

PLACE MATTERS:
Finding Deep Ecology within Towns & Cities

by

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Abstract

Deep ecology is a branch of ecophilosophy with a focus on wilderness philosophy and that appears to hold little relevance within an urbanising world. Yet deep ecology's holistic account claims that *everything* is interconnected – not just those entities definable as wild or natural – but *everything*, including all those things that deep ecology has remained wary of and aloof from – machines, exotic species, department stores, concrete and tar.

This dissertation is an exploration of deep ecological metaphysics, specifically that of transpersonal ecology, within towns and cities. It considers how engagement within towns and cities may influence or change the metaphysical premise of deep ecology, and looks at how revisiting the holism therein may alter how we understand world and self, particularly with reference to towns and cities.

The particularities of the place within which this research is grounded are described. The suburb of Risdon Vale and the author's sense of place are introduced in terms of locality and locale, and with reference to two streams within place discourse – memory and place, and geographer Doreen Massey's 'global sense of the local, a global sense of place'. Three phenomenological encounters are narrated and discussed. The first encounter, entitled 'gum-tree-man', initiates a discussion of Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's gestalt ontology. The second, 'touch me, this tree', takes a fresh look at the concepts of wildness and wilderness from the perspective of gestalt ontology, and the third, 'capillary shawl', moves to consider self and the notion of consciousness as emergent from encounter between the author and her washing machine.

A notion of place emerges that forms the basis for the development of a concept termed 'the locality of place'. The locality of place and symbiosis are offered as alternatives to transpersonal ecology and Self-realisation. Accusations that deep ecology harbours fascist tendencies are addressed in light of the emerging ideas. Deep

ecology emerges as a poignant ontological perspective holding relevance and significance for considerations of self, place and world.

Finally, a re-conception of towns and cities, including of our selves, technologies and exotic species is explored. The notions of relational familiarity and unfamiliarity are offered as means of understanding current trends in relational enmeshment, and the increasingly problematic nature of these trends is discussed. An embodied turn towards familiarising ourselves within our own relational enmeshments is offered as a means of increasing our understanding of ourselves, world and *where we are at* within towns and cities.

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And Jet Lan...

*Look at the stars,
Look how they shine for you,
And everything you do,
Yeah they were all yellow,*

*I came along
I wrote a song for you
And all the things you do
And it was called yellow*

*I swam across
I jumped across for you
Oh all the things you do
Cause you were all yellow*

(Extract from the lyrics of 'Yellow' by Coldplay)

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“Everything hangs together – everything is interrelated”

Arne Naess 1912-2009 (1995a: 240)

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Introduction



These things I think I have seen

because of the stories I have been told.

Extract from 'Within living memory' by Judith E. P. Johnson (2004: 141)

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Deep ecology is a branch of ecophilosophy¹ that is synonymous with wilderness philosophy. It has garnered inspiration from wilderness thinkers such as Henry Thoreau and John Muir, and has roots within wilderness places such as the mountains of Hallingskarvet in southern Norway. However, as the concept of wilderness has come under steady critique and subsequently lost some of the evocative power – both politically and spiritually – so too has deep ecology². Where once, in the 1980s and early 90s, deep ecology was the touchstone for environmentalism and ecophilosophical thought, it is now often viewed as an irrelevant, albeit quaint relic of modernity, full of paradoxes and steeped in problematic tendencies. Although espoused by proponents as a holistic philosophy that holds relevance for everything and everywhere, in maintaining its focus upon, and its positioning within wilderness, deep ecology appears to hold little relevance within a diverse and a rapidly urbanising world. However, given its holistic ontology – as summarised in the maxim cited at the beginning of this dissertation – confining deep ecology to the wilderness seems somewhat presumptuous. If *everything* hangs together and if *everything* is interrelated, then surely there is more to this branch of ecophilosophy than wilderness and surely there remains much to be explored beyond both the concept and the locale of wilderness.

When deep ecology began to emerge in the early 1970s, with its attention fixed upon wilderness and its ethical status, it turned its back on towns and cities. The opportunity now exists for deep ecology to re-find itself within towns and cities, but this time without falling foul of dualistic tendencies by rejecting one place in favour of another. From a deep ecological perspective a return to towns and cities can take with it lessons learnt within the wilds of Yosemite, Tvergastein, the Sierra Nevada, Amazonian rainforests and Tasmania's southwest. The inspiration, renewal, solace and insights gained and spoken by Thoreau, Muir and other great wilderness thinkers can equip us

for our inquiry within towns and cities. In this dissertation, I unpack this equipment – the ideas to nourish and eloquent turns of phrase to sustain – transferring it, as it were, from backpack to suitcase.

