of life, I feel like a piece of driftwood washed up on a shore.

Haruki Murakami

In the previous Chapter, I defined key concepts of place, space, collective memory, and performance. This present Chapter relates these concepts to the operation of performance as a mode of implacement and subjective agency in colonial Western Australia. My purpose is to identify geographic, social, demographic, and economic factors that affected the emergence and maintenance of a local performance culture through implacement. The Chapter is therefore organised thematically, rather than as a chronological history of the performance events themselves. I am especially interested to identify reasons for the fact that local performance remained resolutely amateur from the outset, even with the advent of company tours from the eastern Australian colonies and Britain, and the establishment, during the 1890s, of resident entrepreneurial managements at Perth, Fremantle, Albany, and on the Goldfields.59

59 Commercial managements proliferated in response to increased population and wealth brought on by the discovery of gold at the Eastern Goldfields from 1892. For example, Mr Smalpage opened his Theatre Royal, Coolgardie, in October 1894 (CM. 27 Oct. 1894). Mrs Annie Oliver managed the Cremorne Gardens, Hay Street, Perth, from 1895 (Dunstone 1995a, 436); and Mr Harry Fein managed the Cremorne Gardens, Kalgoorlie from 1896 (HanHer. 5 Aug. 1896). Soubrette Miss Ettie Williams managed her Happy Hours Vaudeville Company from the Cremorne Gardens, Perth, from 1895 (Dunstone 1995a, 436). George Lawrence (also Laurence, husband of Ettie Williams) managed Ye Olde Englyshe Fayre, Perth, from December 1895 (WAust. 12 Dec. 1895); opening a branch at Fremantle in 1896 (WAust. 12 Mar. 1896). Edward Reynolds opened and managed the Cremorne Gardens, Albany, in 1896 (Dunstone 1995d, 633). George Jones and George Lawrence, known as the Firm of Western Australia, managed the Theatre Royal, Perth, when it opened in April 1897 (Dunstone 1995c, 585). The variety Grand All Nations Fancy Fair opened at the Miner’s Institute, Kalgoorlie, in August 1898 (KM. 20 Jul. 1898).
Amateur and professional performance

I begin by making several crucial distinctions between the respective orientations of amateur and professional performance towards the Western Australian community. Colonial amateur performances were produced by members of local communities for consumption within those communities, and to target certain needs of those communities. It is important to note that the expenditure incurred in mounting amateur productions represented a financial excess, given the colony’s perennially straitened circumstances. As an example, the Elwes family papers (1854; 1959, n. pag.) record that five Perth gentlemen, meeting in May 1854 to organise amateur theatricals, donated £3 each towards preliminary expenses.60 Their losses amounted to £100 by the time their production of Isaack Pocock’s melodrama *The Miller and His Men* (n.d.) closed at the Court House, Perth, in September of that year (*Gazette*. 25 Aug. 1854).

The expense to the colony was not only financial. In 1880, *Victorian Express* (12 May. 1880) correspondent ‘Odites’ argued for the creation of a permanent amateur company in Geraldton, to avoid the ‘immense’ waste of energy and talent in ‘getting up’ one-night amateur productions:

In days of old such a company existed [in Geraldton] and materially assisted in building the present Hall of the Working Men’s Association, and many may still remember the shouts of laughter excited by S—’s eccentricities […] These suggestions are offered gratis to the energetic young men of Geraldton.61

---

60 The meeting was held on 8 May 1854, with Mr Valentine Carey Elwes, brother-in-law to Governor Charles Fitzgerald, in the chair. See Chapter One, n.14 for the programme.

61 This older company existed before the establishment of Geraldton’s *Victorian Express* newspaper in 1878. However, the *Inquirer* (20 Nov. 1872) refers to the flourishing record of the Geraldton amateur company. The *West Australian Times* (7 Jul. 1876) records that the Amateur Dramatic and Ethiopian Company gave the first performance at the new Working Men’s Association Hall, Geraldton, in June 1876, having previously contributed funds to the building of the Hall.
Clearly, one of the major social benefits that a community could expect from its excess of young amateur males’ ‘energy and talent’ was the generational restoration of community identity through collective remembering in performance.

Successful amateur seasons also returned financial expenditure to the local economy in the form of charity and material assets. In 1865, the Perth Amateur Dramatic Corps donated £9 of its takings from a season of amateur theatricals to the Poor Box, and £5 to the Anglican Bishop of Perth ‘towards purchase of books, for the use of outlying settlers’ (Inquirer. 13 Mar. 1865). The Perth Amateur Dramatic Corps let it be known in 1869 that the ‘object of the company is to cater for the amusement and recreation of the public, and not in any way for pecuniary considerations.’\(^{62}\) Often, amateur performers raised money for an item of performance equipment that could be shared with other users. Proceeds from the Perth Amateurs’ presentation of Thomas Knight’s farce *The Honest Thieves* (1797) in February 1856, helped fund the importation of a piano to accompany performers and vocalists (Inquirer. 26 Mar. 1856). In 1880, Geraldton’s amateurs put their takings towards importation from Britain of a Collard and Collard piano, and chandelier lighting for the auditorium of the town’s Masonic Hall (*VicExp.* 10 Nov. 1880); while an amateur Minstrel performance in a marquee raised almost £19 in support of the community hospital at Coolgardie, in August 1894 (*CM*. 18 Aug. 1894). As Geraldton’s *Victorian Express* (23 Oct. 1878) put it:

> we wonder at anyone finding fault [with amateurs] in a country like ours where professionals are scarce and amateur talent so plentiful; that is, where there are

\(^{62}\) The Minstrels of the West similarly intended to ‘dispose of any surplus funds in their hands, after disbursing all expenses and creating a small reserve fund, upon charitable purposes’ (Inquirer. 19 May. 1869)
so many young people willing to do their best for the amusement of their fellows
and the benefit of those institutions one is bound to support.63

Itinerant professional companies, on the other hand, performed only for limited
periods in the colony. Professional presence in the colony, and thus professional contact
with local communities, was limited by the factor of financial viability. As the Herald
(17 Jul. 1869) observed, the population in 1869 was too sparse to maintain a resident
professional company:

West Australia may do very well as a [staging post] to India or China, and a
company visiting [us] in that way might not lose by coming among us, but for
any company to dream of staying and living here is absurd.

As late as 1878, the Herald (5 Jan. 1878) noted that Perth audiences were usually
‘exhausted’ after three nights, and those at Fremantle after two nights. Charity
performances for local institutions were not a priority for professionals, though some,
like the Bijou Troupe at the Asylum, obliged. As another instance, veteran British
entertainer Robert ‘The Inimitable’ Barlow donated £12 to Perth’s orphanages from the
proceeds of his performance at St George’s Hall, Perth, on 24 April 1882 (WAust. 28
Apr. 1882).

Amateur and itinerant professional performers afforded their respective benefits
to local communities, each group operating within its horizons of pecuniary interest,
expertise, and the degree of intimacy and duration of its contact with a community. The
extension of benefits into the wider community was a key part of the rationale of

63 However, standards still applied. As the Victorian Express (23 Oct. 1878) observed: ‘there
will be degrees of excellence in every company as there are diversities of talent.’
amateur theatre; it indicates the placial power of colonial amateur performance to surpass its on-stage space. By contrast, visiting professional artists and groups usually took more money out of the local economy than they returned to it through benefit performances, or through purchases from the colony’s few theatre support industries—mainly accommodation, printing and publicity, venue hire, and transport. Geraldton’s *Victorian Express* observed that the funds of the town’s Amateur Dramatic Company, set up in June 1880, would not ‘be lost’ to professional performers from the eastern Australian colonies, but would be ‘devoted to local or charitable projects’ (23 Jun. 1880).

Diasporic colonial audiences thus re-enacted the narrative of their national origin along two performance axes: the idiolocal amateur, of significance primarily within its specific region, but proliferating outwards through surrogacy to the metropolis; and the equally surrogate itinerant professional, that extracted cash in exchange for local consumption of imported metropolitan and intercolonial spectacle. Colonial notions of culturally authentic performance were dual, defined by amateur performance that derived its rationale and social ‘authenticity’ from its community; and by professional displays of a different order of ‘authenticity’ derived from metropolitan theatre genealogy. Colonials derived the community ethos, organisation, and practices of their amateur theatre from antecedents developed in Britain’s ubiquitous private amateur theatres since the eighteenth century (Rosenfeld 1978; Dunstone, 1993; Brisbane, 1995). Professional performance, when eventually it arrived in the colony in 1865, was privileged as the surrogate bearer of British national theatre culture among the colonial diaspora, of which Western Australia was an especially remote and insignificant margin.
Miss Edith Mitchell and Miss Annie Hill, the first British actresses to visit the colony, opened at Perth in September 1865 (Inquirer. 27 Sept. 1865). Notable British entertainers such as Grace Egerton and George Case (1867), Mrs Towers and Frank Towers (1876), Robert Barlow (1881), the Carrington-Taylor Company (1896), and Janet Achurch and Charles Charrington (1891) followed. However, the laurels went to the Wilson Barrett London Company’s season at the Theatre Royal, Perth, in June 1898, which the local press acclaimed as the advent of ‘authentic’ British national culture in the colony—this despite the surrogate transmission of Barrett’s productions to Perth. As the West Australian (25 Jun. 1898) put it, Barrett’s Perth audiences ‘might have been sitting in [his] theatre in London, and the circumstance is worth noting if only to show the improved position which the capital of the colony now occupies in matters dramatic’. To colonial eyes, the Barrett Company’s visit signified Perth’s arrival in the grand narrative of British national identity—if only for the colony’s potential as a locus of conspicuous consumption, rather than actual production.

As far as the colony was concerned, the doublet of Shakespeare’s plays and Barrett’s professional London company were seen to be the bearers of the narrative of nation. But the notion that Wilson Barrett’s imported productions of Shakespeare’s Hamlet (c.1600) and Othello (c.1602) authenticated British national culture on colonial soil exposed a deep contradiction in colonials’ attitudes to their own culture and society. Cultural legitimisation by Wilson Barrett’s professional London productions necessarily relegated local amateur performance and audiences to the status of provincial British culture manqué. Imported metropolitan theatre productions served, in effect, as

64 See: Egerton-Case (Inquirer. 26 Jul. 1867); Towers (Herald. 25 Nov. 1876); Barlow (WAust. 2 Dec. 1881); Carrington-Taylor (KM.1 May. 1896). The Achurch-Charrington season at St George’s Hall, Perth, from 12 to 16 September 1891 included English versions of Ibsen’s dramas A Doll’s House (1957) and Hedda Gabler (1957) (WAust. 31 Aug. 1891).
surrogate artefactual remembering that stood in for an authenticity that colonials perceived to be absent from their lives, and unattainable through their own agency.

Circus, variety companies and artistes, and eventually commercial theatre companies based in eastern Australian colonies also toured to Western Australia.65 Western Australia’s colonists were in effect doubly colonised, via Britain and the larger, more culturally vibrant Australian colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. The status of Western Australia as a place for performance production, as distinct from its consumption, was compromised as an effect of this double abjection. The performance research data indicates that colonial Western Australian society depended on imported imperial culture just as it did on imported imperial capital, labour, industry, and technology. But surrogation, as Roach (1996, 2) defines it, ensured that even direct London ‘imports’ such as the Achurch-Charrington *A Doll’s House* (1891) or Wilson Bartlett’s *Hamlet* (1898) could never replicate metropolitan performance in the colony.

*Amateurism, memory, and settler identity*

Experiences of implacement are intimately bound up with experiences of unplacement, and both were historically inseparable from the dynamic of settler identity. In colonial Western Australia, both conditions can be understood as symptomatic of a settler desire for identity that was intimately linked to a crisis of collective memory. I have already discussed implacement in Chapter Two in relation to the reconnective power of memory, especially in the embodied place-worlds of

---

65 For instance, tours were undertaken by Stebbing’s Circus (*Gazette*, 30 Apr. 1869); Wieland’s Royal Victorian Circus (*Inquirer*, 9 Oct. 1872); Bachelder’s Pantascope (*Herald*, 1 Dec. 1877); Thomson’s Diorama (*WAT*, 6 May. 1879); the Silvester Family Troupe (*WAust*, 19 Mar. 1880); the Great London Circus (*WAust*, 14 May. 1880); the Hyperion Opera Company (*WAust*, 25 Mar. 1881); the Wheeler Comedy Company (*WAust*, 25 Jul. 1882); the Gaiety Pantomime Company (KM, 20 Feb. 1896); the Alfred Dampier Company (*GA*, Apr. 30. 1897; *KM*, 3 May. 1897); and the Maggie Moore Company (*KM*, 1 Jul. 1898). Western Australia was also part of Harry Rickards’ Sydney based Tivoli Company circuit from 1898.
performance. I use the terms ‘unplacement’ and ‘implacement’ in their generative relationship defined by Casey (1993, 28-29): ‘Unplacement becomes implacement as we regain and refashion a sense of place.’

Both unplacement and implacement concern subjects’ relations with their environment. As already noted, Malpas (1999, 181-85) describes that relationship as one involving the subjects’ ‘own affectivity as much as [their] ability to effect.’ To historicise Malpas’ idea, the European colonisation of Western Australia entailed both the perturbation of colonisers’ cultural links with the past through unplacement, and their attempts to restore social and cultural implacement in response to the apparent vacuity of their antipodean environs. Disruption of the colonisers’ links with their cultural past compromised their identification with their new environment. In philosopher Gareth Evans’ (1982, 221) language, the colonial crisis of memory unsettled the ‘very idea of a perceivable, objective, spatial world’ that subjects experienced as ‘being in the world […] due to [their] changing position in the world’ and their sense of the ‘more-or-less stable way the world is.’ Tompkins (2006, 6) identifies two recurrent tropes through which its European inhabitants have imagined Australia: ‘an open, empty productive paradisiacal space, and an open, empty vulnerable or hostile space.’ Colonists were not without an appreciation of the natural beauties of climate and flora, but in regard to their views of their own culture the latter trope prevailed.

---

66 ‘[...] each of us attempts to move from the discomfort of disorientation [in modernist space] by transmuting an initially aimless and endless scene into a place of concerted action, thereby constituting a dense placescape that, in close collaboration with our active bodies, guides us into orientation’ (Casey 1993, 28-29).

67 Millett (1872, 41) records the view of the bush from the darling Range: ‘the oneness of the scene being so complete’ that it recalled the view from the deck of a ship at sea. She later describes the ‘sameness of the bush’ as a potential threat to life: ‘The scenery possesses […] no striking distinctive features to remind a person that he has wandered from the way, or to help him to regain it’ (1872, 264-65).
In pragmatic colonial society, educated settlers sometimes displaced their disrupted memorial sense of being in the world onto literary and dramatic artefacts. Enrolled Pensioner guard Mr Coleman’s readings from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (c.1595), *Othello* (c.1602), and *King John* (c.1596), ‘varied by anecdotes characteristic of men and manners,’ at Literary Institutes at Perth and Fremantle in 1858, were a case in point (*Inquirer*. 25 Aug. 1858). So, too, were garrison theatre performances of George Almar’s drama *The Charcoal Burner* (1828) and Sheridan’s comedy *The Rivals* (1775) by the Dramatic Corps of the Royal Engineers during their tour of duty at Fremantle in 1858, in which Mr Coleman was the only resident to take part (*Inquirer*. 18 Aug. 1858; 15 Dec. 1858).

**Isolation**

This local crisis of settler memory in Western Australia stood in ambivalent relation to a wider crisis of memory then taking place in the urbanised and industrialised nineteenth-century Western world. According to Misztal (2003, 44; citing Terdiman 1993), this wider modern crisis of memory manifested itself doubly in a ‘rejection of the past’ on the one hand, and, on the other, in an acquired appreciation of the past as a concatenation of lost ideals, values, cultures, and behaviours. But this new appreciation of the past was two-edged. In effect, ‘the interpretation of people’s behaviour became notoriously problematic,’ as lost memory came to be reconstructed in public modes, in which memory was dis-embedded from the forms it had earlier taken (Misztal 2003, 43). Performance was one of those public modes.

This analysis accurately describes the historically specific condition of collective remembering in colonial Western Australia, but with one significant difference. The fact that Western Australia’s economy remained primarily agricultural into the last years of
the century both links this colonial crisis of memory with, and differentiates it from, the ongoing crisis in the industrialised West. Indeed, Western Australia, the first Australian Crown colony to be based on land grants to free settlers, was founded partly in a spirit of agrarian reaction against the urbanisation and industrialisation occurring in Britain. Some historical information is appropriate at this point, in order to place the colony’s amateur performance culture in relation with Western Australia’s geography, society, demography, and economy.

Described by Historian F. K. Crowley (1959, 17) as ‘the least favoured of the British colonies in the Antipodes,’ Western Australia suffered severe economic and social setbacks during the decades from its founding in 1829 to 1850, when transportee convict labour was introduced. Economic and social problems arose due to the original colonising company’s failure to anticipate contingencies. Land was inadequately surveyed and no housing was prepared for incoming landed settlers and indentured labourers. Mary Ann Friend’s sketch, ‘The Encampment of Matw. Curling Friend, Esqr. R.N.’ (fig. 4) records the privation experienced by recently arrived colonists at the Swan River in March 1830. Grain crops failed on the patchy soils of the coastal plain, and the native vegetation proved unsuitable for grazing. According to a paper issued in 2004 by the present Australian Commonwealth Department of Treasury and Finance: ‘Capital accumulation [in the colony] was hampered by the initial conditions of settlement and [by] a lack of commercial viability, which was clearly related to expensive transport costs and lack of markets, both a consequence of the Colony’s isolation’ (Economic 2004, 4). In these circumstances, food had to be imported in early years from Java, Tasmania, and the Cape of Good Hope (Crowley 1959, 15). The population was too small and too scattered to sustain viable trade and cash flow. In the upshot, a significant

68 ‘Viator’ described the ‘sand hills, covered in coarse grasses and scrubs’ on the coastal plain near Perth, that ‘so disheartened the original settlers in 1829 and belied the Eden-like pictures that had tempted then from their homes in Merrie England’ (Gazette. 12 Sept. 1873).
number of free settlers opted to emigrate from the colony during its first two decades. An initial settler population of 1,003 in December 1829 had increased to only 2,154 a decade later; and to just 4,645 a further decade on (Chate et al. 1991, 3; 9; 12). Convicts were transported from Britain to Western Australia between 1850 and 1868 to provide a source of labour, mainly in order to reduce the colony’s heavy economic dependence on the Crown (Economic 2004, 3; Prall 2001, n.p.). The contribution made by convicts to Western Australian performance infrastructure is discussed in Chapter Five.

Historians have generally attributed Western Australia’s enduring historic marginality to its geographic isolation, and the economic, social, and cultural effects that followed from that. The facts of the colony’s geographical isolation are readily established. Crowley (1959, 9) notes that when, in December 1826, a small British military outpost was set up at King George’s Sound (present Albany) on Australia’s south coast, the only other British settlers on the Australian mainland were at Sydney, some 4000 kilometres away by ship to the east.\(^{69}\) The 2,525,500 square kilometres of colonial territory that comprised the newly annexed colony of Western Australia in 1829 occupied some twelve times the area of Great Britain, and a third of the Australian landmass.\(^{70}\) It was, by any measure, sparsely populated. Columnist ‘Viator’ estimated a population of 26,000 persons in 1876, including the military and prisoners: ‘half are located in towns, the rest in an immense area, extending 600 miles [960 kilometres] from north to south and eastward from the sea about 200 miles [320 kilometres]’ (Gazette. 12 Sept. 1873). After fifty years of settlement, the non-Indigenous population had risen to only 29,139 by December 1879 (Chate et al. 1991, 3; 23).

\(^{69}\) This military outpost remained part of New South Wales until 1831, when King George’s Sound passed to the control of the colony of Western Australia, and the military detachment withdrew to Sydney (Crowley 1959, 10).

\(^{70}\) The Western Australian coastline is 12,500 kilometres long. The landmass of Great Britain comprises England, Scotland and Wales; it is not to be confused with the United Kingdom.
The process of colonisation in the north-west, which comprised more than half the colony’s landmass, was even more attenuated by distance, deficiencies of transport and communications infrastructure, the intractability of the physical environment, and climatic extremes.\textsuperscript{71} Except for a few remote, thinly populated settlements—such as Tien Tsin (now Cossack, 1863; 1480 kilometres from Perth), Roebourne (1866; 1572 kilometres from Perth), and Broome (1883; 2200 kilometres from Perth)—much of the colony’s north-west remained uninhabited by Europeans during the nineteenth century. The ‘dry land’ Goldfields, 600 kilometres to the east of Perth, began to emerge as an alternative urban centre to Perth only following the discovery of gold at Coolgardie in 1892.

In the small population centres to the south and west, urbanisation was slow to develop. When Perth was proclaimed a city in 1856, its population was approximately 3,000 persons; while the colony’s entire settler population numbered 13,158 (Chate et al, 1991, 15).\textsuperscript{72} Stannage (1979, 87) notes that the population of the City of Perth had increased, by birth and immigration, from just 5000 in 1870, to 6000 in 1881—an average increase of less than 100 persons per year. However, Chate et al. (1991, 26; 30) show that the colony’s non-Indigenous population more than tripled from 48,502 in December 1890 to 170,258 in December 1899. This exponential increase in population, and the economic growth that went with it, were directly attributable to the influx of migrants to the colony’s new Goldfields from 1892. As the case studies of performance at Fremantle and the Eastern Goldfields in Chapter Five indicate, it was only during the 1890s, some sixty-five years after settlement, that regular large-scale importation of

\textsuperscript{71} See Hasluck (1929) for details of early settlement in the North West.

\textsuperscript{72} There are no precise figures for the population in 1859. The figure of 3,000 is based on an average annual increase of 123 persons calculated from the census figures for 1854 (2733 total) and 1859 (3347 total) (Western Australian Census 1860, n.p.).
commercial performance began (Dunstone 2009, 868). Even then, amateur performance held its own in local communities.  

Performance venues

Theatre’s amateur beginnings in Western Australia were shared by all of the Australian colonies. However, nineteenth-century Western Australia’s adherence to amateurism, and the delayed development of touring and resident commercial theatre there, were unique in the history of Australian performance. Perth lagged well behind other nineteenth-century Australian cities in the provision of a theatre suitable for commercial productions. The figures speak for themselves. Robert Sidaway opened a theatre in Sydney in January 1796, just twelve years after settlement in 1788; while Barnet Levey obtained a licence to present plays at the Royal Hotel, Sydney, in 1832 (Webby 1995, 566). Hobart’s New Theatre Royal opened on 6 March 1837 (Winter 1995, 278); followed by George Buckingham’s Theatre Royal at Adelaide in 1838 (Abbie-Denton 1995, 25). At Brisbane, George Croft opened an amphitheatre in 1847; while M.D. Finucan’s Licensed Travelling Theatre improvised its own venue at Mason’s Concert Hall in 1856 (Fotheringham 1995, 100). According to Harold Love, ‘large-scale professional theatre’ came to Melbourne in the mid-1850s, after a ‘few years’ meagre pioneering at the Royal Pavilion Saloon and the Queen’s Theatre’ (1995, 353). Perth was unique among Australian colonial capitals in that its first dedicated theatre building, the Theatre Royal, Hay Street, opened only in April 1879, a full sixty-eight years after settlement began (Dunstone 1995c, 585).

73 Commercial theatre in early twentieth-century Perth declined rapidly in the aftermath of World War and economic depression. Amateur groups, notably the Perth Repertory Club, sustained theatre in Western Australia until the foundation of the resident professional National Theatre Company at the Playhouse, Perth, in 1956 (Dunstone 1995, 437).

74 Katharine Brisbane describes amateur performances at Sydney as a ‘social pastime that relieved the pain of penal servitude for convicts and tedium of exile for the military’ (1995, 38).
As already noted in Chapter One, the earliest colonial performances had taken place on makeshift stages at Leeder’s Hotel, Hodge’s Hotel, the Teetotal Hall, and the Old Court House at Perth; at the Freemasons’ Hotel and Emerald Isle Hotel, Fremantle; and at scattered regional hotels and halls. The Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, possibly the shabbiest and pokiest of the venues, was also one of the most frequently used. The *Herald* (24 Oct. 1868) described its proscenium arch as a disgrace to the city: ‘a frightful inartistic daub—or series of daubings—representing the heads of some of the characters in Shakespeare’s plays.’ Fremantle’s Oddfellows’ Hall was better equipped for performances; the critic ‘Jacques’ commended the ‘carpenter, paper hangers, and scene painters’ for transforming the hall ‘from an unsightly barn into a perfect little bijou theatre’ (*Herald*. 23 Jan. 1869). The Masonic Hall, Geraldton, renovated in 1880, was the only ‘creditably fitted stage’ in regional Western Australia (*VicExp*. 24 Nov. 1880), prior to the opening of Smalpage’s Theatre Royal at Coolgardie in October 1894. Even then, Smalpage’s stage was too small to accommodate the scenery for the Wilkinson Gaiety Company’s pantomime *Aladdin* (*CM*. 17 Nov. 1894).

Yet even the most inadequate and temporary of these makeshift or converted venues fulfilled functions of collective remembering through implacement. Each provided an immediate space of performance that was also an intermediating space of cultural ‘ghosting’ and surrogation. Paradoxically, the multiple purposes of converted commercial venues such as Harry Fein’s open-air Cremorne Gardens at the rear of the Prince of Wales Bar, Coolgardie, in 1896, enhanced the capacity of performance space.

---

75 The critic’s pseudonym is misspelt as ‘Jaques’ in this issue of the *Herald*. For consistency, I give the correct ‘Jacques’ throughout.

76 The opening of Mr Smalpage’s Theatre Royal, Coolgardie, preceded Perth’s Theatre Royal by three years (*CM*. 27 Oct. 1894). Smalpage’s single-storey theatre, with moveable seating for 1000, was built of timber and galvanised iron, like most buildings in early Coolgardie.
to open onto its ambient social and cultural surroundings. Each temporary performance space accommodated the self-presence of remembering: a space in which the remembering subject is a component of the ‘ghosting’ process (Casey 1987, 69). That ‘ghosting’ was evident even at temporary performance spaces, such as the miners’ camp at Lake Lefroy, where some 300 prospectors gathered for an entertainment on St Patrick’s night in March 1897 (Balzano n.d., n.p.).

*Amateurism and ‘internal peace’*

The inhibiting geographic, demographic, and economic factors at work in the colony go a long way to explain the prevalence of amateurism and the delayed emergence of commercial theatre in Western Australia. But there were other factors at work. It is important, in this respect, to acknowledge that local amateurism was as much a matter of ingrained local affect and ethos, as it was of economic effect. Amateurism continued as a mode of local agency that met specific needs for entertainment and community identity. As will become apparent in the next Chapter, amateurs were subject to critical evaluation according to well-considered standards, in which community service was given considerable weight. Inevitably, amateur performance did not merely survive *faute de mieux*; its continuance was imbricated within broader political agenda.

Stannage (1979, 7) observes that the colony’s investor settlers optimistically and self-interestedly set out in pursuit of a collective vision of an ordered white settler society, whose ‘internal peace’ would be guaranteed by a rigid social hierarchy defined by class distinctions and ownership of land, and devoted to money-making and

---

77 Fein planned his garden performance venue as a version of Mrs Annie Oliver’s Cremorne Gardens, Perth. The plans included stage and seating surrounded by a galvanised iron fence that opened onto Bayley Street. He commissioned Con Berthold, ‘foremost scenic artist in Western Australia,’ to paint panels, one of which depicted the Hawkesbury River, New South Wales (*HanHer*. 5 Aug. 1896).
agricultural production. This vision of internal peace entailed a sub-class of poor
indentured agricultural labour. As ‘Observer,’ a settler correspondent to the Gazette (10
Jul. 1847) wrote:

It was ordained from the beginning of the world that there should be different
denominations and classes of people, in order that each nation should preserve
its own internal peace. It was ordained from the beginning that there should be
masters and servants.

Internal peace, and the economic prosperity it was supposed to guarantee, largely
eluded settlers in the early decades at the Swan River. Nonetheless, the quest for an
hierarchical social order became pragmatically and instrumentally embedded over time
in the colonial ‘marketplace, the church, the legislature and local councils, [and] the
general intercourse of every day life’ (Stannage 1979, 7.)

The colonial vision of a society at peace with itself was a naive self-contradiction. Hannah Arendt (1999, 8) argues that ‘no society can function without an
arrangement of things and men in classes and prescribed types;’ such classification is
‘the basis for all social discrimination, and discrimination […] is no less a constituent
element of the social realm than equality is a constituent element of the political.’
Indeed so, and the notion of a discriminatory society at peace with itself would prove to be unsustainable at its intersection with performance in the ‘unprecedented
environment’ (Hobsbawm 1983, 8) of Western Australia. The vision of ‘internal peace’
was elusive because it was essentially backward looking and surrogate; bound up as it
was with settler reaction against the social, cultural, economic, and political changes
that accompanied the industrial revolution in Britain. The catch-phrase ‘internal peace’
had everything to do with the investment of collective memory in the distribution of power within the colony; in particular, power that depended on the pretence of ‘a present that is not in transition’ (Benjamin 1970, 262).

The colonial vision of internal peace devolved into rigid social and economic divisions. Writing of the social structure of the colony in its early years, Stannage (1979, 65) contrasts the relative prosperity of the colony’s newly landed gentry with the straitened circumstances of their indentured labourers. Many of the latter, being ‘caught in a vicious circle of poverty, bare subsistence, [and] social and personal despair,’ engaged in drunkenness, brawling, abuse of spouses, prostitution, and theft. The early years saw a disproportionately higher number of suicides among the labouring class, to whom migration from the colony was not an option.

According to Crowley (1959, 19), ‘few working-class families had permanent and weather-proof houses in the early years,’ few were literate, and few of their children had access to education. Nor, as noted above, did colonials of this social class have access to performances mounted by their social ‘betters.’ Amateur performance tended to nest within existing social formations of class. The colonial establishment controlled attendance at its amateur theatricals by means of a subscription system; those in commerce and trade formed amateur performance formed their own dramatic societies; while the marginalised enjoyed entertainments and performances in public houses where others disdained, or feared, to venture. With its readership in mind, the colonial press generally ignored the latter, except in police reports.

Class dynamics at Fremantle seem to have been especially volatile, almost certainly because of the high proportion of male ex-prisoners in the town’s population
as a consequence of transportation between 1850 and 1868. For example, the Herald (25 Apr. 1868) reported that bad behaviour disrupted a performance by Louise Arnot’s Theatre Comique at Fremantle in April 1868.\textsuperscript{78} The same newspaper accused the police of excessive brutality when they horsewhipped enthusiastic members of the audience at the entrance to Stebbings’ Circus in 1869 (Herald. 1 May. 1869).\textsuperscript{79} The Inquirer (17 Jul. 1872) encouraged Adelaide Stoneham’s company to sell more reserved seats in an attempt to control larrikinism at their Fremantle performances. The disruption of performances at Fremantle signified a wider crisis of social identification that was in large part economic in origin, but also attributable to the perturbation of settlers’ links with their cultural heritage through both voluntary migration and forced transportation.

\textit{Politics of memory and place}

As we have seen in Chapter Two, Malpas and Casey argue their respective philosophical cases for a modern crisis of memory, in which the significance of the concept of place has collapsed into one of infinite, emptied out, homogenous space that threatens subjectivity. According to their stance, when we moderns confront the ‘actual emptiness of modernist space,’ as Casey (1993, 28-29) puts it, we seek to reorient ourselves away from that space so as to ‘transform an apparently vacuous expanse […] into a set of what can only properly be called places.’ Unusual though it is to think of the ancient Western Australian landmass as modernist space, I propose that colonists’ exposure to an unfamiliar environment had effects that paralleled European experience of the disruptive social effects of industrialisation and urbanisation. I mean by this that colonial performance afforded settlers a means to respond, through an excess of

\textsuperscript{78} The programme included Edward Morton’s farce \textit{The Eton Boy} (1825) and J. T. Rodwell’s farce \textit{The Young Widow} (1848).

\textsuperscript{79} Bosworth, et al. (1995, 67) observe that the location of the Convict Establishment at Fremantle in 1850 ‘was accompanied […] by a degree of [public] paranoia. A police station was built in Cliff Street in 1852 and, under [Captain Edmund] Henderson’s urging, a police force was trained.’ The police were notoriously brutal; the Herald (14 Nov. 1868) reported the flogging of an Indigenous woman by police in a Fremantle street in 1868.
spectacle, to their sense of physical and cultural unplacement in their new surroundings. The highly codified, intimate spaces of performance transmuted pockets of apparently undifferentiated, tenuously colonised space into temporarily familiar, collectively remembered moments of place.

I emphasise the momentariness of performed, remembered place for several reasons. For one, performance, as Schechner (1985), Roach (1996), and Carlson (2003) remind us, must continually be reinvented, or restored, because individual performances resist replication. The remembering in performance must, for a similar reason, be surrogate. Secondly, places of performance are not centred and entitative; performance is always in process, and is not contained within a single place or event. In Malpas’ (1999, 93) language, performance is a social action embedded within ‘larger projects or purposes’—and I would add, larger networks of places—with which we engage through our bodies.

Colonial performance exhibits certain factors and tonalities that qualify, but do not negate, Casey’s (1998, 341) stance that it is in place alone that ‘space attains poignancy and plenitude, along with that qualititative diversity and ample discernibility that signal the implacement of place itself.’ The history of colonial Western Australia indicates that ‘the implacement of place’ through performance was in large part a process of subaltern surrogacy and deference towards the metropolis. Furthermore, as Malpas (2007, n. p.) observes, while the idea of place as idea is ‘a positive notion,’ historical instances make it abundantly clear that ideas of place, and of ‘belonging to place,’ are often associated with a politics that is exclusionist and violent. The foregoing historical references to audience behaviour and police brutality at performances instantiate Malpas’ position. The police whippings at the entrance to Stebbings’ circus
tent at Fremantle in 1869 are telling because they bear on performance as a threshold onto, and a point of attachment with, systemic social instability and violence.

Embodiment

In his analysis of ‘the role of the body in memory of place’, Casey (2000, 195) observes that ‘it is thanks to places […] that we are inhabitants of the world. Can it be surprising to us that we find ourselves longing to get back into place, whether by memory or some other way?’ In Casey’s (2000, 195) phenomenological summation: ‘unless it [the body] feels oriented in place, we as its bearers are not going to feel oriented there either.’ In colonial Western Australia, orientation in place meant more than directional ‘coordination and reassurance’ (Casey 2005, 121), though it meant that too. It involved the disorientation experienced by a colonial diaspora struggling to come to terms with an environment from which it was alienated by prior experience, habit, and culture. In historical terms, performance and collective memory operated as two ways of getting ‘back into place’ through the body. Where local colonial performance and collective memory are concerned, amateurism afforded settlers a surrogate form of national identification from the remembered past, but it also entailed the acculturation of that past in the colonial present. For settlers, getting back into place had less to do with physical return to a lost place of prior habitation, or with summoning up eidetic images of it, than with placialising themselves in their colonial present, and future, through material performance culture. The term ‘placialise’ indicates that the state of being in place is to be understood not simply as passive containment, nor as mere situation in planiform space, but as a dynamic interaction between subjective agency and Casey’s ‘encompassingness of space’ (Casey ‘Smooth,’ n. p.).

80 This reference is to Casey’s online article ‘Smooth Space and Rough Edged Places: The History of Place.’ url: http://www.sunysb.edu/philosophy/faculty/ecasey/articles-smooth_spaces.html. Date of access: 7 Dec, 2009. I give subsequent in-text references as ‘(Casey ‘Smooth,’ n.p.).
Bodily centred performance and collective memory were ongoing processes through which colonists sought to [re]orient themselves *in place* in the alienating spaces of their new colony. If we conceive of space in locatory terms, as determined by a multiplex network of ‘landmarks and other locales in the environment’ (Casey ‘Smooth,’ n.p.), then spaces of colonial performance had a double function as acculturation: they contributed to the concrete locality of nodal places within that network, while linking local differences within a collectivity. The (admittedly fragile) performance touring network that linked Perth with its agricultural outposts inland to the east, at Guildford, York, Northam, and Newcastle (now Toodyay) is an historical instance of the capacity of imported performance to support regional identity through surrogacy. To reiterate, Roach (1996, 2) defines surrogation as a ‘three-sided’ relationship between ‘memory, performance, and substitution.’ As I see it, performance in colonial Western Australia was surrogate in the sense that it ‘stood in’ for an absent metropolitan culture. This surrogacy was motivated in large part by both settler desires to displace Indigenous others from land, and settler fear of being replaced by them.81 Colonial surrogacy of British culture also functioned as an instrument of social exclusion, placing certain classes of settlers, especially women, but also male convicts and ex-convicts, as other within a gendered and racialised politics of class based on property.82 Of course, the exclusionist politics of colonial performance were as much a matter of closing ranks, that is, of collective amnesia of the present, as they were of accurate recall. In performance, even cultural nostalgia was politicised. I return to this

---

81 My analysis derives from Roach’s (1996, 45) account of the ‘imperial measurement of identity’ evidenced in the stance of the Royal Africa Company (1672) towards the slave trade in which it found its *raison d’être*.

82 Stannage identifies the reactionary nature of this politics of property in colonial law: from the outset, ‘the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, and the magistrates were masters who had devised a law based on a desire to protect private property and to ensure the existence of a quiescent and industrious serving class’ (1979, 20).
topic in Chapter Four, and in the case studies of performance at Fremantle and the Eastern Goldfields that make up Chapter Five.

As will become apparent, performance had its detractors in colonial Western Australia. However, most settlers accepted performance as an instrument of the colonial ‘civilising’ enterprise. In contemporary conceptual terms, performance presented itself as material cultural practice through which homogenous, planiform colonised space could be incorporated into the narrative of British nationalism. In other words, when Western Australian settlers staged plays or optical illusions, minstrel shows or ventriloquist acts, they were actually performing acts of overdetermined ‘Britishness.’ Under this ahistorical sign of patriotic cultural perpetuation, settlers constructed their own precarious ‘colonial British’ subjective spaces and agencies. Performance played a double part, in association with memory and amnesia, in transmuting and deflecting the desires and fears that underpinned that identity.

**Performance and social anomie**

By their own avowal, proponents of theatre in Perth desired performance as a social means to beguile the tedium of life in their ‘exceedingly dull town’ (*Inquirer*. 4 Feb. 1863). However, the uncertain emergence of a local performance culture, especially in the four decades to 1870, indicates that while performance might beguile, it could not resolve the social anomie that beset the colony prior to the stimulus afforded by the gold rushes at Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and their smaller satellites in the 1890s. I use the term ‘beguile’ deliberately to emphasise the amnesiac property of performance as a diversion from social isolation and anxiety; but also to emphasise that, for much of the century, any surrogacy that colonial performance afforded was insufficiently robust to build a ‘lasting [cultural] sedimentation’—the phrase is Casey’s
(2000, 267)—in the colony. Of course, the colonial notion of Britishness was racially inflected. As an instrument of surrogation, this sign of ‘Britishness’ excluded the Indigenous peoples who had perforce come under British jurisdiction with the founding of the colony in 1829. However, if settler performances embodied patriotic aspirations toward an ‘as it were—Ancestral Englishness’ (Lévi-Strauss 1987, 58), they also played out spatial, temporal, and cultural incommensurabilities between metropolis and colony.

Colonial performance and collective memory were valued at the time as instruments of cultural perpetuation, but it is clear in retrospect that their commemorative value depended, paradoxically, on amnesiac surrogation (Roach 1996, 20). Western Australia’s settler performers proceeded with their activities on the misrecognition that their own local productions and presentations were continuous with Britain’s centuries-old metropolitan theatre heritage. Through a remarkably consistent, seemingly fortuitous choice of plays for repeat performance, colonists elevated a limited repertoire of popular nineteenth-century British comedies to the status of a minor, and decidedly idiolocal, canon. Shorter farces and comedies, most of them originating from London’s district theatres, were candidates for secular canonisation in the colonial calendar. For instance, the first amateur performance in the colony of William Barnes Rhodes’ burlesque *Bombastes Furioso* (1810) took place at Perth in August 1842; following revivals in 1863, 1867, 1872, and 1878, designer Charles Hamilton transposed the play to a local setting for an amateur performance at Geraldton in November 1880.\(^3\) Figure 5 reproduces George Cruickshank’s cartoon version of lines from the opening scene of the play. The Geraldton programme included John Madison Morton’s farce *Whitebait at Greenwich* (1850), which had previously appeared in four

\(^3\) See: *Gazette* (3 Sept. 1842); *Inquirer* (30 Sept. 1863; 16 Oct. 1867; 3 Apr. 1872); *WAT.* (24 Dec. 1878); and *VicExp.* (27 Oct. 1880).
amateur seasons at Perth and Fremantle in 1873, 1876, and 1879. Charles Selby’s farce *Boots at the Swan* (1850), introduced to the colony by Perth gentlemen amateurs in 1866 (*Inquirer*. 14 Mar. 1866), was still in the repertoire at Geraldton in December 1882 (*WAust*. 9 Jan. 1883).

