

IMAGINATION, REALISATION AND THE PERFORMING OF  
AUSTRALIA

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I declare that this dissertation 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 tertiary education institution.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that performance can be seen to constitute both a critical discipline and a set of activities entailing an engagement with spatial, temporal, physical and material relations, rather than as a product of linguistic, textual and discursive relations. As such, performance is able to critique the functioning of language, text and discourse in assuming space, time, bodies and matter. Performance also suggests ways of working on and informing writing practices. The social relations of performance pertain to times and spaces which are temporary and processual, to activities which imagine other times, spaces and people, and seek to realise them for a specific time in a specific space for a specific group of people. The social relations realised in this process of contingent realities are able to inform writing, that is, to produce writing which connects theatre with other discourses, and which connects words with bodies in time and space.

It is argued that theatre and performance's process of imagination and realisation and its engagement with spatial, temporal, physical and material relations provides a valuable site for critically examining the ways in which Australia privileges and remembers specific configurations of space, time, bodies and matter, while marginalising others, in producing official representations of the Australian nation. Such representations, reflected in

governmental programmes such as those concerning citizenship and national security, have a bearing on how Australians view their national past, present and future, and how they perceive their social connections with each other. Just as specific performances are made subject to the textual and discursive categories of literature and social theory, official enactments of the Australian nation are able to ‘contain’ Australians who spatially, temporally and physically transgress national boundaries. As a material practice, performance is able to engage with official enactments of the nation in order to ‘re-open’ the spaces, times and encounters concealed within these sites.

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