In leaving the spatially bound places identified as wilderness, I travel along dusty, log-truck-compact roads, through clearfell coupes, crossing wild creeks running through narrow forestry streamside reserves. I burst out of the forest fringe into agricultural land pushed by climate change into drought. Here I can still hear the call of wild country; I still know how wilderness and all I intuit there make sense here. The awareness of interconnectivity inspired by wilderness leads me to connect the loss of wilderness with the broader scale planetary crisis of change. A sense of self infused with a wildness of spirit drives me to question and protest. Even as I approach the outskirts of the city, the sprawl of subdivision – the dozed piles of remnant native vegetation and filled in creek beds – still make sense within the wilderness vision. Through the infinite greens of wild-tinted spectacles, habitat and biodiversity loss, the desire for non-stop growth represented by housing and construction figures, and the assumption that the land is there alone to serve human needs, appal and confront me. But as I draw closer to home, the settled lands of the suburbs, things become less certain. My connection to the wilderness becomes lost within the day-to-day primacy of the connections forged and galvanised by habit and habitation – forged and galvanised by living within place. I drive, visit the supermarket, tap away on the keyboard, repaint the house, sip coffee with friends, prune the roses, bait the snails and hang out the washing day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade. The interconnections and interdependencies that come with the ritualised repetition of living, of being within place, while peppered by occasional wilderness experiences, ultimately consolidate to define who and how I am within the world. Wilderness remains with me in a sense – walking boot soles are jammed with button-grass mud, broken leaves lie bound within a damp tent roll, digitised

imaginings emerge from LED screens, a quiet longing for a rhythm other than that of the hectic workaday are with me in the city – but its qualities are only a small part of my enmeshment within the habit and habitation of the day-to-day within the suburbs of my home city.

Away from the spatial confines of wilderness, who are we and how are we back here in the city? If we manage to hold on to and nurture the qualities that infused our wilderness experience, we may become activists and promoters for wilderness places. We may prioritise visiting wilderness areas on every possible weekend and extended period of leave from work. But understanding who and how we are, or may be, within the context of wilderness, does not, at least directly, answer who and how we are within the towns and cities, especially for those of us whose relationship with wilderness is made tenuous by this connection being only a small part of the larger webwork we inhabit in suburbia. The key, I believe, lies in an openness and a reawakening to deep ecological metaphysics – a metaphysical conception which binds wilderness with human, with building, with valley, with cloud, with concrete, with daffodil, with microorganism, with computer and so on, in an entangling, enmeshing complex of ecological dexterity; not just that which falls within the delineations of ecological science – the wild or the natural – but *everything*, including all those things that deep ecology has remained wary of and aloof from – machines, exotic species, department stores, concrete and tar. In short – and as previously stated – it is through revisiting the idea that *everything* is interconnected that we may begin to glean who and how we are within the day-to-day of towns and cities.

There has been a growing body of work that draws attention to what is described as ‘urban natures’ – the confluence of the social and the ecological within towns and cities. Davison and Ridder write:

Today’s Australian cities can be thought of not just as fixed places,
but also as sustained events that mix together human and non-

human beings, ecological and technological products, global and local scales, vernacular and cosmopolitan cultures, actual and virtual realities (Davison and Ridder, 2006: 307).

Towns and cities are emerging as complex and profoundly more-than-human places that clearly defy the inference that they are nothing more than 'human artefacts'. The ecological is not simply a smashed and trodden presence beneath the fixivity of concrete and tar; the city is alive within the interconnectivity of a plethora of entities including ourselves, yet not exclusively *ours*.

In a move that has considerable implications for how we perceive and understand our towns and cities, anthropologist Tim Ingold argues that:

We may agree to reserve the term 'building' for any durable structure in the landscape whose form arises and is sustained within the current of human activity. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the distinction between buildings and non-buildings is an absolute one. Where an absolute distinction is made, it is generally founded on the assumption that built form, rather than having its source within nature, is superimposed by the mind upon it. That assumption, however, presupposes the separation of mind and nature. But from the perspective of dwelling there is no such separation. It is evident ... that the forms of buildings, as much as of any other features of the landscape, are neither given in the world nor placed upon it, but emerge within the self-transforming processes of the world itself. With respect to any feature, the scope of human involvement in these processes will vary from negligible to considerable, though it is never total... (Ingold, 2000: 206).

As places where increasing numbers of humans have sought and continue to seek a home, towns and cities present themselves not merely as a backdrop for political machinations concerning a nature or an environment that lies beyond, but as places

steeped within the more-than-human. What lies within places mapped out as wilderness or as ‘natural’ can no longer be seen as the only places of concern for ecology in crisis. Towns and cities, as places embodied and embodying our human selves within the more-than-human, emerge as sites of potent significance for who and how we are within the world, and for how we understand the world as a more-than-human place.