These instances indicate that Perth served as a point of orientation for the transmission of a surrogate British performance culture to a network of small regional centres, Geraldton among them; and that this transmission sometimes involved significant time lags from dates of first performance in London, Dublin, or Edinburgh. In a remarkable paradox, colonists accepted this locally constructed canon of minor British plays as a genealogical continuation of, rather than surrogate for, a metropolitan theatre from which colonials had distanced themselves as a consequence of their residence in Western Australia. But cultural perpetuation being inseparable from acculturation, theatre-going colonists seem to have internalised their alienation from metropolitan finesse over the decades. The *West Australian* (5 Apr. 1881) was driven to comment tartly that an unyielding local preference for ‘buffoonery’ and ‘coarse artifices for provoking laughter’ rendered the public incapable of appreciating ‘finished quiet’ [sic] style on the rare occasions they encountered it in imported performances. This kind of high-handed criticism had the measure of unsophisticated colonial taste in plays, but it too judged by informed, though surrogate, metropolitan standards.

---

84 See: *Herald* (24 May. 1873); Battye Library PR 2855; *WAT*. (10 Jun. 1879); *VicExp*. (27 Oct. 1880).
86 The *West Australian* (5 Apr. 1881) published this comment on local audiences in its review of a performance of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan’s ‘Savoy’ opera *HMS Pinafore* (1878) by Melbourne’s Hyperian Opera Company, at St George’s Hall, Perth, on 24 March 1881.
Mimicry and acculturation

As I have observed elsewhere, amateur theatre in the colony ‘derived its local organisations, repertoire, social ambience, vocabulary and iconography, its industrial practices, and its understanding and expectations of the theatre event from a dominant metropolitan British theatre culture’ (Dunstone 1993, 46). The repertoire of amateur theatre in the colony was based throughout the century on English language play texts published by London houses such as Dicks’, Thomas Hailes Lacy, J. Duncombe, J. Thomas, John Cumberland, and Samuel French (Dunstone 1993, 49). These acting editions closely documented the cues, stage directions, set and costume designs, and property lists of metropolitan first productions; as such, they were the staples of amateur theatre in Britain and its colonial holdings. When circulated within the colony, these texts fostered surrogate, or mimic, theatre practice. As the foregoing list of publishers indicates, colonial theatre was almost exclusively Anglophone, an exception being the 1898 ‘Hindustani’ language production of ‘Ali Baba’ at Coolgardie, to which I refer in Chapter Seven.

Local writing for the stage seems to have occurred on a very limited scale and, judging by the press’s comfortable response, to have been highly derivative. Unfortunately, there is no archive of scripts to confirm or deny this. We know from the press that settler playwright W. J. Robson’s three-act plays, ‘The Duel; or, The Moral Coward’ (1860), and ‘Old love and Young Love; or, Never Too Late to Mend’ (1860) were performed at amateur theatricals at Perth in September and November 1860 respectively (Inquirer. 26 Sept. 1860; 7 Nov. 1860). The Bunbury correspondent to

87 For instance, Cumberland’s edition of Isaack Pocock’s romantic drama The Robber’s Wife (n.d.) includes notes on cast, entrances and exits, stage directions, stage business, and costumes, ‘as now performed at the Theatres Royal, London.’
88 It appears that the texts of Robson’s plays were not published. However, the colonial press published several of his poems: ‘To the Ocean;’ ‘On the Death of a Child;’ and ‘The Calm Before the Storm’ (Inquirer. 16 Apr. 1862; 30 Apr. 1862; 7 May. 1862).
the *West Australian* (19 May. 1882) reported that a ball at Bunbury was preceded by performances of a ‘burlesque upon Shakespeare’s “Othello” and an original comedy by a local author.’ The author was probably Henry Prinsep, from nearby Busselton. 89 We know that E. Hyacinth Tottenham’s pantomime ‘The Golden West,’ the first to be written in the colony, was performed at Ye Olde Englyshe Fayre, Fremantle, in January 1898 (Dunstone 1995a, 436). References in the press to the penning of a prologue or a satirical song, and one or two references to unattributed and unnamed short filler ‘plays written for the occasion,’ indicate more informal local writing for the stage, but no texts have come to light. 90

Clearly, Western Australian colonists maintained strong institutional links with British theatre in order to perpetuate their national identification. If, however, we draw a parallel between Homi Bhabha’s narrative of ‘modern nation’ and the colony’s amateur performance, the latter category emerges not as a patriotic fulfilment of a prefigured, holistic British national heritage, but as one among many surrogate ‘minority discourse[es] that [spoke] betwixt and between times and places’ (Bhabha 1990, 309). As Roach (1996, 2) points out, surrogation by its very nature falls short of precise cultural replacement. As I see it, local attempts to reproduce British home culture through colonial performance effectively *reconfigured* the desired spectacle of hegemonic metropolitan *origin* as a doubled, fissured spectacle of mimic *return* at a remote margin of empire. To historicise Bhabha’s concept of ‘wandering peoples who will not be contained within the Heim of the national culture,’ Western Australia’s colonials

---

89 Colonist Henry Prinsep wrote short comedies for performance by a vice-regal coterie established by Governor Sir William Robinson during his three periods of office from 1875 to 1895 (Jones 1995, 466); and he may have been the anonymous author of an unnamed ‘original comedy’ written for performance at Bunbury in 1882 (*WAust*. 19 May. 1882). The Prinsep papers are held in a private collection.

90 For example, visiting actor Walter Howson’s ‘Summary For England,’ a spoof of colonial news bulletins, ‘contained many severe but amusing local hits,’ as satirical comments were then known (*Inquirer*. 1 Dec. 1869).
marked, through their performances, ‘a shifting boundary that alienate[d] the empire’s frontiers,’ and split the patriotic voice of ‘unisonant’ national discourse (Bhabha, 1990, 315). In mutual misrecognition, settlers located the origins of their cultural history far off in the British Isles, while the British at home failed to see, or simply failed to care, that the delimitation of their cultural hegemony was being played out in the colonies.91

Understood in this way, the memory work involved in colonial performance was in multiplex, secondary mnemonic relation with its British heritage. In Casey’s terms, secondary memory draws less upon ‘essentially unchanged and still-conscious experiences,’ than upon ‘no longer conscious experiences that have been made vulnerable to transformations unknown to the rememberer himself or herself’ (Casey 1987, 51). As noticed above, this notion of secondary memory implicates systemic amnesia as a generative and transformative factor of colonial performance. For colonists, those transformations were initially entailed by their migration to a geographically remote and culturally alien location of which they had no previous experience, and that afforded them no performance heritage (other than their absent ‘own’) through which to restore a British identity. It is important to note, however, that these performances make no sense as clinical symptoms of trauma. Rather, they were a space of anamnesia, in which to forget the forgetting and remembering of cultural separation. Patriotic colonial performance can be understood, in contemporary terms, as a double-edged cultural formation that problematised any notion that the metropolis and its colony constituted an imagined unitary community (Bhabha 1990, 315).

91 I am in debt here to Salman Rushdie (1988, 337): ‘The trouble with the English is that their history happened overseas, so that they don’t know what it means.’
Colonialism and the trope of performance

In recent decades, para-theatrical discourse has figured prominently as an organising trope in colonial and postcolonial theory. Theorists Robert Young (1995), McClintock (1995), and Daniel O’Quinn (2005) are far from alone in organising their respective studies of colonial and imperial politics and the limits of colonial governance around theatrical tropes. Young (1995, xi) opens his account of ‘the emergence of desire in history and its disavowal in the history of racialised [sic] thought’ with an account of Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein’s stage and film musical *South Pacific* (1949) as a ‘typical, untroubled Orientalist fantasy.’ McClintock organises her study of racialised colonial mimicry and ambivalence around an extended trope of performance. She warns her theorist peers against collapsing different modes of colonial mimicry ‘under the ahistorical sign of the same:’ black voguing, she argues, ‘is not the same as whites performing in blackface; black minstrelsy is not the same as lesbian drag’ (1995, 65). Here, McClintock adapts Bhabha’s (1984, 126) trope of a repressive, violent colonial mimicry that seeks to construct the colonised subject as a ‘reformed, recognisable Other […] that is almost the same [as the colonists] but not quite’ (his emphases). Daniel O’Quinn’s (2005, 1-6) study of a crisis of governance in ‘the relationship between metropolitan British society and its colonial holdings’ is premised on the function of London’s Georgian theatre as an operator that ‘distilled the social forces of imperial life […] and presented it on a nightly basis.’ Such co-options of theatricality to post-colonial theory and history indicate close discursive and historical relationships between colonialism, imperialism, and performance. As I have said, performance and collective memory in nineteenth-century Western Australia can be understood as social action to restore colonial settler identification through the transmission, and hence the acculturation, of British culture.
It is more than interesting, then, that the first recorded performance in the colony was an Indigenous ‘corrobory [sic],’ led by the Swan River tribal elder Yagan and presented before settlers in Mr Purkis’s yard at Perth, in March 1833 (Gazette. 16 Mar. 1833). If nothing else, this performance should have opened settler eyes to the prior embededness of Indigenous culture in that place. That it didn’t comes as no surprise today. The Gazette (16 Mar. 1833) displayed characteristic colonial ambivalence towards the much older culture it was attempting to displace: ‘As a novelty the corrobory [sic] is well worth seeing, but much of its interest is lost to us, from the want of a programme of the performance.’ In fact, the literate but culturally purblind Anglo-Saxons were the ‘novelty’ on that occasion. It took a decade from the foundation of the colony in 1829 for Western Australia’s settlers to declare a theatrical space of their own on colonised territory. As twice mentioned, the first recorded settler performance in Western Australia was an amateur theatrical presentation of Major Hort’s ‘petite’ commedietta Love à la Militaire (1834) at Leeder’s Hotel, Perth, on 9 July 1839 (Gazette. 13 Jul. 1839).\footnote{92}{Dramatic genres were not rigorously defined in the nineteenth century. A commedietta was generally understood to be a slight, one- or two-act comedy with songs.} If, as Casey (1987, 189) argues, ‘memories are selective of place’ (his emphasis), then Indigenous culture was more attuned to, and had prior cultural claim to, not only Purkis’s yard but to all newly colonised space. The implications of this limit case of racialised cultural inhibition can now be seen to have resonated through settler performance in one form or another throughout the century; not least in conflicting, racialised settler anxieties about the sporadic transmission, or more precisely imposition, of surrogate British performance culture in the colony.

In its review of this inaugurating performance, the Gazette anticipated ‘good and beneficial purposes’ to which future settler theatre could be put for the education of colonial-born white children, and the ‘civilising’ of the Indigenous colonised. The
*Gazette* pinned this optimism on a report that an Indigenous manservant had subsequently imitated ‘with an exactness peculiarly striking,’ several roles he had observed while attending the performance of *Love à la Militaire*. This ‘mimic’ act on the part of an accomplished Indigenous performer opened a potential dynamic of reciprocal acculturation between colonised and coloniser. However, in the sad saga of colonial racism, indigenous people were relegated to the rank of mimics. They were rarely admitted to settler performances, and only then as observers who were accorded no equality of looking, much less capacity as agents of reciprocal acculturation.

Thereafter, there is little evidence to suggest that Western Australian colonists regarded performance as a means to ‘reform’ the displaced Indigenous population as a mimic other that could be almost the same but not quite.

But if colonial performance excluded Indigenous people on grounds of racial degeneracy, it also staged the reactionary, racialised politics of class difference that operated within white settler society.\(^9^3\) This repressive politics of class was part of an ‘intricate dialectic […] between the domestication of the colonies and the racializing [*sic*] of the metropolis,’ based on an analogy between race and gender degeneration (McClintock 1995, 43). As will become apparent in subsequent chapters, class came into play in mid-century controversy about the propriety of women amateur performers; while the social abjection of white convict transportees as a class caused anxieties in relation to performance.

**Risk management**

As I have already noted, there is an intimate generative relationship between spaces and places of performance and colonisation, both in theory and in historical

---

\(^9^3\) See Stannage (1979, 48; 248) for an account of economic and demographic factors affecting class politics and social mobility in colonial Perth.
praxis (Dunstone 1993; 2000a; 2000b). Historical acts of colonisation are inseparable from tropes of place and space; while performance, whether it occurs as an historical act of colonisation or not, locates its participants in multiplex spaces and places. Colonial Western Australian performance can be understood as a superficially less aggressive mode of a more extensive and more violent colonial [mis]appropriation of Indigenous space. The body was the arc along which performance operated in contiguity with other more brutal enterprises of colonial racism.

As I have observed elsewhere, physically oriented performances seem to have held social appeal in colonial Western Australia as affirmations of a link between a white male colonial bodily imaginary and colonial subjectivity (Dunstone 2000b, 38). Injuries sustained by juvenile colonial imitators of visiting acrobats and aerialists afford an unexpected insight into the dynamics of colonial subjective space ‘on stage’ and ‘off.’ Press reports indicate a pattern of injuries to colonial youths that embody their falling short, often literally, of ‘natural’ aspirations to adult manhood. A youth at Bunbury broke his collarbone while attempting to emulate aerialist and strongman Harry Bartine’s athletic explorations of space—about which I have more to say in Chapter Six (Inquirer. 7 Jul. 1869). At Perth, boys sustained serious injuries while imitating acrobatic feats they had seen performed at Stebbing’s Circus—the first visit of a circus to the colony being a novelty to them (Gazette. 11 Jun. 1869). Another ‘venturesome youth’ escaped unhurt when his ‘improvised fixture’ collapsed while he was imitating the ‘Young Blondin’ (the juvenile ‘Australian Wonder’ aerialist) before some twenty people at a Perth street corner (WAT. 13 Sept. 1878).94 The Herald (15

---

94 Bartine and Young Blondin fell and sustained injuries while performing, the one at Fremantle and the other at Perth (Herald. 26 Apr. 1873; WAT. 13 Sept. 1878). ‘The public seems to have accepted these falls as more or less expected outcomes to calculated, even ritualised, confrontations with physical danger’ (Dunstone 2000b, 40).
May. 1880) records the death of ‘a lad named Baker’ from injuries he received while imitating ‘athletic performances’ given by the London Circus.

These and similar physical ‘performances’ demonstrate juvenile emulation, rather than mere imitation, of an adult masculinist discourse of the colonial conquest of space through mastery of physical skills and physical risk (Dunstone 2000b, 39). The injuries sustained in these juvenile performances were in one sense merely contingent; but the fact that the press thought them significant enough to report indicates an awareness, at some unconscious level, that colonial mimicry entailed potential damage to an imaginary of a unitary colonial masculine body. There are intriguing parallels to be explored between these intimate juvenile performances of physical risk, and adult male experiences of physical danger, even possible death, by prospectors such as Albert Gaston (1937) on the Eastern Goldfields, and explorers such as Carnegie (1898; 1989) on the Goldfields and in the Gibson Desert.

A masculinist notion of implacement as bodily risk is implicated in colonial physical performance, with a bearing on colonial concepts of place and space. I have referred thus far to physical risk. In Chapter Four, I argue that colonial notions of masculinity were put at risk even in stage plays that represented no immediate threat of physical injury to the performer, especially when male cross-gendered acting was involved, as it so often was. Place and space were equally implicated in this body based, gendered politics of risk, because, as Casey (‘Smooth’ n.p.) puts it, space is a ‘doublet composed of itself (whatever that is) and place.’ The knack here is to relate concepts of place and space with historical instances of implacement through performances of bodily risk taking; in which case, some clarification of terms is necessary.
As discussed in Chapter Two, the concept of place in analytical philosophy is primary to performance, memory, and culture. According to Casey (1993, 31), the primacy of place is ‘phenomenological as well as ontological: places are primary in order of description as in the order of being.’ Malpas (1999, 35) similarly emphasises that notions of subjectivity and the social are each located within the conceptual frame of place. Casey and Malpas concur in defining place and implacement as performative social action. To return to Casey’s (1993, 23) theatrical trope, to be implaced is to be ‘part of [place’s] action’ and ‘acting on its scene.’ Casey’s (1993, 23) summation of the performative quality of place is apposite not only to performance but to the re-implacement—and displacement——experienced by British settlers who departed their homes to migrate halfway round the globe to colonial Western Australia:

What is paramount in a culturally specified place is not the end-point of destination, much less the shortest route to it. What matters most is the experience of being in that place and, more particularly, becoming part of that place. The time of cultural implacement (and the time experienced in that implacement) is that which informs a place in concert with other human beings through one’s bodily agency, within the embrace of a landscape.

Casey’s (1993, 24) term ‘landscape’ designates the ‘unrecuperable’ difference between the more usual ‘determinate’ designators of place, such as rooms and buildings, and the places that environ them. He refines this position significantly in his recent study of contemporary ‘earth art’ (Casey 2005, 79), in which he proposes a trope of the ‘voyage’ as ‘traveling [sic] in place’ (his emphasis); such voyaging being in contradistinction with journeys taken to and from places (Casey 2005, 66).95

95 See the notion of ‘voyage’ in the case study of performances at Fremantle in Chapter Five.
Casey’s notion of ‘voyage’ has important implications for an understanding of performance as implanation. In particular, colonial performance placed an introduced ‘national’ culture into close proximity with the antipodean other from which that culture had specifically alienated itself. This self-alienating propensity was made strikingly manifest in hybrid local amateur events that brought into focus concealed metonymic relations between stage performance and other forms of colonial confrontation with the other. Several historical examples make the point. In its review of a minstrel show in Perth in 1865, the Inquirer (21 Jun. 1865) singled out for praise settler Mr F. Roe’s ‘inimitable’ Christy Minstrel performance of an ‘Australian native dance.’ In September 1881, the agricultural community at Northam, 100 kilometres east of Perth, followed an afternoon Ploughing Match and communal evening dinner with an entertainment by the race cross-dressed Northam Christy Minstrels (EDC. 2 Sept. 1881). In 1897, a local performance of ‘Honey Moon Experiments’ (n.d.) at Katanning, 180 kilometres north of Albany, was followed by an exemplary colonial exhibition of log-chopping (Dunstone 1995c, 633). The inseparability of these performances from acts of colonial racism, and from colonial destruction of the native vegetation, seems to have been taken for granted at the time.

To reiterate my position, performance and memory are social actions that exhibit discrete but interrelated placial characteristics. Performance as historical event is pre-eminently and inherently idiolocal, occasion-bound, and hence ephemeral: ‘as anyone involved in the theatre knows, performance, however highly controlled and codified, is neverrepeatable’ (Carlson 2003, 4). If performance is ephemeral in this way, then both performance, and memory of it, must be constantly restored; as must implanation when it is implicated in performance and memory. Carlson (2003, 5) identifies memory as crucial to reception in performance, insofar as memories of previous performances
provide ‘codes and strategies that shape reception’ of subsequent events. He also points out that ‘using the memory of previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena is fundamental to human cognition’ (2003, 6) (my emphasis). However, memory work in performance being secondary, it does not depend on accurate recall of any single performance event. It is rather the case that performance reinforces secondary memory by ‘bringing together on repeated occasions and in the same spaces the same bodies (onstage and in the audience) and the same physical material’ (Carlson 2003, 11). Implacement, too, depends for its restoration on collective memory beyond the immediate recall of inherently local, occasion-bound, single performance events. Performance events are dual in this sense: at once culturally and socially codified to an unusually high degree, yet intensely intimate, idioloal, and resistant to transhistorical construction. Carlson (2003, 5) identifies this duality at work in the dynamics of reception, which alter as ‘cultural and social memories change.’ This doublet invites further analysis of the operation of historical idolocality in performance and memory.

**Self-proliferation**

The transmission of collective memory as cultural heritage in performance can be expressed in terms of the capacity of performance and memory for spatial self-proliferation. Following Casey (1987; 1993; 1998), it is possible to identify self-proliferation of both the body and collective social memory as marks of subjective space and agency in performance.

As an historical instance, the performing body’s self-reflexive capacity for self-proliferation was prominently staged in nineteenth-century optical illusions and Protean (quick-change) acts. Madame Silvester, who toured Western Australia with the Silvester
Family in 1880, specialised in gender cross-dressed quick-change ‘representations of “gentlemen of the period”’ (WAust. 26 Mar. 1880). Her comic act involved a particularly audacious cross-dressing of her upper lip and chin: successive ‘moustaches or whisker[s]’ were projected onto her face ‘by means of an instrument similar to a magic lantern,’ while she played and satirised the male types identified by them. This patently contrived act demonstrated that gender displacement was implicated in implacement; while the gap between a visible phenomenon (her palpably feminine body) and a hirsute patriarchal imaginary exposed the ambivalence of gender politics to laughter—not least because the gender switches were executed so deftly.

The projection of a series of images onto the face was a technical development of what was known as quick-change acting. In a performance at the Town Hall, Perth, in November 1876, the touring Towers Family performed a sequence of quick-change characters in a scenario based on guests at a fashionable ‘At Home.’ This widely popular form was a variant of the ‘Protean’ entertainment devised and perfected by British comic actor Charles Mathews during the early nineteenth century (Mathews 1838-39). In the Perth act, Frank Towers played in turn: Tim Flaherty, an ‘Irish Laddy;’ Props, ‘a stage struck young man;’ and in gender cross-dress, Miss Melinda Clementina Anastasia. Fifteen-year-old Rosa Towers gender cross-dressed as Miggs, ‘a waif of the streets’ (Herald. 2 Dec. 1876).96 The organisation of the scenario as a series of theatrically self-reflexive ‘entrances’ and ‘exits’ in effect staged subjectivity as performance, as did the cross-dressing. Subjectivity was on display as acquired bodily implacement—gendered, contested, ambivalent, and above all performed. Madame Silvester and the Towers Family seem to have typified a colonial preference for bravura

---

96 Whereas Charles Mathews performed his ‘characters’ in rapid sequence, changing roles in full view of the audience, and often relying on ventriloquy to perform ‘dialogue’ and ‘voices off,’ the Towers Family generally alternated their ‘characters,’ so that each performer had time to change off stage (Mathews 1838-39; Herald. 2 Dec. 1876).
histrionic delineations of generic ‘characters’ rather than the close social observation in which Charles Mathews specialised.

It is important to notice the privileged professional status of Madame Silvester and Rosa Towers as cross-dressed female performers of gender difference.97 Local amateur actresses, bound by the colonial narrative of domesticity, seem never to have achieved that privilege.98 If we accept that masculine colonialism conferred on men a metonymic contiguity with each other and the colony, while assigning to women ‘a metaphoric or symbolic role’ (McClintock 1993, 335), then by analogy, cross-dressed performances by women partook of that metaphoric status. In that sense, the shadows of masculinity (my italics) projected onto Madame Silvester’s face functioned as symbolic signifiers of gendered colonial difference that denied women ‘direct relation to [colonial] agency’ (McClintock 1993, 355). However, the ambivalent actorly presence of Madame Silvester has to be taken into account. Her body was not reduced in performance to a screen on which to project an image; nor, for that matter, was its significance reduced to that of a simple membranous container. Rather, it could be said that cross-dressing triggered the feminine subject’s self-proliferation as its own doubled, gender-mocking place. The comic displacement of moustaches from the masculine physiognomy to the feminine makes it possible to imagine that self-mockery was part of Madame Silvester’s ambivalent performance of gendered subjective space.99 However, it was probably impossible to be sure of this even at the moment of performance. As I see it, the ambiguous gender interplay of body and shadow in Madame Silvester’s act was a pretext for satire at the expense of a masculine imaginary

97 Other visiting professional actresses to cross-dress include Miss Edith Mitchell (Inquirer. 27 Sept. 1865); Grace Egerton (Mrs George Case) (Inquirer. 7 Aug. 1867); and Miss Louise Herbert (Inquirer. 1 Apr. 1868; 22 Apr. 1868).
98 I discuss settler actresses as bearers of colonial gender difference at length in Chapter Four.
99 Something of the same gendered ambivalence attaches itself to the popular comic icon of a moustachioed ‘Mona Lisa.’
of face hair; it was potentially unsettling as a reminder that ‘the world is full of apparitions,’ and that every object we see ‘sees us’ (Elkins 1996, 51). This capacity for self-reflexivity—which I understand to be a form of subjective self-proliferation—belongs especially to the performer who disconcertingly stages a ‘return’ of the gaze; or, as Barbara Freedman (1991, 1) puts it, ‘is aware that she is seen, reflects that awareness, and deflects [the seer’s] look.’ The performer’s potential capacity to return the gaze was a basis upon which to unsettle a colonial politics of gender; but the same return could also problematise colonial links with metropolitan theatre. I take up the gendered politics of cross-dressing by adult and juvenile settler males in Chapter Four.

Casey (‘Smooth,’ n. p.) maintains that the ‘ultimate source of spatial self-proliferation’ is not the body but ‘the placialization [sic] of space itself.’ In this sense, he concludes, the body is the nexus for the generative dynamics of space and place. When this argument is applied to historical instances of colonial cultural heritage, it raises the problem of how the generative relationship of performance and collective memory is materially effected. How do performance and memory placialise space, assuming that they do endow intimate performance space and subjective space with ‘properties of encompassing, holding, sustaining, gathering, situating’ that Casey (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) ascribes to place? There can be no totalising answer, given that space and place themselves are ‘two quite variant kinds’ of things that nevertheless ‘cannot do otherwise’ than co-exist in ‘uneasy disparity […] and ambivalent togetherness’ (Casey ‘Smooth,’ n.p.).

This chapter indicates that colonial amateur performance was characterised by complexities specific to itself. Analysis indicates that colonial Western Australian amateur performance was a matter of collective social action specific to the
communities that generated those performances, but shot through with remembering of other places. As such, amateur performance opened onto a range of colonial and imperial class, gender, and race politics, and it did so as an action of place. In this chapter, I have described conceptual notions of the ambiguous capacity of performance to implace culture through the enactment of bodily being-in-the-world. I have grounded these notions in the historical specificity of colonial performance as a spatial and placial modalisation of collective remembering. My analysis indicates that colonial amateur performance was a collective response to desires for colonial identity that were invested in cultural heritage but embedded in a present politics of racial exclusivity, the social abjection of male convicts, and the marginalisation of women.
Chapter Four: a politics of colonial performance

Our social assemblies have been but few [...]  
*The Inquirer and Commercial News*

This Chapter discusses in more detail the gendered and racialised politics of performance in colonial Western Australia that I have outlined in Chapter Three. In particular, I analyse the transmission of imperial performance culture to the colony, and its imbrication within gender, racial, and class matrices. This develops the theme that performance contributed, as an artefact, to an expansive coming into place that mere geodetic exploration could not bring to the colony.

My discussion focuses on colonial performance as a local spectacle of a wider Victorian cult of domesticity, and more especially as an embodiment of the particular politics of race and gender that developed within the colony in response to that discourse of the domestic. McClintock (1995, 5) argues that the cult of domesticity was ‘an indispensable element both of the industrial market and the imperial enterprise.’ Moreover, according to McClintock, European men were the ‘most direct agents’ of that enterprise, and women and the colonised peoples its most direct targets. Spectacle was integral to the imperial enterprise of the domestic, whether on an international scale at the World Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, London, in 1851, or at the level of commercial advertisements for household goods. I now examine the ways in which the politics of the domestic came to bear on colonial performance.

In McClintock’s (1995, 34) terms, the nineteenth-century Western cult of the domestic positioned the Victorian middle-class home as ‘a space for the display of imperial spectacle’ through which ‘evolutionary racism and imperial power were
marketed on a hitherto unimaginable scale’. That spectacle entailed ‘processes of social metamorphosis and political subjection of which gender [was] the abiding but not the only dimension.’ McClintock links gender with racism in this process, emphasising that European colonies became a theatre for ‘commodity racism’ and a Western reinvention of gender.

McClintock (1995, 32) defines commodity racism as the convergence of ‘private domesticity and the imperial market—the two spheres vaunted by middle-class Victorians as entirely and naturally distinct—in […] commodity spectacle.’ I argue that this convergence of private domesticity and the market was also played out in performance. Colonial performance was imbricated within the larger enterprise of the imperial cult of domesticity, and racialised in its adherence to its British heritage. British (and to a much lesser extent American) performance culture can be understood as a marketable social commodity imported into the colony, where it was valued but in short supply.

There was a doubleness to colonial performance as commodity, partly as a consequence of the division between amateur and commercial performance, but also because of the capacity of a performance space to expand inclusively into its social and cultural environs. Amateur performance was, by general consent, a voluntary activity that required profits (if any) to be returned as a benefit to the community. Amateur voluntarism was held to be a social value of specific benefit to its own bounded community; though, as dramatic criticism in the press indicates, voluntarism did not preclude a concern for the maintenance of performance standards pertaining beyond the host community. However, the irregularity of amateur performance, indeed its absence
for long periods during the first five decades of colonisation, demonstrates the difficulty of sustaining voluntarism in small, scattered communities.\(^{100}\)

Commercial theatre, on the other hand, was conducted as an habitual occupation and business enterprise across widely distributed communities. The value of commercial theatre to colonial communities resided in its capacity to import performances of an artistic and technical standard not locally attainable. Amateurs and itinerant professionals thus made complementary contributions to the coming into place of colonial communities. In effect, the two discrete domains of performance reflexively enacted the ‘civilising’ colonial enterprise as an implantment of ‘determinant’ British culture. In philosophical terms, the two categories explored the limits of colonial and imperial implacements, testing their capacities for inclusion in more expansive envelopments of place.

Part of the marketability of colonial performance resided in its capacity, as an artefact, to mediate practices and values of domesticity embedded in British cultural heritage. The forms in which that heritage was to be ‘ghosted’ were contested in an ongoing politics of performance in the colony. I begin an analysis of those politics by considering the British provenance of colonial amateur theatre.

**Amateurism at home and abroad**

The cultural ambience and presentation of amateur theatre in colonial Western Australian were modelled on two forms of amateur performance that pertained in Britain during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These were the amateur theatricals mounted by families in private houses in town and country; and the

\(^{100}\) The *Herald* (21 Oct. 1876) editorialised: ‘In a country where the population is so sparsely scattered as it is here, it is the misfortune of almost every undertaking which is dependent for its success on voluntary efforts to have to contend with a general feeling of indifference.’
performances that amateurs presented ‘for charity or their own amusement’ at local halls, hotels, playhouses, or private homes (Rosenfeld 1978, 8). Several other forms of British amateur culture took root in the colony, in association with institutions having ancillary interests in performance. The British armed forces, for instance, were instrumental in transmitting ‘Home’ culture in the form of entertainment to servicemen and colonists throughout the empire. In Western Australia, members of the resident Pensioner and Rifle Volunteer bands, the dramatic corps of the Royal Engineers during their tour of duty, and the crews of visiting naval vessels participated in amateur performance.\(^\text{101}\) The colony’s private schools presented annual juvenile performances for educational purposes.\(^\text{102}\) Regional communities mounted ‘one off’ entertainments; while the memberships of lodges, the Temperance movement, and churches affirmed their affiliations through performances.\(^\text{103}\) Amateur performance remained unremunerated in conservative colonial society: the colony never acquired small private theatres where, as in Britain, ‘the stage-struck of all types paid for their roles in order to satisfy their histrionic cravings’ (Rosenfeld 1978, 8) (my emphasis). Amateur theatricals were effective in building community cohesion through these institutional interactions, but as will become apparent, amateur voluntarism was also exclusionary in matters of gender, race, class, rank, education, belief, and wealth. I will now discuss the Perth presentation of Love à la Militaire (already referred to) as an instance of the ‘recycling’ of collective memory in Western Australia’s amateur performance culture.

\(^{101}\) See Chapter Five for an account of the Theatre Royal, Fremantle, built by the Royal Engineers for their own garrison performances in 1858. Sailors of the Royal Navy performed on board ships and ashore. The Royal Snowflake Minstrels of HMS Bacchante performed at the Court House, Albany, where their ship was docked in 1881 (WAust. 28 Jun. 1881).

\(^{102}\) The Christian Brothers’ School, Perth, presented John Home’s tragedy Douglas (1794) in May 1865 (Inquirer. 10 May. 1865); and schoolchildren presented an evening of tableaux at the Town Hall, Albany, in August 1896 (AustAdvt. 18 Aug. 1896).

\(^{103}\) The Northam Farmers Club presented three plays at the town’s Temperance Hall in September 1878 (EDC. 7 Sept. 1878); the Catholic Young Men’s Dramatic Corps performed William Brough’s farce Apartments (1851) and Lord Glenfall’s farce Irish Tutor (1830) at Perth in May 1868 (Inquirer. 27 May. 1868); and the Western Australian Temperance Recreation Society presented excerpts from Byron’s Manfred (1817), with Irish characters, and stump oratory at Fremantle in October 1868 (Inquirer. 21 Oct. 1868).
Colonial ‘ghosting’

Schechner’s (1985, 36-37) previously mentioned definition of performance as ‘twice-behaved behavior [sic]’ was doubly borne out at the amateur theatrical presentation of Love à la Militaire at Leeder’s Hotel, Perth, on 9 July 1839 (Gazette. 13 Jul. 1839). Leeder’s Hotel, later the Freemasons’ Hotel, stood at the corner of St George’s Terrace and William Street, Perth, where it catered to the colonial establishment (Stannage 1978, 65). The first amateur performance at the hotel not only restaged Major Hort’s comedietta for colonial conditions, but led to the implacement in the colony of a long standing British controversy about the social propriety of theatre in general, and the morality of actresses in particular. For reasons of clarity, I first analyse the historical specificity of the colonial staging of Hort’s play as an instance of the colonists’ pre-modern preoccupation with the present as a continuation of tradition. I then discuss performance as an action of domesticity; and the paradox of performance as future memory. That paradox follows inevitably from the notion (Roach 1996, 2) that performance is a surrogation that cannot replicate the past. I will then provide an account of the controversy surrounding performance, and the effects of that controversy on the gender and race politics of colonial performance; and conclude with a discussion of the commemorative dimensions of colonial performance.

The Gazette’s (13 Jul. 1839) description of the Perth performance of Love à la Militaire as a ‘novel situation’ was a misnomer. For all its colonial novelty, the production and its social ambience ‘ghosted’ much of what British amateurism then stood for. The construction of a removable stage ‘of suitable proportions’ at one end of Leeder’s room, the ‘creditable’ stage management, and Mr Purkis’ ‘effective’ scenery (Gazette. 13 Jul. 1839) might have been modelled directly from British manuals of

---

104 The Palace Hotel replaced the Freemasons’ Hotel in 1897; the 204 metre-high Bank West Tower now occupies the site (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_Hotel,_Perth).
amateur performance by George Grant (1828), William Sorrell (1866), or Henry Dakin (1883). Following practice at other colonial outposts, Perth’s militia band provided instrumental overtures, entr’actes, and anthem. Privacy was the hallmark of the occasion, colonial gentry being admitted by named subscription ticket only. Silk programmes listed the cast’s names, but the ‘private nature of the performance’ precluded their publication in the *Gazette* (13 Jul. 1839). Figure 6 is of part of a programme. Nor did the press publish attendance figures. Given that the settler population of the entire colony in 1839 numbered 2154 (Chate et al. 1991, 9), and estimating the seating capacity of the hotel assembly room, I calculate that about seventy-five persons attended the performance on 9 July 1839.

Even so modest a performance as this was inseparable from a desire for power based on hierarchies of class and race. Choice of play and players, audience composition, and venue all conformed to a racialised assumption that colonial performance should embed traces of earlier British performance and its social ambience; all of which served to rationalise the conservative social attitudes and aspirations of those who presented or attended the play. As polemicist Henry Trigg (*Gazette*. 5 Oct. 1839) reflected, ‘the private theatricals of Swan River [were] only intended for the amusement of the heads of society.’ I return to Trigg’s polemic against theatre later in this chapter.

Paradoxically, the *Gazette* (13 Jul. 1839) saw these exclusionary amateur theatricals as a promise of future community cohesion: the ‘cheerful manner in which the first representation has been supported […] will tend greatly to cement our little

---

105 George Grant (1829) published under the pseudonym ‘A Veteran Stager.’
106 A silk programme from the Perth performance of *Love à la Miltaire* is held at the British Museum (shelfmark C.43.h.4); a facsimile is held at the State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library, (catalogue number PR14482).
107 The programme cannot be photographed for reasons of conservation.
community in bonds of social interest and enjoyment.’ But the socially conservative Gazette’s notion of ‘our little community’ was class-bound to its readership. The 1839 presentation was promoted as a theatrical ‘first’ in order to affirm a collective claim to class identity and cultural ascendancy in colonial society, while looking back, via amateur theatricals, to the vanishing world of conservative landed gentryism in Britain. As Sybil Rosenfeld (1978, 8) points out, the earlier practice of amateur theatricals in country houses had by this time become urbanised, and to some extent democratised, in Britain. There were amateur theatre groups for city apprentices; technically equipped halls and theatres were available for hire to amateur performers in London; and—I would add—the professional theatre trade journal Era advertised for the services of itinerant ‘amateur’ performers.

By comparison, the private amateur theatricals at pre-urban Perth in 1839 were in a reactionary time warp. But if these colonial amateur theatricals modelled a conscious reversion to earlier British practice, they also enacted local processes whereby filiative bonds to family, rendered anachronistic by migration, were displaced into affiliations with emerging bureaucracies, institutions, special interest groups, and modalities of recreational, ‘rational’ entertainment. McClintock (1995, 45) identifies two functions of the family trope that are relevant to an understanding of what one might call the domestic politics of colonial amateurism. For one thing, the figure of the hierarchical domestic family served as an organising metaphor for the distribution of power within the supposed unitary organism of the colony. The other virtue of the trope of the family was to legitimise diachronic ‘social hierarchy’ and synchronic ‘historical change’ as ‘natural,’ and so not subject to historical change.

Performance was rapidly imbricated within colonial re-configurations of family as affiliation. Indeed, a second performance of *Love à la Militaire* was given for ‘ladies and gentlemen’ at Leeder’s Hotel on 4 September 1839 (*Perth Gazette*. 20 Aug. 1839); and two subsequent seasons of theatricals presented there in September and October 1839.109 These performances were explicit displays of privilege to the colony’s privileged, to the exclusion of those upon whose labour that privilege depended. In a relaxation of earlier admissions policy, servants and tradespersons were admitted at a reduced price to the dress rehearsal for the October 1839 season, but they were excluded from mixing with their social ‘betters’ at public performances (*Gazette*. 12 Oct. 1839).

*Amateurism and the cult of domesticity*

Colonial society was historically laminated, looking back to pre-Victorian gentryism but also participating, of necessity, in the encroaching Victorian cult of the domestic. McClintock argues that, by the mid-nineteenth century, the domestic realm had become an ‘indispensable arena’ for the organisation of the values of Western imperial commerce, especially as these were embedded in the surface sciences and technologies of ‘surveying, map-making, measurement, and quantification’ (1995, 168). The process of exploring and mapping Western Australia continued into the early twentieth-century.110 But by the time that Henry Dakin (1883) published his advice on the erection of temporary stages in Britain’s drawing rooms, the public amateur stage had also become embedded as a space of commodity spectacle in colonial Western Australia.

---


110 See, for example, Alexander Forrest (1880) and David Carnegie (1898; 1989).
We have seen the failure of the colony of Western Australia to accumulate capital in fulfilment of its role as a site of imperial commercial expansion during its first several decades. We have also seen the colonials’ failure to manage the terrestrial surface of Western Australia, and to engender a collective being-in-place in the colony. McClintock’s notion of the domestic affords an insight into the performance of *Love à la Militaire* in July 1839 as a gesture, on the part of the colony’s new gentry, to organise and control public space as controllable ‘domestic’ space in the face of economic and cultural privation. The colonial environs of the Perth performance necessarily entailed a shift of emphasis in the action of the domestic away from the rampant industrial forms of the northern hemisphere, towards the implantation of race and gender constructions in agrarian colonial society. It is important to an historical understanding of colonial performance to recall that the colony was based on a subsistence agrarian economy in 1839; and that, having experienced periods of economic recession during the 1840s, 1850s, and 1880s, it did not significantly industrialise its economy until the development of the Eastern Goldfields in the late 1890s.\(^{111}\)

The performance space of *Love à la Militaire* at Leeder’s room was domestic in the sense that to be admitted to it was to affirm the ‘presiding domestic values’ of monogamy, classification, and regulation (McClintock 1995, 168). These were values through which, to borrow McClintock’s (1995, 168) phrase, the new colonial gentry class sought to establish an appearance of ‘unified class identity.’ From what we can reconstruct of its domestic spaces, the performance at Leeder’s Hotel was grounded in a middle-class identification of ‘happiness with rational order and the clear demarcation of boundaries’ (McClintock 1995, 168).

\(^{111}\) See Stannage (1979, *passim*) for the social effects of recession in the colony. Chapter Five of this thesis gives an account of the reasons for introducing transportation in 1850, and of the economic stimulus to performance given by the gold rushes of the 1890s.
Love à la Militaire inaugurated the historic function, assigned to amateur theatre by the colonial establishment, of defining and policing the social and economic boundaries of a cult of domesticity. Colonial surrogations of this cult were grounded in creationist notions of a pre-ordained, unitary order of nature and society. The politics of a stable, male dominated universal order permeated every dimension of colonial performance. Thus, in its review of amateur theatricals at Hodge’s Hotel, Perth, in August 1842, the Gazette (3 Sept. 1842) praised an all-male cast for playing female and male roles ‘with proper discernment, not outraging all the orders of nature, but portraying faithfully the characters committed to their charge.’

A mainly complaisant press seems to have accepted the appearance of male cross-dressers in female roles as markers of masculine authority in domestic and natural realms, while reserving to male journalists the power to reflect on standards and conditions, and comment on individual performances.

Objections raised in the press to the behaviour of audiences had as much to do with the breaching of class boundaries and decorum as they did with the disruption of performances. The politics of a social order grounded in property and domesticity became ever more firmly entrenched in Perth’s social and political establishment during the century, partly in reaction to the gradual emergence of working class and mercantile organisations as alternatives to the social and political power of the establishment (Stannage 1979, 7).

---

112 The plays on this occasion were William Barnes Rhodes’ burlesque Bombastes Furioso (1820), James Kenney’s farce Raising the Wind (1829), and John Stirling Coyne’s farce The Queer Subject (1837) (Gazette. 7 Sept. 1842).
113 The Inquirer (17 Jul. 1872) gave practical advice on how to control disruptive behaviour at performances.
114 See Stannage (1979, 87; 151-52) for an account of worker politics in colonial Perth; and Webb and Webb (1993) for the emergence of Kalgoorlie as a regional centre capable of challenging the centralisation of social and political power in Perth.
Domesticity and repertoire

The stage, being under the sign of Proteus, made fun of but ultimately endorsed the quasi-familial, domestic principles on which it managed its spaces. The repertoire of plays performed on the colonial stage provides an insight into the ways in which Perth’s amateurs rationalised the use of public performance to police the boundaries of domestic space. Of course, the colony’s amateurs were not alone in adhering to the organising principle of the domestic: the popular ‘At Home’ or ‘Drawing-room’ format of professional ‘quick change’ acting was also a salient example of the propensity to enact public performance space self-reflexively as domestic space.

Mark Lemon’s one-act farce Domestic Economy (1849), performed in Western Australia in 1865 and 1876, exemplifies the dramaturgical convergence of mid-Victorian domestic values and theatricality. The action of Lemon’s play is organised around a conventional polarity of female and male labour that is farcically inverted, and then provisionally restored, through the device of gender cross-dressing and role swapping.

Before I discuss the play, I should define what I mean by the term ‘cross-dressing.’ In my terms, a female cross-dresser is an actress who adopts men’s apparel in order to give a credible performance of a male role on stage; a male cross-dresser wears women’s dress to similar effect in his performance of a female role. No matter how credible the gender performance, the inescapable sexuality of the performer’s body

---

116 Perth Amateur Dramatic Corps presented Domestic Economy, J. M. Morton’s Little Toddlekins (1850), and Charles Mathews’ The Two Bonnycastles (n.d.) at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, on 21 and 22 June 1865 (Inquirer. 28 Jun. 1865). Western Australian Timber Company employees performed Domestic Economy at the Lockville sawmill, near present day Busselton, in July 1876 (Inquirer. 11 Jul. 1876). The Lockville event raised £6/10/- for the timber workers’ accident and sickness fund (WAT. 28 Jul. 1876).
makes cross-dressing a stubbornly ambiguous activity. Any convincing performance of a gender to which the performer does not belong must of necessity draw on codified gender and sexual behaviours. As a performance modality that layers, ambigufies, or inverts social constructions of gender, cross-dressing is likely to enter collective memory as a remembered artefact rather than as individual experience. The cross-dresser’s intended effect can range from conveying sexual desirability, to psychological and emotional conviction; from performing accurately observed gender behaviour, to the exploration and exploitation of sexual ambiguity; and, of course, to parodic romp. Hopefully, this explanation will clarify my analysis of cross-dressing in Domestic Economy.

Staging the domestic

At the opening of the play, British housewife Mrs Gumley divides her energies between lathering her son in the tub, maintaining a clean house in the face of ever-encroaching dirt, and attending to the demands of customers in the adjoining family shop:

The soap’s in your eye? and serve you right, sir—you should stand still […] As if I didn’t have enough to do in an ordinary way, what with the shop and the house, (brushes Joey’s hair) and one thing and another.

Shop bell rings, and Mrs Shackles enters.

Dramatic crises arise from the masculine impulse to regulate domestic space and time along industrial lines; or, to put it another way, to subordinate diachronic family space to modern synchronic standard time. When Mrs Gumley fails to provide her husband’s lunch ‘on time,’ Mr Gumley arrogates his wife’s domestic space to himself, while the
defiant wife dons her husband’s working clothes and exits to do his work as a potato digger. The spatially ‘fixed’ gender roles of labour in marriage are made nonsense of by the comic proliferation of gender and class roles into female cross-dressing. Domestic perturbation re-doubles when cross-dressed Mrs Gumley plays the female bigamist, introducing to her husband a man to whom she claims to be married, and who has ‘rescued’ her from the indignity of working in the potato patch. Identities are restored and bigamy averted only when Mrs Gumley reveals that her surrogate ‘husband’ is cousin Tom, an Englishman returned from imperial India.

In this comic dramaturgy, Mrs Gumley’s body is the matrix that links the subordination of women to men in domestic Britain with the feminisation of the wider imperial unknown by British men.117 The dialogue collapses female domestic labour into the imperial narrative of racial degeneration when Mrs Gumley exclaims: ‘Why, I’m a perfect slave, I am. If I were a regular Ethiopian, I couldn’t be wearing out my bones faster.’ Implied questions of Anglo racial purity are ‘resolved’ when son Joey, who has been soaped in the bathtub, and has symbolically re-appeared in his father’s ‘long johns,’ finally emerges from the shop covered in baker’s flour—the white ‘flower of the family,’ and unlikely guarantor of its dynastic continuity.118

The Gumley family, linked with its filiative past but aspiring to modern bonds of affiliation, collectively figures the national body politic. Their exchange of gender roles theatricalises the domestic and racial abjection of ‘unclean’ surfaces, whether of skin, clothes, kitchen floor, potato patch, or, by imperial extension, India. Dirty surfaces, the grime associated with physical labour, and the life of an imperial Englishman in India must be ‘cleansed’ within conventional gender boundaries before the Anglo-Saxon self,

118 Master Charles Utton’s Joey, a role with no dialogue to speak of, kept the regional Lockville audience in ‘roars of laughter’ (WAT. 28 Jul. 1876).
body, and family can become social and middle-class. Comedy, however, deals a
double hand, playing the world in ‘reverse’ as well as ‘forward.’ Thus, abject spaces
continue to haunt collective domesticity in Domestic Comedy. The family gathers for
lunch, the clock ticks, but Mr Gumley has forgotten to put the pudding in the pot.
Domestic amnesia runs on its own inertia; standard gender divisions of labour are
‘restored,’ but only in surrogate, hence historically changeable, form.

**Comic amnesia**

Another colonial favourite, William Brough and Andrew Halliday’s one-act
farce The Area Belle (1864), heightens the absurdity of imbricating domestic space and
industrial labour within what McClintock (1995, 115) refers to as an ‘emergent
discourse on racial degeneration.’ The setting of The Area Belle calls for a modern
(industrialised) Victorian kitchen with a ‘practicable copper,’ in which Constable
Pitcher, by a series of coincidences, contrives to hide. Mrs Croaker, the ‘missus’ of the
house, enters, fills the copper with water, lights it, and leaves without noticing the
constable. Having escaped being boiled alive, the constable hides under a table just
before his rival, Tosser the soldier, and Penelope the kitchen maid discover Pitcher’s
cap and handkerchief in the copper:

Tosser: What is it, Penelope?
Penelope: Pitcher!
Tosser: I like him, Penelope—no unfriendliness towards ‘im whatsoever—he’s a
broth of a boy!

---

119 The Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps presented William Brough and Andrew Halliday’s farce The Area Belle (1864) in a programme with Colin Hazelwood’s domestic drama The Harvest Storm (1850) at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, on 19 and 20 January 1869 (Herald. 23 Jan. 1869). The Area Belle followed minstrel items in a programme of ‘Amateur Theatricals’ at the Working Men’s Hall, Geraldton, on 11 and 12 October 1878 (VicExp. 16/10/78).
Penelope: He is indeed! —look here, stewed down to this (showing hat and handkerchief).

This domestic space is a space of amnesia and semantic slippage, in which meaning is in constant need of restoration. Acts of amnesia propel the action; and by dramatic logic, amnesia (forgetting who or where you are) entails the multiplying of disparate places. The comic illogic of amnesia perpetuates itself: at the final curtain, Pitcher ‘arrests’ the audience so that they must ‘join’ Penelope’s suitors in paying their ‘devoirs’ to her ‘for many nights to come.’

The kitchen setting is a multiplex of spatial conversions that mocks the rational boundaries of domestic striated space. The lighting of the copper, with its imperialist nod at cannibalism in exotic places, plays the racial degeneration card. Penelope’s absentminded sexual eagerness, which impels her to arrange to meet four beaux at the same hour, disrupts the feminine ordering of domestic space. The patriarchal forces of law and order, embodied in Pitcher the policeman and Tosser the soldier, are shown to be vulnerable to their sexual energies. Dramatic action being double, domestic ‘order’ is restored but remains in a contingent condition of ‘arrest.’

These two comedies afford subliminal affirmations of domesticity as a bulwark against the trope of racial degeneration. The action of each play assumes the form of a lustration: a ritualistic cleansing of domestic space, and by extension, imperial capitalist expansion. The power of being white and middle-class was operative in both Domestic Economy, and The Area Belle. In this sense, these plays enacted the amnesiac distancing
of their respectable colonial audiences from the cycle of poverty and squalor in industrialising Britain, and in its colony.\textsuperscript{120}

\textit{‘so sober and so polite a mirth’} \textsuperscript{121}

I would ask, is it needful to see vice portrayed to make it odious?

Rev. Henry Trigg

Sectarian resistance to amateur theatricals emerged immediately following the presentation of a second programme of amateur theatricals at Leeder’s Hotel, Perth, in September 1839.\textsuperscript{122} Wesleyan Methodist minister Reverend Henry Trigg, of Perth, published an attack in the \textit{Gazette} (5 Oct. and 12 Oct. 1839) against what he saw as the immorality of performances.\textsuperscript{123} His two-part letter coincided with the third season of amateur theatricals, given at Leeder’s Hotel on 16 October 1839 (\textit{Gazette}. 12 Oct. 1839).\textsuperscript{124}

Trigg condemned amateur performance on grounds of gender, sexuality, and moral education; knowing, as he claimed, ‘from actual experience, the baneful effects theatricals have on the young and inexperienced mind, and the gross immorality of many “stars” in the profession’ (\textit{Gazette}. 5 Oct. 1839). Borrowing selectively from, among others, puritan William Prynne’s (1632) polemic against London public theatre in the days of boy actors, Trigg (\textit{Gazette}. 5 Oct. 1839) described backstage as: ‘A

\textsuperscript{120} Stannage (1979, 65) describes ‘a vicious cycle of poverty, bare subsistence, social and personal despair’ in which the colony’s ‘labouring classes were driven to act in ways which the gentry believed were central to their natures.’

\textsuperscript{121} Taken from an unattributed quotation in a review of the aforementioned first amateur theatricals at Perth on 9 July 1839 (\textit{Gazette}. 13 Jul. 1839).

\textsuperscript{122} See note 9.

\textsuperscript{123} Trigg’s rhetorical attack appeared in two parts, across four columns (\textit{Gazette} 5 Oct. 1839; 12 Oct. 1839).

\textsuperscript{124} The programme consisted of William Moncrieff’s farce \textit{The Spectre Bridegroom} (1829), Lord Glenfall’s farce \textit{The Irish Tutor} (1830), and a revival of \textit{Amateurs and Actors} (\textit{Gazette}. 12 Oct. 1839).
charibidis [sic] of dissipation—a sink of infamy—the acme of licentiousness—the mart of all crime’. Arguing from a notion of theatre as unmediated imitation, he condemned comedy for preparing young women ‘for any intrigue with a bold adventurer,’ and predisposing young men ‘to imitate the good natured heroic rake they have seen such favorite [sic] on the stage’ (Gazette. 5 Oct. 1839).

Trigg’s respondents countered from their characteristically racialised colonial position. ‘Philo-Dramaticus’ (Gazette. 19 Oct. 1839) asserted that ‘the drama, in some shape or another, is a necessary concomitant of a certain stage of civilisation.’ To dismantle the drama, along with ‘literary and scientific institutions,’ would return modern Britons ‘to that primeval simplicity and ignorance, of which we have so beautiful an example amongst the aborigines [sic] of this colony’ (Gazette. 19 Oct. 1839). ‘Philo-Dramaticus’ had unwittingly condemned colonial amateur theatricals from his own mouth, as a racialised spectacle of imperialism.

Controversy and gossip associated with amateur theatricals continued into the 1860s. For example, the Gazette (19 Sept. 1842) adverted to a rumour that unnamed persons were to seek the indictment of Perth’s gentlemen amateur actors ‘at the next Quarter Sessions as rogues and vagabonds.’ Official attitudes to amateur performance were inconsistent. Chief judicial officer Mr Mackie had granted permission for a performance of the Elwes amateur theatricals at the Court House, Perth, in July and September 1854. However, he refused a subsequent application from the same group for performances to take place in the same venue in 1855, causing the amateurs to relocate to the less suitable Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth (Gazette. 10 Aug. 1855).  

125 The July programme comprised three farces: John Madison Morton’s The Original (1837), his farce Box and Cox (n.d.), and John Stirling Coyne’s The Queer Subject (1837) (Gazette. 14 July. 1854). The September season reprised The Queer Subject together with Isaack Pocock’s
Mackie’s reasons are lost, but the *Inquirer* (29 Aug. 1855) was blunt: ‘In consequence of […] the ill-natured opposition of those with whom rested the power of refusal, the Amateurs were deprived of the use of this building.’

Latent animosity towards performers, and to actresses in particular, re-emerged in 1869. In a letter to the *Inquirer* (1 Sept. 1869), ‘Censor’ claimed (without evidence) that ‘the present inundation of dramatic and acrobatic companies’ had led to ‘great demoralization [sic] amongst the juveniles of our colony.’ ‘Censor’ named no names, but his examples indicate that he had in mind gossip about a collaboration involving the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps and temporary resident Americans, actress Mrs Lyons and wire rope walker Harry Bartine, at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, on 6 July 1869 (*Inquirer*. 30 Jun. 1869). Bartine’s performance of his ‘Antipodean Feat’ at Fremantle on 2 June 1869 is analysed in Chapter Six.

Like Trigg before him, ‘Censor’ made the general claim that professional actresses exercised a baneful influence on young people’s morality; adding pragmatically that theatricals were a distraction to young men during working hours. In the absence of any case against Mrs Lyons, one can only surmise that stage appearances by women who had reached the age of sexual activity aroused misogynistic prejudices and fears. Surprisingly, neither Trigg nor ‘Censor’ addressed the morality of gender melodrama *The Miller and His Men* (n.d.), and Joseph Ebsworth’s farce *The Rival Valets* (1847) (*Gazette*. 25 Aug. 1854).

---

126 The Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, had not been used for performances before this. The *Inquirer* (29 Aug. 1855) described the Hall as ‘a building not sufficiently roomy, and ill fitted for the purpose.’

127 The archive suggests that ‘Censor’ most likely had in mind Lyons’ Rocky Mountains Wonders Troupe and Stebbing’s Circus, each of which toured the colony in the colony in 1869. See also note 27.

128 Mrs Lyons and her husband H. P. Lyons had brought their Rocky Mountains Wonders Troupe of comic actors, acrobats, vocalists, and equestrians to Western Australia in March 1869 (*Inquirer*. 31 Mar. 1869). Wire walker and slack rope vaulter Harry Bartine had arrived in the colony with Stebbings’ Circus in April 1869 (*Inquirer*. 28 Apr. 1869).
cross-dressing, presumably because the sexual attractiveness of men in feminine dress, to men or to women, was not a possibility in their moral universe.

In his reply to ‘Censor,’ Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps Secretary Michael Samson denied that the Corps’s performances were ‘followed by late suppers […] “orgies and brawlings”’; and rejected the slur against ‘a lady [presumably Mrs Lyons] who was kind enough to come forward […] to assist at one of our performances’ (Inquirer. 8 Sept. 1869). No attack followed Mrs Lyons’ subsequent appearance with the combined Fremantle and Perth Amateur Dramatic Companies at Perth, in July 1870 (Inquirer. 20 Jul. 1870). The Fremantle amateurs reverted to practice in their following season, when sixteen-year-old Henry Yelverton cross-dressed as Milly in J. B. Buckstone’s comedy The Maid With the Milking Pail (1853), and as Mrs M. in William Suter’s [sic] farce ‘Shrimps For Two’ (n.d.) at the Oddfellows’ Hall, in June 1870 (Inquirer. 29 Jun. 1870).

Gender cross-dressing

Following the Trigg controversy, one-off seasons of amateur theatricals, each of two or three nights duration, continued at irregular intervals until the formation of a ‘permanent’ Perth Amateur Dramatic Company in 1860. But the 1839 dispute over the propriety of women’s participation had material consequences for amateur practice in that period and beyond. Although ‘ladies and gentlemen’ had performed in all three 1839 seasons, adult or juvenile males were regularly cast in female roles in amateur seasons at Perth and Fremantle during the decades from 1842 to 1870. In the few

---

129 It is possible that Mrs Lyons had stepped in as a result of poor performances by Master Makckey and Mr Caporn in the female roles in the Fremantle Amateurs’ production of C. Hazelwood’s drama Clock on the Stairs (1850) in June 1869 (Herald. 12 Jun. 1869).
130 Amateurs presented 15 more seasons before the foundation of the Perth Amateur Dramatic Company in 1860 (Dunstone 1993). The new company opened at the United Services Tavern, Perth, on 28 August 1860, with J. M. Morton’s ‘comic drama’ Box and Cox (n.d.), and scenes from Mrs Maria Lovell’s melodrama Idiot Witness (1855) (Inquirer. 5 Sept. 1860).
instances in which women appeared on stage during those decades, as they did in the amateur performance of Isaack Pocock’s melodrama *The Miller and His Men* (n.d) at the Court House, Perth, in September 1854, the names of women performers were omitted from the programme to ensure their anonymity (Elwes 1854; 1959, n.p.).

The more usual practice at Perth and Fremantle was to cast adult and juvenile males in female roles. The descriptor of the ‘Perth gentlemen amateurs,’ who presented two farces and a burlesque at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in October 1855, speaks for itself (*Inquirer. 17 Oct. 1855*). The effort to elide women’s participation mid-century extended to the artistic decision-making and administration of amateur companies. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Mr Elwes assembled a committee of eight ‘Gentlemen’ to present amateur seasons at Perth in July and September 1854, (Elwes 1854; 1959, n.p.). The office bearers and membership of the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps, established in 1865, were likewise exclusively male (*Inquirer. 19 Jul. 1865*). Stage management, with responsibility for rehearsals, drilling new actors, and sometimes designing scenery, fell exclusively to men. So, too, did musical direction. Actors in cross-dress were sometimes ‘damned with faint praise’ for their gowns, but the seamstresses and tailors who made them went unmentioned, as did other women backstage workers.

There were imperial precedents enough for this male prerogative. I have already referred to the contribution made by the all-male British armed services to the dissemination of British performance culture in the colonies. Commercial theatre afforded precedent of a kind. Laurence Senelick (1993, 82) records that about this time

---

131 A copy of the programme (MS 8991 e [GB] 947) is held at the National Library of Australia. The programme similarly gives ‘Miss—’ against the role of Julia in John Stirling Coyne’s farce *The Queer Subject* (1837), indicating that a woman performed the role (Elwes 1854; 1959, n.p.).

132 Messrs Elwes, Conroy, Ogett, Durlacher, Parry, Eliot, Wittenoom, and Hillman were committee members. See Chapter One, n.14 for the programme.
'epicene young men' began to appear in female roles at theatres in Britain, America, and Germany. Known in Britain as female impersonators, these male performers ‘first took stage in an Anglophone culture’ as part of developments in commercial variety (later gaiety) theatre (Senelick 1993, 82). Circumstances were different in mid-century Western Australian amateur circles, where male gender cross-dressing was practised only in stage plays and minstrelsy; and, as will become apparent in Chapter Six, at masked and fancy dress balls during the 1880s. I argue that although colonial practice was rationalised as a concern for female decency, it had more to do with attempts to elide female performances of femininity from the stage in the name of a privileged Anglo masculinity. It is possible, too, that cross-dressing afforded male performers opportunities to experiment, as Senelick (1993, 83) puts it, ‘with feminine behaviour in a way that was neither suspect or threatening,’ in a colony that was on the alert for ‘unnatural’ practices. But there is no evidence, one way or the other, of overtly homoerotic performance in the colony.

The earliest instances of amateur cross-dressing in the colony appear to have taken place in a season of amateur theatricals at Hodge’s Hotel, Perth, in August 1842. The Gazette named none of the players in its review of that season. However, by the early 1860s it had become customary for the press to name cast members. Thus, George Roe played Agatha in J. Oxenford’s farce Retained For the Defence (n.d.) for the Perth Amateur Dramatic Company at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in December 1863 (Inquirer. 30 Dec. 1863). According to the Inquirer (15 Jun. 1864), Roe and Mr Lawrence, a mature amateur actor, played female roles at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in 1864. The Inquirer gave no opinion as to the plausibility of

---

133 The detail of the season of plays is given in note 12 of this chapter. My research shows that no amateur performances took place in the colony between October 1839 and 30 August 1842.

134 George Roe was the brother of Frederick Roe, referred to in Chapter Three.
Roe’s performances on that occasion, other than to remark that he ‘was—as usual—well dressed.’

**Child amateur cross-dressers**

Cross-dressing in drama and comedy was standard practice in the colony’s single-sex schools, and presumably in performances by organisations such as the Catholic Young Men’s Dramatic Company. Among the colony’s ‘Lilliputian tragedians’ Master John Flanagan won praise for his Lady Randolph in the previously mentioned presentation of *Douglas* (1794) at the Christian Brothers’ School, Perth, in May 1865 (Inquirer. 24 May. 1865). A girl (by convention unnamed) played Petruchio with ‘much cleverness’ in scenes from Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (c.1593) at the Bishop’s Girls’ College, Perth, in June 1882 (WAust. 13 Jun. 1882). The two plays in question were probably chosen because each could be performed without amorous contact between schoolchildren. T. H. Motter (1929, 120) recounts that mid-Victorian British public school boys variously played female roles in tailcoats and white ties, or in skirts worn over trousers. However, the Perth press gives no account of how colonial children performed gender in single-sex school productions, presumably because the sexual identity of child performers was of no account.

**Males in ‘petticoat roles’**

The gender cross-dressing of post school-age males in female roles in domestic and romantic dramas required technical finesse, psychological credibility, affectivity, and sentiment of the actor. A different order of skills was required of actors who cross-dressed in comedy and farce, the category to which most cross-dressing on the colonial stage belonged.

---

135 The Catholic company, being of ‘extreme youth,’ presented William Brough’s farce *Apartments* (1851) and Lord Glenfall’s farce *The Irish Tutor* (1830) at the Catholic Boys’ Schoolroom, Perth, in May 1868 (Inquirer. 27 May. 1868).
Master Mackey’s performance in the role of Rose Redland in Isaack Pocock’s romantic drama *The Robber’s Wife* (n.d.), at Fremantle in April 1869 (*Herald*, 17 Apr. 1869), exemplifies amateur gender cross-dressing that aspired to a convincing performance of gender difference as identity. The critic ‘Jacques,’ who reviewed this performance for the *Herald* (17 Apr. 1869), acknowledged the bold decision to cast a ‘mere lad’ in the role, and the difficulty of playing it with ‘as much success as would save it from ridicule and condemnation.’ He commended Master Mackey for his make-up, tasteful delivery, and emotional clarity. He also alluded to faults ‘that could only be corrected by professional training.’

The practice of casting young men in female roles extended to popular entertainments in hotels. As already mentioned, the colonial press was not in the habit of reviewing such performances. However, under the caption ‘Wandering in Strange Places,’ the *Herald*’s ‘Yorick’ (20 Nov. 1875) recorded a performance of Douglas Jerrold’s nautical melodrama *Black-Eyed Susan* (1829), followed by a harlequinade, at Mr Herbert’s Federal Hotel, Fremantle, in October 1875. ‘Yorick’ singled out for praise two unnamed players: a fourteen-year-old boy in the role of Susan; and an older man who played the Clown in the pantomime. Despite the insalubrious venue the ‘whole affair [was] an example of industry and ingenuity under difficulties’ (*Herald*, 20 Nov. 1875).

**Women’s participation**

The difficulty of identifying women’s performances in amateur plays is compounded by the popularity of combined amateur musical and dramatic entertainments that regularly included vocal and instrumentalist performances by
However, the colonial politics of gender and class had shifted sufficiently for Lady Leake, Mrs Wilkinson, Mrs John (later Lady) Forrest, Mrs Stone, and Miss Sholl to appear in a programme of four plays for the Thespian Dramatic Company at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in July 1878 (Hillman 1990, 122-23). The quality of women amateur performers who took part in this season indicates that there was already some depth to their ranks in 1878. Mrs Wilkinson, who had never seen a professional performance, went on to distinguish herself as Eily O’Connor in the amateur production of Dion Boucicault’s domestic drama *Colleen Bawn* (1860), the inaugural presentation at St George’s Hall, Perth, in December 1879 (*Herald*. 13 Dec. 1879). Mrs Price played Ann Chute, and Mrs Broadhurst played Mrs Cregan in that production. The *Herald* (13 Dec. 1879) regarded *The Colleen Bawn*, requiring ‘a large cast, extensive scenery and stage appliances,’ to be a defining moment in amateur performance in the colony. In a signal departure from colonial amateur practice, the actresses succeeded in their roles (where the men did not) by playing ‘to the stage’ rather than to the audience.

Women’s participation increased, though within strict limits of class and rank, under the auspices of women at vice-regal level. Mrs Robinson [sic] set the vice-regal trend: during her husband Sir William Robinson’s first term as Governor from 1875 to 1877, she and a ‘committee of ladies’ conducted fortnightly ‘musical and reading entertainments,’ at St George’s Anglican Cathedral Sunday School room (*Herald*. 25 Sept. 1875). During her husband’s second term as Governor from 1880 to 1883, Dorcas Society theatricals raised £40 for charity under Lady Robinson’s auspices at St George’s Hall, Perth, in August 1882 (*WAust*. 8 Aug. 1882). An appearance by Mrs

136 For instance, women performed items in a programme of recitations, vocal and instrumental items, a short play, and a display of ‘athletic exercises’ presented by the Western Australian Temperance Recreation Society at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, in September 1868 (*Herald*. 26 Sept. 1868).

137 The Dorcas Society comprised ‘leading women from each religious denomination in Perth’ (*Herald*. 18 Nov. 1876).
Wilkinson and Mrs L. Clifton under the auspices of Miss Wrensfordley, daughter of the Acting-Governor, at St George’s Hall, Perth, in April 1883 (WAust. 10 Apr. 1883), marked a further vice-regal endorsement of women’s participation in amateur performance. Sanctions of colonial women’s participation in theatre given by female members of vice-regal families were probably more telling in Perth, the seat of colonial administration, where gradations of social rank were more strictly observed than at Fremantle and more distant regional centres such as Geraldton and, in the 1890s, the Eastern Goldfields.  

Gaps in the archive make it difficult to ascertain the extent to which women participated in amateur performances at the regional centres of Geraldton, York, Northam, and Albany. In some instances, the regions seem to have taken their lead from the men of Perth: the *Inquirer* (2 Dec. 1868) reported a proposal by ‘a few young men’ at the small inland town of York to set up an amateur group in 1868; while the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* (15 Jun. 1878) reported similar moves in the town in 1878. There is no indication that women performed in plays there.

The status of women players at Geraldton (also Champion Bay), on the coast some 420 kilometres north of Fremantle, was less categorical. Figure 7 gives a panorama of the town and Champion Bay about 1890. Geraldton’s *Victorian Express* (9 Apr. 1879) refers to a past when ‘concerts, amateur theatricals, and penny readings flourished here,’ but gives no details of gender casting. However, by 1879, membership of the Geraldton Amateur Dramatic Company was open to women and men, and the practice

---

138 For example, Mr and Mrs Henry Prinsep, the Hon. H. H. Hocking, and Mr J.C.H. James participated in an entertainment of music and dramatic readings for the Dorcas Society, patroness Mrs Robinson, at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in November 1876 (*Herald*. 18 Nov. 1876).

139 Geraldton’s first newspaper, the *Victorian Express*, began publication in 1879. Prior to that, performances at Geraldton and its region were occasionally mentioned in the press at Perth and Fremantle.
evolved of allotting female roles to women in some plays, and to men in others. We know that Mrs du Boulay, Mrs B. Davis, Mrs Devenish, and Miss Tracy performed the female roles in two programmes of farces given by the newly formed Geraldton Amateurs at the town’s Working Men’s Hall, in April and September 1879 respectively (VicExp. 30 Apr. 1879; 10 Sept. 1879). However, male cross-dressers ‘Mlle Mourdant’ and ‘Miss Vere de Vere’ took female roles with the Geraldton Amateur Dramatic Company between July and December 1880, (VicExp. 14 Jul. 1880; 25 Aug. 1880; 3 Jan. 1881). Male cross-dressing seems to have had a mixed reception in the town. The Geraldton correspondent to the West Australian (9 Jan. 1883) welcomed debut appearances by Miss Walker, Miss Woodman, and Miss Baston in Charles Selby’s farce Boots at the Swan (1850) in December 1882, for making good the ‘want of female members’ in the town’s recently re-constituted amateur group.

**Professional gender cross-dressing**

Gender cross-dressing by professional actresses and actors was accepted practice; female and male professional performers took cross-dressed roles in Western Australia without censure. British comedienne Louise Arnot (also Herbert) played the juvenile male lead role in Frances Burnand’s farce Villikins and His Dinah (1856) at Perth in April 1868, though Walter Airey, ‘King of the Clowns,’ and two other actors in her company were available to take the role (Inquirer. 22 Apr. 1868). Australian actress and ‘Shakespearian Scholar’ Miss Virgie Vivienne, whose company included the

---

140 Mr Frank Kelly played Penelope in The Area Belle for the Geraldton Amateurs in October 1878 (VicExp. 9 Oct. 1878). Mrs Devenish and Miss Tracy performed the female roles in John Maddison Morton’s farce The Two Puddifoots (1850) and W. H. Murray’s farce Diamond Cut Diamond (1850) at Geraldton in September 1879 (VicExp. 10 Sept. 1879).

141 It appears from the Victorian Express (11 Aug. 1880) that ‘Miss Vere de Vere’ was Mr Frank Shaw’s stage name.

142 The Geraldton amateur group seems to have collapsed by 1883. The town’s correspondent to the West Australian (24 Nov. 1883) reported that its recently active amateur company had ‘died a natural death,’ and that the Masonic Hall stage had been left tenantless except for occasional visiting professionals, ‘and rats.’
reputable British actors Tom Cannam and Harry Fitzmaurice, played both Hamlet and Ophelia in an extract from Shakespeare’s Hamlet (1600) at the Cremorne Theatre, Coolgardie, in November 1898 (CM. 24 Nov. 1898).

Female and male professional performers were technically equipped to bring an edge of self-mockery to gender cross-dressing. Visiting professional actor Henry Stoneham billed himself as ‘The Fair Maid of Perth’ for his Marguerite in a commissioned burlesque, ‘Faust, M. D., and Little Mephistopheles’ (n.d.), at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in April 1871 (Inquirer. 12 Apr. 1871). Ready acceptance of professional gender cross-dressers in the colony simply reinforces the historical anomaly that saw discrimination against women performers on the local amateur stage in the three decades from 1839.

**Dramatic criticism and cross-dress**

Gender cross-dressing by inexperienced colonial born amateurs posed an ethical problem for colonial dramatic criticism. The Herald’s ‘Jacques’, who was experienced in dramatic matters, saw the colonial critic’s function as the ‘nurturance’ of latent qualities in amateur performers (Herald. 23 Jan. 1869). ‘Jacques’ took a balanced view of amateur male gender cross-dressing, as a cultural practice with very specific technical requirements. He argued from the standard position of his time, that the art of acting is ‘the holding the mirror up to nature to reflect character’ (Herald. 23 Jan. 1869). But he also maintained that few attained the ‘highest art’ of the actor: ‘to identify himself [sic] with the character he is personating’ (Herald. 23 Jan. 1869). Paradoxically, the notion of ‘personating’ a character through identification implied a depersonalised form of acting. This was precisely the order of acting for which the colony, unable to
support a resident professional company and a purpose built theatre for most of the century, was unable to prepare its amateurs.

‘Jacques’ therefore modified his critical stance to accommodate local conditions, advocating that roles be cast so as to match, as near as possible, the ‘natural peculiarities’ of untrained amateur actors. As I see it, the practice of casting according to personal qualities would have placed particular demands on the bodies and psyches of gender cross-dressed performers. Any openness to the feminine in the masculine, and the masculine in female, would have required tactful management in a colonial society so aggressively masculinist as Western Australia. The difficulties would have been multiplied by shifts in the adolescent performer’s perception of self, relation to her or his body, and candour about these things. It was probably for one or other of these reasons that ‘Jacques’ judged Master Mackey’s Jane in Colin Hazelwood’s domestic drama *The Clock on the Stairs* (1850) to be uneasily restrained, and in need of rehearsal (*Herald*. 12 Jun. 1869).143 The task for female and male cross-dressers would have been all the more challenging because of the undervaluation of women’s agency and creativity, and cultural ambivalence about the ‘decency’ of women playing the feminine on the stage.

‘Jacques’ (*Herald*. 23 Jan. 1869) displayed a strong social sense in his dramatic commentary. In answer to the charge that rigorous criticism of inexperienced amateurs was ‘invidious,’ he argued for standards that every amateur could reach ‘with perseverance and attention.’ He asserted that because amateurs charged ‘a price of admission […] they have no right to offer a valueless return’ (*Herald*. 23 Jan. 1869). True to his word, he observed that Mr Caporn ‘did his best’ as Mrs Blancheville in the

---

143 The Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps presented *The Clock on the Stairs* at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, on 1 June 1869 (*Herald*. 22 May. 1869).
Fremantle Amateurs’ production of *The Clock on the Stairs*, but that ‘the manager had better not cast’ him in a ‘lady’s role’ again (*Herald*. 12 Jun. 1869). In this same review, ‘Jacques’ penned what might have been the informed colonial critic’s motto: ‘—a word in season how good it is.’

The practice of male cross-dressing in farce was at times a vexed matter among the colony’s drama critics. An unsigned review of three farces presented by the Perth Amateur Dramatic Company at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in October, 1868, first argued that ‘there is too much similarity in the action and play’ of farces for three of them to be played consecutively in an evening’s entertainment (*Herald*. 24 Oct. 1868). The ambivalence of male cross-dressing simply exacerbated the problem of alienated reception: young men, the same reviewer observed, ‘cannot supply the want’ of female players in farce.\(^{144}\) The problem, in contemporary language, was that the stereotypical roles, contrived situations, and antics of farce worked against dramatic constructions of the putative ‘natural’ feminine. ‘Jacques,’ on the other hand, accepted the frank artifice involved in amateur male cross-dressing. He praised Master Mackey’s performance of Penelope in Brough and Halliday’s farce *The Area Belle* (1864) as, ‘for a young amateur […] one of the best pieces of acting I have ever seen’ (*Herald*. 23 Jan. 1869).

The attention that ‘Clio,’ the dramatic critic for Geraldton’s *Victorian Express*, paid to costume and make-up in his reviews of male cross-dressed performances, together with his enjoyment of the ‘coquettish airs and graces’ of ‘Mlle Mourdant,’ indicate his appreciation of comic artifice and ambivalence in performances of gender (*VicExp*. 8 Dec. 1880). It appears that several adult Geraldton males enjoyed gender

\(^{144}\) The critic in question wrote ‘as one with some professional experience.’ His vocabulary and tone suggest that he (one assumes ‘he’) might have been ‘Jacques’ before the latter adopted his pen name, but this is far from certain.
cross-dressing as a self-justifying practice in the early 1880s. Two regulars, ‘Miss Vere de Vere,’ well-known to his public for ‘the assumption of female characters,’ and ‘Miss Claire de Lune,’ as ‘he prefers to be styled,’ played the female roles in John Madison Morton’s farce *Betsy Baker* (1825) at the town’s Masonic Hall, in December 1880 (*VicExp*. 8 Dec. 1880). Clearly, the popularity of male cross-dressers at Geraldton had as much to do with display of gender ambivalence, as it did with convincing performances of ‘natural’ gender and sexuality.

**Gender memory**

The contested practice of cross-dressing on the colonial stage indicates a wider crisis of gender identification within the trope of familial order. Gender identification was invested in, and legitimised by, the subordination of females to males, and children to adults in the family; an hierarchical order that, McClintock (1995, 45) points out, was taken to be ‘natural fact.’ However, the disruption of inherited cultural and social structures that colonists experienced as a consequence of migration required the re-invention of the trope of family in the new colonial order. The affiliative family therefore assumed an importance as a metaphor for the culturally ‘restored’ colonial body politic; and as a sanction for the implementation of an emergent, putatively unified administrative, social, and economic hierarchy vested in men of rank and property.^{145}

How then did cross-dressing operate within this process of colonial re-affiliation? Like other modalities of performance, its embeddedness as a social construction in a colonial present influenced its capacity to recover cultural heritage; while its codified embodiedness in performers mediated and helped to interpret the past. In this sense, performance operated as a designated space of production in which a

---

^{145} I follow McClintock (1995, 45) on the trope of the family as political sanction.
privileged past converged with an exigent present through the collective agency of its participating subjects. If I can put it this way, cross-dressing reflexively performed social gender roles as performative rather than ‘natural.’ But cross-dressing was performative in a particular way. Being neither politically pragmatic, denotative, or authoritative, it exploited its own marginality within a socially marginalised artform, to ironise claims to unitary gender ‘authenticity.’ As reflexive artifice, cross-dressing had the capacity to generate effects in excess of social norms of gender; but equally, it fell short of the mark whenever its players mismanaged the rules of play.146

Another way of looking at this is to recognise the potential for colonial amateur performance to operate as a ‘theatre’ of conversion. The organisation of performance space as domestic space can be understood as a way to manage gender and racial crises that beset displaced colonials. Systemic discrimination against women performers implied a need to contain the potential for women to explore the constructedness of gender, the ambivalence of masculinity, and hence the arbitrariness of attempts to elide their sex from the stage. It is an historical irony that action by Trigg and ‘Censor’ to banish the feminine to the realm of the invisible domestic prepared the way for, and even rationalised, sexually ambivalent gender cross-dressing on stage. Cross-dressing was generally accepted as an anodyne modality that constituted no direct threat to processes of affiliative arrogation in colonial politics, the judiciary, religion, commerce, and society. Even so, the practice interrogated domestic power relations by playing out gender affiliation in reverse. Within the performance space, theatrical costume, make-up, wigs, and gender coded speech and movement enacted patriarchal power as a construction rather than as a fact of nature. This theatricality was a self-reflexive

146 I am indebted to J. Prager (1998), cited in Misztal (2003, 77), for these definitions of embedded and embodied memory.
response to a crisis of gender collective memory attributable in part to the cultural
displacement of settler migration to the colony.