Many of us who inhabit towns and cities will have experiences that fall in some way within place phenomenologist Edward Relph’s categorisation of insideness (Relph, 1976). We have specific places within the towns and cities where we live or where we have lived, and within which meaning arises. Yet it is common for such meaning to be viewed not as a source of knowledge about people and place, but as something that covers over the world (Ingold, 2000: 208). It is viewed not as something embodied within the world, but as cultural construction layered upon the world. Hence, meaning and meaningfulness are discounted and stripped away in pursuit of that which, in theory, lies beneath. Any knowledge gleaned is reliant on the *untelling* of places and people, and places and their significances are reduced to quirky idiosyncrasies. This is, however, knowledge stripped bare of the terrain within which it was once embodied. It is knowledge adrift, only becoming real again once it takes root within the meaningfulness of place; once storied within the particularities of specific places.

As Ingold writes, stories, “far from putting meanings upon the landscape ... allow listeners to place themselves in *relation* to specific features of the landscape, in such a way that their meanings may be revealed or disclosed. Stories help to open up the world, not to cloak it” (Ingold, 2000: 208). In the mobility of our times, stories regarding people and places have, on occasion, become a little strung out. The legacy of colonisation means that many stories have undergone dramatic and often violent unsettlement. Within rapidly expanding and constantly changing towns and cities many stories remain in dynamic flux. Catching sight of a story – of storied

relationships with places – is an undertaking seldom attempted, a pastime that at least on the surface bears little relevance to the main game of policy, politics and the stirrings of an ‘environmental crisis’. Yet it is within the lived experience of the day-to-day that stories reveal the world within which we dwell, and it is in the towns and cities that most of us live the day-to-day. Hence, in turning our attention towards towns and cities we are drawn into the storied relationships we hold in such places. Rather than these being dismissed as idiosyncratic meanderings, their grounding in the particularities of place and the day-to-day insists that the insights gained remain infused with life and meaning.

This dissertation takes a personal turn towards towns and cities. It is in a sense my story of the day-to-day within my home suburb of Risdon Vale, located on the outskirts of Hobart in southern Tasmania, Australia. Within the macro, it is an exploration of deep ecological metaphysics – in particular the idea that everything is interconnected – within places commonly termed the ‘built environment’. Yet closer to home – within the micro – this dissertation is a journey within the mundanity of the day-to-day. It is an awakening to the stories that glide across my imagination but so often slip quietly out of sight as I negotiate a pile of washing, a crack in the pavement and the racks and shelves of a department store. It is about my lived experience within a place within one small suburb within a small city on a small island. It is in itself a story of emplacement – of a tentative disclosure of the possibilities of self within place and place within self.

Within the macro, this inquiry questions our understanding of towns and cities, and our sense of self as inhabitants of these places. With regards to the holistic metaphysics of deep ecology, how do we understand our relationship with the introduced species that dominate urban ecology? How do our technologies fit within the interconnected and interdependent whole? The study considers how the notion of wilderness may be re-understood upon engagement with towns and cities, and what

the thing is we have come to term ‘consciousness’. In short, this inquiry considers how engagement within towns and cities may influence or change the metaphysical premise of deep ecology, and looks at how revisiting the holism therein may alter how we understand world and self, particularly with reference to towns and cities.

I begin by describing the origins of this research; with the initial ideas and questioning that emerged from moving into a new house and establishing a garden. Chapter 2 (Without Towns and Cities) considers how environmental ethics, including deep ecology has engaged, or failed to engage, with towns and cities. The notion of ‘place’ is introduced as a common theme for both wilderness and for towns and cities, and as a notion that allows movement beneath and beyond the duality inherent within much deep ecological literature with regard to these two realms. The chapter concludes with a description of the phenomenological methodology and method that underpin the research, including an account of the first-person and hermeneutic phenomenological methods. Finally the three phenomenological encounters emerging through the inquiry are identified, setting the scene for the subsequent chapters.

Prior to moving to a detailed exploration of these encounters, Chapter 3 (Transpersonal Ecology) explores the deep ecological approach, including the metaphysics of Self-realisation, as explicated by Warwick Fox (1995a). While not without its critics from within deep ecology, Fox’s work remains the most comprehensive and in-depth articulation of this branch of ecophilosophy and hence provides a benchmark for the exploration of deep ecology contained herein. In this chapter critics of Fox’s work are reviewed, in particular the critiques of ecofeminist thinkers who question whether deep ecological thought has really escaped the bonds of duality and androcentrism. The work of Australian ecophilosopher Freya Matthews – a writer associated with deep ecology and one whose work has engaged with towns and cities – is also discussed.