In this context, male cross-dressed performance can be seen to have had as much
to do with containment of femininity in males, as it had to do with containment of
female sexuality and participation. A theatre of gender ‘conversion,’ in which the
ambivalence of the masculine could be controlled as highly ritualised spectacle, offered
‘temporary control over social risk,’ analogous to that which McClintock attributes to
theatricalised cross-dressing in S/M (1995, 147). By that analogy, the male cross-
dresser’s control over his performance was a surrogate enactment of colonial men’s
mastery of their own disavowed femininity. This points to the profound, but disavowed,
ambiguity of this performance of mastery as a return of the masculine repressed.

Cross-dressed performers restored memories of gender implacement through
enactments of displacement, ‘staging loss of control in what [was] really a situation of
excessive control’ (McClintock 1995, 147). The colonial cross-dresser transformed the
invisible feminine-in-the-masculine into a theatre of spectacle, where it was controllable
and, for many, pleasurable. But such performances were acts of surrogation; as
enactments of loss (of the feminine), their capacity to restore disrupted memory and
gender was perpetually deferred. For this reason, repetition of gender ambivalence
emerges as a structuring commemorative principle of cross-dressed performance.

Otherings

Casey (1993, xi) observes that memory is not mere recollection: ‘memory must
be pursued into its own otherness—into what is other than (and to) mind.’ He

147 See McClintock (1995, 65 ff, 146 ff) on the theatricality of S/M.
designates body, place, and commemoration as three exemplary spaces in which memory others itself. This refusal to privilege the mind ‘as source and container of representations’ has profound implications for my topic. First, it opens the way to a study of corporeal performance as one of the modalities of memory that is not merely mental. Furthermore, it positions the performed body in triangular relationship with memory and place. Last but not least, the concept that memory others itself is concomitant with the capacity of the body to other itself in performance. As I have argued, gender cross-dressing is one of the more extreme boundary markers of self-othering in performance. It is a liminal example of the self-proliferating capacities of performance space, and of body as place. I will conclude this chapter with several of my own observations about the expansive spatial and placial dimensions of memory and place as they are embedded and embodied in colonial performance.

The Gazette’s (13 Jul. 1839) emphasis on the historical significance of the 1839 performance of Love à la Militaire as the ‘first theatrical representation in this colony,’ inadvertently revealed the potential for performance to other itself as simultaneously commemorative and inaugural space. In contemporary terms, the Gazette’s review collapsed the commemorative and the inaugural dimensions of the performance into a frozen moment of imperial spectacle. The review was premised on precedent, evoking the ‘ghosting’ effect—to borrow Carlson’s (2003, 7-8) term—of recycling this minor playlet from the capacious British amateur repertoire in local circumstances. At the same time, the review stressed the novelty of theatre performance as a threshold experience for colonial-born ‘youngsters and young misses’ who until then had no experience of plays, and thus no memories of them to bring to the performance.
With ill-founded optimism, the reviewer also figured the performance as a cultural portal to the sole Indigenous man who attended the play as a domestic servant. Co-option of amateur theatre to the civilizing mission of colonialism was a recurrent theme in press commentary during these early years. The reviewer was similarly alive to ‘the novel situation in which the actors were placed’ by virtue of their relative inexperience and the historic character of the occasion—a modest, private theatrical on a dark night, at a small British settlement half a world away from its putative ‘home’ culture.

These cultural projections into future memory were exemplary attempts on the part of settlers to make place in (to them) an alien landscape in which, by Casey’s (1993, 24) definition, there was ‘a felt difference unrecuperable by the usual [determinate] designators of place.’ Underlying the Gazette’s sense of colonial contingency was a collective remembering of British performance culture as authoritative and ‘authentic.’ This settler cultural memory was based on the self-divisive premise that while the colony, for its part, had achieved a theatrical rite de passage at Leeder’s Hotel in 1839, mature theatrical culture must originate in, and be imported from, Britain. In other words, the colonial performance implicitly othered its own ‘authenticity.’

This settler notion of an absent ‘national’ culture was in one sense ahistoric: it collapsed the temporal and spatial distinctions between commemoration and inauguration; and it inhibited settler recognition of the antipodean world as a place of present habitation. Confronted with an Australian environment that refused pre-Darwinian notions of a stable globe in which the natural order ‘was relatively static and

148 The Gazette (7 Sept. 1839) recommended ‘getting up’ an open-air summer performance of amateur theatricals ‘exclusively for the natives’ in 1839.
harmonious’ (McCalman 2009, 47), settler thinking about cultural heritage tended to be atemporal and unplaced. The implacement of an ‘authentic’ national culture also acquired a particular gender dimension in the colony. As I have argued, the trope of the affiliative family served as a sanction for masculine dominance over the colony’s institutions. A similar trope was operative in the feminisation of colonial lands as a space for occupation, domination, and exploitation by white men. Males also feminised the production spaces of colonial performance through their control of repertoire, casting, administration, finances, dramatic criticism—and not least, their attempts to control, or thwart, women’s participation. This parallels masculine attempts to control the broader space of the colony by virtue of ‘culture’ and numbers.

Despite settlers’ predisposition to assume the authority of an ‘authentic’ home culture, colonial performance instantiated Carlson’s (2003, 4) conundrum: that performance ‘admits the inevitable slippage in all repetition,’ but also acknowledges a congruency with past performance that ‘haunts the new.’ In other words, all performance is grounded in collective memory, though no performance is precisely repeatable. Elin Diamond (1995, 2) takes this insight a step towards future meanings, arguing that while ‘a performance embeds traces of other performances, it also produces an experience whose interpretation only partially depends on previous experience’ (my emphasis). Performance embeds ‘the pre-existing discursive field, the repetition within the performative present,’ but also asserts ‘the possibility of something that exceeds our knowledge, that alters the shape of sites and imagines new unsuspected subject positions’ (Diamond 1995, 2). That is to say, the imaginative scope of each performance provides a platform for future memory that exceeds mere recall of prior experience.
Diamond’s argument explains the capacity of otherwise insignificant performances of *Love à la Militaire*, *Domestic Economy*, or *The Area Belle*, to act as repositories of (surrogate) cultural memory, and at the same time to negotiate colonial spaces and subject positions that were excess to such memory. It is in the nature of settler migration that the notion and content of settler subjectivity, memory, and performance should undergo stress and change in response to the (more or less traumatic) experience of relocation to a remote, vast, and sparsely inhabited territory little known to, or understood by, Europeans. I argue that colonial performance was an exemplar of Casey’s (1993, 28) philosophical definition of orientation: performance generated an interspace in which settlers could aspire to ‘transform an apparently vacuous expanse […] into a set of what can properly be called *places*.’

Those colonials who participated in performances were engaged, knowingly or not, in experiments of cultural implacement. The experiment, the trying out, was directed towards the acculturation of a British heritage in conservative colonial society. The performance of gender was one such space of experimental cultural implacement, embedded in a wider political discourse of gender relations. Decisions to cast men in female roles came from within the masculine controlled amateur movement itself, in response to male opponents of theatre. At best, we can say that the gender dynamics of the colonial amateur stage in these decades reflected a pervasive Western masculine discourse on domesticity, which, as McClintock (1995, 7) neatly puts it, became ‘an organizing trope for other social forms.’ The history of nineteenth-century Western Australian performance suggests that many respectable colonial women accepted as normal this ban on their appearance on the amateur stage, though women and children continued to attend performances. Meanwhile, evidence of women’s resistance may yet come to light.
Chapter Five: Case studies: Fremantle and the Eastern Goldfields

And if it is the body that places us in place to start with, it will be instrumental in replacing us in remembered places as well.
Edward Casey

This chapter comprises case studies of the transmission of British culture through performance at specific venues in locations in colonial Western Australia. The locations and the periods for study are: the town of Fremantle from 1858 to 1868; and the nineteenth-century Coolgardie Goldfields region, centred on Coolgardie and the adjacent town of Kalgoorlie, from 1892 to 1899. The choice of these places and periods is a considered one. Nineteenth-century Fremantle, and the towns of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, were each important regional hub settlements and service centres. Each was settled at a different period of the colony’s history, and the decades chosen for study were critical in the development of colonial performance, cultural identity, and sense of place. Some brief historical data will prepare the ground for the case studies.

As Erickson (1983, 1) puts it, ‘Western Australia, […] founded as a free colony in 1829, became the last penal colony in the British Empire in 1850,’ with Fremantle selected as the seat of the new Convict Establishment.¹⁴⁹ Captain Henderson’s sketch of Fremantle (fig. 8) shows the Establishment in the foreground. From 1850 until the arrival of the last transportees in 1868, convict labour, under the supervision of officers of the Royal Engineers and a detachment of the 20th Company of Sappers and Miners, provided the colony with a basic infrastructure of buildings, roads, and bridges. The lack of even a rudimentary infrastructure had contributed significantly to the constant

¹⁴⁹ Captain Henderson, R.E., newly appointed Comptroller of Convicts, arrived at Fremantle with a detachment of the 20th Company of Sappers and Miners and 100 convicts, in October 1850, after four months at sea. Non-commissioned Captain Wray and Lt. Du Cane arrived with more sappers in 1851; and Lt. Crossman followed with more convicts and a sapper guard in 1852.
recession from which the colony’s subsistence economy had been unable to free itself since its beginnings in 1829. The presence of a convict labour force and elements of the British Army from 1850 led to increased wealth and demand, and an injection of imperial funds that saved the colony from economic collapse. Along the way, these developments provided a platform for the emergence of a more settled performance culture than had hitherto been possible.\textsuperscript{150}

Where the case study of Fremantle is concerned, the decade from 1858 to 1868 saw the beginnings of a local performance culture marked by several seasons of garrison theatre in 1858, courtesy of the Royal Engineers; and the more sustained programme of the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps, formed in 1865 by members of the town’s expanding merchant class. Ex-convicts James Pearse and William Beresford founded and co-edited Fremantle’s \textit{Herald} newspaper, which regularly published high quality dramatic criticism and commentary from 1867. In contrast with the gradual development of settlement at Fremantle earlier in the century, the far inland towns of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie sprang up literally within months during the gold rushes of the 1890s. The rushes brought increased population, demand, wealth, a nascent secondary mining industry, and problems of infrastructure on a scale unprecedented in the colony. The case study of the Goldfields considers the rapid influx of imported performances that took advantage of the rich pickings on offer from a substantial Goldfields population that was more mobile, more cosmopolitan, and more politically aware than was the case elsewhere in the colony. I am particularly interested in

\textsuperscript{150} The 20\textsuperscript{th} Company of Sappers and Miners was formed at Woolwich, UK, in 1848 ‘for [the] purpose of training and supervising prisoners in construction projects’ (Prall 2001, n.p.). Three detachments of the Company arrived in the colony between 1850 and 1852. Most Sappers were recalled in 1856, to serve in the Crimean War; the recall was completed in 1862 (Watson, 336).
performance as a factor in Kalgoorlie’s challenge to the cultural pretensions of end-of-century colonial Perth.\footnote{The combined populations of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, numbering several times that of Perth by the end of the century, were significant factors in the colony’s transition from Responsible Government (proclaimed in October 1890) to statehood within the Commonwealth of Australia in January 1901. For an account of the Goldfields separatist movement, and the strong Goldfields vote in favour of Western Australia joining the proposed federation of Australian states, see Webb and Webb (1993, 506-08).}

The intertwined processes of immigration and cultural transmission through performance demonstrate critical shifts in the colony’s historical dependence on injections of labour, funds, and cultural capital from Britain. In the two decades from 1850, significant numbers of free settlers and convict transportees migrated to Western Australia. Experiences of economic and personal trauma were at the heart of these migrations, and the transmissions of culture associated with them. This was so, even when account is taken of the different status of voluntary and transportee arrivals. The exclusion of Indigenous people, convicts, and in some instances ex-convicts, from participation in colonial performance was symptomatic of the socially riven, traumatised condition of a new penal colony. These case studies analyse the interplay between migration, economy, collective memory, and cultural amnesia in the adaptation—even, one might say, survival—of colonial performance in local conditions. The case studies in this chapter, taken into consideration with the studies of performed bodies and stage technologies in Chapters Six and Seven, indicate that a fitful and highly eclectic modernising of colonial performance culture was taking place as the colony gradually expanded its economy and infrastructure. I examine the highly selective and hesitant modernisation of colonial performance and subjectivity in relation to Misztal’s (2003, 43) notion of a late nineteenth-century crisis of western collective memory that was induced by social upheavals and the disconnection of people from their pasts. I examine the transmission of performance culture through migration as a
specific factor in this crisis, having in mind Casey’s concept of the dyslocated modern subject who, not knowing ‘the difference between place and space,’ is confined to a ‘pseudo-voluntarism that thinks that such a subject can go any place’ (Smooth, n.p.).

*Case Study: Fremantle 1858-1868.*

Think of it: memory not in brain or mind but in the world, and thus in the things that belong to the world […]

Edward Casey

Welcome! On West Australia’s strand—Welcome to our adopted land!
Welcome, from every heart and hand, Respected HENDERSON.

*Ode to Captain Henderson, R.E.*
*Comptroller-General of Convicts*

Fremantle was founded at the mouth of the Swan River in 1829, with a population of some hundred British free settlers, to which were soon added some recently shipwrecked ‘Lascars,’ probably from South India (Bosworth and Hutchison 1995, 13). By 1848, Fremantle was still a village port of about 420 inhabitants that owed its existence, on the one hand, to its proximity to Perth, the main population centre and seat of colonial administration upstream; and on the other, to its outlook onto the Indian Ocean. The mouth of the Swan River at Fremantle was unnavigable to ships at the time. Albany, some 600 kilometres by sea to the south, remained the colony’s major deepwater port, until the Swan River mouth was cleared and the newly completed Fremantle Harbour was opened in 1897.152

---

152 The unblocking of the Swan River mouth and the opening of Fremantle Harbour in 1897 have now entered history as a metaphor for Fremantle’s access onto the modern world.
Fremantle’s interstitial placement significantly inhibited its commercial, cultural, and educational development during the first two decades of settlement to 1849. As Charles Wittenoom’s 1839 *View of Fremantle inland from Arthur’s Head* (fig. 9) suggests, any sense of permanent settlement was invested in a few buildings constructed of timber or local limestone, roofed with rushes or, in rare cases, shingles (Bosworth and Hutchison 1995, 17). The few settler occupations pursued at Fremantle summed up the town’s identity as a place to process arrivals and departures: inn-keeping to accommodate those arriving or departing by sea; some small scale boat building; a cross-river ferry; providoring, chandlery, and cargo handling, when ships were in; and the transit of passengers, goods, and mail upriver by boat to Perth.

The archive records no theatre building and no performances at Fremantle during the years prior to 1858. Perth similarly lacked a theatre, but even so, its establishment class and its ‘mechanics,’ that is, its tradespersons and working people, had presented a total of fifteen seasons of amateur theatricals during the same period. As already mentioned in Chapter Three, the colony’s slender record of performances into the 1850s was symptomatic of chronic economic recession from the time the colony was founded, and a consequent failure to attract and retain a critical number of free settlers.

Though the Perth establishment viewed early Fremantle as a commercial and cultural backwater, the town retained a precarious autonomy as a marginal place of mainly seafarer comings and goings. Located between a vast, sparsely inhabited hinterland and the Indian Ocean, Fremantle was pre-eminently a place that could ‘be grasped as having both a within and a without, as capable of being turned in towards its centre or out towards its periphery’ (Malpas 1999, 104). But the centre’s hold on place.
was slender; the hinterland represented a cultural vacancy to settlers, while social activities at Fremantle tended to ‘exhaust themselves in their occurrence without leaving any significant residue’ (Casey 1987, 266). The Fremantle of those days exhibited what Casey calls ‘thin autonomy’ of memory, in which a paucity of public events, and especially the absence of performance, yielded little in the way of ‘lasting sedimentation’ (Casey 1987, 267). However, Fremantle gradually came into its own as a place of quite stark re-location when, in 1850, the colony agreed to relieve the Imperial government of an excess of convicts sentenced to transportation. During Western Australia’s years as a penal colony from 1850 to 1868, a total of 9,271 convicts and 6,122 free settlers had entered the colony—all of the former class, and most of the latter, passing through Fremantle.

**Convictism**

‘I have heard […] that the inhabitants of Western Australia are divided into two classes; those who have been transported, and those who deserved to be.’

‘Susannah’s Diary’

The decision, taken in 1850, to locate the Convict Establishment at Fremantle had long-term effects on the social and cultural life of the port, as it did on the colony as a whole. These effects are a further instantiation of Casey’s point that a different sense of place emerges ‘when the same place is reconfigured significantly’ (2005, 95). A key factor in the memorial ‘thickening’ of Fremantle’s social and cultural life during the period from 1850 was the presence of the Royal Engineers, under command of Captain

---

153 ‘Traveller’ described Fremantle thus in a letter to the Herald (12 Sept. 1868): ‘An unsheltered roadstead, an unnavigable river and a barren tract of country stretching from the sea to the Darling Ranges, characterise the site, nor is there a single redeeming feature either on the coast or in the interior to balance these evils.’

154 The decision was hotly contested within the colony, but it was eventually taken in expectation of a substantially increased economic labour force and an injection of imperial funds (Erickson 1983, 1).
Edmund Henderson, and the prisoners they supervised in the construction of much needed buildings and public works throughout the colony (Watson 1915, 336). Histories of Western Australian convictism have tended to account for the Royal Engineers in terms of their contribution to the colony’s built environment. The importance of that contribution notwithstanding, I focus here on the military’s intervention in the colony’s future through performance, and in particular, performance as a modality of what Casey calls the ‘thick autonomy’ of remembering. According to Casey, the notion of the ‘thick autonomy’ of remembering confronts ‘the many ways in which we remember in media vita, in the very thick of things’ (Casey 1987, 262). In contrast to eidetic accounts that privilege memory as purely mental action, ‘thick autonomy’ concerns ‘the outreach of memories into the surrounding world of the remembering subject’ (Casey 1987, 288).

My present focus is confined to performance as a mode of subject-centred outreach, through which inhabitants of mid-nineteenth-century Fremantle added density to their social world through enacted revivals of collective memory. Thus the ‘thick autonomy’ of remembering with which these case studies are concerned was limited to the outreach of subjects to artefacts that they had made—in this case, to buildings, texts, and scenography constructed for the purposes of subject-centred performance.

In general, Fremantle’s early nineteenth-century inhabitants did not accord memorial power to the antipodean world beyond their town, holding the natural Australian world, in Casey’s (1987, 312) phrase to be ‘unambiguously outside the human subject’ rather than continuous with it. To them, the antipodean natural world was other to a matrix of memory; it was not a place where memory went on, or which could be redeemed by memory, and so to them it remained uncapturable by, and consciously excluded from, a performance culture imported from Britain. This colonial
sense of an outside world that was resistant to memory, and hence to human habitation, materialised in the Royal Engineers’ recourse to garrison theatre as a memory matrix for performance. This colonial incapacity to recognise that ‘everything belongs to some matrix of memory, even if it is a matrix remote from human concern and interests’ (Casey 1987, 311), was symptomatic of a systemic amnesia in colonial performance culture.

The Royal Engineers Dramatic Company adhered to British armed forces commemorative precedent when it staged military theatricals at Fremantle in 1858, precisely demonstrating an institutionalised limit of Casey’s notion of remembering.155 While engaged in building and public works projects at Fremantle, Albany, Perth, and Geraldton, the Royal Engineers found time, in 1858, to renovate the Assembly Room, Freemasons’ Hotel, Fremantle, as a temporary garrison theatre, similar to others constructed at army bases in Britain and the empire.156 According to the Inquirer (1 Sept. 1858), unprecedented ‘arrangements’ were made to ensure the ease of the audience; no details were given, but judging by accounts of other colonial venues at that time, these arrangements probably included comfortable seating, a clear view of the stage, and adequate ventilation to disperse the heat and smells of bodies, tallow candles, and kerosene lighting.

155 The Inquirer (18 Aug. 1858) noted that ‘following closely the home theatrical practice, the National Anthem commenced and concluded’ the Royal Engineers’ first Fremantle performance on 13 August 1858.

156 Rosenfeld (1978, 8) notes army theatricals at Coxheath, Ipswich, Colchester, Deal, and Faversham in Britain. Fremantle’s Assembly Room at the Freemasons Hotel was located at the corner of Market and Essex Streets. Prall (2001, n.p.) lists the Royal Engineers’ construction projects as: Fremantle Prison (1853-58); the sea jetty at Geraldton (1858); the light-tower at Breaksea Island, off Albany (1858); bridges over the Swan River at Guildford (1858) and North Fremantle (1864-66); Government House, Perth (1859-63); and the Enrolled Pensioner Barracks, Perth (1863-66).
The Royal Engineers Dramatic Company’s repertoire at the Theatre Royal was one of the many modes of commemoration through which British theatre culture was regularly transmitted to the colonies via the armed forces.\textsuperscript{157} This adherence to accepted practice is an instance of Casey’s notion of commemorative revival as a phase of secondary memory. The latter term refers to the remembering of experiences that, having lapsed from consciousness after their initial occurrence, ‘had to be remembered in a decisively different way’ (Casey 1987, 50). Revival concerns the ‘resuscitation of previously experienced objects, events, and circumstances […] albeit in representational or symbolic form’ (Casey 1987, 51); Schechner’s understanding that performance is always subject to revision is co-extensive with commemorative revival.

The Company opened the Theatre Royal, Fremantle, with performances of George Almar’s melodrama \textit{The Charcoal Burner} (1828), and John Poole’s one-act comic interlude \textit{Intrigue} (1814) on 13 August 1858 (\textit{Inquirer}. 18 Aug. 1858). Three performances of Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s comedy \textit{The Rivals} (1775) followed, between 26 October and 17 December 1858 (\textit{Inquirer}. 20 Oct. 1858; 15 Dec. 1858). The Company’s final season, on 27 and 28 December 1858, comprised Joseph Stirling Coyne’s one-act farce \textit{Urgent Private Matters} (1856), items of singing and dancing, and ‘Ill Will’, a series of local ‘character’ sketches (\textit{Inquirer}. 22 Dec. 1858). Thomas Coleman, an Enrolled Pensioner Guard who had arrived in the colony in 1853, was Stage Manager, and played the leads in \textit{The Charcoal Burner} and \textit{The Rivals}. No other cast members were named, but we can assume that soldiers cross-dressed in the female roles. This collective participation in commemorative theatricals had precisely to do with ‘overcoming the separation from which otherwise unaffiliated individuals suffer’ (Casey 1987, 250); or, more precisely, the separation that temporarily or permanently

\textsuperscript{157} For example, the \textit{Inquirer} (15 Mar. 1855) relayed reports of amateur performances on board HMS \textit{Duke of Wellington} in the Baltic Sea during February 1855.
dys-located soldiers and settlers experienced in mid-nineteenth-century Western Australia.

For reasons that I cannot ascertain, the Theatre Royal at the Assembly Room was projected to remain open only ‘for two months or more’ (Inquirer. 1 Sept. 1858). In fact, by the time the Assembly Room was converted in 1858, Royal Engineers subaltern officers and most sappers had already been withdrawn from Fremantle to fight in the Crimean War; while performances ceased altogether as soon as December 1858, four years before the withdrawal of the remaining complement of sappers and their officers (Watson 1915, 336). Thereafter, Enrolled Pensioner Guard David Hancock kept garrison theatre alive with solo readings of short comedies and ‘character delineations’ for the Mechanics’ Institute and Working Men’s Association, Fremantle, between 1861 and 1868 (Inquirer. 3 Jul. 1861; Herald. 25 Jul. 1868). These withdrawals limited the capacity of garrison theatre to contribute to the long-term commemorative ‘thickening’ of Fremantle’s performance culture. However, the increased wealth, demand, and infrastructure that accompanied transportation and the military presence attracted itinerant commercial performers, and provided a platform from which local amateur performers could alleviate the tedium that beset colonial life.

Members of the town’s merchant class founded the Fremantle Amateur Theatrical Corps in May 1865. Under its auspices, and to raise funds for a temporary theatre, Mr Hancock read two ‘Modern Farces’ at the Assembly Room, Freemasons’ Hall.

---

158 Mr Hancock was indefatigable: his readings from John Buckstone’s comedy The Wreck Ashore (1840) and G. Wood’s farce The Irish Doctor (1850) at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, on 31 March 1876, raised £3.12.0 for the Fremantle Literary Institute, of which he was sometime Secretary (Herald. 1 Apr. 1876).

159 During economic contraction in 1876, the Herald (18 Mar. 1876, Suppl.) reflected: ‘Amusements have for some years past been on the decline—probably because there has been less money floating about than in the healthier days of the [Convict] Establishment.’
Hotel, Fremantle, on 1 June 1865 (Inquirer. 31 May. 1865).\(^{160}\) Having reconverted the Assembly Room at the Freemasons’ Hotel, Fremantle, to a theatre, the Corps gave performances of William Suter’s farce Sarah’s Young Men (1850) and John Millington Morton’s farce To Paris and Back For £5 (1850) on 10 August 1865 (Inquirer. 2 Aug. 1865). The Corps presented a further season of John Millington Morton’s farce Who Stole the Pocketbook ['?] (1850) and John Oxenford’s farce A Legal Impediment (n.d.) at the Assembly Room, Fremantle, in June 1866. (Inquirer. 2 May. 1866).\(^{161}\) The Assembly room proving to be unsuitable as a theatre, the Corps went into recess for want of a suitable ‘room,’ until a revived Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps resumed performances in the ‘long room’ of the new Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, in January 1869 (Herald. 9 Jan. 1869).\(^{162}\)

The location and activities of Fremantle’s new civilian amateur company were aligned, consciously or not, with those of the long gone Royal Engineers’ Dramatic Company. Renovations at the Assembly Room in 1865 included a ‘raised gallery, similar to [that] created by the Royal Engineers some years ago,’ to enhance seating and sightlines (Inquirer. 21 Jun. 1865). The amateurs’ repertoire similarly favoured popular one- and two-act British farces; like the garrison company, the Amateur Corps was all-male, and males cross-dressed in female roles; while the militia Fremantle Volunteer Band was in attendance at performances. It is quite likely that some of the skilled

\(^{160}\) The Inquirer (31 May. 1865) lists Mr Alex Francisco jnr. as Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps. Francisco Brothers were Commission and Customs House Agents at High Street, Fremantle (Erickson 1988, 1113-14).

\(^{161}\) The Company advertised Ascuford as the author of A Legal Impediment, but Nicoll (1955) attributes the play to John Oxenford. It was common for different versions of plays to circulate without attribution, under the names of those who adapted them.

\(^{162}\) The Inquirer (27 Sept. 1865) commented adversely on the unsuitability of the Assembly Room for performance, notably its ‘sticky’ lime-washed walls and poor ventilation. The Oddfellows’ Hall, built near the intersection of William and High Streets, Fremantle, for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1846), opened for performances in July 1867 (Herald. 27 Jul. 1867).
tradesmen who carried out renovations at the Assembly Room were ex-prisoners whom the Sappers had trained in trades such as printing, shoemaking, and building.  

It is difficult to form a picture of the participation of convicts and ex-convicts in performances at Fremantle to 1868. There are no press records of performances by convicts serving sentences in Fremantle Gaol, or by probationer prisoners who worked under warder supervision outside the Gaol. Although the absence of records is not decisive, it is highly unlikely that any such performances would have been permitted. Although the colonial Executive acknowledged a need to balance penal and reformative elements in the convict system, ‘retribution and deterrence’ were considered the ‘proper objects of the system’ (Ellis n.d., 1). Official attitudes at Perth can be judged from Attorney-General Richard Birnie’s reply to the Perth Mechanics’ Institute’s cited in Chapter One.  

In 1879, the West Australian Times recommended, tongue-in-cheek, that the colony should follow the ‘American model’ of providing libraries and amateur theatricals for prisoners (2 May. 1879).  

Despite rising rates of crime and absconding among convicts, and the imposition of a nightly 10 pm curfew, attitudes were more liberal at Fremantle, where ex-convicts were admitted to the Mechanics’ Institute (but not at Perth); and where, as already mentioned, ex-convicts William Beresford and James Pearse co-edited the Herald newspaper from 1867. Pearse, a member of the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps, appeared with professional actresses Mrs Lyons and Mrs Wieland in James Robinson Planché’s vaudeville The Loan of a Lover (1834) at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, in

---

163 Bosworth and Hutchison (1995, 15) record that the Sappers trained serving convicts in these trades at Fremantle.

164 To reiterate, Birnie had written: ‘I do not wish to be upheld at Home as one who, despite warnings before and experience after, courts notoriety, and vainly strives to make the world better by polishing savages and preaching refinement to convicts’ (Inquirer. 2 Apr. 1856).
February 1973 (Herald. 8 Feb. 1873). Perhaps colonial authority’s denial of in-gaol performance implicitly recognised that performance exhibits a freedom that is co-extensive with remembering, and inimical to incarceration: the freedom of ‘letting the world in’ through memory’s, and performance’s, ‘many subtle pores […] only to allow us to realize how richly we inhabit the world without’ (Casey 1987, 310).

The Fremantle military theatricals, and those of their amateur civilian successors, were commemorative occasions that interconnected past and present, as these were entailed in the experience of migration from Britain to Western Australia. As such, the Fremantle theatricals can be understood as memorial adjustments to the dislocation experienced, sometimes traumatically, by migrating free settlers. The experience of migration was almost certainly more traumatic for convict transportees, but they would not have been permitted entry to performances until they had completed their sentences. These performances were commemorative by nature, looking back to ‘Home.’ But they were not entirely forgetful of the colonial world in which they took place. There is no record of any attempt to represent Fremantle scenically in any of the amateur performances in 1865 and 1866. However, the drop-scene painted for the renovated Assembly Room, where they took place, was ‘intended’ as a representation of Perth, though it was ‘not a very successful’ one (Inquirer. 30 Aug. 1865).

To borrow from Casey’s philosophical analysis of remembering, these Fremantle performances were constructed as subject-centred place-worlds, in which the ‘commendably inter-human’ could perdure and be appreciated (2000, 251). In the case of the military amateurs, and for free settlers who had migrated from Britain, collective memories of performances experienced in Britain would have supported these performances as commendable actions of sociality in the colony. In the case of the local
born, several of whom were prominent among Fremantle’s civilian amateurs, any collective memory of British performance would have been mediated by proxy through their own memories of performances of British play scripts that had taken place in the colony.\(^{165}\) This indicates a further sense in which these commemorative performances at Fremantle were not simply backward looking. They constituted a memory of the future for those born in Britain, and, in a different way, for the local born who, though identifying as British, shared a different set of memories from their migrant parents. I understand the meaning of future remembering in this context to encompass more than simply intentional ‘remembering-that,’ as Casey puts it (2000, 63). Future remembering posits the projection of a collective memory, here construed as that of being a colonial British subject, in which colonists invested their future.

Performances at Fremantle by itinerant professional British actresses and actors, attracted there by the colony’s strengthening economy, would also have mediated future rememberings of British identification. As mentioned, Miss Annie Hill and Miss Edith Mitchell, the first professional actresses to visit the colony, opened at the Assembly Room in September in May 1865. Visiting entertainer Charles Steele gave his ‘patriotic’ performance there in July 1866 (\textit{Inquirer,} 27 Sept. 1865; 11 Jul. 1866). British actress Grace Egerton and her husband, comic instrumentalist George Case, drew large crowds at the opening of Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, in July 1867; to be followed, at the same venue, by London music hall artiste Miss Louise Herbert’s Theatre Comique in April 1868 (\textit{Herald}, 27 Jul. 1867; 1 Feb. 1868). This list of visiting British performers is not exhaustive. Even so, those mentioned offered Fremantle audiences a typically mid-century mixed bag of performance modes: excerpts from Shakespeare and London

\(^{165}\) Local born members of the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps included William Stone (b. Perth, 1836), Michael Samson (b. Fremantle, 1844), Albert Francisco (b. Fremantle, 1845), and William Marmion (b. Fremantle, 1845) (\textit{Inquirer,} 30 Aug. 1865; Erickson 1988, passim).
melodramas; short commercial comedies and farces; ‘quick change’ character
delineations; vocals and instrumentals; dances; and gender cross-dressing by women.

Each of these visiting performers held the allure of coming from, and being en
route to, distant places. As such, their appearances in the colony entailed travelling
between actual places, often far distant places; and they also invoked some sense of
those distant places in which their performances had, or would, take place. Figure 11
shows Cobb & Co. as a provider of inland transport to the Goldfields prior to the
opening of the railway from Perth to Coolgardie in 1896 (Chate et al. 1991, 55). But the
travelling at stake in their performances had less to do with movements between points
on the globe than with what Casey (2005, 79) refers to, in a discussion of contemporary
‘earth art,’ as ‘traveling [sic] in place’ (his emphasis). Casey (2005, 66) develops a
notion of ‘voyage’ as ‘primarily movements in and thorough places,’ in
contradistinction to journeys to and from places. It is possible to construe performance
itself as a modality of place-bound ‘voyaging.’ The performances at Fremantle can be
understood as imaginative ‘voyagings’ in and through artefactual place-worlds. On the
material level, these place-worlds were spatially organised to separate performers from
spectators, and to separate spectators into sub-sets according to configurations of
seating. They also enacted collective memories through performing bodies-as-place.
These performance ‘voyages’ were always double: they were simultaneously mental
and material actions; and, at one and the same time, they looked inwards to intimate
subjective spaces, and outward towards the inter-subjective social spaces in which they
were performed.

To view of Perth painted on the drop-scene for the renovated Assembly Room
of 1865 (Inquirer. 30 Aug. 1865) is an instance of ‘voyaging’ through scenography.
This threshold image onto the stage made no truth claim; rather, it mediated the
relationship between the performed place-worlds enacted on the stage and the colonial social world in which that enactment took place, and for which Perth was figured as a metonym. As such, the drop scene was diachronic; that is, it was attuned to Perth as an historical place in time, but also as a static pictorial image to be viewed in Fremantle. The drop scene, like the action that took place on the stage onto which it opened, required an ‘effort of meaning’ from performers and spectators alike (Miztal 2003, 118). That is to say, the drop scene and dramatic action made sense as collective memory not simply through their imaginative or fictional contents, but through their highly conventionalised, schematised, and simplified articulation of ‘voyaging.’ The Fremantle performances were socially transmissible, imaginative reconstructions of collective memory, in which remembering was coeval with imagination. Memory enabled performers and spectators alike to ‘sustain a continuity of [theatrical] experience,’ while their imaginative thinking built upon their capacity to ‘make the world intelligible and meaningful’ through memory (Miztal 2003, 119).

By pivoting all of these place-world ‘voyages’ on the embodied particularity of the remembering subject, the Fremantle performances have returned us to the (by now familiar) notion of ‘place as a middle ground between extremes’ (Casey 1996, 324). Their example also indicates a subtle but significant shift in Casey’s thinking about place. Through the interplay of socially transmissible collective memory and imaginative thinking, they indicate an extension of the notion of eventmental place.

---

166 The inseparability of imagination from commemoration was evident in other colonial drop scenes: Henry Prinsep’s 1879 drop curtain, ‘Come unto these yellow sands,’ for St George’s Hall, Perth, recalled Richard Dadd’s painting of the same subject, taken from Shakespeare’s Tempest (Dunstone 1995b, 540). Prinsep probably intended a pun on Western Australia’s gritty terrain. Scene painter Charles Hamilton localised his settings for the Geraldton Amateur Dramatic Company’s production of William Barnes Rhodes’ mock-heroic burlesque, Bombastes Furioso (1820), at the Masonic Hall, Geraldton, in October 1880 (VicExp. 20 Oct. 1880). His drop cloth for scene 3, for instance, represented a ‘Cottage Ornée, in a retired avenue, near the Chapman [River];’ that for scene 4 was of a ‘Winding Street near the [Geraldton] Lighthouse.’ This particular scenography was based on witty disjunctions of figural place; verisimilitude did not come into it.
beyond that of a ‘middle ground’ matrix between extremes, to the paradox of ‘traveling in place.’

**Case Study: Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie 1892-1899.**

The change from Perth was at once noticeable, and made one feel that here was that essential vitality that is always a forerunner of prosperity.  
Julius M. Price

The only means of enjoyment offered to the public is that of witnessing displays of strength between devotees of the fistic art.  
*Coolgardie Pioneer*

This case study examines a crisis that was incipient to performance at late nineteenth-century Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. That crisis was historically specific to gold rush conditions that involved the migration of thousands of people to a remote, semi-arid environment that was utterly foreign to the individual and collective memories of those immigrants’ pasts. This crisis of cultural commemoration on the Goldfields was symptomatic of the crisis of memory in the Western world—to which the two Western Australian Goldfields towns were extremely recent additions.

A brief preliminary explanation of names and their histories will smooth the way for the discussion. Present day Coolgardie is 540 kilometres east of Perth, and Kalgoorlie is a further 40 kilometres to the northeast; both are now part of the Eastern Goldfields region of Western Australia. Coolgardie, known initially, and appropriately, as Fly Flat, and then for a short time as Bayley’s Find, was the pivot of the Coolgardie Goldfield for perhaps three years from the time that the field was declared in September 1892. However, new mining leases were pegged at nearby Kalgoorlie and Boulder, just
5 kilometres or so from Kalgoorlie, in 1893. First known as Hannan’s, Kalgoorlie rapidly asserted ascendency over the other mining centres on the Coolgardie Goldfield, of which it was part.\footnote{See Webb and Webb (1993, 288-320) for an account of Coolgardie’s decline and Kalgoorlie’s rapid rise as the colony’s major goldmining centre.} Figure 11 is a photograph of Bayley Street, Coolgardie, just as the town was declining in importance relative to Kalgoorlie. The term ‘Eastern Goldfield’ in the singular was first used in an editorial of the \textit{West Australian} (3 Apr. 1891) as a collective to designate the then adjoining goldfields of Coolgardie, Coolgardie North, Yilgarn, and Dundas These earlier goldfields have since been subsumed into the present Eastern Goldfields region. Kalgoorlie’s official designation changed in 1989, when it and the contiguous shire of Boulder were amalgamated to form the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder. To keep matters simple, I use Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Boulder as the place names by which those nineteenth-century townships were known. I likewise retain the nineteenth-century designation of the Coolgardie Goldfield, and the term ‘Goldfields’ as a collective.

The Goldfields in the 1890s were a cartographic, social, industrial, and political construction in flux.\footnote{See Webb and Webb for an account of the complex politics of class, race, and labour relations on the Goldfields (1993, \textit{passim}).} Performances were a kind of experimentation on the part of settled townspeople and nomadic prospectors, in imagining and implacing a Goldfields mnemonic community—in actuality, multiple communities that socialised their members ‘to what should be remembered and what should be forgotten’ (Misztal 2003, 15), especially on race grounds. But the Goldfields were an unsettling place for subjects to inhabit in the early to mid-1890s. Experiences of long voyages, dislocated identification, perturbed remembering, and amnesia provided a far from stable mnemonic framework for goldfields society and its performances. The \textit{Coolgardie Pioneer} (10 Apr. 1895) warned that the lack of ‘rational amusements [that] most
bushmen look forward to’ could lead people to ‘seek their pleasures in […] ways so
dangerous to health that in the interests of the public polity we draw attention to the
matter.’ A generation at least would pass before the Goldfields could describe itself as a
place in which non-Indigenous culture was made by people’s relationships ‘with the
place from which’ they had sprung (Casey 2005, 66). Even so, an unusually high
fraction of the Goldfields population has always been transitory, due to the customary
movements of Indigenous people; and to the movement of prospectors across the
diggings. The motility of the Goldfields population called for constant renegotiation of
diverse, sometimes conflicting, cultural memories and their ownership. This study
shows that nineteenth-century performance on the Goldfields was implicated, whether
by design or not, in a contestatory local politics of collective memory.