Chapter 4 (Risdon Vale 1) is the first of two chapters that describe the particularities of the place within which this research is grounded. The suburb of Risdon Vale and the author's sense of place is introduced in terms of locality and locale, and with reference to two streams within place discourse – memory and place, and geographer Doreen Massey's 'global sense of the local, a global sense of place'. The second chapter concerning Risdon Vale, Chapter 5 (Risdon Vale 2), centres around the descriptive accounts of the three phenomenological encounters previously introduced. The first encounter, entitled 'gum-tree-man', initiates a discussion of Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's gestalt ontology. The second, 'touch me, this tree', takes a fresh look at the concepts of wildness and wilderness from the perspective of gestalt ontology, and the third, 'capillary shawl', moves to consider self and the notion of consciousness as emergent from encounter between myself and my washing machine. This chapter concludes with a summary of a notion of place as emerging from both it and Chapter 4.

This notion of place forms the basis for Chapter 6 (The Locality of Place). Place is offered as a means of sense-making, and the notion of place termed 'the locality of place' is described with regard to a relational understanding of the colloquial sense-making devices of linear time and geometric space. The chapter concludes by revisiting deep ecology, including how deep ecological ideas have evolved through intimate engagement with a suburban place. The locality of place and symbiosis are offered as alternatives to transpersonal ecology and Self-realisation. Finally, accusations that deep ecology harbours fascist tendencies are addressed in light of the ideas emerging in this dissertation.

The penultimate chapter, Chapter 7 (Within Towns and Cities) offers a re-conception of towns and cities, including of our selves, technologies and exotic species. The notions of relational familiarity and unfamiliarity are offered as means of understanding current trends in relational enmeshment, and the increasingly

problematic nature of these trends is discussed. An embodied turn towards familiarising ourselves within our own relational enmeshments is offered as a means of increasing our understanding of ourselves, world and *where we are at* within towns and cities.

The dissertation concludes, in Chapter 8, with a move back to where the research started – my front garden. It is within the thriving relationality of this garden that this dissertation received initiation, and it is within this garden that the dissertation comes to rest in the epilogue.

Without Towns and Cities



*So I might keep in the city and alleys
The beauty and strength of the deep mountain valleys;
Charming to slumber the pain of my losses
With glimpses of creeks and a vision of mosses.*

Extract from 'Bell-Birds' by Henry Kendall (1972: 70)

Chapter 2 – Without Towns and Cities

2.1 Initiation

I buy into Risdon Vale to put down roots. I begin in the oblique front garden – hewing holes in parched earth, prodding and prompting within the reluctance of water, displacing and replacing dilapidated shrubs. Within the rhythm of trimmed grass, ornated shrub, fence, trimmed grass, ornated shrub, fence I plant natives. Endemic Risdon peppermints, globe-trotting native hops, low lying saggs, yellow dogwoods (not doing very well for some reason), a black wattle, red and green flowering correas, a bugger-to-weed-around prickly mimosa, and poas take their place.

Beyond my natives, passing through and over my garden and pushing up through the mulch are a myriad of other species. Dusty sparrows stuff dead grass beneath Harry's eaves; as Topsy-cat rounds the corner a blackbird sounds a yellow beaked alarm; twitch travels swiftly underground popping up occasionally for a bit of sun. An ornamental reminiscent of flared pants and paisley minis unloads a sticky seed mass over the fence, and two scruffy shia tzus circle nose to bum along the footpath.

Watching out my window I ponder: What are all these other species? Where do they fit into my sense of place? Are they part of me putting down roots? If so, how?

When I experience this place, my place, the word 'native' loses its neat ordered boundaries and runs wild. The sparrows gather native grass for their nest, the blackbird's alarm is sounded from the high branches of a self-sown native wattle, twitch gains refuge from a determined weeder in the dense roots of the sagg, seeds hitch a ride on trouser, hair and breeze, and in native and feral guts alike.

Beings are interacting, interrelating everywhere any old how. Native begets feral, begets native, begets feral.

Now established, my garden appears like a missed beat, or at least a beat from a very different drum. My garden is streets apart from those of my neighbors and the word 'native' has lost meaning. I begin to recognize my concept of placedness as that of a disembodied part under the illusion of being something whole, and I begin to drift towards something other.

Inside my house, within the containment of wall, floor and ceiling, the wild also, unexpectedly, presents its self to me. There are species that know my home – parts of my home – better than I do. Spiders spin spaces I never enter; ants lay tracks I never follow; mice build homes I never frequent. Moss takes rhizoid on south facing sill; mould moves in, up and under; and I can scarce imagine what the trillions of bacteria are up to!

How absurd to think that my home is my own; that I control who and what enters and stays. My home is habitat! This place I call my home is a dwelling place for many – each inhabiting in its own way.

I start a species list, and feel drawn to conduct a survey of my house and garden; to gather data on species distribution, abundance and the implicated and implied relationships thereof.