As the previous quotation from the Coolgardie Pioneer (10 Apr. 1895)
indicates, this case study of performance on the Coolgardie Goldfield hinges on abiding
colonial concerns about the need to establish performance both as a mode of
commemorative recreation, and as a marker of civic and economic development in a
highly peripatetic population. This case study examines the historically specific forms
that these concerns took in performance on the Coolgardie Goldfield between 1892 and
1899. I argue that the social in-tensions and dynamics of performance at Coolgardie
and Kalgoorlie were symptoms of a crisis of memory that manifested itself locally in
ways distinct from, but related to, a wider crisis of modern memory that was ongoing
throughout the Western world during the late nineteenth-century. As mentioned in
Chapter One, Richard Terdiman identifies this wider crisis of modern memory as
evidence of an anxiety on the part of Western peoples about ‘the insecurity of their
culture’s involvement with the past,’ and ‘the perturbation of the link to their own
inheritance’ (1993, 3). As will become apparent, the concern for heritage was radically
racialised on the Eastern Goldfields, possibly exacerbated by the store of wealth involved.

In the years from 1892 to 1899, the emergent towns of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie developed substantial links with the Western world, at a rate unprecedented in the colony’s economic and cultural history. Gold production in the colony as a whole almost tripled to 1,404,259 ounces between 1892 and the end of the century (Chate 1991, 27-31). Production of wealth on that scale introduced industrialised mining and urbanisation of a more sedentary population, as reef mining rapidly replaced alluvial workings. The need to import mining technology and equipment placed the Goldfields in dependent relation with the metropoles of industrialisation in Britain, Europe, and America. This subaltern relationship with the industrial West was mirrored in the emergence of industrial disputes on the Goldfields, and in the formation of workers’ associations and employers’ groups to intervene in disputes (Webb and Webb 1993, 314-15; 385). Clearly, industrialised mining deepened social divisions on the Goldfields. But as I read it, while industrial disputes ran deep on the Goldfields in the 1890s, they were directed towards redistributions of power within the mining industry, rather than to the revolutionary overthrow of its structure (Anderson 1983, 191). For its part, the Kalgoorlie Progress Committee made sure that ‘the real news was the steady progress in the development of the leases’ (Webb and Webb 1993, 314). Efforts to establish international communications and inter-ocean transport links, and to import Western finance, technology, and culture, indicate how unquestioningly the Goldfields saw its interests as continuous with Western notions of progress: the basic issue on the Goldfield in the 1890s was not how to oppose progress, but how to divide its ‘rewards.’

169 Katharine Susannah Pritchard’s full-length play ‘Solidarity; or, the Penalty Clause’ (1940) is based on actual events in the history of industrial disputes on the Goldfields. The Perth Repertory Club gave the play its only performance at Perth in 1940 (Dunstone 1979, 194). A typescript is held at the University Library, University of New England, Armidale NSW.
The crisis of memory on the Goldfields was coeval with a local crisis of performance; both were associated with collective experiences and memories of migration and of lives lived in other places. Migration to the Coolgardie Goldfield during the 1890s occurred on a scale unprecedented in the colony. Statistics indicate a net population increase of 111,903 persons in Western Australia from 1892 to 1899, thousands of whom travelled inland to the Goldfields (Webb 1993, 185). Migration on this scale involved a degree of rupture with subjects’ known worlds that impacted on resident colonists and new arrivals alike. This would have been so for incoming migrants, if only because of distances travelled, and the experience of isolation from the past in an unfamiliar natural environment on arrival. Yet the paradox is that, to Goldfields society, migration and mining represented prospective avenues to the future that, at the same time, preserved retrospective, genealogical links with the past. This same paradox of remembering the future was equally at the heart of performance on the Coolgardie Goldfield during the 1890s. It requires some explanation.

If, as Daniel Schacter posits, ‘our sense of ourselves depends crucially on the subjective experience of remembering our past,’ it follows that a specific sense of self is grounded partly in remembered experience of performances past (1996, 34). This aligns with Marvin Carlson’s (2003, 8) contention that dramatic texts involve highly self-conscious ‘processes of recycling and memory,’ and that the ‘recycled’ bodies of actors in performance intensify the effects of these processes on reception. As already mentioned, collective memories and performance share a constitutive relationship that supports continuity and intelligibility of experience and subjectivity. On the Goldfields, the memory that was operative in performance had less to do with exact recall of migrants’ past experience, than with the enactment and reception of what Casey (2000,
69) calls ‘momentary mini-worlds of imagination.’ To reiterate an earlier point, Casey (1993, 69) argues that in memory that is not simply directed to accurate recall, we experience the presence of an ‘environing world’ that is worldlike precisely in its consistency and persistence. He refers elsewhere to a related notion of place-worlds; a notion that has greater explanatory power than has that of ‘an environing world’ (2005, 120). Place-worlds are not ‘centred spaces’ but imaginative eventmental mappings of topogenesis; that is, of the ways—in multiple senses of that word—of coming into place. Casey’s position on place-worlds requires a grasp of the relations between memory and imagination; relations that are also relevant to performance. Imagination, he argues, is distinct from memory in that the former does not exhibit ‘an underlying field of [mnemonic] presentation’ (2005, 120). However, performance points to a crucial difference to be observed between imagination that is merely mental, and imagination that is enacted through the skilled, active body as an event of place. In performance, the body-as-place acts as a presentationnal matrix for both memory, which supports continuity of experience, and for imagination, that makes the world intelligible and meaningful (Misztal 2003,119).

It follows that any discussion of a crisis of memory in performance on the Goldfields raises issues about the continuities and discontinuities between the new spaces of that society and the older societies from which the population had recently migrated. My approach to performance and collective memory through philosophical concepts of space and place leads me to regard this particular crisis of memory in performance as sublate to a prior crisis of space and place. I will proceed from a discussion of the historical forms that the crisis of memory took on the Goldfield, to an examination of its roots in a prior crisis of space and place.
Press records of performances at Coolgardie do not begin until the appearance of the *Coolgardie Miner* newspaper in September 1894. However, references in the press to performances on Coolgardie streets, in marquees, and at stores suggest that entertainments were taking place there soon after settlement commenced in 1892. Examples from 1894 include the Coolgardie Minstrels’ appearance in Ivory and Downie’s marquee in Bayley Street (*CM*. 6 Oct. 1894); and entertainers Little Dominick and his father who regularly performed on violin and harp on Coolgardie streets (*CM*. 21 Jul. 1894). Settlement came at a social cost to the Goldfields community, and, in the absence of social support systems, local performers made significant efforts to ameliorate the more immediate adverse social effects. For instance, the Coolgardie Minstrels gave a benefit performance for the town’s Hospital and convent in Ivory’s marquee in August 1894 (*CM*. 18 Aug. 1894). Amateurs organised a benefit entertainment for Mr and Mrs J. Arnot, ‘regular performers’ in Coolgardie who had ‘lost all in a fire in their tent,’ in April 1895 (*CP*. 3 Apr. 1895). Press reports of entertainments by Mr Jack Mack’s six-man Variety Company in a room adjoining Paisley’s store (*CM*. 14 Apr. 1894), and by the Coolgardie Minstrel and Dramatic Club on a wagon stage in Bayley Street (*CM*. 23 Jun. 1894), suggest that, rudimentary as these arrangements were, performers were well attuned to the motility of their audience, and to the social deprivations that communities faced on the diggings and in the makeshift town. The *Coolgardie Miner* (23 Jun. 1895) reported of the wagon concert: ‘I spent some time listening to the good-natured fellows who so kindly helped their less fortunate associates to while away a pleasant hour, and who, for their part, proved an attentive and appreciative audience.’ In Coolgardie’s highly mobile, polyglot society,

---

170 As a further instance, a meeting of local amateurs at the Australia Hotel, Kalgoorlie, decided to present a ‘general entertainment,’ to conclude with a farce, to benefit Hannan’s Hospital. The programme, preceded during the afternoon by running, cycling and hurling, took place at Quigley’s Hall, Kalgoorlie, on 1 January 1896 (*KM*. 13 Dec. 1895; 20 Dec. 1895).
street performance and busking were occasions for communal identification that extended beyond the moment of performance.

Amateur performances appear to have been particularly effective as moments of stasis in which itinerant prospectors could ‘travel in place’ (Casey 2005, 79). Prospector and diarist James Balzano gives an account, previously mentioned, of an entertainment on St Patrick’s Day, 1897, at which ‘fully 300 men’ gathered at night around a bonfire in the bush, for an impromptu two-hour entertainment of songs, recitations, instrumentals, and boot dancing on a meat box ‘stage’ (Balzano, n.p.). The event took place at Dick Egan’s bush camp at Lake Lefroy, near present day Kambalda, 60 kilometres south of Kalgoorlie These early amateur performances, in and out of ‘town,’ generated a sense of community through the interaction of subjects with places in which people’s long established collective memories did not resonate. In these instances, the conventions of body centred performance functioned as a contingent place-world for collective remembering.

These early performances, in which the whole body came into action in makeshift conditions, were of particular value and resonance to a numerous but socially fragile community dependent for its continuity upon strenuous physical labour in harsh conditions. The photograph (fig. 12) of a swagman walking for possibly hundreds of kilometres to reach Coolgardie illustrates an action of a male body as place in place. As Casey (2005, 181) remarks of ‘earth art’ in another context, performance, even in its ordinary acceptation, ‘implies getting the lived and moving body fully into the act: making it operative and not just operational.’ I take this difference to mean that these amateur performances were not just happening, but were having a profound effect on those subjects and that place. Amateur performance created an effective, imaginative
place in which migrants of many nationalities, with different and sometimes conflicting collective memories, could identify momentarily as a community. But even so, community identification based on performing bodies was never unitary, and never stable; as performance, it had to be ‘restored,’ and as Schechner (1985), Roach (1996), and Carlson (2003) argue, performance itself was a powerful means to ‘restoration’ of community. Here, the notion that performance is ‘restored’ social action aligns with the notion that memory is by nature ‘reconstructive’ (Werscht 2002, 32). The amateur performances at and near Coolgardie were a modality of collective memory that integrated ‘various different personal pasts’ into a shared collectivity that amounted to ‘more than an aggregate’ of individual memories (Misztal 2003, 11).

The close alignment of performance with collective memory engendered a politics of performance on the Goldfields that was by extension a crisis of collective memory in performance. The internal dynamics of this cultural politics were related only implicitly to the divisive issues of parliamentary representation, regional separatism, labour relations, and racism that dominated Goldfields political life in the 1890s. However, Misztal (2003, 16) makes the important point that ‘a particular cognitive bias marks’ every group’s remembering. As ever in the colony’s short history, the dominant cognitive bias on the Goldfields was towards a racialised colonial version of imported British and North American performance culture.\(^\text{171}\)

James Wilkinson’s Melbourne based Gaiety Pantomime Company is an instance. The company was the first to perform at Coolgardie’s new Theatre Royal, also known as the Olympic Theatre, in October 1894 (CP. 3 Oct. 1894). Its repertoire exemplified the late nineteenth-century Australian commercial theatre’s genealogical

\(^{171}\) Webb and Webb (1993) are unusual among historians in registering the presence of imported theatre culture on the Goldfields, though they pass over amateur performance.

A similar case can be made for the production of Alfred Dampier and Garnet Walch’s Australian bushranger play *Robbery Under Arms* (1994), first performed at the Alexander Theatre, Melbourne, in 1890, and subsequently in London in 1894. The Dampier Company performed *Robbery Under Arms* at the Theatre Royal, Coolgardie, and at Kalgoorlie in April and May 1897 (*GA*. 30 Apr. 1897; *KM*. 3 May. 1897). The Goldfields’ link with London was reinforced by British actors Tom Cannam, formerly of the Brough and Boucicault Company, and A. H. Elvins, formerly of the Carrington-Taylor Company, who appeared with the Garrick Comedy Company on the Goldfields.

---

172 See West (1995, 240-41) for an account of the Gaiety companies in Australia.
173 An advertisement for Wilkinson’s Gaiety Company claimed that the group played anything from ‘ponderous tragedy etc. [sic] and tearful drama, down to light comedy and musical burlesque (where they are most at home)’ (*C.P.* 3 Oct. 1984).
in the late 1890s (*CM*. 21 Jul. 1898). In July 1898, the Garrick Comedy Company, of which Cannam was stage manager, presented a farce ‘Uncles and Aunts’ (n.d.), at the Miners’ Institute Kalgoorlie. The farce had circulated in the British provinces for three years before Cannam performed in it for the Brough-Boucicault Company at Her Majesty’s Theatre, Sydney, on 23 January 1892.  

Goldfields society was eager to host visiting companies and apparently unconcerned by its consequent dependence on theatre centres in Britain, the United States, and the Eastern Australian colonies. As already observed, the local amateur community nurtured a sense of cultural continuity with British theatre’s social values through repertoire and the promotion of benefit performances and rational entertainments. T. L. W. Benstead’s correspondence with the *Coolgardie Pioneer* (17 Apr. 1895) on ‘a matter so frail as amusement’ typifies expectations that performance and collective memory together could secure a sense of continuity and ameliorate social concerns: ‘we are yet thoroughly human, and […] rational amusement is as necessary to sustain the health of our minds as the food that sustains our lives.’ Both local and visiting commercial managements reinforced the subaltern status of Goldfields performance through the downscaling of overseas and intercolonial productions to local conditions. The importation of entertainment onto the Goldfields in the 1890s merely amplified Western Australia’s multiple colonial status. Commercial tours to the Goldfields by the Taylor-Carrington Company, Harry Rickards’ Tivoli Company, J. C. Williamson’s Royal Comic Opera Company, and the Maggie Moore-Harry Roberts Company originated in, and returned to, Eastern Australia.  

---  

174 Tom Cannam was also active with Western Australia’s Albany Dramatic Club in 1900 (*AlbAd*. 31 Mar. 1900).  
175 For the Taylor-Carrington Company, see *Kalgoorlie Miner* (1 May. 1896); for the Harry Rickards Tivoli Company, see *Coolgardie Miner* (8 May. 1897) and *Golden Age* (11 May. 1898); for the Royal Comic Opera Company, see *Golden Age* (28 Jun. 1898); for the Moore-Roberts Company, see *Golden Age* (17 Jun. 1898) and *Kalgoorlie Miner* (1 Jul. 1898).
culture was in some respects dependent on Perth theatre, though it was also a financial lifeline to Perth companies and impresarios. The Ettie Williams Happy Hours Variety Company, based at the Cremorne Gardens, Murray Street, Perth, regularly toured to the Goldfields from 1896; while the Grand All Nations Fancy Fair variety show, which opened at the Miner’s Institute, Kalgoorlie, in August 1898, appears to have been a local attempt to emulate Perth’s Ye Olde Englyshe Fayre (KM. 20 Jul. 1898).\textsuperscript{176} Even the numerous ‘job lot companies who have done a few nights and disappeared to parts unknown’ (CP. 10 Apr. 1895) came from afar.

Press commentary and local business attributed the region’s client status to a lack of properly equipped performance venues, rather than to a lack of demand. An 1898 prospectus for a proposed Cremorne Gardens and Hotel at Kanowna, 18 kilometres north-east of Kalgoorlie, reasoned that ‘the want of adequate stage accommodation at any of the Goldfields places of amusement’ had deprived the community of touring companies that ‘contribute so much to life’s enjoyment in the Eastern Colonies’ (KM. 12 Jul. 1898). Coincident with the Wilson Barrett Company’s tour to Perth, a Kalgoorlie Theatre Company was registered in June 1898, for the purpose of erecting a theatre to Wilson Barrett’s design, with seating for 1350 people, and a two-storey frontage of 33.6 metres on Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie (KM. 1 Jul. 1898). The target figure of £15,000 was not raised. A third proposal for a theatre at the east end of Hannan Street failed in 1898 (KM. 11 Nov. 1898).

Language and ethnicity were issues by default in Goldfields politics of performance and collective memory. In July 1898, the amateur New Indian Dramatic Company, comprising members of the Goldfields Afghan community, gave a single

\textsuperscript{176} For the Ettie Williams Happy Hours Company tour, see Kalgoorlie Miner (13 May 1896; 28 May 1896). For the opening of Ye Olde Englyshe Fayre, Perth, see (WAust. 12 Dec. 1895). A branch of Ye Olde Enlyshe Fayre operated at Fremantle in 1896 (WAust. 12 Mar. 1896).
‘Hindustanee’ language performance of the pantomime ‘Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves’ (n.d.) at the Tivoli Theatre, Coolgardie (CM. 21 Jul. 1898). Imperialist racism prevailed: attendance was poor; Afghans sat to the right, Europeans to the left. The Coolgardie Miner (21 Jul. 1898) reviewer condescended to the ‘antics of the aliens,’ and to the musical accompaniment by Hansen’s String Band and Afghani pipes and drums. The Indian Company was able to perform in the Tivoli Theatre only as a concession to players who ‘were born and educated in India [sic], and therefore are British subjects’ (CM. 19 Jul. 1898). Reaction to the Indian Company points to the body as the matrix of Goldfields performance, consistent with its status as a marker of a politics of race. Thus, Afghans and Europeans sat apart from each other at Ali Baba; the ‘forty thieves’ were clothed in ‘football singlets;’ and a child was ‘taken out in fright’ from the performance (CM. 19 Jul. 1898).

As discussed in Chapter Four, performance can be construed as metonymic representation of the colonial body politic. Amateur performance at Coolgardie and its hinterland made visible a racialised Goldfields body politic—or bodies politic. To reiterate, Moira Gatens (1996, 21) describes the body politic as a metonymic representation in which ‘one body or group of bodies is taken to stand for a group of diverse bodies.’ In colonial performance, bodies were not neutral markers of difference. In the case of the New Indian Dramatic Company’s ‘Ali Baba,’ performers and spectators were divided within an Anglo body politic that rejected an Afghani ‘tongue.’ The body politic was also gendered. If, on the one hand, the benefit performance for Mr and Mrs Arnot at Coolgardie projected an imaginary of a body politic injured by fire and succoured by a nurturing feminine hand, then Balazano’s reference to ‘300 men’ gathered around a bonfire at Lake Lefroy identified a different body politic motivated
by an ‘infantile’ masculine wish ‘for independence from the maternal body’ (Gatens 1996, 22).

This crisis of migrant memory and performance was grounded in a prior crisis of space and place. The Goldfields’ subaltern status can be understood spatially, in Anderson’s (1983, 187-88) terms, as a colony within a colony on the geographic and cultural margins of imperial civilisation, in which a critical mass of people lived in varying degrees of subaltern relation with larger centres at Perth, Sydney, and Melbourne. In his analysis of the naming of new places in America from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Benedict Anderson (1983, 187) identifies ‘an idiom of sibling competition rather than inheritance,’ in which ‘new’ and ‘old’ co-exist within ‘homogeneous, empty time.’ In a parallel way, the ‘new’ the Goldfields environment manifested itself to Europeans as primordial vacuous space that challenged the intelligibility of experience and the continuity of identity invested in memory. The crises of memory and performance on the Goldfields arose from the modern European propensity to reduce place to neutral space, and therefore to fail to recognise the ‘minimal dyad of place and space’ (Casey ‘Smooth,’ n.p.) that was always already there before their arrival. Casey (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) captures the predicament of the modern individual, whom he describes as ‘a dislocated, or perhaps more exactly, a dyslocated subject, someone who does not know the difference between place and space,’ or the difference between either of these and the empty sites to which such cognitive failures confine modern subjects. Casey’s observation, that the ‘pseudo-voluntarism’ of modern subjects impels them to think that they ‘can go any place,’ resonates particularly with the experience of Goldfields immigrants who, as I understand it, either did not appreciate that to go ‘any place’ is to confront difference, or, having recognised this, raised their cultural defences against such an encounter.
Chapter Six: Case Studies: Harry Bartine and Masked Balls

Solvitur ambulando [...] The first kinaesthetic activity, then, is to unify one’s own moving body.

Edward Casey

Seeing is effortless and mercurial, or so it seems, and it appears we prefer it that way.

James Elkins

In this chapter, I analyse constructions of the colonial body in case studies of selected balancing acts and a series of masked balls that took place at Perth and Fremantle in nineteenth-century Western Australia. The first study is of two programmes of balancing and athletic acts given by visiting American athlete Harry Bartine, the first on 24 April 1869 to mark the colony’s Queen’s Birthday holiday, and the second on 1 June 1869 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the colony. The subject of the second study is a series of masked balls staged by Melbourne based illusionist Professor Silvester and his manager Minton Naylor Griffiths at Perth and Fremantle in July and August 1880. I begin with some remarks on the choice of these topics, and some clarification of terms.

The colonial masked balls were novelties in colonial Western Australia, though they were relatively innocuous in comparison with similar events on the Continent and in Britain. They are of interest partly for their significance in the social and cultural history of the colony, but mainly because they constituted an expanded sense of performance that was based in a multi-focused, participatory spectacle of movement. Mask and costume—much of the latter on hire from theatrical stock—provided opportunities for revellers at the Perth and Fremantle balls to act parts at variance with their normal roles in life. Among the other performative aspects of the masked balls, paying spectators in the galleries viewed the maskers from above; hobbyhorse
tournaments were staged on the dance floor; and clowns and a comic ‘moral policeman’ circulated among the dancers.

The notion of ‘placialization’ introduced in Chapter Two is central to each of these colonial performances. It is useful to recall here that Casey’s (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) concept of the ‘placialization of space’ encompasses the notions that space is self-proliferating in both dimensional and adverbial senses; and that space is also ‘a doublet composed of itself (whatever that is) and place.’ These two studies give a clearer sense of how the process of ‘placialization,’ which is prior to collective memory, works in these performances.

Visuality is a key factor in both Bartine’s strongman acts and the masked balls. Peter de Bolla (1996, 65) defines visuality as ‘a figurative spacing that opens up, controls, or legisitates the terrain upon which a large number of concepts are articulated.’ Modalities of visuality, according to de Bolla, encompass ‘social and cultural practices as well as philosophical and technical descriptions of optics.’ I interpret these modalities of visuality to include slack rope and tight wire acts, and masked balls, as performances of body-centred subject space. Visuality is implicated, in differently encultured ways, in both risk-taking displays of male physical strength and balance, and perturbations of visual experience through masks and costumes at the balls. These performances constituted embodied imaginings of colonial identity, embedded in what de Bolla (1996, 65) describes as ‘the sociocultural noise that colours and distorts vision in its construction of visuality.’ As he adds (1996, 65), visuality is located ‘within the virtual spaces created by cultural forms’ but it is also ‘certainly not confined to the visible.’ Analysis of the events provides an historically nuanced account of modes of visuality in
embodied performance, through which class, race, and gender identity claims were played out at in the colony.

Both Bartine’s balancing and athletic acts and the Silvester-Griffiths masked balls can be understood as self-proliferating performances, and also as enactments of the self-proliferation of colonial subjects through implacement, visuality, and collective memory. Casey’s (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) aforementioned notion of space as a self-proliferating ‘doublet composed of itself […] and place’ goes some way to account for the capacity of physical performance to self-proliferate in space and place. The notion of self-proliferating performance is double here. It refers not only to the capacity of performance to proliferate spatially, but to the capacity of performance to proliferate constructions of the subject—that is, proliferations of the ‘self’. In broad terms, my interest is in performance as an occasion that is simultaneously placialized and placializing. Transposing Casey’s (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) terminology to my own topic, I argue that the ‘ultimate source’ of the power of performance to self-proliferate is not collective memory, nor ‘the body or the way the world is’; it is the ‘placialization’ of performance itself ‘as place.’ Casey’s logic reminds us that the relations between performance and collective memory are place based, and generative rather than derivative.

Peta Tait (2000, 1) inquires of the mental action of performance: In what ways do physical bodies in live performance present vital and compelling expressions of ideas? I rephrase her question to ask in what ways physical performance both draws upon, and re-draws, collective memory; and in what ways this process implaces the performing and remembering subject? I argue on the basis of the case studies, that the horizon of mental content embodied in live physical performance extends to non-
verbalised social, cultural, political, and ideological dimensions of social memory; all of which are entailed in the construction and implacement of the colonial subject. Tait’s searching question leads to another: What constitutes the body-as-place that enacts this embodiment in performance? A possible answer is to be found in Casey’s (1998, 332) observation, consonant with Luce Irigaray’s notion of the female body as débordé, that the body ‘has become an effective basis for […] an expansive vision’ of place.\footnote{Irigaray’s term débordé refers to the continual surpassing of the specificity of human sexuality, in part through touch. She writes of women’s bodies: ‘There are two touches between boundaries; and these are not the same: the touch of one’s body at the threshold; the touch of the contained other. There is also the internal touch of the child’ (1993, 51).}

Another possible response to the question is that visuality is embodied and implaced in performance, where spectators look at bodies, and performers’ eyes are integral to their performance. Mutual looking in performances supports coming into place. The disruption of habituated vision in performance adds something not usually encountered in our reflections on the logic and experience of looking; something akin to the cultural dimension of place described by Casey (1993, 33). Historical instances of disrupted visuality in performance are to hand: Bartine topped one of his performances by pushing a wheelbarrow across a slack rope while blindfolded; the wearing of masks at the colonial balls had the capacity momentarily to introduce a new embodied dimension to the wearers’ experience of looking and what Casey (1993, 33) designates as the ‘felt density of a place.’

Case Study: ‘Mr Bartine, The Great American Equestrian, Slack Rope, Tight Wire, and Flying Trapeze Performer’

I begin this case study with some relevant facts about visiting professional athlete and acrobat Harry Bartine’s performances on the slack rope and tight wire at Perth and Fremantle, in May and June 1869.
In late April 1869, Harry Bartine, an American professional acrobat and equestrian who had earlier appeared with the ‘renowned Barlow Troupe’ in Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia, arrived in Western Australia from Adelaide, as a member of Frank Stebbing’s Intercolonial Circus (*Inquirer*. 28 Apr. 1869). Stebbing’s Circus, the first to visit Western Australia, opened its tour of the colony with a performance at the Fremantle cricket ground, on the night of 24 April 1869. In its review of the performance, the *Herald* (1 May. 1869) complimented Bartine on his horsemanship in ‘the Shipwrecked Sailor”—an equestrian act marred, ironically, by the adverse effects of the sea voyage from Adelaide, from which Bartine’s horse had not fully recovered. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the novelty of a circus entertainment, and the gathering of unprecedented numbers of people for a performance in the colony, resulted in a disturbance at the entrance to Stebbing’s 800-seat marquee. Two bystanders, who objected to the ‘flogging of several boys’ in the crowd by the constables, were arrested and faced charges of ‘creating a disturbance and exciting resistance to the police’ in the Fremantle Magistrates Court (*Herald*. 1 May. 1869).

Bartine continued with the Intercolonial Circus for its next season on an allotment opposite the Horse and Groom Tavern, in Murray Street, Perth, in early May 1869. However, he was released from the Circus’ subsequent tour to the small agricultural towns of Guildford, York, Northam, and Newcastle inland to the east of Perth (*Inquirer*. 5 May. 1869; 19 May. 1869). Remaining in Perth, Bartine gave tight wire, slack rope, and strongman performances at two events associated with official commemorative celebrations in the colony.

---

178 The *Inquirer* (19 May. 1869) reports that Stebbing’s were washed out by inclement weather at Guildford; that, as a result of ‘the bad state of the roads, and an accident to the conveyance, the tents and other apparatus were not available’ at York; and that Stebbing’s were thus ‘compelled to leave for Northam and Newcastle.’
To mark the celebration of the Queen’s Birthday at Government House, Perth, on the afternoon of 24 May 1869, Bartine successfully pushed a navvy’s wheelbarrow along a thirty metre-long tight wire suspended some twelve metres above the ground, carrying a balancing pole the while. On his return passage along the wire, he pushed the wheelbarrow while blindfolded, having ‘a common sack’ placed over his head and tied at the neck. Before setting out, Bartine called for a volunteer to ride the last passage in his wheelbarrow, or on his back, but no spectator was willing to share the doubled risk of balancing two bodies aloft (Herald. 29 May. 1869). Bartine ended his performance with a display of ‘Vaulting the slack rope’, completing each pose without ‘the slightest jerking of the rope’ (Inquirer. 26 May. 1869). The spectators were said to represent ‘the largest concourse of people ever gathered together in the colony’ (Herald. 29 May. 1869).

Bartine’s rope walking required radically adjustments of the body to the space through which it moved, but it also acted on that space. The tight wire requires the performer to move forward along a wire suspended high above the ground, one foot aligned directly forward of the other, thus depriving the body of the balance it derives, in its upright position, from the distribution of its weight through the soles of the feet. By means of this constraint, Bartine’s slack rope performance with the wheelbarrow enacted the capacity of the body to self-proliferate; to re-orient itself in order to live and move about in radically altered relation to space. The capacity of Bartine’s body to re-orient itself in space could well have related subliminally in the minds of his settler spectators, to their own experiences of migration and survival in a new and unfamiliar space.

179 Bartine appears not to have used a safety net during any of his performances in the colony.
The significance of his act derives from the self-proliferating property of space itself. Casey (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) observes that ‘the three-dimensionality of space directly reflects our bodily state, i.e., the fact that as upright beings three perpendicular planes implicitly meet and intersect in us.’ Casey argues further that the body’s bilateral symmetry doubles the three-dimensionality of the body. Bartine’s act radicalises the orientation of his performing body in space through means of the wheelbarrow and balancing rod, which extend his body in multiple directions in space along the wire; while the asymmetrical placing of his feet on the wire redoubles the effort needed to maintain quotidian bodily balance while moving forward. But these arithmetical spatial relations do not exhaust the self-proliferating capacity of Bartine’s body in space; as Casey maintains, ‘there is no end to the number of ways’ in which the body ‘can move in any given spatial scene’ (‘Smooth,’ n.p.).

The constant mutations required to maintain Bartine’s physical balance in performance problematised and challenged any normal acceptance of the structure and sense of space as ‘something sufficiently roomy to live and move in’ (Casey ‘Smooth,’ n.p.). Indeed, the spatial organisation of this act, and the risk Bartine ran of injuring himself, tested the limit of the body’s capacity to orient itself by movement in space. Bartine’s act multiplies the capacity of the body to self-proliferate in space, to the point at which the body continually approaches the limits of controlled self-proliferation in self-injury—that is, the body approaches the limit to its ‘aerial’ performance, and possibly to its own self-continuity, in the shape of a fall through space. Should Bartine’s body have overbalanced, his descent would have reconstituted the space through which he fell; thereby constituting his descent as a telluric implacement of a rather abrupt kind. If we accept Casey’s argument that space is a doublet ‘composed of itself […] and
place’ (‘Smooth,’ n.p.), then Bartine’s performing body is a place that enacts coming into place.

The garden place in which Bartine was performing belonged by proxy to the Queen. The Herald (29 May. 1869) likened his ‘tread on the wire’ to ‘that of a Monarch,’ but his display of body-centred space on the slack rope in Government House Gardens evoked its own transgressive kind of counter celebration, associating an image of itself with the Queen’s anniversary in the public memory. More precisely, the processes of Bartine’s act mediated, structured, and transformed the significance of that year’s Queen’s Birthday celebration in the public memory. Following Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986, 2), the juxtaposition of Bartine’s act with the royal occasion it celebrated can be understood as a transgression of ‘a much broader and more complex cultural process whereby the human body, psychic forms, geographical space and the social formation are all constructed within interrelating hierarchies of high and low.’ While Bartine’s display on the tight wire embodied the possibility of a fall from rope to ground, it also enacted the discursive ‘slippage’ of Bartine’s body-centred space between higher and lower social and political valuations. Stallybrass and White (1986, 5) argue that slippage of this kind is made possible by a constitutive internal relation between ‘high’ and ‘low’ valuations, such that the ‘high’ includes the ‘low’ symbolically, ‘as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life.’ In view of Bartine’s tight wire performance, I prefer to expand Stallybrass and White’s notion of an internal relation between ‘high’ and ‘low’, such that that the ‘low’ also includes the ‘high’ as an ‘eroticized constituent of its [own] fantasy life’.

The notion that ‘low’ and ‘high’ ranked subjects mutually constitute each other as and through the other, accounts for the transgressive, eroticised character of Bartine’s
Transgressive performance places the ‘socially peripheral’ performer as ‘symbolically central’ to the performance; just as, historically speaking, it placed Bartine’s marginal and ephemeral performance as ‘symbolically central’ (Stallybrass and White 1986, 5) in the collective memory of the Queen’s Birthday. The transgressive character of Bartine’s performance is consistent with Paul Connerton’s (1991, 1) observation that collective memory is an important ‘dimension of political power.’ In the long run, transgressive performances such as Bartine’s tight wire display were acts of affiliation that did not ultimately challenge historical distributions of social and political power within the colony.

On 1 June 1869, Bartine participated in two further performances at Fremantle to commemorate the fortieth Anniversary Day of the founding of the Colony (Inquirer. 2 Jun. 1869). During the afternoon, Bartine gave an open-air performance on the tight wire in the yard at the Old Convict Establishment. That evening, at a benefit for the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, Bartine repeated his afternoon tight wire display. He then performed his ‘Antipodean Feat’—his pièce de résistance in the colony—in the interval between performances of C.H. Hazelwood’s drama The Clock On the Stairs (1862), and the extravaganza ‘Green Grow the Rushes O’ (n.d.). The Herald described Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’ as ‘a dangerous and trying’ act requiring great muscular strength:

It is performed thus:—An iron bar about 30 feet [ten metres] long with large rings attached is fixed to the ceiling. The performer mounting to the end of the bar by means of a rope, swings himself up, puts the fore part of one of his feet

---

180 The Young Blondin’s cross-dressing and strip as Britannia in 1878, referred to in Chapter One, occupied quite a different political space. He might have acted the giant killer with respect to Britannia but he was protected by his age, and the edge was taken off any political point by costume fetishism and comedy.

181 The performance was for free settlers, not convicts.
through the first ring—and suspending himself by the instep of his foot, puts the other foot in the next ring; hanging by his foot, he moves the foot that was in the first ring into the third ring and so on from ring to ring till he has traversed the whole length of the bar. The progress is backwards. (*Herald. 12 Jun. 1869*)

Conceptually speaking, Bartine’s wheelbarrow balancing act in Perth and his athletic ‘Antipodean Feat’ at Fremantle can be understood as two among many actual occasions bound into ‘unique collocations of space and time’ (Casey 1993, 23) in the process of placialization through performance in colonial Western Australia. His performances can be understood as locatory, in the adverbial sense that each was an event precisely located in time and place; while, as the foregoing newspaper reports make clear, each performance specifically located spectators, performer, and equipment within the dimensions of the performance space.

The ‘antipodean’ designation of the act, also implied another order of locatory reference—surely witty, although the press did not pursue this—to the geographically, ideologically, and politically subordinate relation of its settler audience as other to imperial Britain and the northern hemisphere in general. If Bartine’s act was transgressive in this way, its effect was also uncanny, at once familiar and weird, insofar as his progress ‘backwards’ and upside down across the ceiling inverted the erect human body’s normally perpendicular relations to gravity, symmetry, and three-dimensional space. Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’ re-oriented his body in space, so that he ‘faced’ the world preposterously, that is, back-to-front and upside down. As Casey’s analysis of the ‘dimensionality of space’ ('Smooth,' n.pag.) makes clear, Bartine’s performance of spatial and human otherness enacted the macrocosmic self-proliferating

---

182 I take this notion of the uncanny from Vivian Sobchack (2000, xiii).
property of space in the microcosmic, subject-centred space of his body on the hall ceiling. Bartine’s performance can also be understood as a self-proliferating metaphor, in the sense that his performance on the ceiling interpellated his floor-bound spectators into an enfolding place-world. By allowing his spectators to see the mechanical apparatus by which Bartine made his antipodal ‘progress’ through space, the performance embodied, in spatial terms, the constructed, insecure condition of both performing subject and colonial subject (Solomon 2000, 14-15). The uncanny otherness of the performance can be understood as ‘strangely familiar’ to, and ‘culturally self-reflexive’ of, its spectators. It is when Bartine progresses against the odds across the ceiling or along a wire, or when, as happened, he falls to the ground and bruises his body, that he is at his most human—most in place.\textsuperscript{183}

The locatory character of Bartine’s royal birthday performance, with all that it implies of the ideological centrality and unity of empire, could not rob his feat of its ‘idiolocal power.’ I apply Casey’s (1993, 23) notion of the ‘idiolocal’ here. If we extrapolate from Casey’s abstract philosophical notion that implacement is radically ‘idiolocal,’ it is possible to understand Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’ as a specific occasion in a broader omnilocational process of implacement that was not simply locatory but ‘concretely placed’, ‘intrinsically particular’, and ‘occasion-bound’ (Casey 1993, 23). That is to say, Bartine’s feat was a radical, eventmental placialisation of space and time. I describe Bartine’s act as ‘eventmental’ in the sense argued by Casey (1998, 336), that ‘a single place [being] capable of reflecting the whole universe of space,’ is a place by virtue of ‘the event of this reflection.’ Thus, while Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’ was radically focused on the human body and subject-centred space, it bears out

\textsuperscript{183} Bartine overbalanced and fell five metres to the ground, badly bruising his body, while walking the tight wire in the yard next to the harbour master’s Barracks, Fremantle, in April 1873 (\textit{Herald}, 26 Apr. 1873).
Casey’s (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) claim, already mentioned, that ‘the ultimate source of spatial self-proliferation is [...] the placialization of space itself.’

From a contemporary conceptual position, Bartine’s commemorative ‘Antipodean Feat’ at Fremantle reads as a fittingly uncanny witness to the otherness inscribed in nineteenth-century colonial subject-space; as well as, in more general terms, to the self-proliferating, generative relations between performance, space, place, subject, and memory. Bartine’s progress along a wire or across a ceiling cannot be reduced to theory. But the conjoining of his feet to the wire or the ceiling hooks suggests parallels with Casey’s (1993, 28) description of orienting oneself in space by bringing one’s body into conformity with the configurations of environing space. Bartine’s space of wire or ceiling was liminal and difficult to conform with, but the purpose of conformity might have been, in philosophical terms, to enact the transformation of an apparently vacuous expanse (a coloney) into ‘a set of what can only properly be called places (even if these places still lack[ed] proper names)’ Casey 1993, 28).

Bartine’s performances were appreciated in their time as physical exhibitions of masculine muscularity and risk-taking. They can be understood in more precise contemporary terms as spectacles that enacted the space and place bound character of masculine sexual identity—though Bartine and his peers are unlikely to have understood matters in this way. Given its popular ‘catch penny’ title, Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’ can nonetheless be construed as a (decidedly bizarre) telluric showing of human inhabitation of a place-world that enfolded the performance, the wider social world in which the performance took place, and the encompassing natural world. The outwardly visible components of Bartine’s acts constructed the masculine
sexuality of his body. The balancing rod, wheelbarrow, blindfold, and hobbles functioned as prosthetics that extended his body visibly outwards into performance space. That space was, to all appearances, organised in ‘physicaliste terms’ as a masculine space of *partes extra partes*; that is, a space in which each thing appeared to be external to the space of every other thing (Casey 1996, 322). But contrary to appearances, Bartine’s intimate ‘antipodean’ space was a space of relational re-doublings, in which the performer’s body moved upside-down, back-to-front, and in inverted relation to the floor that habitually anchored the body in the world. What is more, the re-positioning of Bartine’s body in physical space entailed a re-organisation of the visual field his body inhabited. In this subjective enfolding of spaces-within-spaces, the macrocosmic world, the body’s ‘natural realm’ (Casey 1996, 322), was in generative relationship with the performer’s microcosmic ‘world on a wire’. Bartine’s body, with its prosthetic extensions, was the arc that mediated the relationship between these worlds. In this way, his body in performance constituted itself as an intimate organic place.