Despite scribbled anecdotes, the species list remains dry and deceitful, speaking more of Linnaeus, Latin and laboratories than of place. There is more to this place, my place, than taxons and the top-drawer relationships defined by ecological science.

There is decaying infrastructure, and there is the subsiding incidental and accidental – shattered glass, ditched plastic, trodden toys and ravished cars. A power pole rusts and its concrete heart corrodes under the lightness of lichen; pavements settle and open to insect and plant; caved-in tar and pebble fills for bathing birds; a grit-laced

teddy bear retains moisture spurring seedling growth; and a car-become-body tinkers out and silts in.

These things litter the neighbourhood, speaking of the cycling transformation of being and the permanence of transition. They have arisen within world, they dwell within world, and they subside within world. They are the relational process of world, and hence cannot be cleaved from any sense I have of my place.

This place is the wild synergy of all that is – the ugly, the forbidden and the sacred.

2.2 Urban Blind Spot

Up until the point of buying a house and putting down roots, deep ecology, particularly its focus and prioritisation of wilderness and the wilderness experience, had provided an adequate account of the world. In settling within the suburbs, in Risdon Vale, however, I was starting to feel incomplete.

Australian ecophilosophy Freya Mathews describes a similar feeling:

The ecological ideals to which I had been committed in my work had hitherto seemed impossible to put into practice in the heart of the city. I had been waiting, for decades, for a chance to relocate myself to the country, to take up a lifestyle compatible with my dreams and convictions. In the meantime, I had searched among the innumerable urgent and compelling environmental issues that came to my attention daily for the one to which I could devote myself wholeheartedly; for a time it was rainforests, then uranium mining, then Tibet, and so on (Mathews, 2005: 64).

Deep ecology has received criticism for its focus on wilderness, this being sometimes interpreted as antihumanist and even misanthropic (see for example Cronon, 1995, van Wyck, 1997). But this is not what my experience of deep ecology and living in Risdon Vale was telling me. Rather, I had a growing recognition of a gap to be explored, of

terrain just waiting to be navigated. It struck me that towns and cities open up a whole new realm for deep ecological discourse – one that draws on insights and knowledge gleaned in wilderness, yet is inclusive of the burgeoning spatial, temporal and cultural locale of the city.

It is not only deep ecology that has turned a blind eye when it comes to towns and cities. Warwick Fox, one of the most prominent advocates of deep ecology during the 1990s, argues that towns and cities are a realm of ethical consideration often overlooked in philosophical discourse (Fox, 2000b). With interhuman ethics focused on what goes on between humans, and environmental ethics focused on the natural or wild sense of the environment – other species, ecosystems, the ‘planet’, wilderness and so on – towns and cities hang in a state of limbo, directly addressed by neither, and with no voice of their own. Fox finds this circumstance exceedingly odd as it appears obvious that the “fate of the ‘green bits’ of the planet is now inextricably bound up with – indeed, effectively at the mercy of – the future of the ‘brown bits’” (Fox, 2000b: 3). As he points out, the environment “consists not only of a self-organizing, natural environment but also of an intentionally organized, artificial, built, or constructed environment (as well as all manner of combinations of these two kinds of environments)” (Fox, 2006: 9). And, of course, it is the latter that most people are immersed within on a day-to-day basis³.

A growing body of literature has emerged that calls into question the lack of engagement with towns and cities within environmental ethics. Like Fox, Alastair Gunn points out that “the central concerns of environmental ethics have been and largely continue to be heavily slanted towards animals, plants, endangered species, wilderness, and traditional cultures and not toward the problems of life in industrialized, urbanized society where most people now live” (Gunn, 1998: 341). Gunn makes a case for the active involvement of environmental ethicists in environmental restoration and environmental justice within urban communities.

Rodger J.H. King (2000) also contends that there is a direct connection between the issues affecting towns and cities, and those impacting upon the wild:

if we are to contribute to articulating the outlines of an environmentally responsible culture, we must be prepared to address the problems faced by people in the places they inhabit. Degraded urban, suburban, and rural environments are obstacles to the development of an environmental conscience. In addition, they are objective constraints on our efforts to minimize waste and pollution and to enjoy a harmonious and integrated human existence in the natural world. Built environments affect how we perceive the natural world and how we understand ourselves. It is crucial, therefore, that we consider how we might critique the contemporary built environment and envision one more in consonance with environmental aspirations. Such a task calls for philosophical attention as strongly as the more typical concerns with nonhuman value and the health and integrity of wild ecosystems (King, 2000: 115-16).

For King, the built environment, where increasing numbers of people spend increasing amounts of time, has metaphysical implications that lead to attitudes and behaviours that threaten to inhibit the development of a broad-based and effective environmental consciousness. He proposes four tentative principles to guide building and design within towns and cities: that built environments grow from place and work with local natural forces; that built environments make nature a palpable presence in daily human experience; that built environments show respect for current and future users; and, that built environments manifest an understanding of the finiteness of resources (King, 2000: 129-30). He sees a “philosophical articulation of the built environment as a complement to the defence of the value of wild ecosystems and species” (King, 2000: 131).

In a subsequent paper King (2003) builds this case, highlighting the relationship between the making and unmaking of space within towns and cities. Place conditions awareness and feeling, and it conditions and educates imagination:

the domesticated is *our* space. It is from this world that we move out into the wild landscape, either in fact or in imagination. Our ability to do this with respect and attention to details presupposes an education of our moral perception to overcome the habitual and acculturated anthropocentric neglect of nature (King, 2003: 6).

More recently King (2006), while maintaining his focus on towns and cities, assesses the pros and cons of green technologies, ecocentrism and civic environmentalism for moving us toward an ‘environmental culture’. He concludes that all three have much to contribute, yet affirms that “ridding ourselves of our environmentally harmful habitat requires mindfulness about our choices and actions and, ultimately, a change in the belief systems themselves” (King, 2006: 184).

Robert Kirkman (2004) takes this growing concern with towns and cities into the suburbs. He gives two reasons why the suburbs deserve philosophical consideration. First, suburbs are environments, in that they are the surrounds in which most of us conduct our daily lives; they are, if you like, our native habitat. Second, suburbs are heavily implicated in the traditional concerns of environmental ethics, such as habitat loss, resource depletion, climate change and so on. Kirkman makes this important point:

The peculiar intertwining of technology, culture, and nature in suburbia opens up whole new categories of environmental problems that push at the limits of traditional environmental ethics. What do we do when there are conflicts not over endangered species or pristine woodlands, or even over overt cases of toxic pollution, but over various ways of using environments that are already deeply enculturated (Kirkman, 2004: 85).

Engagement with towns and cities may be the ultimate test of the validity of pre-existing branches of environmental ethics. Ethical positions that may have seemed plausible in the wilds of ‘free nature’, if they are to stand the test of time, must also be able to account for, make sense of, and act decisively within the expansive realm of towns and cities. A line can no longer be drawn between the pared omnipresence of the wild, and the burgeoning pervasiveness of the built.

While Fox, Gunn, King and Kirkman raise some valid concerns for environmental ethics, many of the ideas explored and much of the language used continues to reinforce a sense of definitive separation between that which is ‘built’ and that which is ‘wild’. Fox’s use of the terms ‘green bits’ and ‘brown bits’ (Fox, 2000b: 3), and King’s reiteration of ‘built environments’ and the ‘natural world’ (King, 2000: 115-16) are both examples of this. While suggesting options and opportunities for change, they fall short of moving beneath and beyond the very dualisms that have allowed these realms to be considered as distinct entities in the first place, and as such offer only a tentative introduction to the possibilities of an urban environmental ethic.

Environmental ethicist Andrew Light, on the other hand, constructs a detailed critique of the relationship between environmental ethics and towns and cities, with a particular focus on dualities (Light, 2001). Within environmental ethics, Light argues, the built environment is a “landscape either to be mined for examples to be avoided or ignored all together [*sic*] as a product of human intentions – an artefact rather than part of nature and so outside of the appropriate boundaries of the discipline” (Light, 2001: 8). He contends that the non-anthropocentric prejudice of environmental ethics – the focus on discerning, formulating and defending the presence of values within wild nature independent of human agency – leads to an inability to engage with towns and cities, especially when such an approach goes hand in hand with both nature/culture and geographical dualisms.

In a bid to escape the confines of the anthropocentric worldview and the instrumentalist approach that it is seen to imply, environmental ethicists have headed into wild nature, for it is here that the clearest expressions of non-anthropocentric value are to be unearthed:

since many if not most environmental ethicists see the principle goal of their inquiry to involve the identification of an acultural non-anthropocentric value in or for nature, most theorists focus in their work on what they perceive to be pristine forms of natural value, such as wilderness areas, as exemplar forms of this value. If nature is to be considered as valuable in itself then, however the ground of that value is metaphysically or ontologically conceived, it will be best identified in those areas relatively independent of human invention as opposed to those humanly shaped areas which exemplify exactly those culturally bound preferences that many environmental ethicists wish to reject (Light, 2001: 12).

A consequence of such a position is to denigrate or ignore not just towns and cities as environments, but also the inhabitants of these places. Light cites the work of Holmes Rolston III as an example. For Rolston, humans are not fully human if they only dwell within towns and cities as towns and cities do not include wild nature. To be complete we must actively engage with and respect wild nature. For Light there exists within environmental ethics both the nature/culture dualism and a geographical dichotomy – one pole, one place contains ‘nature’ and the other, the built, does not.