Of course, these spatial and visual enfoldings had a resolved facticity; Bartine’s body had to come off the wire one way or another, to end the performance. But this facticity did not contain or exhaust the possible constructions of masculinity in Bartine’s performances. While his ‘strongman’ performances made no specific identity claim, they enacted and visualised the masculine body’s particular capacity to extend and proliferate its gendered identity through the porous boundaries of spaces-within-spaces; that is, its capacity to be masculine body-as-place. To negotiate the body’s passage between the macrocosmic spaces of the ‘natural realm’ and the microcosmic spaces of performance, as Bartine did, is to deal visually and corporeally with the
problematic of ‘place as a middle ground between extremes’, as Casey (1996, 324) puts the matter in another context.

Bartine’s ‘antipodean’ bodily progress ‘backwards’ along an iron pathway suspended from the ceiling enacted a microcosmic place-world that was in mutually constitutive relation with the material social world in which it took place. If this performed place-world was microcosmic, it was also ponderous. To traverse it heel-first, without benefit of sight and forward bodily inclination to guide the placing of one’s feet, required the strongman’s phenomenal strength and kinaesthetic powers; *phenomenal* as both ‘evidenced by the [re-oriented] senses’, and ‘prodigious’, as evidenced by the effort and pain involved in transferring his body weight from the soles of his feet to his insteps. In the spatial and visual dynamic of this place-world, the inverted ‘heft’ of Bartine’s habitually ‘earth-bound body,’ momentarily suspended head-down from the ceiling, complemented the ‘earth-bound’ stance of his observers, gazing head-up from the floor. By this logic, Bartine was undoubtedly the eponymous protagonist on whom all attention was focused, but his performance took place by virtue of the enfolding *in*-versions of its own world. This enfolding overlaid new values on the conventional, grid-like verticals and horizontals of the room upon which the event was premised. For one thing, the dialectic between the body suspended from the ceiling and the bodies upright on the floor decentred the visual and spatial experience of the event, so that no privileged experience of the event was available while it was in progress. As well, the event was designed to destabilise, at least for the moment, habituated modes of human walking. In an account of his earth-mapping, Robert Smithson stresses the ‘importance of the [artist’s] body walking over the site itself […] If you think about tracks of any kind you’ll discover that you could use tracks as a medium [for mapping]’ (1996, 181). A parallel case could be made for Bartine’s ‘Antipodean Feat’, with the
added complexity that it involved at least two modes of human motility. On the one hand, spectators perambulated habitually within the social world on the floor. On the other, the tautly constructed, effortful, *in-verse* and *re-verse* ambulation of the performer’s body across the ceiling mapped the intimate performance space.

Bartine’s performances, and the operation of collective memory within them, cannot be thought without a prior concept of place. His performances raise the crucial issue of what placialization, from which they are inseparable, has to do with the operation of collective memory in performance. His performance on the wire at Government House invites consideration of how it can be said to have sustained collective memory of an event in royal history without evincing specific mental images of that royal past. Given that the monarch’s physical absence from the colony was permanent, and that most of her colonial subjects had emigrated from their home country, any colonial performance in celebration of her birthday can be thought only as an historically contingent (re)construction of the colonists’ cultural past and a construction of their cultural present. No doubt, Government House Gardens and the Odd Fellows’ Hall each functioned as a kind of *emboîtement* that acted to relocate twice over: to ‘relocate’ the venue in the sense of reconfiguring it as a performance space; and then to relocate the performer’s body in a space that is at once a space of exposure (above the spectators) and a space of containment (the tight wire, or the ceiling).

Bartine’s performance in commemoration of the royal birthday was an instance of regressively displaced cultural transmission, in which the ‘adaptation of historic practices to changing conditions’ required that the Western Australian performance stand in for ‘an elusive entity that it is not but that it must … aspire to embody and replace,’ or at least evoke (Roach 1996, 2-3). Bartine’s acts on the tight wire can
similarly be said to have stood in for his previous performances of these items, which he could not exactly reproduce in the present. His performances are consistent in this way with Richard Schechner’s (1985, 36-37) notion of performance as behaviour that is ‘always subject to revision.’

The connection of Bartine’s performances with the past is further complicated by the fact that they privileged the non-verbal, visual, and bodily transmission of a cultural practice that was authoritatively inscribed (Connerton 1989, 4). Bartine’s wire walking and his ‘Antipodean Feat’ can be understood in these ways as exercises in multiple re-location. Bartine being an itinerant performer, his performances needed to be literally relocatable to wherever he could transport and assemble the required rigging, and raise an audience. Even at this literal level, his performances rejected the notion of single location; journeying and multiple location were built into them. Yet these performances entailed more than literal re-location to Government House Gardens, Perth, or the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle. Their re-locations inhered in ‘the different sense of place that emerges when the same place is reconfigured significantly’ (Casey 2005, 95). And, I would add, in the different sense of body-as-place that emerges when the same body is significantly reconfigured.

Press reports give an incomplete account of his subsequent appearances in the colony. Following his Anniversary Day performances at Fremantle, Bartine toured his ‘Antipodean Feat’ inland to Guildford and the Eastern districts during June 1869, under the management of another American, Mr H.P. Lyons, whose Rocky Mountain Wonders equestrian, athletic, and acrobatic troupe had arrived in the colony in March 1869 (Inquirer. 31 Mar. 1869; 9 Jun. 1869). On his return from his inland tour, Bartine performed on the trapeze in a programme of plays with professional actress Mrs H.P.
Lyons and the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps, at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, in June 1869; and again at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle in July 1869 (Inquirer. 30 Jun. 1869; 7 Jul. 1869). He is again recorded in two performances of acrobatics and trapeze work at the small south-western port of Bunbury, presumably on his way to the southern port of Albany, and an outward passage to the eastern Australian colonies (Inquirer. 18 Aug. 1869). Bartine returned to the colony in late 1872, to re-join Mr H.P. Lyons, now licensee of a hotel at Guildford, in preparing several local horses to take acting roles in an equestrian play, ‘The Steeplechase; or, Harvest Home’, for Tom Wielands’ and H.P. Lyons’ Royal Victorian Circus, which arrived in Perth in October 1872, (Inquirer. 16 Oct. 1872). H.P. Lyons seems to have been the Royal Victorian Circus’ man in Perth. Bartine joined Mr and Mrs H.P. Lyons, and their horses, in performances of ‘The Steeplechase’ for the Royal Victorian Circus on the open ground opposite Cameron’s bakery, Hay Street, Perth; and at Guildford and Fremantle (Inquirer. 16 Oct. 1872; 30 Oct. 1872). Bartine gave three further performances in the colony, riding a bicycle on the high wire at Guildford and Perth in April 1873, and appearing on the high wire and corde volante at Fremantle in May 1873 (Gazette. 4 Apr. 1873; Herald. 3 May. 1873).

184 The Rocky Mountain Wonders were the first professional troupe to reside for any length of time in the colony. Members of the Troupe made a significant contribution to professional and amateur performance in the colony from 1869 to 1872. Advertisements for a season of plays at Fremantle give Mrs H.P. Lyons as late of the Rocky Mountains Troupe (Inquirer. 30 Jun. 1869), suggesting that Mr and Mrs Lyons had retired from the Troupe at some time in June 1869, during its tour of Western Australia. The Troupe continued in Perth under the management of Walter Howson, an original member and its leading entertainer, during 1869 (Inquirer. 29 Sept. 1869). At some point the Troupe disbanded, and Walter Howson continued as a successful entertainer and minstrel until he left the colony in December 1872. Mrs Lyons performed in plays with the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps, until she, Mr Lyons, and Walter Howson left the colony, after farewell benefits for them at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth in December 1872 (Inquirer. 22 Dec. 1869; 29 Dec. 1869).

185 Mr Lyons became licensee of the Guildford Arms Hotel in December 1871 (Inquirer. 20 Dec. 1871). The Perth Gazette (3 Jan. 1873) reported that Mr and Mrs Lyons, ‘late hosts’ of the (renamed) Stirling Arms Hotel, Guildford, had relinquished their license and were preparing to leave the colony.
Case Study: The Silvester and Griffiths Masked Balls, 1880

In this second case study, I analyse three colonial masked balls presented at halls in Perth and Fremantle by visiting Melbourne illusionist Professor Alfred Silvester and his American manager Minton Naylor Griffiths, during the five weeks from 8 July to 12 August 1880. It may seem strange to claim that masked balls are intelligible as performance; it probably would not have occurred to colonial settlers to do so. However, an analysis of the three masked balls as enactments of implanctment, visualisation, and collective memory challenges conventional notions that limit performance to a primarily verbal imitation of ‘human action in a progressive and linear’ temporality (Franko 1993, 5-6). Through the immersion of all participants in hybrid, centrifugal modes of performance, the masked balls foreshadowed some of the spatial and visual characteristics of contemporary improvisation, installation, and multi-media performance events, though they did not share the postmodern underpinnings of these contemporary modes of performance. I begin with some relevant historical information.

Silvester and Griffiths presented the three masked balls as part of a series of six that included three other ‘grand ball[s] with supper’ that involved no masking or fancy dress. The three masked balls were the first of their kind to take place in Western Australia (Inquirer. 14 Jul. 1880). They were, in all likelihood, the first balls of any kind in the colony to be organised by visiting professional entertainers. The three ‘supper’ balls, on the other hand, joined the colony’s long history of private and public recreational dancing. Two of the Silvester and Griffiths ‘supper balls’ followed

---

186 Silvester and Griffiths presented masked balls at the Town Hall, Perth, on 8 July 1880 (Inquirer. 7 Jul. 1880); the Town Hall, Perth, on 27 July 1880 (W Aust. 23 Jul. 1880); and the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, on 12 August 1880 (Herald. 7 Aug. 1880).

187 Stannage (1979, 28) describes a Governor’s ball at Perth on 3 September 1831. The small populations of Perth and Fremantle managed a total of three ‘supper balls’ to celebrate Anniversary Day 1880.
directly on stage performances given by the Company.\textsuperscript{188} Again, this was familiar practice in the colony; recreational dancing often followed at the end of a performance, usually in the same premises—a hall or hotel assembly room making do as a theatre. These dances were sometimes sufficiently vigorous for dancers to be injured, and they often lasted until first light.\textsuperscript{189} By contrast, the masked balls were performances in their own right.

The professional management, performance skills, and theatrical spectacle that Silvester and Griffiths brought to the presentation of these masked balls were unique in the history of public entertainment in the colony to that time. The chiastic intertwining of theatricality and visuality that distinguished these masked balls from the usual supper balls was carried over from the Company’s touring repertoire of visually charged stage performances.\textsuperscript{190} This stage repertoire comprised a suite of stand-alone items requiring a range of theatre skills and technology: optical illusions, notably the ‘Enchanted Lady’ and the ‘Disappearing Birdcage;’ a functional fountain with coloured lighting; cardboard puppets; back and front projected shadow pantomime; prestidigitation; popular vocals, patter songs, and selections from opera; and short stage comedies and burlesques.

Professional clowning and mumming entertainments were inserted into the programmes of all three masked balls. During those at Perth on 27 July, and Fremantle

\textsuperscript{188} For example, the first Silvester ‘supper ball’ followed the Company’s performance at the Town Hall, Perth, on 27 May 1880 (\textit{Inquirer}. 26 May. 1880).
\textsuperscript{189} Hillman (1990, 373-74) records ‘the usual dance’ following a performance by the Thespian Dramatic Company at the Mechanics’ Institute, Perth, on 6 June 1878. Mrs Trigg fractured her leg during a quadrille following a performance at the Working Men’s Hall, Geraldton (\textit{VicExp.} 10 Sept. 1879). In the remoter regions, post-performance dancing until dawn enabled audiences to avoid the dangers of travelling in darkness over bad roads.
\textsuperscript{190} It is not clear whether Silvester and Griffiths planned this series of balls in advance of the Company’s first tour to Western Australia. Events suggest that Silvester may have decided to present the balls in response to Mrs Silvester’s withdrawal from performance due to an illness soon after the tour began.
on 12 August 1880, Silvester performed as the Clown ‘whose gambols being calculated to interfere with the dancing,’ was pursued by Griffiths as the grotesque Moral Policeman (Herald. 31 Jul. 1880). The same pair performed ‘Fight For the Standard,’ a comic hobbyhorse tournament, as an inset entertainment towards the conclusion of each of these balls. Appearances by the generic duo of ‘Chang the Chinese Giant’ and the midget ‘Japanese Tommy’ were also advertised for the three masked balls (WAust. 20 Jul. 1880) Presumably, these roles were to be played by Silvester and Griffiths. However, the press records no such performances.

The masked balls can be explained as performances in terms of their spatial and visual organisation. Each ball can be construed as an aggregation of many performances, each grounded in subjective space, each of varying density, duration, direction, and degree of ‘furnishing forth.’ Victor Turner (1982, 13) derives the notion of performance as ‘furnishing forth,’ or ‘completion,’ from the Old French word parfournir. Clearly, the performances of Silvester and Griffiths as Clown, Moral Policeman, and hobbyhorse jousters would have been ‘complete;’ more skilled, culturally denser, and more energetically focused than those of the dancers in fancy dress and mask. Spatiality and visuality are so intimately interconnected here that it is impossible to understand each in isolation from the other. However, for the sake of clarity I will focus on the spatial qualities of the masked balls, relating them where appropriate to visuality, and to collective memory.

An understanding of the masked balls as performance begins with an analysis of their spatial and placial qualities. Each of the masked balls was a space of vortiginous performance and spectatorship, quite unlike the spaces of conventionally staged theatre. Understandably, journalists who reported the balls at the time tended to describe, rather
than analyse, the spatial organisation of the balls. The journalist from the *Inquirer* (14 Jul. 1880), himself a spectator at the first masked ball, had this to say about the masked ball of 8 July 1880:

As early as seven o’clock, the doors to the Town Hall were besieged by a crowd eagerly waiting admission, and within a short time the corridor, platform [stage?] and body of the hall were literally crowded, the spectators alone numbering five hundred.

The assumptions about space in this report return to Cartesian and Newtonian notions of spatiality as a matter of pure extendedness, in which mere containment of a thing abstracts it from its enclosing environs (Malpas 1999, 26). The spaces as described exhibit certain characteristics of what Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 59) define as ‘striated space.’ According to them, striated space is ‘limited in its parts, which are assigned constant directions, are oriented in relation to one another, divisible by boundaries, and can be fit together’ (1988, 59). This definition adequately describes the spatial organisation of the balls, at least as this was determined by the metric dimensions of each hall, and by the strict physical separation of subscriber dancers from non-subscriber spectators on the floor and its environs. The notion of striated space also fits the geometrical configurations of current ballroom dances, such as the quadrille that opened the ball of 8 July 1880 (*Inquirer*. 14 Jul. 1880).191

This same masked ball demonstrated striated spatial elements that were common to all three. Conditions of entry to the ball differentiated the privileges and exclusions that applied to subscribers and non-subscribers respectively; physical and social

---

191 The *O.E.D.* gives ‘quadrille’ as: ‘Square dance for four couples, containing usually five figures.’
boundaries abounded. For admission charges of ten shillings per single male and twelve shillings per (heterosexual) couple, subscribers could join the dancing; receive free masks; wear fancy dress and play at being in ‘character,’ as it was then known; compete for prizes; take supper; and order a carriage free of charge (Inquirer. 7 Jul. 1880). Spectators were admitted, at a charge of two shillings, to standing room in parts of the hall adjacent to the dance floor. As Casey (2005, xvii) points out, such striated space is ‘visual with a vengeance;’ it requires strictly relational organisation of space ‘that only the austerities of oculocentric vision can accomplish.’

But the striated spaces of the ball did not prevent more open visual and bodily spaces from coming into play. Paradoxically, the relational division of the hall into exclusionary zones also positioned maskers and spectators as participants in dispersed, multi-layered performance and visual fields that transgressed physical and social boundaries without violating them. The spatial doubleness that pervaded the masked balls was played out partly through a performed, protean identification with gendered and ethnic others through mask and costume. Alexander Forrest, notable explorer and brother of future State Premier Lord Forrest, attended the masked ball of 27 July 1880 in full ‘fig’ as an Aboriginal warrior, the settlers’ racial other (Inquirer. 14 Jul. 1880). The liberties of masking and costume induced a kind of ecstasy, in the paradoxical sense of being simultaneously ‘out of one’s place’ and in it. This experience also embodied a kind of future memory of the gender and race proliferation of subjective space. Thus, ‘Morrison at Guildford’ attended the ball of 8 July 1880 dressed as a woman under ‘a very ugly loose black domino;’ tellingly, he used a fan ‘all evening’ (Hillman 1990, 383). While the masks conferred no anonymity, they could induce a

---

192 The admission charges indicate that unaccompanied women subscribers were not expected to attend the ball.
193 Oculocentric vision is concerned with the physiology of sight and optical coordinates.
194 It is not clear to what extent Forrest blacked-up, in addition to wearing a mask.
degree of subjective amnesia, whether contrived or not: at the conclusion of the same ball, E. K. Courthope, ‘who had no idea who he was, was utterly dumbfounded when reminded of some improper behaviour on his part’ (Hillman 1990, 383).

The masked balls can be understood in philosophical terms as experiments in implacement, a social, cultural, and historical process by which subjects are ‘concretely placed’ (Casey 1993, 23). The masked balls were ‘intrinsically particular’ events of implacement, at once idiolocal and collective. As Malpas (1999, 26) reminds us, place being inextricably tied to ‘notions of both dimensionality or extension and of locale or environing situation,’ any exploration of implacement must be pursued ‘in conjunction with an investigation of the notion of space.’ At the balls in question, fancy dress and mask functioned as structural doublings of intimate subjective space. Being separate from, yet in tension with, the bodies of those wearing them, costume and mask enriched the subject’s ‘room’ for social action through ‘the appropriation of a [present] context that provide[d] the grounding for such […] action’ (Malpas 1999, 93). The interplay between mask, costume, and body enriched subjective space with placial properties such as perspective, proximity, position, agency, and rational action (Malpas 1999, 50-53).

How, then, did masks in particular function to implace those wearing them? The masks and costumes prompted performances of fictive bodies and fictive ‘characters,’ if only through inducing alterations to corporeal and mental spaces and actions required to wear them. These fictions constituted an imaginary doubling of the body through its contiguity with mask and costume. The performance of these fictitious bodies and ‘characters’ did not exhibit, or require, the psychological density and continuity proper to stage performances. Nor did they involve the same intense differentiation and
interplay between performer and role that full theatrical masks require (Barba and Savarese 1991, 116). Nonetheless, the effect of the masks worn at the balls was decisive in determining the performance and visual characteristics of the balls.

It is clear that only half-masks were used at the balls. The half-mask being a neutral mask, drew attention to the eyes but involved no scenic deformation or dramatisation of the masker’s face. The visible features of the masker’s face would have retained their mobility. Even so, the half-mask was a disruption of the visual field. It would have caused the wearer to alter bodily posture and action (Barba and Savarese 1991, 118), if only to adjust spatially to the restricted vision imposed by a half-mask. Any such corporeal alteration would proliferate spatially and temporally towards ‘character,’ since the human body is anatomically constructed such that the movement of any individual part ‘results in a kind of muscular echo in all other parts’ (Barba and Savarese 1991, 122). Gender citation, such as Morrison’s costume, would similarly have invited performance. In Morrison’s case, a displaced femininity would have been signalled through alterations to his bodily balance, muscle tone, and action as he adjusted his masculine body to a costume and field of vision to which he was unaccustomed. Further, and more importantly, the mask would have made visible the action of looking, and the intention to be looked at by others. In general, the motivated actions of display and spectatorship at the balls entailed a certain energy that was both heightened but contained, and that manifested itself through bodily in-tensions and more defined actions—not least the actions of seeing, and being aware of being seen. With the exception of Silvester and Griffiths’ clowning, none of these performances need have been executed with professional skill.

195 By contrast, the theatrical full mask is a scenic deformation that must be activated through bodily tension in order to show the ‘dramatic vicissitudes in the relationships between characters’ (Barba and Savarese 1991, 112).

196 See Barba and Savarese (1991, 110-12) for an account of bodily in-tension in performance.
The many actions of looking, or being looked at, during the masked balls would have been merely contingent; they would have taken place in a vortex of movement that provided no fixed moment or co-ordinates for seeing. These conditions of seeing and movement were in marked contrast to the perspectival organisation of immobilised bodies within the visual field of the *tableau vivant*, another popular costume entertainment at the time.\(^{197}\) Sources of lighting at the halls would also have modified visual action, but in the absence of archival evidence it is difficult to know precisely how. All we can infer is that candles and or kerosene lamps were in use, since neither gas nor electric lighting was available in the any of the colony’s halls at the time.\(^{198}\)

The three masked balls were in effect large-scale, hybrid performances of kinaesthetic imagination, embodied principally through dancing, masking, costume, and spectatorship—assuming that the latter involves the encultured actions of looking at, and being looked at. As defined by Roach (1996, 27), the kinaesthetic imagination is a ‘way of thinking through movement,’ that ‘flourishes in the mental space where imagination and memory converge.’ I expand this definition to include ‘thinking through visuality,’ and also to take account of Casey’s (1993, 31) assertion that places ‘are primary […] in the order of culture,’ such that ‘there can be no unimplaced cultures.’ Kinaesthetic imagination, and the masked balls and other performances it inhabits, can be understood in this expanded sense as a ‘culturally specific’ way in which we ‘make trial’ of places (Casey 1993, 31). As Casey (1993, 31) reminds us, ‘we get into places together;’ the 1880 masked balls were collective cultural processes (with

\(^{197}\) Students at the Bishop’s Girls’ College, Perth, presented costumed *tableaux* as part of an entertainment for parents on 20 May 1881, and again in June 1882 (*WAust*. 25 May. 1881; 13 Jun. 1882). As late as 1933, a ‘presentation of Greek Friezes in Tragedy’ was included in a production of Euripides’ *Trojan Women* at St. Georges’ College, in the University of Western Australia.

\(^{198}\) It was only in November 1882 that Messrs Stone and Burt, lessees of St George’s hall, Perth, published their reasons for replacing the kerosene lighting at the hall with ‘Needle’s Gas,’ which they had done on the recommendation of Alfred Silvester junior (*WAust*. 23 Nov. 1882).
an ‘experimental edge’) of getting into places, reshaping them, and being acted on by them.

The masked balls exhibited interlocking modes of ‘kinaesthetic imagination,’ especially through the doublet of motivated self-display and its necessary other, spectatorship. This kinaesthetic action was interdependent upon a productive visuality that was constructed as both an inward turning and an outwardly projected gaze (Brennan 1996, 224). The slippages between these modes of kinaesthetic and visual imagination allowed space for some degree of carnivalesque licence. As already observed, the mix of dancing, foolery, and spectatorship at the masked balls engendered hybrid modes of performance that differed markedly from conventional spoken-word theatre. While ballroom dancing tended to organise dancers into collective patterns of progressive, sequential movement, the wearing of masks and costumes offered opportunities to imagine, and even play out, an enriched, potentially transgressive subjectivity that proliferated beyond the fixed points of the dance and bodies. The capacity for subjective space to self-proliferate through the actions of kinaesthetic imagination was commensurate with the subject’s ‘room’ to move, that is, to engage with encultured place.

The masked balls can be construed as dynamic, multi-focused cultural experiments (in the experiential sense) that opened multiple points of entry into place. Thus, the masked balls functioned, on one hand, as ‘fixed posit[s] of an established culture,’ and on the other as social and cultural implacements that ‘despite [their] frequently settled appearance’ (Casey 1993, 31), were experiments in living within a changing, that is to say fissured, colonial culture. However, idiolocal place is,

199 ‘Places are also primary in the order of culture […] there can be no unimplaced cultures […] Taken as encultured, places […] are matters of experience. We make trial of them in culturally specific ways’ (Casey 1993, 31).
paradoxically, also ‘omnilocated’ through the eventmental power of places to ‘mirror’ places (Casey 1998, 336). Casey (1998, 336) describes the ‘mirroring power’ of place succinctly:

as bodies expand into places, so places exfoliate through (built and given) things into (social and natural) regions, and regions expand into worlds. From body and thing and region we come to world, but we do so only insofar as the event of place is active throughout.

In contemporary conceptual terms, the fancy dress masked balls were places in which colonial subjects experimented with the ‘mirroring power’ of place through transgressive performance and visuality.

This is a grandiloquent reading of such parochial events, but it makes the point that place has the power to expand its role beyond that of ‘strict container or simple locator or (more generally) as site-specific’ (Casey 1998, 335). One of the forms in which this power manifests itself in the masked balls is through the displaced transmission of collective memory. Following Roach (1996, 28-29), I define displaced cultural transmission as an ongoing process in which cultures are adapted to changing conditions, and in which social actions are reconstituted in new locales. I choose the term ‘social actions’ here in place of Roach’s ‘popular behaviours’, because, as has been established in Chapter Two, memory and performance constitute modes of rational social action insofar as they can be ‘related to some intention or purpose that is additional to the mere behaviour (my italics)’ (Malpas 1999, 93). Displaced

---

200 Malpas (1999, 93) further distinguishes action from behaviour: ‘One way of capturing this point is to say that behaviour is intentional, and so counts as action, only under a description,
transmission is a specific form of Roach’s (1996, 2) broader concept of surrogation, which defines the processes by which cultures reproduce and recreate themselves. The three Silvester and Griffiths masked balls can be understood as historically delimited instances of the displaced transmission, and adaptation to local conditions, of collective memories that were based on prior experience of masked balls that had taken place elsewhere. In contemporary theoretical terms, attendance at one of the masked balls would have marked a point of entry into the ongoing displacement of colonial collective memory. But as Roach observes, there is a paradox at the heart of cultural ‘transmission by surrogacy.’ In this instance, while each of the three masked balls was a surrogate for, or ‘restoration’ of, social actions performed on earlier occasions, those actions could never be exactly reproduced. As Roach (1996, 29) observes: ‘no action or sequence of actions can be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance.’ In sum, the notion of displaced cultural transmission posits colonial collective memory through fancy dress and masking as a dynamic process with ‘an experimental edge’ (Casey 1993, 31). In this respect, the transmission of collective memory in the masked balls was displaced into the experimental realms of kinaesthetic imagination, carnivalesque privilege and immunity, and improvisatory performance.

The notion of surrogacy was implicit, though not recognised in so many words, in the belief then commonly held that colonial culture was at best an inexact adaptation of British culture to local conditions. The three Silvester and Griffiths masked balls of 1880 may have been the first in Western Australia, but they vividly demonstrated what Roach (1996, 268) describes as a ‘genealogy of performance.’ Reflecting on precedents for the first of the masked balls, the *West Australian* (30 Jul. 1880) observed that the

where the description enables the behaviour to be grasped in a form that connects it with some complex of belief and desire that “makes sense” of the behaviour or provides a framework within which it can be grasped as rational.’
English, ‘who take their pleasures sadly,’ had ‘never really taken kindly’ to continental masked balls, but that ‘once away from the old country,’ they appeared to ‘throw off old trammels, and do as Rome does.’ In present terms, the masked balls can be understood as moments of carnivalesque inversion, in which something of the levity and licence attributed to Britain’s continental other returned, in the displaced form of ‘restored’ colonial behaviour, to haunt the mother Anglo-Saxon culture.

Fancy dress and mask signalled intentions to see, and be seen, in ways that were alternative to habituated colonial experience and imaginative constructions of body and vision. But these historical moments of masquerade never put at risk the self-imposed constraints within which colonial culture and society operated. Costume in particular constituted a collective experimental brush with alterity, through its patently artefactual accommodations and transformations of subjective space. Late nineteenth-century colonial fancy dress can be understood in this sense, as both a consensual social action and an historical technique. The wearing of costume and mask was a declaratory act that flagged the wearer’s intention to experience, that is, to experiment with, distortions of habituated body and visual field. Each of the masked balls was an intimate space that gave corporeal and visual ‘room’ for subjects to play at self-proliferation; even to the point at which the subject confronted her or his own theatricalised ‘split truth’ that, in Blau’s (1990, 370) words, ‘materializes in its own denial.’

Blau’s notion of ‘split truth’ invites a spatial account of seeing as an action that is anything but straightforward. It is not the case that the wearing of a half-mask disrupts a field of vision that is otherwise homogeneous, unimpeded. For, as James Elkins (1997, 19) argues, the simple idea that observer and object ‘are two different things’ is mistaken. In the multiple actions of seeing that go on at a masked ball, a half-
mask is more than a half-face: it has the power not only to catch and hold the observer’s eye, but to entrance it, as much by the potential of what it does not show as by what it allows the eye to see. The mask’s power to catch and hook the eye does at least two things: it makes visible the complicity of seeing (in which the eye seeks out), and of unseeing (in which the observer is blind to what she or he wishes not to see). I cannot do better than cite Elkins (1997, 21): ‘All seeing is heated. It must always involve force and desire and intent.’ He argues (1997, 21) that seeing is analogous to our experience of dreams, hypnosis, or falling in love.201 If this is so, then Forrest’s Aboriginal fancy dress suggests that there is politics of ‘heated’ seeing in which there is more than meets the eye.

One of the entailments of this politics of seeing was the suppression, though not the erasure, of elements of the colony’s brief but bloodied history of racism.202 Forrest’s Indigenous costume, and that of the unnamed person who attended the same ball as a ‘Heathen Chinee’ [sic], demonstrate ‘the suppression of history that ethnic citation can entail’ (hooks 1981, 141), especially when ‘history’ recycles the originary myth of white supremacy. The extent of Forrest’s effrontery can be gauged from this account of the procession that celebrated the colony’s fiftieth Anniversary Day at Perth in 1879:

The leading column was formed of a few aborigines [sic]—fantastic in their dress and degraded in their lives—strikingly illustrating the difference between themselves and the master race before which they were disappearing—taking part in their exterminators’ triumph and pleased to take part in it’ (Herald. 7 Jun. 1880).

201 Love is ‘the moment when the prey becomes another hunter, so that both people are hunter and hunted at once’ (Elkins 1997, 21).
202 For a summary of settler military action against Indigenous inhabitants of disputed land, see Blackburn (1999, 44-86).
Fancy dress mimicry of the ethnic other drew attention to itself as ‘restored behaviour’ of an imagined settler body politic that is supposedly unitary, but is rifted with ambiguities. Gatens (1996, x) points to an ambiguity in the term ‘representation’ as it applies to the analogy between ‘the supposed moral and political autonomy of rational man’ and the ‘supposed autonomy of the body politic;’ an ambiguity that, I argue, is borne out in fancy dress representations of the ethnic other. Forrest’s patently artificial fancy dress maintained the separation of his actual body from the fictive ‘body’ projected through his costume. This was so in spite of the purported accuracy of his accoutrements, which positioned his representation of the ethnic other as creative artifice, but suppressed a corresponding analogy between his own body and the colonial body politic. Gatens (1996, 21) identifies this ambiguity as metonymical representation, in which ‘one body or group of bodies is taken to stand for a group of diverse bodies.’ Forrest’s fancy dress raises the metonymic stakes by displaying itself as, at one and the same time, an ontological body and an ethnographical body that is a patent mimicry of its other. But this mimicry brings no equivalence: it is the white settler’s privilege to catch and hold the eye.

As Gatens remarks (1996, 21), the analogical body politic ‘shares several features with the masculine imaginary body.’ Forrest’s and Morrison’s fancy dress demonstrate that one shared feature of this analogy was the assumption of an autonomous masculine right to represent the ethnic or gendered other. That colonial body politic was both racial and gendered. Forrest’s racial cross-dressing provoked social scandal but, as a performance of ‘identity as [racial] difference’ (McClintock 1995, 65), it did not disrupt colonial authority, or the imperialist myth of development. To the contrary, Forrest displayed his privileged Anglo-Saxon masculine ‘right to [non-subversive] ambiguity’ (McClintock 1995, 65). The analogy between Forrest’s actual
body and the body politic did not produce an ethnic equivalence (Sobchack 2000, 240). No more did Morrison’s feminine ‘character’ produce an equivalence of gender: it affirmed the white masculine privilege to stage gender. The calculated audacity of these two performances shows the degree to which race, class, and gender, articulated in white masculine privilege, were critical markers in colonial society. So does Hillman’s (1990, 383) remark that no female members of the socially elite ‘upper ten’ colonial families attended the highly successful masked ball of 8 July 1880. In more explicit terms, the reporter for the *West Australian* (17 Aug. 1880) attributed the failure of the Fremantle masked ball of 12 August 1880 to a growing snobbish and cliquishness that left ‘the “middle class” out in the cold.’ He registered surprise ‘at how contemptuously [women] treated the whole affair’ at Fremantle, conjecturing disingenuously that ‘(disguised under a mask) they were afraid of unknowingly meeting an Aboriginal.’ The barb was no doubt delivered with Alexander Forrest’s fancy dress in mind; it implied that the presence of an Indigenous person might subvert the privilege of racial cross-dressing.

The focus on male fancy dressers to this point has been decidedly one-sided. But it is difficult to redress this bias, given what we do not know about the women’s costumes. The archive records that women attended in the ‘characters’ of Little Red Riding Hood, the Morning Star, a *Vivandière*, and an Italian Signora. The question remains as to whether these generic, theatricalised feminine ‘characters’ indicated an attempt among women attendees to display prevailing constructions of femininity; and whether a woman’s theatrical display of socially constructed femininity would be considered playful or subversive. It appears, in this respect, that no women cross-dressed as males at the masked balls. Boycotts and intimations of snobbery suggest that

---

203 The term ‘upper ten’ was a colonial derivation from the ‘Upper Ten Thousand,’ a term denoting late nineteenth-century Britain’s ruling elite of rich and landed persons and families.
the distribution of power among colonial women was class based, uneven, and conflicted. Further study of women’s motivations for participating in, or boycotting, these first masked balls is required. Silvester and Griffiths’ ludic inversions and transgressions as the Clown and Moral Policeman can be understood in retrospect to have played on social tensions to do with class and gender within the colony, though always without giving direct offence to the middle class or the absent ‘upper ten.’

The analogy between the human body and the body politic took a third significant form in the 1880 masked balls. The metaphoric ‘bodies’ of the public halls in which the Silvester masked balls took place were also modalities of the body politic. In philosophical terms, the buildings provided enriched ‘room’ for transgressive social action, as well as for ‘the appropriation of a past context that provide[d] the grounding for such an action’ (Malpas 1999, 93). According to Casey, provision of such ‘room’ is what differentiates buildings from the ‘landscapes’ in which they are situated. Casey (1993, 24) has already been quoted to the effect that landscape exists ‘wherever there is a felt difference’ that cannot be recuperated by ‘more determinate places, such as rooms and buildings’. The bodies of those who participated in the 1880 Silvester and Griffiths masked balls were the mediatrix between the cultural spaces of buildings and the indeterminate spaces of their Western Australian environs.

---

204 An advertisement for the ball of 27 July (WAust. 20 Jul. 1880) announced: ‘it would appear needless to inform the elite of Perth and Fremantle that, although the charges for admission are so exceedingly low, these balls [are] conducted with the STRICTEST PROPRIETY, the same decorum being observed as at a private assembly, and no lady need hesitate in joining the masquers’ (original capitals and emphasis).
Chapter Seven: Stage Magic and the ‘Fatima’ Illusion

[...] of all the sciences Optics is the most fertile in marvellous expedients.
Sir David Brewster

[...] it is a mistake to think that only those who are still well known to us responded to what was newly thought, as if by some special privilege.
Gillian Beer

This Chapter comprises two sections. The first section discusses the interconnection of stage illusions with optical science technology and spiritualism in the late nineteenth century. This discussion establishes a cultural context for the second section: a case study of ‘Fatima,’ a booth style optical illusion of partial ‘disembodiment’ that was popular for a time on the late nineteenth-century Western Australian stage.

The Juvenile Wielands were a Melbourne company of three brothers aged three, six, and ten years, managed by their father Thomas Wieland. This description does not account for the young woman who played ‘Fatima,’ whom the Wielands introduced to the colony in performances at Fremantle, Perth, and Geraldton during their first tour of Western Australia in 1879 (WAT. 10 Jan. 1879). Her identity may have been suppressed for reasons of show-business mystification. The ‘Fatima’ illusion belonged to a body of technologically enhanced later nineteenth-century itinerant stage exhibitions that offered popular re-readings and transvaluations of scientifically developed mirror technology. These illusions were intended primarily to perturb visual experience, thereby to amuse and tantalise the spectator, and to evoke a sense of wonder. They interconnected with each other as part of a web of theatrical memory systems that had had developed piecemeal, rather than according to a rational Enlightenment order, from seventeenth-century European experiments with the camera obscura and
phantasmagoria (Stafford and Terpak 2001). This theatrical culture of optical illusions functioned as a collective memory system that contributed to the shaping of public visual experience, ‘albeit in a submerged and unconscious manner’ (Boyer 1994, 15-16). The nineteenth-century theatrical memory system was generational, embedded in practices passed on through the transmission of skills via the theatrical quasi-family (Bratton 2003, 171); and through the allocation of dedicated public spaces to performance (Boyer 1994, 7). The Juvenile Wielands were but one Australian instance of the ubiquitous familial organisation of nineteenth-century itinerant colonial theatre companies. As head of his family, Tom Wieland managed the interface between the public and his sons who, along with ‘Fatima,’ were the main attraction. The Silvesters, whose masked balls were discussed in Chapter Six, were another stage family. The stage magician—usually, as in the Silvesters’ case, the family head—was important to theatrical collective memory as a masculine mediator between the antecedent technology and the spectators’ direct experience of the stage illusion.

The provenance of ‘Fatima’ (n.d.) from an earlier illusion known as ‘The Sphinx’ (1865) is a minor instance of the operation of communal memory in nineteenth-century British and colonial theatre. In 1865, British chemist, inventor, architect, and scientific demonstrator Thomas William Tobin had invented ‘The Sphinx’ at the Royal

---

205 According to Barbara Stafford (2001, 81), ‘magic lantern grotesqueries were a major addition to the curious presences popping up in baroque distorting mirrors, perspective boxes, and camera obscuras.’

206 Bratton (2003, 171) identifies ‘quasi-familial links’ within show business, manifested via the transmission and transvaluation of skills, and through the practitioners’ sense of the ubiquity of their ‘family’ connections in theatre, sometimes over generations.

207 Members of the Silvester family regularly toured to Western Australia during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Having first visited in 1880, the Silvester Family were invited to perform for a fourteen-week season at the opening of Ye Olde Englyshe Fayre, Howick (now Hay) Street, Perth, in December 1895 (WAust. 7 Dec. 1895). The Silvester Family’s mixed fortunes, and their contributions to colonial theatre culture, in particular to stage lighting technology and theatre for the Working Men’s Institute, merit a monograph.
Polytechnic Institute, London. Tobin’s ‘Sphinx’ was in turn the prototype of two other illusions: first ‘The Talking Head’ (n.d.), and then ‘The Living Half-Woman’ (n.d.), from which ‘Fatima’ derives. Figures 13 and 14 illustrate ‘The Talking Head’ and ‘The Living Half-Woman’ respectively. The successive adjustments made to Tobin’s prototype illusion in Britain and Australia are instances of the experimental ‘ghosting’ of the theatrical practices and ‘accoutrements’ that haunt performance (Carlson 2003, 7-8). Of course, the collective memory developed through successive developments of ‘The Sphinx’ and its avatars involved more than an historical sequence of remodelling. This was especially the case in a remote imperial outpost such as Western Australia, where relatively few spectators would have been sufficiently well travelled to be able to recall prior performances of this or other illusions. Any ‘ghosting’ associated with ‘Fatima’ in the colony would have had more to do with spectators’ generic experience of other kinds of performances at colonial venues.

**The ‘perfect eye’ and ‘rational’ conjuring**

The Introduction to this thesis began with an account of Innes’ magic lantern show as a transmission of imperial technological spectacle at rural Newcastle, Western Australia, in 1876. It is time to take up the subject in more detail. In her study of theatre as a site for the representation of, and resistance to, imperialism and colonialism, J. Ellen Gainor (1995, xiii) defines imperialism as a ‘transnational and transhistorical phenomenon.’ The transmission and acculturation of performance throughout the British Empire during the nineteenth century is an historically specific example of ‘transnational’ imperialism understood, in Edward Said’s (1993, 9) words, as ‘the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center [sic] ruling a

---

208 The Royal Polytechnic Institute, Regent Street, London, staged a permanent science exhibition in its two halls. William Tobin designed an oxy-hydrogen spotlight used in exhibitions of the projecting microscope and Magic Lantern at the Royal Polytechnic.
distant territory.’ The dioramas, pantoscopes, and stage magic that entertained colonial Australia were outcomes of the implantation of British visual culture in remote, culturally dependent and receptive settler colonies. ‘Fatima’ derived its entertainment value as imperial spectacle in colonial Western Australia from a bizarre interplay between metropolitan and colonial showmanship, the science of optics, and current discourses on body, gender, and domesticity. Bodily stage illusions such as ‘Fatima’ were exemplary placial and spatial mediations of a concealed homology between imperialism, industrialisation, and in McClinton’s language, the racialised Victorian cult of domesticity (1995, 207-08). The Australian ‘Fatima’ applied current metropolitan optical science to generate a non-scientific spectacle of the partial ‘disembodiment’ of a female colonial figure. In this respect, the illusion can be understood in part as a colonial acculturation of the imperial disembodiment of the feminised settler other. Of course, this reading does not disavow the cultural ambiguity of the illusion. In order to place ‘Fatima’ in an accurate historical and cultural context, it is first necessary to discuss a practice familiar to the late Victorians as ‘modern’ or rational stage magic, in its relations with nineteenth-century science and spiritualism.

In order to accord nineteenth-century stage illusions the critical appraisal their popularity and ingenuity deserved, it is necessary to look first to their relations with two other powerful components of Victorian culture: namely, science and spiritualism. Nineteenth-century stage magicians were in triangular relationship with the scientists and the spiritualists of the age, a mismatched couplet that, according to Gillian Beer (1996, 85), tussled for control of the meaning of ‘that which is invisible.’ The discrete domains of science, stage, and spiritualist channelling from the ‘other side’ converged in the deliberate cultivation and control of commodity spectacle, for different reasons.
and to markedly divergent ends in each. I first discuss some examples of Victorian science as spectacle.

Goodall (2002, 2-3) observes that nineteenth-century exhibitions of ‘the science of natural history’ were, like performance, a form of show business; and that the boundaries between exhibitions and performances ‘were not always clear.’ But it was also the case that nineteenth-century enthusiasm for mass spectacles of ‘progressive’ technological achievements were compromised by growing scientific and public recognition of the troubling social implications of ‘the entry of “energetics” and wave theory into general currency’ (Beer 1996, 95). There was an abiding tension between scientific confidence in the capabilities of lens and mirror technologies to sharpen visual images, and recognition of the ambiguity of visual experience, the heterogeneity of ‘specific scopic regimes’ (Jay 1988, 5-6), and the ubiquity of invisible wave motion. Stage illusionists played on the ambiguity and heterogeneity of visual experience, and the mystique of the invisible, for the purposes of show business. While those purposes often involved rank deceit, reputable illusionists such as Henry Dircks (1863), Professor Alfred Pepper (Pepper 1890), William Tobin, Dr Lynn, and Harry Houdini were knowledgeable experimenters in optical technology that challenged spectators’ visual experience and culture while entertaining them.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science (hereafter the BAAS) exemplifies the Victorian institutional drive to display science as large-scale spectacle. Founded in 1831, and motivated by a spirit of progressive secular evangelism, the BAAS promoted an idea of rational science that ‘would powerfully affect Victorian society and would become the most enduring of Victorian legacies’ (Morrell and Thackray 1981, xxii). The BAAS rapidly recognised that the visibility of science
depended upon an unlikely but mutually dependent relationship between science and the crowd-pulling capacities of carnival and spectacle:

The British Association prospered as a philosophical travelling circus. Under one aspect, it was a carnival that could be deplored but not ignored. It was a theatre of science run by zealous missionaries intent on converting their audiences to their views (Morrell and Thackray 1981, 161).

Technological spectaculars, as Morrell and Thackray (1981, 160) observe, carried a message to the crowd ‘about the power, the majesty, the progressiveness of science.’

The assumption behind scientific exhibitions was that experiments in optical technology enhanced rather than altered the kind of knowledge of the world accessible to the eye. Stafford (1991, 343) describes the refinements of nineteenth-century lens technology that ‘brought to the surface, as it were, the mysterious life floating somewhere beneath the skin.’ Stafford writes within a long tradition of commentary on ‘mechanical aids to vision’ such as the camera obscura, the magic lantern, the phantasmagoria, the microscope, the telescope, and similar devices. Certain of these devices, adapted at different times from scientific optical technologies of ‘projection, magnification, and transparency’, were applied in the theatre, and at fairgrounds, to produce simulacra designed to launch spectators ‘into graphically detailed alternative [place-worlds]’ (Stafford 1991, 80) (my brackets).209

The benefits of science to humanity were expected to extend well beyond the visual experiments and entertainments described by Stafford. Early Victorian optical

209 Stafford (1991, 343) refers to ‘alternative realities’ but I make an ontological distinction between ‘realities’ and place-worlds, which I prefer here.
scientist and inventor Sir David Brewster (1833) nurtured a broad libertarian vision of the potential benefits of rational science to humanity. He declared that the secular principles of optics had the potential to ‘free’ the modern public from ‘the spiritual despotism’ of the ‘prince, the priest, and the sage’ who, since antiquity, had been ‘leagued in a dark conspiracy to deceive and enslave their species’ (Brewster 1833, 2). Brewster assumed that this eurocentric, progressivist notion of science was non-negotiable.

It was in just such an evangelistic spirit that Brewster envisaged and designed a phantasmagoria suited to the realistic modern stage.\(^{210}\) Anticipating Professor Pepper’s famous ‘Ghost’ effect (Dircks 1863; Pepper 1890), Brewster proposed a mirror and lens apparatus that would replace the ‘absurd gesticulations’ of current stage ‘ghosts’ with ‘phantasms of the most perfect delineation, clothed in real drapery, and displaying all the movements of life’ (Brewster 1833, 86). Brewster, Henry Dircks (1863), and Professor Pepper (1890) each prioritised the visual as surface, and accorded to optics the power to bring the invisible to the surface via the body.

Brewster’s approach to the cultural politics of spectacle was idealistically naïve. He overlooked the anomaly that, if put into practice, his secular evangelism would merely have transposed to modern scientists the ancient despots’ power to generate images of the supernatural. Brewster’s complex and expensive apparatus affirmed the well-heeled male experimental scientist’s traditional agency in the matter of optical effects. In similar fashion, the subsequent publication of trade secrets in Victorian manuals of prestidigitation and ‘Ghost’ effects, notably those by Dircks (1863), J. H.

\(^{210}\) Actors commonly appeared live in spectral roles on stage; phantasmagorias were popular at fairs and in home entertainments. Brewster sought to conflate the two, using a calculus of mirrors and lenses to project a ‘real time’ image of an off-stage performer onto the stage during a scene. He seems not to have considered the implications of this image for sightlines and the movement of actors about the stage.
Brown (1864), Pepper (1890), and Albert Hopkins (1897), perpetuated the assumption that the presenter controlled techniques of visual seduction, disruption, and deception. Those of Brewster’s contemporaries in show business were more alert to the vulnerability of natural science and technology to laughter, parody, and mystification. Fraudulent manipulation of those means of control, though by no means generic, was a cause for objection to nineteenth-century stage magic, and for accusations of its guilt by association with spiritualism.

**Propulsive energy**

However, such manifest confidence in the ‘perfection of the eye’ would gradually be undermined as scientists and the public took cognisance of the laws of thermodynamics, the physiological limitations of the eye, and the power of microscopes and telescopes to alter the forms of both the visible and the knowledge to which it gave access (Beer 1996, 87-91). Beer argues that, by 1850, the invisible world, conceptualised in the laws of thermodynamics, seemed to be beyond human control; indifferent or inimical to humanity. The attempt to make things visible by inverting the visual relations between surface and interior, near and far, was an attempt to regain control of knowledge (Beer 1996, 87).

Wave theories of energetic motion inevitably displaced optimism of the kind expressed by Brewster and documented by Stafford, inducing instead a darker view of science and its implications for humanity. As Beer (1996, 85) points out, the first and second laws of thermodynamics, formulated in the nineteenth century, revealed light, heat, and sound to be modes of energetic motion, rather than the material particles they...
were previously thought to be.\textsuperscript{211} Scientifically understood, the invisible was thus not simply something minute beyond the range of unassisted sight, but a system of invisible wave energies out of which the visible only ‘fittfully emerged’ (Beer 1996, 85). As a consequence, sight, a privileged Enlightenment metaphor for understanding and reason, now afforded less sufficient, less reliable access to a world system of invisible energies. As Beer (1996, 85) succinctly puts it: ‘Far from dominating explanation or experience in this mind-set, sight welters in a world strung through with energy that declares itself as heat, light, sound.’ In scientific thinking, the visible had become subordinate in a new way to a secularised, energetic invisible.

For its part, spiritualism, which began in the United States as a mid-nineteenth-century populist religion, held as its central tenet that human mediums were able to communicate psychically with the invisible ‘spirits’ of the dead through bodies, material objects, sounds, photography, and ‘automatic’ writing. In the words of William Kalush and Larry Sloman (2006, 50), there followed a rapid ‘natural progression’ from spiritualist religious experience to secular ‘concert hall’ magic. Fraudulent secular ‘spiritualists’ introduced photographic technology and the techniques of stage magic to the séance as means to deceive.\textsuperscript{212} Whereas scientific notions of invisible energies were subject to verification by experiment, spiritualists evoked the ‘invisible’ in order to play, sincerely or otherwise, on the limitations of human sight, and the emotional neediness that rendered their sitter subjects vulnerable to self-delusion.

\textsuperscript{211} The first law of thermodynamics states: ‘The increase in the internal energy of a system is equal to the amount of energy added by heating the system, minus the amount lost as a result of the work done by the system on its surroundings.’ One version among many of the second law of thermodynamics states: ‘In a system, a process that occurs will tend to increase the total entropy of the universe.’

\textsuperscript{212} Kalush and Sloman (2006, 55) record that certain spiritualists went so far as to engage prostitutes to afford widowers seeming sexual relations with their ‘departed wives.’
Stage illusionists, being practitioners of ambivalence, had a foot in both camps. Stage magicians applied scientifically derived lens and mirror technology to generate visual ‘effects’ that hinted at the invisible, while concealing the sleight of hand, distractions of the eye, and scenic devices they employed to manipulate the spectators’ visual experiences, and tickle their imaginations. A favourite device of stage illusionists’ was to acknowledge, in publicity and stage patter, that the techniques of their magic were open to rational explanation, while withholding an adequate account of their methods. The magician’s appeal to the rational basis of optical illusion was intended to differentiate ‘modern’ stage magicians from spiritualists, although, of course, the distinction was often blurred or exploited in practice. Stage magic and spiritualism indicate, each in its own way, that rational explanation does not invariably compromise a tantalising sense of the weird; that spectators may take pleasure, or refuge, in a moment’s apprehension of an ambivalent visual space. Magic and séance tease with the infinite deferral of rational explanation.

Séance as performance

The performed nature of late nineteenth-century séances brought into question the boundary between spiritualism and theatre. In offstage spiritualist séances, psychic mediums frequently assumed exotic personae for dramatic effect; they, or their concealed assistants, performed voices ‘transmitted’ from ‘the other side’ (Warner 2006, 267). Experiences and ‘messages’ were shared via ‘telepathy;’ while the alternate dimension of the invisible construed subjectivity as multiple, fluid, and elusive. The powers of the subject’s conscious mind, agency, and will were threatened when supposedly unitary individuals ‘were taken over, possessed’ by invisible presences that ‘spoke’ through their voices (Warner 2006, 267).
Warner (2006, 267) notes that constructions of fluid subjectivity in spiritualism were homologous with a nineteenth-century ‘hermeneutic project’ that understood the subject to be a both a ‘text to be read’ and a space through which ‘information flows’ like energy. In this respect, nineteenth-century classicist Frederic Myers (1903) postulated that the ‘supernatural’ prophetic dreams and oracles of the ancients were in fact generated by the secular human mind and its powers. According to Myers (1903, 461-62), the manner of Socrates’ death demonstrated that ‘the spirit’ that spoke within him was ‘an agency’ that the philosopher could not ‘disavow.’ As Myers discerned: ‘Each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity […] which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation’ (cit. Warner 2006, 266-67).

The apparent spatialising and multiplying of the human psyche in séances lent itself to exploitation on the stage, as did the seeming power of the past to manifest itself organically, and independently of the subject’s conscious mind. Stage mediums effected illusions of the invisible through ventriloquism, imitation of foreign and local accents, emotional expression, gesture, costume, lighting, and décor. They could also rely on the skills of colleagues concealed in different parts of a hall to spatialise the vocal and sound effects of ‘telepathy.’ The supposed mediation of individual and collective memory was intrinsic to the operation of the séance, onstage and off. ‘Telepathic’ communication with the dead seemingly offered mourning sitters consolatory, commemorative ‘manifestations’ of the past across the temporal and spatial doublets of organism and psyche, life and death. Sitters remembered the dead, but their capacity to summon and control memory was supposedly compromised by ‘invisible’ spirits that ‘manifested’ themselves via mediums, when and as they ‘chose.’ Performers of stage séances simulated these effects for their audiences.
Modern magic

Stage séances were popular in late nineteenth-century Western Australia, although the fact that they were exported from Melbourne and Sydney indicates that their popularity may have been waning there. An anonymous member of the Juvenile Wielands performed stage ‘séances’ in the exotic character of ‘Scipio Africanus’ at Fremantle, Perth, and Geraldton during the Family’s 1879 tour (WAT. 14 Jan. 1879). Another itinerant magician Alfred Silvester performed ‘Levées,’ during which he conjured up fashionable figures, at St George’s Hall, Perth, in November 1881 (WAust. 22.Oct. 1881). The local press reported these performances impartially, presumably knowing their contrivance. However, the archive does not specify what stage paraphernalia the Wielands and Silvesters used to simulate ‘invisible’ presences on stage, or to what effect. Nor does it enable us to gauge whether these conjuring acts were played for mystique, or to parody fraudulent séances and ‘levées’—thereby parodying their own recessive theatricality. Nevertheless, it is possible to piece together some information.

As will become apparent from the discussion of the ‘Fatima’ illusion, the Wielands’ stage effects were of the ‘modern’ algorithmic kind described by Herbert de Caston (1910) as understandable in principle to an ordinarily educated person, yet designed to deceive the eye. Given the Wielands’ inclination towards the ‘modern,’ it is

---

213 The archive does not indicate whether the same Juvenile Wieland played both ‘Fatima’ and ‘Scipio Africanus.’ However, the fact that the two acts were not parts of the same programme increases the likelihood that the same performer played both roles. An advertisement for ‘Scipio Africanus, King of Dahomey (Brother to Fatima)’ (VicExp. 20 Mar. 1879) hints that one of the Wieland boys played the role, but clarifies nothing.
214 Charles Silvester inherited the stage name from his British grandfather Professor Alfred Pepper, inventor of ‘Pepper’s Ghost’ (1863). The Professor’s title was a conventional nom de théâtre for stage magicians.
215 The fraudulent side of spiritualism was often laughed at on the stage. For example, Levin C. Tees’ farce Mrs Pepper’s Ghost (1894) parodied Professor Pepper’s famous ‘Ghost’ illusion. Charles White’s burlesque The African Box; or, The Magician’s Troubles (1875) made fun of stage magic.
likely that their ‘Scipio Africanus’ negotiated a fine line between agreeably suggestive mysticism and knowing theatricality. In the absence of detail, it is impossible to judge the extent to which audience participation might have affected the credibility of the ‘Scipio Africanus’ séances.

The practice of ‘modern’ magic had its own brief history in the colony prior to the advent of ‘Scipio Africanus’ in 1879. The German ‘wizard’ Professor Kohler had introduced ‘modern’ prestidigitation to the colony during his highly popular tour in 1868. Kohler characteristically tantalised his spectators, avowing in advance that his magic was ‘rational,’ but never quite disclosing his tricks of trade. The Professor’s stage costume aligned ancient mystique with modern industrialism. According to the *Inquirer* (3 Jun. 1868), Kohler wore modern dress, both arms uncovered workman-like ‘to the elbow,’ in place of the magician’s traditional garb of ‘guberdine [sic] and flowing sleeves.’

Twelve years later, the thoroughly ‘modern’ Professor Alfred Silvester, father of Charles the ‘Fakir of Oolu,’ performed in evening dress, in a ‘gentlemanly quiet spoken’ manner, with ‘more the appearance of a scientific lecturer than a magician,’ at St George’s Hall, Perth (*Herald*. 27 Mar. 1880).

To reiterate, the magic purveyed by Kohler and the Wielands can be understood as culturally transmissible collective memory, in addition to its appeal as popularised applied science. In the ‘Scipio Africanus’ and ‘Fatima’ acts, remembering and imagination were coeval with performance. Memory enabled performers and spectators alike to sustain a mnemonic continuity of theatrical experience. Yet at the same time, the bizarre phenomena presented on stage momentarily questioned the spectators’ imaginative capacity to make that ‘magic’ intelligible and meaningful through

---

216 Professor Kohler died of a throat infection at the Freemasons’ Hotel, Perth, on 23 October 1868 (*Herald*. 28 Oct. 1868).
collective remembering. For despite their trumpeted rationality, performances such as ‘Scipio Africanus’ and ‘Fatima’ hinted at the notion of a universe of invisible energies that exhibited ‘scant regard to the human’ (Beer 1996, 86).

These illusions always tended towards resolution through the magician’s version of restored behaviour, or more precisely, of surrogation that never exactly replaces the past. In that sense, the material body of ‘Scipio Africanus’ was the arc that mediated and grounded incompatibilities of past and present, visible and invisible. But in the process these illusory séances played on anxieties of identity arising from a ‘general dialectic of visibility and invisibility’ (Jay 1996, 5). That dialectic challenged accepted notions of a unitary subject and continuity of self invested in, and jointly supported by, the organism and collective memory. Gillian Beer (1996, 85) ascribes the invisible component of this dialectic to the nineteenth-century scientific notion of ‘the ultimate form of cosmic death’ when, according to the second law of thermodynamics, entropy ‘reaches its maximum and no energy remains.’ If this notion of entropy is granted, the magician’s skill and the spiritualist medium’s psychic ‘communication’ with the dead emerge not as merely contingent, but as futile gestures of control in response to the instability of material objects and the indifference of the secular invisible towards the human.

It is possible that stage séances were popular precisely because they purported to interrogate the collective experience of being ‘concretely placed’ that Casey (1993, 23) attributes to implacement. In this scenario, the discourses of visibility and invisibility in the performance event would have ‘restored’ colonists’ sense of collective cultural continuity with current European scientific thought. But equally, the play on thresholds onto entropic subjective space in stage séances may have resonated subliminally with
colonial experiences of unplacement and implacement referred to in Chapter Three. This is not to say that the popularity of stage séances can be accounted for by these two alternatives, but they go some way to explaining the appeal of the occult to colonists generally characterised as hard-bitten pragmatists oriented towards property ownership and money-making.\footnote{I owe this historical insight to Lenore Layman.}

The power to ‘haunt’ that these ‘modern’ illusions had in their day has been displaced onto contemporary technologies of cinema, television, and video digitisation. Marina Warner (2006, 269) notes that contemporary television transmits granulated images of ‘time travel’ that are summoned not at the command of viewers, but by others, after the manner of ancient oracles and wizards. This historic association between television and séance affirms television’s ‘affinity with the enchantments of deception [and] the promises of visual seduction’ (Warner 2006, 269).

**Case Study: ‘Fatima.’**

On 1 January 1879, an anonymous young woman associated with the Juvenile Wielands appeared solo in an optical illusion billed as ‘Fatima,’ at the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle (*Herald*. 4 Jan. 1879). The Wieland children specialised in comic vocals, grotesque instrumentals, and ‘character and national dancing’ (*Herald*. 11 Jan. 1879). Six-year-old Master Sidney Wieland gave impersonations of a ‘Collins Street Swell,’ a sailor, and a soldier, and played variations on the ‘musical gridiron.’ Comic impersonations of social stereotypes were a staple of British entertainment, and Charles Mathews had built his career as a ‘quick change’ actor on the form (Mathews 1838-39). Wieland’s ‘Swell’ is an example of the application of British stage genealogy to
perform an emergent colonial Australian sense of belonging and implantment. While the three infants and Thomas Wieland worked the Fremantle audience from the stage, the young woman performed as ‘Fatima’ at the entrance to the Hall.

Provenance

The 1879 Fremantle performance of ‘Fatima’ came just a year after its antecedent ‘Living Half-Woman’ was first seen at London’s Royal Polytechnic Institute. Among his technical explanations of nineteenth-century magic and stage illusions, Hopkins (1897, 69) included Tobin’s ‘Living Half-Woman’ as ‘a very ingenious improvement’ on the earlier ‘Talking Head,’ described by him as ‘probably the most common illusion depending on mirrors.’ Whereas ‘The Talking Head’ used a simple arrangement of mirrors to conceal the body of the female performer from the neck down, after the fashion of the ‘decapitation’ trick (Hopkins 1897, 48-50), ‘Fatima’ and its forerunner the ‘The Living Half-Woman’ exhibited the figure of a partly ‘disembodied’ woman. ‘Fatima,’ following the ‘Living Half-Woman,’ incorporated experimental catoptric, or mirror, technology, naturalistic behaviour, and realistic stage décor in order to enhance the verisimilitude of the illusion of ‘disembodiment.’ These illusions were essentially up-to-the-minute, technologically sophisticated sideshows, ‘haunted’ by the shades of fairground freaks of old. As Hopkins (1897, n.p.) points out, ‘ingenious adaptations of scientific principles’ to stage illusions were of great interest to the public of his day.

The shared history of ‘The Talking Head,’ ‘The Living Half-Woman,’ and ‘Fatima’ is

218 His father Tom Wieland played ‘Old Robin Gray’ with variations on the violin (WAT. 10 Jan. 1879).
219 In this regard, I have already mentioned Brewster’s (1833, 86) technical specifications for an apparatus that would operate ‘by reflexion and refraction’ to generate ‘phantasms’ for the stage. Brown (1863) offered a physiological explanation of spectral illusions ‘everywhere and of every colour’ via the ‘persistency of impressions’ upon the retina. The lavish trade index of optical lanterns, slides, and accessories compiled by Welsford and Sturney (1888) indicates the widespread popularity of the magic lantern as a means of information and entertainment, at home and in public, in the late nineteenth century.
an instance of the transmission and adaptation of popular illusions that practitioners of stage magic regularly undertook in different parts of the empire.\footnote{Ownership of theatrical optical inventions and versions of them were notoriously disputed in the mid-1860s in Britain, and it was commonplace for pirated versions of newly invented optical illusions, first shown at the Royal Polytechnic, the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, or other London venues, to be transferred illegally to theatres and fairs in the British provinces. For instance, Pepper’s Ghost—Henry John Pepper’s simplified and improved version of Henry Dircks’ ‘ghost’ effect, ‘possessing all the external characteristics of a corporeal body’ floating in the air—had been presented without permission or acknowledgement of Pepper or Dircks at performances in the Assembly Room, Bath, soon after its London premiere in 1863 (Dircks 1863, 37; 75). Minton Griffiths’ presentation of Pepper’s Ghost at St George’s Hall, Perth, in September 1880 was a ‘fiasco’ due to damage to the apparatus (WAust. 1 Oct. 1880).}

\textit{Technicalities}

Given that some of today’s readers may not be familiar with ‘The Living Half-Woman’ and ‘Fatima,’ I begin with a technical description. Hopkins’ (1897, 69-71) explanation of Tobin’s ‘Living Half-Woman’ complements an account of the Australian ‘Fatima’ published in Melbourne’s \textit{Daily Telegraph} (8 Nov. 1878), and reprinted in Fremantle’s \textit{Herald} (11 Jan. 1879). I conflate these descriptions in order to explain the operation of the Wielands’ version. I have not been able to find an image of ‘Fatima,’ so I rely on Hopkins’ diagram of ‘The Living Half-Woman.’

According to Hopkins’ illustration, reproduced here as figure 14, viewers approaching ‘Fatima’ would have seen a small, brightly lit booth furnished in modern domestic style, with two rails at its front, and draped at the sides and rear. On the carpeted floor of the booth stood a rectangular wooden table with a 2.5 centimetre-thick top. The upper body of a young woman in modern costume appeared to rest on a low three-legged footstool at the centre of the table. Where viewers would have expected to see the woman’s lower body beneath the table, only table legs were visible; while a gap appeared between the tabletop and the underside of the stool, where one might have expected to see a downward continuation from the woman’s middle. According to the
Herald (11 Jan. 1879), the bust of ‘Fatima’ at Fremantle calmly fanned herself, read a book, and ‘gaze[d] upon visitors in a manner which denote[d] the utmost comfort.’ The audience was left to ponder the young woman’s bodily detachment and self-absorption—‘partly cut off,’ as it appeared, from the world (Herald. 11 Jan. 1879).

The technology of ‘The Living Half-Woman,’ and hence of ‘Fatima,’ consisted of a geometric arrangement of very clear, smooth glass mirrors, concealed and angled along precise sightlines to reflect sharp mirror images that gave the illusion of visual depth to the reflections. The drapery that Hopkins describes served to prevent spectators from seeing stray, telltale reflections. Two upright glass mirrors filled the gap between the floor and the underside of the table. Each mirror extended from the front legs of the table, to meet seamlessly at a right angle to each other at the table’s centre. The woman was seated on a chair concealed behind these mirrors. Two smaller mirrors, similarly angled between the surface of the table and the bottom of the stool on which the woman’s torso rested, created the further illusion that the tabletop was continuous beneath the stool. The stool was in fact a hollow wooden ring that circled the woman’s lower body like a belt. By virtue of the mirror images, viewers perceived gaps between table and floor, tabletop and footstool, where none existed.

The mirrors served to conceal from view the woman’s seated lower body, as well as the rear legs of the table, and the floor on which these stood. The mirrors were angled to produce equidistant, symmetrical inverse images of the front table legs, carpet, and tabletop. Bright lighting and the absence of ripples and whorls in the mirrors ensured clarity of reflection, such that the viewer could mistake the mirror images for

---

221 Jim Steinmeyer (2006, 62-63) traces the antecedence of this arrangement of mirrors back to the previously mentioned ‘Sphinx,’ or ‘Talking Head’ (1865) by Thomas Tobin, in which ‘two rectangles of mirror glass … arranged at 90-degree angles to each other and 45-degree angles to the furniture … concealed the actor’s body, which was beneath the surface of the table, and reflected the furniture around it.’
solid objects. The slotting of the two pairs of mirrors into the furniture hid their giveaway edges from view. Presumably, the mirrors were inset far enough back into the lip of the table and stool to prevent spectators from inadvertently catching their own reflections. By these means, the Wielands contrived a visual field in which mirror images seemed continuous with the objects reflected. The mirror technology identifies ‘Fatima’ with a category of stage illusions intended to invoke ‘a realistic visual effect disassociated from the actual concrete, material nature of the object’ (Leeman 1975, 9).

The ‘invisible’ conjured in ‘Fatima’ was scientifically explainable as an effect of mirror reflection. It was also explainable as a show business exercise to distract the eye of the beholder by concealing the lower part of a woman’s body and the rear legs of a table and stool behind two pairs of solid plate glass mirrors, their clear sides towards the viewer. The mirror technology served in this way to disrupt rather than clarify the viewers’ visual experience. The ‘Fatima’ illusion was characteristic of its kind, in that the bizarre spectacle of the female ‘half-body’ figure served to distract the viewers’ attention from detecting the illusion’s actual working parts: the mirrors that reflected inverse images of the forward legs of table and stool, the carpeted floor, and the tabletop. In sum, the ‘Fatima’ illusion was typically double. The performance conjured the mystique of the invisible, while functioning exclusively within the domain of the visible. There was more to ‘Fatima’ by way of implication than met the eye; but equally, no more to it than the eye could see. What meanings did colonial viewers find in the ‘Fatima’ figure; and what discursive significance can we attach to its visuality at this distance in time?
**Visuality, performance, and optical science**

As Jay (1996, 3) points out, the critical concept of visuality teaches us to attend to the constituted rather than the ‘found’ quality of seemingly ‘natural’ visual phenomena. In this respect, the scientifically and technologically generated optical techniques deployed in ‘Fatima’ and like illusions depended on culturally inflected visual practices that transvalued both habitual visual experience and technologically enhanced aids to vision. Colonial cultural responses to ‘Fatima’ affirm that, like other late Victorians, her Western Australian spectators attached entertainment and affective value to technologically generated visual displays. More precisely, illusions such as ‘Fatima’ appealed as exhibitions of the concealed power of technology to transvalue the human body as a medium between the domains of visible and invisible worlds. The ‘Fatima’ illusion, and its forerunner ‘The Living Half-Woman,’ employed light and mirrors to problematise modes and theories of monocular perception and representations of gender on the stage.

Colonial press notices of ‘Fatima’ are few, but they give some idea of the Western Australian public’s culturally constituted reception of the illusion. As mentioned, the Herald’s (11 Jan. 1879) notice of ‘Fatima’ confined itself largely to technical detail taken verbatim from Melbourne’s Daily Telegraph (8 Nov. 1878). The limitations of this critical response are consistent with the pleasure that colonial settlers took in the consumption of scientific exhibitions, and commodity spectacles based on imported metropolitan optical technology. These aesthetically pleasing and mystifying stage spectacles were culturally inflected to distance their technology from the grim effects of industrialisation on people’s lives; so, for that matter, did British experimental science. Show business and science took little cognisance of the horrors of urban industrialisation upon which the products of Victorian technology relied. In that regard,
the ‘Fatima’ illusion distanced the human from the modern, though for historic reasons the industrial context would have borne less directly on colonial spectators. The *West Australian Times* (14 Jan. 1879) described ‘Fatima’ as ‘this interesting exhibition.’ For cultural reasons, the colonial press privileged the Wielands’ illusion as an anglocentric spectacle of technological and industrial achievement.222 Public acknowledgement of the illusion’s potential to provoke erotic fantasies of the female body was culturally proscribed. Indeed, any such overt acknowledgement could be punishable by law. Such was the experience of at least one Western Australian male viewer, a ‘low fellow’ named Gallop who was arrested for addressing ‘indecent language’ towards ‘Fatima’ in the presence of ‘a number of ladies’ during a performance at the Town Hall, Perth, in January 1879 (*WAT*. 14 Jan. 1879).

**Bodily and subjective place and space**

Although the ‘Fatima’ illusion afforded viewers a powerful visual experience, the performance effectively centred on a discourse of female embodiment. In contemporary theoretical terms, the illusion posited a gendered bodily space, with implications for the possibility, or otherwise, of women inhabiting a *vita activa*. The performance organised bodies, actions, objects, and mirror images into dramatic ‘place-worlds’ that were differentiated from, but interacted with, the gender discourse of the social world in which the event was staged. It was in this doubled discursive and cultural sense that the female figure was placed in performance. How, then, was the female figure placed within the spatial organisation of the performance?

The scenic spaces of the ‘Fatima’ illusion exhibited characteristics of Deleuze and Guattari’s previously discussed concept of ‘striated space.’ The concept describes

---

222 In a ‘puff’ for the Wieland’s tour of the Champion Bay district, 500 kilometres to the north of Perth, Geraldton’s *Victorian Express* (5 Feb. 1879) remarked that ‘Fatima’ stimulated interest similar to that stirred by the ‘automaton chess-player’—presumably in London.
the precise angling of mirrors and sightlines; the vertical series of ‘gaps’ between floor, table, and stool; the horizontal ‘halving’ of the figure’s body; and the control of visual orientation through strict segregation of spectator space from performance space. The illusion’s mirror technology was spatially organised so as to disrupt culturally habituated perceptions of visual phenomena, and differentiate the visible from the ‘invisible.’ As Casey (2005, xvii) points out, such striated space is ‘visual with a vengeance,’ in the sense that it requires strictly relational, that is, geometric organisation of the visual field, and placement of the spectators within it.

This spatial austerity was manifest in the forced immobility of the partially ‘disembodied’ female figure, embedded as it was in the furniture, and enmeshed in an intangible calculus of sightlines. This sense of bodily entrapment is reminiscent of the panoptic ‘space of domination’ in which space, place, and subject are fixed in the moment (Casey ‘Smooth,’ n.p.). The young woman’s apparently truncated body was the arc that mediated a double displacement: her figure was explainable partly as an effect of concealed stage mirror technology, and partly as a gendered mediation of the contradictions within modern industrialism and imperialism. McClintock (1995, 43) includes among those ‘presiding contradictions’ the dyads of leisure and labour, private and public, domesticity and industry, and metropolis and empire. Such contradictions render the ‘Fatima’ illusion spatially and placially multiplex. Its spatial organisation was in large part a matter of applied calculus and geometry, but its technology evoked affects and eidetic place-worlds that were haunted by other bodies and other performances in other (visually riven) places. The stage spectacle mystifies the domestic as a space shot through with energies from which the visible world emerges. It presents the female body as a space in which memories of freak shows, and the
spectacle of imperialist capital coalesce to haunt middle-class notions of gender and sexual propriety.

**Domesticity as imperial spectacle**

Entertainments and experiments at London’s Royal Polytechnic, and at its colonial offshoot the Melbourne Polytechnic, with which I assume ‘Fatima’ was associated, were rooted in projects of Victorian imperialist consumerism. McClintock (1995, 1) identifies three such projects as: ‘the transmission of white male power through control of colonised women; the emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge; and the imperial command of commodity capital.’ It would be disproportionate to claim that a minor performance event such as ‘Fatima’ could be a conscious part of an imperial project of such amplitude as the casting of ‘a single, European, male authority’ over the globe (McClintock 1995, 34). However, the late Victorian discourse on domesticity in ‘Fatima’ links the illusion into an expansive imperial discourse of gender and racial domesticity as a ‘social relation to power’ (McClintock 1995, 34) (her emphasis). In its own way, ‘Fatima’ was as much a spectacle of imperial and colonial ‘domesticity’ as the popular Victorian ‘At Home’ entertainment.223

The scenic organisation of the ‘Fatima’ illusion as a realistically furnished, intimate, interior domestic space, together with the dramatic action of reading a book in a composed manner, identify the visible upper part of the female figure as a leisured woman of her time. Except, of course, that the realistic setting and the woman’s calm demeanour forces a disjunction between, on one hand, the spectators’ consciousness that the ‘Fatima’ figure is a contrivance, and, on the other, their willingness to accept

---

223 Interesting comparisons could be made between figures of ‘domesticity’ in the nineteenth-century ‘Fatima’ illusion and Samuel Beckett’s twentieth-century play *Happy Days* (1961), in which the figure of Winny is buried to the waist in sand.
the evidence of their senses that she really was freakishly ‘cut off from the world’
(Herald. 11 Jan. 1879). For, true to its spatial and placial ambiguity, the ‘half-woman’
figure was also very much part of the spectators’ world of imperial commodity
spectacle: the partial ‘disembodiment’ figured the woman’s lower bodily spaces as ‘part
of the furniture’ and a space of imperial domination of colonial women. Her partially
‘disembodied’ figure, in that respect, constituted a self-reflexive metonymic relationship
between its visible and ‘invisible’ parts.

The strictures applied to domestic spaces in ‘Fatima’ contrast with the discourse
of the domestic in Mark Lemon’s farce Domestic Economy (1850) and William Brough
and Andrew Halliday’s farce Area Belle (1864), each of which was discussed in
Chapter Four. The ‘Fatima’ illusion is dramatically skeletal in comparison with the
confident, fast moving dramaturgies of the two farces. That is to say, the strict
regulation of performance space and pace imposed by the mirror technology, the limited
agency of the single, immobilised figure of the ‘half-woman,’ and the resulting absence
of intersubjective dialogue inhibit the development of dramatic action in ‘Fatima.’

Nor does ‘Fatima’ afford the comic potential of gender and class cross-dressing upon
which the actions of the two farces depend. These specificities notwithstanding,
‘Fatima’ poses issues for a contemporary reading of the marginalisation and victimising
of middle class women, and of their concealed, unwaged domestic labour, in the
Victorian cult of domesticity.

The domestic spaces in Domestic Economy and ‘Fatima’ were industrialised, but
in different ways. Lemon’s farce dramatises its racial and gender discourse of
industrialisation through contradictions between female and male labour, waged and

---

224 Pace is a technical term for the dynamics of a performance. It is not synonymous with speed of delivery.
unwaged work, dirt and cleanliness, nurture (bread, potatoes, and the family meal) and
dearth, culminating in festive restoration of family cohesion at table. By contrast, the
‘Fatima’ illusion figures industrialisation obliquely through precise geometric and
technological regulation of the visual field; and through stylish costume and furniture
that are consumer products of industry and waged labour. These components of the
performance transvalue the domestic setting of ‘Fatima,’ seemingly neutral and ‘beyond
the domain of political analysis’ (McClintock 1995, 35), as a layered space of social
transformation and gender subjection. The prosthetic substitution of table legs for the
lower half of the female figure metonymically incorporates the ‘half-woman’ into the
gender and class roles of Victorian colonial society, as these are reified in the spectacle
of middle-class furniture, costume, and décor. Through these means, the domestic
domain of ‘Fatima’ reveals itself as a threshold of the domination and entrapment of
women of the seemingly leisured class. ‘Seemingly’ is the operative word here. As
McClintock (1995, 161) observes of the labour of female servants at the time, the
idleness of middle-class women was ‘less a regime of inertia […] than a laborious and
time-consuming character role performed by women who wanted to be members of the
“respectable” class.’ The figure of women’s lives as theatrical roles applies equally to
the ‘Fatima’ illusion, and to dramatic roles such as that of Mrs Croaker in The Area
Belle. In that play, the role of mistress of the household, a comic variation on the female
aspirant to social respectability, is depicted as utterly dependent on Penelope, a waged
servant who takes the initiative in amorous relations with men of her own class. In
contrast, partial ‘disembodiment’ of the woman in ‘Fatima’ tends to elide female energy
and agency.
**Female agency and the ‘victim’ figure**

Ambiguity was intrinsic to the figure of a ‘half-woman’ whose upper body appeared to inhabit the realm of the visible and whose lower body appeared to be located in the domain of the invisible. Given that this figure of bodily ambiguity derived from masculine dominated imperial science and technology, it is possible to interpret this partial ‘disembodiment’ as a masculine violation of a female body. By that reading, the ‘Fatima’ illusion is a metaphor for the application of scientific knowledge and technology to control and ‘violate’ women’s bodies, and inhibit women’s agency. Men’s agency is implied through the optical appliances that ‘bisect’ the female’s body and ‘elide’ its lower half from the visible world. The subtlety of the ‘Fatima’ illusion is that masculine agency, conventionally figured in the ‘presenter’ magician, remains invisible: masculine dominance is merely implied through concealed technological control of the mobility of the woman’s body and its visibility to spectators.²²⁵

Ironically, the figure of masculine dominance both declares and disavows itself by virtue of its own technological ‘invisibility.’

The racialised representation of women as victimised other has a history in nineteenth-century performance, whether on stage, at fairs, or in exhibitions such as ‘Fatima.’ Hopkins (1897, 64) attributes the achievements of late nineteenth-century British and American magicians and illusionists in part to western appropriations of knowledge from the Yogi and Mahatma ‘wonder workers’ of India. This metropolitan importation of colonised culture found an industrial analogy in the importation of colonial produced raw materials for manufacture in Britain. I do not know the extent to which the ‘Fatima’ illusion exploited eastern knowledge. However, it is clear that ‘Fatima’ was in ambivalent relationship with the metropolitan cult of ‘domesticity,’ for

²²⁵ Presumably, Thomas Wieland did not take the stage magician’s honorific of ‘Professor,’ ‘Doctor,’ or ‘Fakir’ because the ‘Fatima’ illusion required no male presenter.
the illusion drew heavily on a racialised discourse of the feminine in order to naturalise and rationalise the ambiguity of its materially privileged but horizontally ‘bisected’ female figure. McClintock (1995, 6) describes both the violated status of colonised women, such as the Indigenous women of Western Australia, and the marginalised status of colonial women who upheld the social and cultural ‘boundaries of empire,’ and bore its ‘sons and daughters,’ but were excluded from making ‘direct economic or military decisions of empire.’ ‘Fatima,’ being an Australian version of the metropolitan ‘Living Half-Woman,’ belongs to the latter category of colonial women. The irony is that ‘Fatima’ metaphorically racialised the middle-class Anglo-Saxon female figure as both cultural bearer of imperial ‘domesticity,’ and its principal victim. I am not convinced that this irony was intentional or self-evident in its time, but it constitutes ‘Fatima’ as a profoundly ambiguous figure of the middle-class Anglo-Saxon woman as privileged victim.