This leads non-anthropocentrically motivated ethicists to distinguish not only between the value of the wild and that of the built, but also between the very nature of the landscapes themselves. Culturally modified and built landscapes do not simply reflect a different type of value to that of the wild, they are disvalued. Here Light identifies what he terms an “undefended prejudice – a move from a critique of crass human-centred forms of valuation to a rejection of humanly produced landscapes, landscapes

which cannot possibly bear any semblance of acultural descriptions of value” (Light, 2001: 17). Hence, anthropocentrism for many environmental ethicists does not only imply anthropocentric values, but anthropocentric landscapes. In taking a non-anthropocentric stance one is compelled to at best ignore these ‘human-centred’ landscapes, and at worst to deride and demean them. The urban blind spot is not simply an *oversight* by a branch of philosophy that has been spurred toward a rediscovery of the inherent values of wild nature. This blind spot presents an anti-urban bias based on prejudice and perhaps, dare I say it (Light does not), misanthropy. By way of a solution, Light suggests that we steer clear of an engagement with the “turgid arguments in epistemology and metaphysics to decide whether our intuitions about the relative importance of experiences in wilderness and cities are correct” (Light, 2001: 20). Rather, he prioritises the importance, in ecological terms, of urban environmental issues, and advocates that consideration be given to the potentially destructive social implications of maintaining an anti-urban bias, specifically, ethical positions providing the basis, albeit inadvertently, for fascist and racist tendencies.

Light concludes:

If environmental ethics is to fully embrace the urban, then it must describe the brown space of the city to be as important a locus of normative consideration as the green space... we will only have a fully environmental ethic, which covers all environments, when we turn our attention to the preservation of richly textured urban spaces as often as we do to old growth forests (Light, 2001: 31).

2.2.1 Holism with a hole

Deep ecology is no exception to the observations made by those such as Fox (2000b; 2006). Like environmental ethics, deep ecology has tended to avoid explicit engagement with towns and cities. References to towns and cities are few and far between, with the focus primarily on wilderness, the wilderness experience and the

ramifications thereof. This can be exemplified through an examination of two early works by foundational deep ecology proponents, Bill Devall and George Sessions: *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Devall and Sessions, 1985), and *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology* (Devall, 1988).

Deep ecology without question has its roots within wilderness – Thoreau and Muir are both cited as key sources of inspiration for, and evocation of deep ecology, and both turned from ‘civilisation’ to the wilds, gaining in the process an understanding of the world and the human place within it. Another source of inspiration for deep ecology, philosopher Martin Heidegger, centres his notion of authenticity on a remote cabin in the German Black Forest, an idyllic location substantially removed from the hustle and bustle of towns and cities (see for example Heidegger, 1977). Arne Naess, the founder of deep ecology, himself spent considerable time writing and thinking in a private hut, Tvergastein, high on the slopes of Hallingskarvet in southern Norway. As a central feature of deep ecology the relocation of self and thought from the city and the subsequent contrast of the ‘civilised’ and the ‘wild’, provides a foil for the inherent worth of the wild and for the virtues of wild-experiencing for humans:

Experiencing the wilderness or the wildness of a place... is a process of 1) developing a sense of place, 2) redefining the heroic person from conqueror of the land to the person fully experiencing the natural place, 3) cultivating the virtues of modesty and humility and 4) realizing how the mountains and rivers, fish and bears are continuing their own actualizing processes (Devall and Sessions, 1985: 110).

Back in the cities:

We let ourselves become colonized by mass media, by expectations in our culture. We are seduced by entertainments and promises of pleasures on city streets. We break away only by becoming self-

conscious. Thus we have a paradox, in order to lose our *self* into the larger self, we must become more self-conscious in the midst of techno-scientific civilization. Without cynicism or sentimentalism we create an opening for discovery. Outside the ordered, bordered, fenced, domesticated, patrolled, controlled areas of our region, our wild self is waiting (Devall, 1988: 70-1).

There is a geographic dualism inherent within deep ecology that delineates between the wild, and towns and cities. The ennatured place, like the ennatured person, lies in sharp distinction to the encultured place and person. On one side there is diversity, maturity and growth, and on the other paucity, confinement and stuntedness. The wilderness is where the former exists and may be experienced and nurtured. In towns and cities the latter is fostered, and thrives and subsumes.

In disvaluing towns and cities the actualities and particularities of these places and their inhabitants is undercut. When arguing that “even in large cities, a sense of place can be recultivated” Devall and Sessions (1985: 24) bypass engagement with the actual, the landscape of the city, and promote as an example a project that uncovered “information on the geology, native plants, animals and land forms buried under the mass of concrete that forms the modern image of the city” (Devall and Sessions, 1985: 24). In such an act of ‘psychological palaeontology’ the existing landscape is disregarded, dismissed and disvalued. All that is of true value is what lies beneath the concrete and the tar; the crushed and broken remnants of the wild.