There was no overt racism or direct reference to racial degeneration in the female ‘Fatima’ figure. Nevertheless, a form of inverse imperial racialisation operated: the trope of ‘racial degeneration’ legitimised the colonial female figure’s privileged social, economic, and racial position in the imperial order of ‘nature,’ in contradistinction with the collective figuring of Indigenous Australians as racially inferior to whites, and the classification of certain colonial minorities as racially deviant. In Western Australia, as we have seen in Chapter Six, Indigenous people were mimicked at colonial masked balls, and figured as the ‘civilised’ racial other in pageants of empire, but they were not accepted into colonial society. Stannage (1979, 43) observes that Perth’s white settlers generally refused to accept Indigenous people as social equals, citing James Purkis’ complaint, in 1838, that the congregation of ‘Natives’ at his neighbour’s house destroyed ‘the peace and comfort of [his] family and
home’ and reduced the value of his property in Perth. The labour of Indigenous people as servants was of value to the project of colonial domesticity, but interracial sexual relations and marriages were proscribed in the name of an Anglo-Saxon racial ‘purity’ that depended on ‘the rigorous policing of [colonised and colonial] women’s sexuality’ (McClintock 1995, 61). It is possible, in this regard, to interpret the ‘invisibility’ of the woman’s lower parts in the ‘Fatima’ illusion as an instance of the racial policing of colonial women’s procreativity. The incidence of male violence against women in colonial marriages notwithstanding (Stannage 1979, 66), there can be no doubt that colonised and colonial women experienced this policing in radically different ways.

The notion of racial ‘purity’ was also invoked to define classes of racial ‘deviation’ specific to the colony. McClintock’s (1995, 43) category of metropolitan ‘deviant’ classes includes ‘the militant working class, the Irish, Jews, feminists, gays and lesbians, prostitutes, criminals, alcoholics and the insane.’ British convict transportees constituted a specifically Western Australian addition to the class of racial ‘deviants.’ So too did colonial shepherds, described by settler farmer’s wife Eliza Brown (1977, 42) as a ‘wofuly [sic] extravagant and wasteful’ class of workers. But the legitimisation of colonial Australian middle-class women’s privilege as natural and universal was itself ambiguously inverse, for it implied the hierarchical division of domestic labour, first between males and females, and then between waged and unwaged domestic workers. The ‘Fatima’ figure being among the privileged but ‘idle’ female unwaged, her sexual energies and industrial capacity were strictly contained, even sanitised and proscribed, within the striated, masculine dominated ‘domestic’

---

226 Stannage (1979, 43) adds that ‘Aborigines continued to carry out tribal killings’ in St George’s Terrace, Perth, at the time; and that in 1838, the Reverend Henry Trigg was signatory to a memorandum requesting the Governor to ban the appearance of Indigenous people ‘in a state of nudity.’
spaces of polished glass surfaces and sharp edged reflections. To paraphrase McClintock (1995, 43), colonial domestic crises of gender and class were displaced into racial terms in ‘Fatima.’

**Subject, agency, and collective memory**

The social constraints operating within the ‘Fatima’ figure pose interesting questions for subjective agency and collective memory. As previously mentioned, subjectivity is holistically structured, such that the subject’s agency depends on ‘the articulation of a system of mental states, rather than being some simple underlying structure’ (Malpas 1999, 92). Mental states interconnect with actions that are ‘explicable in terms of reasons attributable to the agent’ (Malpas 1999, 93). A performance—like the memory embedded in it—is a purposive action in this sense, and is thus closely connected with notions of agency. However, the interconnection of acting with agency in ‘Fatima’ involves two subtle but fundamental distinctions. Analysis of ‘Fatima’ as a *performance of agency* requires that the performer’s purpose (in performing) be differentiated from the discursively constructed agency of the performed female figure. Analysis also requires that the performer’s dependence on memory of a body of past performances be differentiated from constructions of memory in, and as, dramatic action.

Performance can therefore be understood as purposive action of a specifically regulated, complex sort that depends, in Malpas’ (1999, 94) general terms, on the subject’s capacity to ‘play out possibilities’ in her or his mind and to ‘fit actions and events to a history and a context.’ It follows that the complex nature of agency in performance allows space for transgressions of memory systems, and of the constraints that science and cultural and social values imposed on performance discourse. How,
then, do the notions of striated visual space and bodily entrapment relate with the operation of memory in a performance event such as ‘Fatima’?

Following Misztal (2003, 12), I understand memory to be intersubjective in the sense that, ‘while it is the individual who remembers, his or her memory exists, and is shaped by, [the individual’s] relation with what has been shared with others.’ In this view, the remembered past is always a collective past that is lived, remembered, and open to contestation among other people in the present. The notion that memory is intersubjective avoids recourse to socially deterministic theories that subordinate individuals to a collective; or recourse to individualistic notions of an atomistic society (Misztal 2003, 10). Furthermore, collective memory (re)constitutes the past as double, insofar as the act of remembering accords the past a generative role in present social reality.

Constructions of collective memory in the dramatic action of ‘Fatima’ are not immediately apparent. The performance time was ‘real time’ present, in which the past appeared to play no active dramaturgical role in shaping a present or a future. Instead, collective memory in ‘Fatima’ functions through accumulated cultural practices that provide people with ways of understanding a performance and its experiential and heurisitic relations with the social world. To paraphrase Misztal (2003, 12-13), ‘Fatima’ functions as cultural memory that exists independently of its individual carriers; it incorporates not only what people can remember of their own experience but ‘the constructed past [that] is constitutive of the collectivity.’

227 The performance time of ‘Fatima’ was flexible. Spectators could come and go, and the show could be terminated at any time by the management. It seems that the performer improvised, rather than follow a scenario or script. In this respect, the performance approached the stasis of a photographic moment.
The performance place-world of ‘Fatima’ was constituted through several discrete but interconnecting forms of collective memory. Technical memory that informed the geometrical arrangement of mirrors, sightlines, and so forth was schematic, in Casey’s sense that such collective memories embodied ‘cognitive schemes’ that can be historically interpreted today (2000, 45). Spectators’ affective memories would have been just as much at work shaping the reception of the performance. These individual memories were non-schematic; so lacking in definition, shadowy, fleeting, and partial that they would have been difficult to identify or articulate in any coherent way, then or now. The generative relationship between these co-existing modes of memory in ‘Fatima’ would in effect proliferate the spaces of the performance and, by semantic extension, their reception and interpretation.

Collective memory also functioned through the genealogy of ‘Fatima.’ Illusions such as ‘Fatima’ were specific cultural and technological interventions in a history of scientific ‘mechanical aids to vision’ that goes back at least as far as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. Stafford and Terpak (2001, 79) relate Enlightenment interest in the camera obscura, telescope, and microscope to ‘the intellectual shock of passage away from established truths and towards increasingly multiple, fluid or incomprehensible domains.’ This view positions ‘Fatima’ and similar ‘convincing phantasms’ as popular ludic responses to the efforts of modern philosophers and scientists to ‘quantitatively sharpen up the cognitive and perceptual indefiniteness existing in things’ (Stafford and Terpak 2001, 80). Goodall (2002, 2-3) observes the transgressive approach that the late nineteenth-century entertainment industry took to legitimate science, and the concomitant exploitation of a popular ‘counter fascination with what might be out of the natural order: [notably] freak shows in which extreme differences of bulk and stature, form and feature were the staple ingredients.’
As Hopkins’ (1897) explanatory demystifications demonstrate, there was an algorithmic, scientific explanation for even the most baffling optical illusion. Even so, the paradoxical use of mirror images to render ‘invisible’ the lower body of a woman is a paradigm of the late nineteenth-century stage illusion industry’s transgressive approach to the scientific quest for accurate vision. Tobin, who invented the prototype of the ‘Fatima’ illusion, appropriated the clarificatory function of optical science in order to *perturb* rather than enhance the viewing public’s experience of spectatorship. ‘Fatima’ and its forerunner ‘The Living Half-Woman’ appealed to a visual culture that valued exhibitions of extreme bodily experience, and apprehended an invisible, darker side to experience for which rational science could not account (Stafford and Terpak 2001, 80).

The ‘Fatima’ illusion’s reliance on technology rather than overt dramatic action for its effects was part of a cultural shift in late Victorian society and theatre towards a secular, racialised consumerism. McClintock (1995, 34) describes that shift as an interrelated process in which the metropolitan middle-class home became a ‘space for the display of imperial spectacle’ and the colonies became a ‘theater [sic] for exhibiting the cult of Victorian domesticity.’ In colonial Western Australia, this cultural shift manifested itself in changing attitudes to past performance, and colonial collective memories of it. As I have argued in Chapters Three and Four, the attitudes and practices of amateur performance during the early decades of colonisation were surrogates, in Roach’s (1996, 2-3) definition of the term, of late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century British amateur theatricals. Paradoxically, the Reverend Trigg’s (1839) summoning up of ancient authority in his animadversions on amateur theatre can be understood as a theological form of ‘twice-behaved behaviour’ (Schechner 1985, 36-37)
analogous to theatrical performance. By contrast, the Juvenile Wieland’s ‘Fatima’ illusion exhibited a secular, domestic metaphor of men’s domination over white middle-class women by the very same imperial technology that generated the illusion. The dramaturgical suspension of the past in ‘Fatima’ can be understood as symptomatic of a crisis of memory in modern societies that no longer constituted themselves as ‘societies of memory’ (Hervieu-Leger 2000, 13). In those modernising societies, the traditional constitution of collective memory through shared experience was displaced into technology and display.

This critical re-orientation of society to its cultural past had historically specific implications for performance discourse in the colony. While the overt class and gender cross-dressing that propelled Domestic Economy and The Area Belle continued to satisfy colonial performers and audiences into the 1880s, an entertainment such as ‘Fatima’ introduced a more up-to-date, gender specific exhibition of internalised feminine accidie, in which parts of the middle-class female’s body were prosthetically reified as ‘furniture.’ The ‘Fatima’ exhibit is striking for its elision of those female agencies and energies that motivated the action of Victorian stage farces. The comedy of abject ‘dirty’ surfaces—especially of human skin—that enlivened Domestic Economy, and the animating female sexuality of The Area Belle, are at odds with the figure of ‘Fatima’ as a partially ‘disembodied’ woman in the hard-edged technological space of smooth, clean glass surfaces and geometrically bounded mirror images that was ‘Fatima.’ This visual and technological turn in colonial culture was no less critical for being intermittent and gradual. The visual turn in colonial Western Australian

228 The Gazette (22 Oct. 1842) drew attention to this analogy in its ‘review’ of a sermon against theatricals delivered at the Perth Wesleyan Chapel in October 1842: ‘We listened with much pleasure to the declaimer against performances, and acknowledge him as one of the many best actors [sic] we have seen. The representation […] was good, without affectation […] but very dramatic.’
performance culture was closely associated with the introduction of modern stage lighting effects, but that remains a matter for another thesis.\textsuperscript{229}

If ‘Fatima’s female body was half it was also double, in that hers was a thoroughly ‘domesticated’ freakishness. Domesticity is inscribed in the décor of her booth, in her fashionable clothes, her civilised pastime of reading, her self-containment, and her physical immersion in her social environs. Her privileged modern domestic condition is in sharp historical contrast with the reality that faced settler Mrs Eliza Brown (1977, 21), who had to manage a farm household ‘without the common necessaries of life’ in the early years of settlement. But while the booth furnishings and her reading identify ‘Fatima’ with literate, leisured middle class women’s pastimes, the seeming invisibility of her lower body hints at a place of the feminine unknown that is double, tending both to fluidity and an enveloping anatomical inwardness. Through its doubleness, Fatima’s body enacted a politics of identity. Her body was the nexus of unresolved power relations between the imperial rationalism that sought to assign meaning to the female body, and that body’s refusal to be so constrained. It is possible to critique ‘Fatima’ in contemporary terms as an experimental spectacle of the colonisation of women through technology and through the consumption of domestic goods. ‘Fatima’s’ spectators might not have understood the illusion in these terms, but the illusion plays on a ‘crucial but concealed relation between gender and imperialism’ that, according to McClintock (1995, 5–6), has, ‘until very recently, been unacknowledged or shrugged off as a fait accompli of nature.’

\textsuperscript{229} The Silvester Company made a particular contribution to this visual turn over two decades. The Company’s 1880 tour featured ‘Brilliant Lime and Oxy-Calcium lights […] on a liberal scale’ (\textit{WAust}. 3 Mar. 1880). Charles Silvester introduced a superior form of gas lighting during his performances at St George’s Hall, Perth, in 1881, and attempted to promote the use of use gas for domestic heating and street lighting in Perth (\textit{WAust}. 1 Nov. 1881). As late as 1895, the Silvester Family entertained audiences with ‘Limelight effects from the Bondi Aquarium’ at the opening of Perth’s Ye Olde Englishe Fayre (\textit{WAust}. 12 Dec. 1895).
The theatricality of ‘Fatima’ stages the unbridgeable gap that divides memories based on past experience from the external stimuli that activate those memories in the present. If the ‘Fatima’ illusion generates any ‘truth,’ it is to perform the spectators’ relationship to this gap. McAuley (1991, 40), following Sigmund Freud’s concept of verneinung, or negation, argues that just as we can ‘admit to some level of consciousness a fact that the conscious mind refuses to acknowledge,’ so ‘in the theatre we can know that something is real and not real at the same time.’ The concept of negation enables us to understand ‘Fatima’ as, at one and the same time, a contrived optical deception and a truth-bearing enactment of ‘dismemberment’ as a metaphor for the fracturing of the subject and its tendency to entropy. ‘Fatima’ was a kind of commemorative wild card that could perturb and reconfigure remembered experience. In so doing, it both applied and interrogated rational lens and mirror science, and the juggernaut of imperial consumerism, without interrogating its own fetishised consumerism.
Conclusion

The presumptions of the effects of travel, sessility and territorialisation, enter deeply into our often unspoken assumption that societies are somehow pre-established rather than constantly in the process of formation and dissolution. Eric Leed

The multi-disciplinary approach I have taken in this thesis has involved cumulative reflection and critical analysis of concepts and data. It is now time to draw together some of the threads. To reiterate, one of my research tasks has been to document and interpret archival material on nineteenth-century Western Australia performances that has not previously been available to scholars and others with an interest in the subject. My thesis studies the social historicity of that body of performances from examples, and explores the understandings that contemporary philosophical, sociological, and psychological concepts of collective memory might bring to an analysis of those performances.

Interpreting research data

The research data assembled in the main text and in footnotes identifies performances of some seventy plays, together with a significant number of performances that are differentiated from ‘spoken word’ theatre. With a few exceptions, such as the oft-cited performance of Major Hort’s Love à la Militaire at Perth in 1839, these performances have received limited, if any, scholarly attention. This is particularly so in the case of popular unscripted performances of acrobatics, wire and rope walking, dancing and masking, and optical illusions.
There is justification aplenty for taking an inclusive view of colonial performance. Analysis shows that apparently inconsequential one-off items such as Bartine’s rope-walking, or the hybrid performances of maskers and dancers at masked balls, surpassed their own specificity as performances. Through ‘ghosting,’ colonial performance mediated both the particularity and motility of collective remembering, and of the subjects that that memory subserved. Specifically gendered but ‘haunted’ performing colonial bodies afforded an expansive view of performance as space and place as situated in geodetic space and chronometric time, but also opening onto other performances in other locations at other times. By surpassing its immediate boundaries, colonial performance enacted the multiplex particularity, spaciousness, and inclusiveness of place, and of the settler culture to which place was ontologically and phenomenologically prior.

On the subject of spaces and places, the research data also documents multipurpose halls, converted hotel assembly rooms, even storerooms, in which colonial performances took place prior to the opening of purpose built theatres in the 1890s. The converted stages at the Mechanics’ Institute Hall, Perth, and the Oddfellows’ Hall, Fremantle, have been well documented elsewhere. So too, have late nineteenth-century purpose built venues: the Theatre Royal, Coolgardie; the Cremorne Gardens at Perth, Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, and Albany; the Theatre Royal, Perth; and the Princess Theatre, Albany. This thesis documents other less well-known indoor venues at Perth, Fremantle, York, Geraldton, Albany, Coolgardie, and Kalgoorlie. The data also identifies outdoor performances, and performances in tents and bars, as well as a performance at Fremantle’s Asylum. With the exception of the Asylum, none of these minor venues was of architectural merit. Together, however, they constitute a
significant heritage network that mapped transmissions of British imperial and Australian colonial performance culture over six decades from 1839.

**The argument**

My thesis argues that the social and economic effects of settler migration, together with the perturbation of social memory and identity that settlers experienced as an effect of migration, were acculturated into Western Australian colonial performance. I interpret this process of acculturation as one in which colonials explored the motility of the subject and memory, and the durability (or otherwise) of self-identification through a surrogate British performance culture. Motility, as I use the term here, embraces travel in a geodetic sense, but also conceptual and mental mobility and porosity, and the remembered past-in-the-present as both continuity and transience (Jammer 1969, 82).

My position is that colonial performance did not arise *ex nihilo*. To extrapolate from Leed (1991, 21), colonial migration to an unfamiliar environment required the ‘mobilization [sic] of British traditions’ toward, as I see it, the generation of a new colonial cultural self-consciousness. Colonial performance was thus implicated in a crisis of settler memory generated by migration. The colonial imperative was to transvalue Western Australia into a place of surrogate civilisation: to make it, in effect, a spacious, historicised, ‘restored’ performance of Leed’s (1991, 18) notional ‘place of origin’ and object of return journeys. In Western Australia, that colonial imperative subserved political allegiance to the crown; an hierarchical social order based on the protection of investor settler property under British law; and adherence to a British
Within this imperative, colonial performance constituted an ongoing surrogation of metropolitan culture from which colonials were geographically and hierarchically remote. Colonial distance from imperial ‘origin’ was not merely temporal and geographic; it engendered a dependency on London that permeated the colonial economy, governance, society, and cultural identification.

The process of recognising and coming to grips with that distance engendered in turn a colonial self-consciousness towards which, the research data suggests, most Western Australian settlers remained ambivalent. The transvaluing of colonial distance from the metropolis into specific colonial difference was complicated by another factor: the cultural ‘distance’ of settlers from the unfamiliar country they were in process of occupying—or, as settlers viewed it, ‘civilising.’ As mentioned in Chapter Four, settler and farmer Eliza Brown (1977, 131) had, in 1851, attributed the new colony’s ‘slow and difficult’ economic progress less to the country than to the collective ‘frittering away of its capabilities’ by settlers ‘unaccustomed to the task they [had] set themselves.’ The same could be said of the colony’s racially exclusive, surrogate British performance culture.

This thesis has explored reasons for this colonial cultural phenomenon. As I interpret the matter, settlers’ experience of travel through migration and colonisation would have altered, perhaps contorted, their collective remembering and their cultural identity. Mindful that ‘we have no real understanding of the passage experience,’ or of the way in which travel alters the psychic state of migrants (Leed 1991, 16), I have limited my topic to a social and cultural study of colonial performance in relation to

230 The term ‘investor settler’ refers to free settlers who invested funds in settlement, as distinct from those who entered the colony as indentured labour or convicts. According to Stannage (1979, 11): ‘The law […] was introduced to Swan River to contain the servants; and the administration of the law was to be in the hands of the masters, the respectable [free settler] investors.’
collective memory. There is a conceptual basis for this. Following Bartlett (1932), Werscht (2002), and others, I have been careful to distinguish collective memory from individual memory. To restate Bartlett’s (1932, 296) position, social collectivity constructs ‘persistent’ frames that inflect both the ‘manner and the matter of recall,’ and into which all ‘detailed recall must fit.’ I have adjusted this definition to describe colonial performance as the mediation, rather than framing, of collective memory in the manner Bartlett describes. This version of Bartlett’s definition of the psychology of collective remembering has provided me with a conceptual starting point from which to interpret the research data, and it has allowed me to argue the interconnectedness of colonial performance and collective remembering.

**Critical and theoretical concepts**

The thesis topic revisits an age-old question that is still pertinent: How are performance and remembering related? I consider that relatedness to be at once conceptual, material, and historically specific. I will first summarise my conceptual position. As I have noted in Chapter One, the interconnection between memory and performance has attracted much recent attention among performance scholars and theorists. For example, Turner (1982) and Schechner (1985) explore the connection through anthropological studies of performances. Blau (1992, 2) mounts a complex theoretical argument that the performer’s psyche, ‘preempted, colonized [sic] as it may be,’ engages in ‘an active forgetting’ that may make ‘ideological claims of its own.’ Roach (1996) offers an historically specific, topographical account of surrogation that maps transmissions of performance culture around the Atlantic rim. Carlson (2003) surveys historical instances of theatrical ‘haunting,’ or ‘ghosting,’ from performance cultures around the world. Bratton (2003) considers the historiography of theatre as it has shaped the discipline of theatre history today, and shaped contemporary British
theatre practice itself. McClintock’s (2003) analysis of domesticity makes it possible to understand performance as, in part, a future memory of imperial industry based ‘civilisation.’

While I draw significantly on these and other thinkers, I have responded to the ancient question with my own interpretation of historically specific colonial performance events. I understand performance to be purposive social action that is inseparable from collective memory, but not reducible in its here and now to memory. Further, that performers’ bodies are primary arcs that mediate and interconnect performance with memory in the present. My thinking on the subject has been guided by the philosophers Casey (1998) and Malpas (1999) who argue for the primacy of place to culture; from which I infer the primacy of place to performance and collective memory. I also owe much to McClintock’s (2003) understanding of imperial and colonial representations of race and gender.

The phenomenological primacy of place opens this study onto another fundamental question: How are performance and memory related to place and space? This question introduces its own set of implications concerning the relatedness of place and space. As was discussed in Chapter Two, place and space differ in kind but cannot be understood independently of each other. In this I follow Casey (‘Smooth,’ n.p.) who argues that place necessarily co-exists in an uneasy and ‘uneven doublet’ with space, its ‘odd and incongruous other.’ This doublet of place and space provides a conceptual basis for my study of the historicity of colonial Western Australian performance and collective memory. Since Casey and Malpas do not engage directly with performance, I have proceeded mainly by inference from them. For the same reason, I have viewed the case studies in Chapters Four to Seven as opportunities to test concepts and theories.
The history of colonisation makes it clear that, from the outset, colonists encountered the places they colonised as resistant, unimagined, planiform sites. Colonists and sites of settlement were thus in a relationship of commemorative indifference to each other.\footnote{This interpretation of historical events is my own. In it, I draw on philosophical ideas at Casey (1993, 336). For an historian’s vignette of settlers’ lack of knowledge of the country they colonised, see Stannage (1979, 12-13); and see Brown (1977) and Millett (1872) for settler women’s accounts of colonial life.} The site of Matthew Friend’s encampment at Swan River is a trope of the placeless condition of colonists in a site-specific present that challenges or excludes the subject’s experience of being in memorable places. Viewed in this context, colonial performance served a double purpose: as a surrogate mediation of absent memorable places and experiences; and equally as a mode of acculturation through which colonial sites could gradually come to the condition of discrete places that reflected other remembered places. I find that settlers’ historical misunderstanding of the places they were colonising had the potential to disrupt the connective capacity of memory to intermediate ‘between mind and world’ (Casey 1987, 141). Case studies of the thin autonomy of memory (and hence of culture) at mid-century Fremantle and on the Eastern Goldfields in the 1890s analyse performance as a form of recreational remembering through which colonists sought to restore or surrogate that connective power.

The concept of the hauntedness of performance enables me to explore the connective power of colonial performances in their new ‘surrounders’ (Casey 1998, 332); and hence the opening out of colonial performances ‘towards encompassing ethical, political, social, and religious matrices’ as an influence of place (Casey 1998, 332). The memorial connective power of performance was sufficient to rebut the Reverend Trigg’s attempt at religious intervention in amateur theatre in 1839. But the
very fact of that controversy locates performance within a wider crisis of gender relations and the moral values invested in domesticity in the colony.

Performances of specific plays were implicated in wider social discourse, though there is no evidence to suggest that colonial performances overtly engaged in political contestation. As I have argued in Chapter Four, amateur performances of Lemon’s farce Domestic Economy at Perth in 1865, and at Lockville in 1876, had the power to perturb, but not dislodge, the normally covert bodily processes of gender self-recognition and self-identification. Casey (1987, 136-37) refers to the ‘stubborn’ particularity of self-recognition, and its centrality to self-identity and cultural identification. The cross-dressed exchange of labour roles in Domestic Economy momentarily disrupts the particularity of self-recognition within a gender based ‘domestic economy,’ but ultimately restores the division of domestic labour around an iconic kitchen table. The doubled cross-dressing of a male actor in the role of Mrs Gumley at Perth simply bracketed Domestic Economy even more firmly into colonial crises of gender and labour. The gradual strengthening of the connective power of performance involved the acculturation of British performance to colonial society through collective memory. This acculturation was racially inflected to exclude Indigenous performance culture, and to police performances by other racial minorities such as the Goldfields Afghans. The acculturation of older collective memories to colonial experience was therefore also a process of cultural exclusion and imposition.

Casey (1987, 214) refers to an ‘elective affinity between memory and place,’ in which each is ‘suited to’ and calls for the other. By that logic, colonial performance can be understood today as an historical modalization of being in place through collective memory. The tenuous cultural hold of colonial performance during the early decades of
settlement can be attributed in large part to settlers’ (in)experience of the colony as a place that disrupted their sense of being in the world. Chapters Three and Four examine economic, demographic, and social factors that contributed to the thin autonomy of colonial memory, and of performance, during the decades prior to and immediately following the transportation system. Bartine’s upside-down walk across the ceiling during his ‘Antipodean Feat’ enacted both the disruption and restoration of body memory—‘the prime mover of our memorial lives’ (Casey 1987, 215), and hence of identification—in a topsy-turvy, southern-hemisphere, colonial ‘world.’ Equally, and setting aside occasional controversy, colonial amateur performance was a popular surrogate mediation of other places made memorable through performances beyond the colony. In this regard, performances within the colony were a cultural resource for reconstituting settlers’ being-in-place in the world.232

Casey defines place in abstract terms as eventmental, by which he means that place is ‘something that surrounds,’ but does not contain as a membranous, immobile unit. By this logic, place is ‘the event of envelopment itself’ (Casey 1998, 339). This definition suggests a further eventmental affinity between place, performance, and collective memory. An understanding of performance as eventmental takes us beyond the description of an event by calendar date, chronometric time, and venue location. The notion of eventmentality positions performance as a social action through which a sense of place is enacted that, consciously or unconsciously, reflects on and figures forth other memorable comings into place through performance. Thus the masked balls staged by Silvester and Griffiths in 1880 were a basis from which the striated spaces and disguised bodies specific to Perth and Fremantle could be interwoven into a more expansive and inclusive web of places in Britain and the Continent, where masked balls

were an established practice. The figurative place-worlds of colonial performance re-enacted the event of this topogenesis.

It is a time worn platitude that performance is ephemeral and site-specific. Similarly, if memories tend towards immobility, ‘this is the work of those places in which they come to inhere so deeply’ (Casey 1987, 215). But despite its apparent limit to the here and now, performance has a range that is suited to counteract its own tendency, and that of collective memory, towards fixity through association with a particular place. As agents of the motility of collective memory, theatrical performers on tour and colonial amateur performers in their communities opened new perspectives on place. I argue that the specifically gendered/sexed bodies of Bartine, the ‘Fatima’ figure, and the cross-dressed Master Mackey opened out in performance onto a range of colonial concerns as various as the relations between the sexes and the gender distribution of labour; the relations between science, spirituality, and visuality; and the class and gender politics of public performance. In the long run, experiences of performance had the potential momentarily to destabilise, but not to supplant, the self-identification of colonial subjects ‘snugly invested’ in their bounded ‘surrounders.’

Amateurism

As I have more than once mentioned, local colonial performance was exclusively amateur, with rare exceptions when amateur and visiting professional artists appeared on the same programme. The strength of colonial amateurism, even during its precarious early phase, was its particular social engagement with the communities that produced it. The intimacy of that engagement enhanced the potential for amateur

---

233 I am paraphrasing here from Casey (1998, 332) on the ‘seemingly contracted locus of the human body.’
performance to acculturate, though not to replicate, metropolitan practice and values to specific ends at specific places in Western Australia.

Colonial born amateur performers, having little or no experience of performance beyond the colony’s borders, were potentially well placed to be effective acculturators of metropolitan performance to local conditions—the only conditions they knew. The achievements of Mrs Wilkinson and Master Mackey in this respect are discussed in Chapter Four. The colonial press operated as a collective medium for the publicising and transmitting of amateur performance culture, as well as providing forums on occasion for theatrical controversy and polemics. The Fremantle Herald’s ‘Jacques’ in the late 1860s, and ‘Odites’ at Geraldton’s Victorian Express in the late 1870s and early 1880s, made judicious contributions to the collective memory and ethics of colonial amateur performance discourse, each bringing his historical knowledge and practical experience of colonial conditions to dramatic reviews and commentary. Informed and nuanced press reviews and commentary promoted the ‘self-persistence’ over time that Casey (1987, 263) designates as memory’s ‘thick autonomy.’ ‘Jacques’ and ‘Odites’ were historic examples of Casey’s ‘critical intermediaries,’ through whose discourse collective remembering links up with the circumambient world of ‘specific tasks, perceptual configurations, and forms of social life’ (1987, 264)—all of which bear on performance and its commemorative ‘ghosting.’

**Theatre history?**

It is appropriate to conclude with a reflection on the stance of this thesis toward theatre history. Following Matsuda (1996) and others, I have maintained from the outset that performance has its history, as does collective remembering. The history of memory studies has an established, though contested, conceptual and theoretical basis in
the disciplines of social psychology and sociology. Misztal (2003, 27) outlines shifts in
the history of memory from ‘preliterate culture through literacy to today’s capacity to
freeze, replay and store visual memories.’ Werscht (2002), Misztal (2003) and others
are also careful to distinguish between the historiography appropriate to memory
studies, and the historiography that is particular to the discipline of history itself. But as
Bratton (2003, 3) points out, the discipline of theatre history has only belatedly been
‘coming to self-consciousness’ about what it is talking about, and what it is supposed to
be doing. Similar questions have occurred to me during the writing process. The
historiographical issue becomes much more complex when the histories of performance
and memory are interrelated, as they are here. I have therefore spent some time
describing my position on the matter.

While acknowledging that colonial Western Australian performance is part of
the chronological history of theatre, I have focused on the potential of colonial
performance to mediate cultural identification through surrogation (Roach 1996, 2).
That is, the thesis reflects critically on performance and collective remembering as
interconnected human actions that relate holistically with other cultural, social, and
institutional constructions at other times in other places. I have proceeded from the
premise that performance and collective memory are discrete but interwoven social
actions that work together to mediate pasts that serve presents and futures. This premise
has proved to be fruitful, but it has posed a problem: the conceptual distinctions
between memory and history are less than clear-cut, and as a consequence, performance
events do not fall neatly on either side of a convenient divide between history and
memory.234 If a resolution of these problems is to be found, it is certainly beyond the
present scope of this thesis. So, how have I responded to them?

234 Werscht (2002, 19) states this point in general about memory and history.
My research prompted me to suppose that colonial Western Australian performance and collective remembering were not mere by-products of a pre-existing frame external to them, but generatively interactive with each other, and with other collective economic, political, social, and cultural actions. I have therefore assembled a series of concepts that accommodate performance and collective remembering as social actions within a group, rather than as a group. Where memory is concerned, Halbwachs (1980, 48) writes that it is individuals who remember, and that they do so as group members. Bartlett (1932, 294) concurs: collective memory concerns ‘memory in the group,’ rather than ‘memory of [or by] the group.’ Contemporary studies of remembering further emphasise that memories are negotiated and mediated through the internal dynamics of remembering communities, though accounts of these dynamics differ (Werscht 2002, 18-20; Misztal 2003, 67-74). Taken together, these statements have directed me towards a working concept of collective remembering as a group dynamic that mediates and negotiates pasts that are usable in the present and future.

This concept has seemed all the more viable because of its compatibility with Roach’s (1996, 2) notion of surrogation; Carlson’s (2003, 7-8) explanation of theatrical ‘ghosting;’ and Blau’s (1987, 173) evocation of the ‘uncanny but inescapable impression imposed on spectators at a performance that “we are seeing what we saw before”.’ Werscht’s (2002, 23-24) examination of ‘complementary’ distributed memory reinforces this compatibility. In complementary forms of collective remembering, group members remember from their subject positions within systems of complementary relations (Werscht 2002, 23). This account of remembering accords well with the organisation of performances in which practitioners work together in a reciprocal system of discrete skills that are renegotiated and remembered beyond the duration of any individual’s membership of the performing group.
Werscht (2002, 20) describes a dynamic tension between memory and history in which each can only be understood in terms of the other. In view of this, I have been careful to differentiate between the methodological imperative to verify the accuracy of my research data, and the rather different conceptual position that collective memory is generally concerned with agreed or contested interpretations of pasts that serve presents. Verification of data is critical to history. But while accurate representation of the past is a factor in the credibility of collective memory, that representation is generally a matter for negotiation or contestation, and is therefore subject to ambiguity and alteration (Werscht 2002, 35).

What next?

The scope of this thesis extends from 1839 to 1899. As might be expected, more research and interpretation remains to be done. The topics addressed here indicate possible directions in which further work could proceed. Given the gender censorship of women’s voices in the colonial press, I would give priority to a study of women’s attitudes to performance in the context of the Victorian cult of domesticity, as far as archival limits permit. A study of women’s performance would open onto the gender politics of labour; the possibility of women’s resistance to practices such as gender cross-dressing that marginalised them in performance; and the boundaries within which women were able to imagine and reflect on their specific sexuality and gender through performance. A key question would be: To what extent were colonial women’s bodies in performance valued as bearers of cultural memory? It would be appropriate to examine this question in relation to the colonial imaginary of a masculine body politic.
Analysis of the quasi-familial structure of commercial touring companies would also bear on the gender politics of colonial performance. Research on itinerant family companies such as the Wielands, the Silvesters, and the Towers Family would bear on the related issue of the employment, or exploitation, of child performers. The Lyons troupe and the Stonehams indicate other configurations of quasi-familial company structure: husband and wife; brother and sister. Amateur performance also afforded space for local families to participate in and set directions: among them the junior males of Fremantle’s mercantile Francisco, Samson, and Solomon families, and later in the century, Coolgardie’s tent-dwelling Mr and Mrs J. Arnot.

The key roles of scene designers and painters are under represented in the thesis. A monograph awaits on the contributions made by artists Mr Purkis, Henry Prinsep, Charles Hamilton, Con Berthold and others to colonial topogenesis through their depictions of local places on drop-curtains. Prinsep’s designs for St George’s Hall, Perth, in 1879, and Charles Hamilton’s local settings of Bombastes Furioso at Geraldton in 1880, are of particular significance for their different interrelations of imperial and colonial place.

I have referred to colonial attitudes to Indigenous performance, but Indigenous performance was in no sense a cultural minority during the colonial period. The persistence of Indigenous performance contemporaneous with emergent colonial performance is an important area for further research. From this perspective, racial cross-dressing in colonial minstrel shows could be considered a minority activity. The racial politics of colonial performance do not end there. Further research is called for on performances by colonial nationalities other than the British; especially the Afghans on the Eastern Goldfields and the Chinese inhabitants of Perth during the 1890s.
Finally, e-research would make it possible to explore these topics through the digital time mapping and visualisation of performance sites that define patterns of professional touring and amateur practice. That endeavour would contribute significantly to our understanding of colonial performance as an opening out onto a more expansive vision of place through collective memory. In particular, it would be more inclusive than the focus here on British culture. This thesis documents and responds to historical and performance events in nineteenth-century Western Australia. It also opens the way for future scholars to revisit this material to support their own research in a range of areas, some of which are signalled in this conclusion.
Reference List

Note:
There are several plays referred to in the text for which I have been unable to find publication detail. I include them below by author (if known) and title, followed by ‘Unpublished script.’

Following the Chicago Manual of Style Online, e-references are given in footnotes rather than in this list.


Balzano, James. n.d. Diaries. Manuscript in possession of Mr Ron Manners, Kalgoorlie WA.


Brough, William. 1851. *Apartments; or, ‘Visitors to the Exhibition May Be Accommodated,’ etc. A Piece of Extravagance to ‘Suit The Times.’ In One Act*. With notes in German by Dr. A. Diezmann. Leipsig [sic]: H. Hartung.


Hasluck, P. M. C. 1929. The First Year in the North West. In: *Early Years (Journal of the Historical Society of Western Australia)*. vol.1, part 4. 1-16.


Robson, W.J. The Duel or the Moral Coward. Unpublished script.

Old Love and Young Love, or Never Too Late to Mend. Unpublished script.


Figure 1.

Freemasons Hotel, corner St George’s Terrace and William Streets, Perth, 1869. Photograph. b&w. 1869.

(This was the site of Leeder’s Hotel, where an Amateur Theatrical performance of Love à la Militaire took place on 9 July 1839.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. BA1344/84.
Figure 2.

Looking west along Hay Street from Pier Street corner showing the Mechanics’ Institute Freemasons’ Lodge, and Perth Town Hall under construction. 1868. Photograph. b&w.

(The Mechanics’ Institute, which served as a theatre from 1863, is to the left. The Town Hall was also used for performances from its opening in 1870.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. 816B/TB/207.
Figure 3.


(The title dates the photograph at 1894, but Webb and Webb [1993, 524] give 1896 for Dwyer’s arrival in Kalgoorlie.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. 5816B/103.
Figure 4.


(It is difficult to locate the encampment precisely. The landscape indicates a site on the coastal plain, possibly at Perth, with the Darling Range on the horizon to the east.)

Figure 5.

George Cruickshank. 1838. ‘Begone, brave army, and don’t kick up a row.’ From W.B. Rhodes’ ‘Bombastes Furioso; A Burlesque Tragic Opera in One Act.’ In: *Thomas’ Burlesque Drama* (1838). *opposite* the title page.

© Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. Call no. DSM/827.73/T.
Figure 6.

Part of a Programme for *Love à la Militaire*. 1839. Printed on silk by Charles Macfaull at the *Gazette* office, Perth.

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. PR14482.
Figure 7.

(Photograph of a painting depicting an early view of the port of Geraldton showing the old wooden jetty. Published in the Western Mail 28 September 1950.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. 3542B/66.
Figure 8.


(The Old Convict Establishment, begun in 1850, is the longer of the buildings on the rise to the right. Rottnest Island was to become a gaol for Indigenous prisoners and transportees.)

The National Library of Australia. Call no. PIC S 1109 LOC 1618.
Figure 9.


(The view looks inland from Arthur’s Head to the Darling Range in the distance. The Swan River is to the *left*, the sea to the *right*.)

Figure 10.

Copy of an old photograph of a Cobb & Co. coach at Coolgardie taken in 1894. Photograph. b&w.

(The original photograph was taken two years after settlement at Coolgardie in 1892. The railway from Perth to Coolgardie opened in 1896.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. BA559/150.
Figure 11.

Bayley Street, Coolgardie. 1897. Photograph. b&w.

(Drinking water was in short supply. A public supply tank stands in the middle of the street. The street was built so wide in order to allow camel teams to turn in it. A turbaned member of the town’s Afghan population can be seen to the left.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. BA1758/45.
Figure 12.

A Swaggy travelling overland to Coolgardie. c.1895-1910. Photograph. b&w.

(Barrowmen and swagmen were a common sight on the Goldfields. Albert Gaston [1937] walked for three weeks from York to Coolgardie in 1892. James Balzano [n.d.] pushed his barrow 900 kilometres in a single journey.)

Courtesy of the State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library. Call no. BA1437/12.
Figure 13.

The Talking Head. Reproduction of a plate from page 69 of Albert Hopkins’ *Magic Stage Illusions*, etc. 1898. Photograph. b&w.

© British Library Board. Shelf mark X619/17489.
Figure 14.

The Living Half of a Woman. Reproduction of a plate facing page 71 of Albert Hopkins’ *Magic Stage Illusions*, etc. 1898. Photograph. b&w.

© British Library Board. Shelf mark X619/17489.