And the inhabitants of towns and cities? Sessions draws on Spinoza’s account when he states:

Most people are like the slaves in Plato’s cave; they have mostly opinion about casual sequences in Nature in that their perceptions and thoughts are colored by their ego desires. They are essentially helpless and passive, moved by emotions, fears, and desires based

on ignorance and imagination, and living life largely by reacting to external causes and situations (Sessions, 1985: 239).

What perhaps saves deep ecology from allegations of antihumanism or misanthropy is that both Devall and Sessions see towns and cities and their inhabitants as redeemable. Devall asks: “Is it possible to explore our ecological self while imprisoned in the concrete streets of a modern metropolis?” (1988: 51). Only, he concludes, if there is radical change within cities, and such radical change is possible. Devall and Sessions (1985) include in their book a critique of a range of utopian or ecotopian options. These include ideas that specifically address the issue of cities, such as a perspective offered by Paul Shepard in *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (1973). Shepard envisages a world in which the entire population inhabits cities spread along the edges of continents and islands, leaving the interior free for ecological and evolutionary processes.

In one sense Devall and Sessions are candid about their lack of engagement with the built environment:

Nothing is said in this book about the export of commodities – water, plants, timber, etc. – to cities, nor anything about managing cities, their size or design, nor the political power of cities to take natural resources from far away for their own uses. Nor do we discuss jobs, the structure of decision-making in natural resource extraction and the creation of jobs for ever-growing human populations. These are vital issues for individuals and for public policy and deserve careful, thoughtful consideration based on deep ecology norms and principles. We encourage readers to draw from their own experiences, whether living in large cities, suburbs or the countryside, to make more specific decisions based on their own knowledge, information, and intuitions within the deep ecology framework (Devall and Sessions, 1985: 158-59).

Devall and Sessions' deliberate focus on the wild can be seen, at least in part, as an attempt to give the wild the hearing it is denied within traditional western philosophical thought. However, given their brief yet illuminating descriptions of towns and cities, such acknowledgement and call for future work seems somewhat irrelevant. If towns and cities are as bad as they describe, a clear decision for a deep ecology proponent to make is to abandon the city, seek out the wild, and return only to towns and cities for wilderness promoting and preserving activism. It is important to note that, until recent work by Freya Mathews (2005), and despite Devall and Sessions' encouragement, deep ecology literature has by and large continued to ignore and disvalue the built⁴.

An important point emerges here. Despite its holistic metaphysics, deep ecology has a tendency to disregard and disvalue towns and cities, thereby placing itself in a quandary – an emphasis and concern for a holistic account of the world to the exclusion of the spatially, culturally and ethically significant – and burgeoning – towns and cities. Can holism contain a hole? Can holism be exclusive, embracing some relationships and effectively severing these (in a psychological sense) from a broader relationality? Does holism with a hole provide an adequate account to deal with the complexity of ecological issues facing the world today? I would argue that holism with a hole is a dubious metaphysical base upon which to develop the “new foundations for environmentalism” (Fox, 1995a: iii). An opportunity exists to take a fresh look at deep ecology within towns and cities.

In taking just such a look at deep ecology, it is pivotal to explore why this blind spot exists, and to consider whether the relationship that deep ecology's proponents maintain with towns and cities is a necessary and inherent feature of this branch of ecophilosophy. If it is, the pursuit of further enquiry would be fruitless, to say the least. Addressing this matter centres, by and large, on why this blind spot has been perpetuated within deep ecological thought. Light's (2001) explanation for its

existence in environmental ethics more generally may provide some insight, however, it is important to note that deep ecology lies outside environmental axiology – the formulation and defence of theories of value regarding the nonhuman world – and it is environmental axiology that is now predominant within environmental ethics. It is not unusual for this distinction between deep ecology and environmental axiology to be overlooked, especially within ecophilosophy (Fox, 1995a). This is in part due to the frequent use and apparent prioritisation of terms such as ‘intrinsic value’ and ‘inherent value’ within deep ecological literature. For example, the first principle of the Deep Ecology platform formulated by Naess and Sessions states: “The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes” (Naess and Sessions, 1985a: 70). This appears to place deep ecology well within the bounds of environmental axiology. However, as Naess and Sessions stress, the use of these terms is not intended to imply a strictly philosophical position. Rather the terms are used non-technically – in a colloquial everyday sense – aimed at making the deep ecology position broadly understandable and widely acceptable (Fox, 1995a). Thus, the philosophical rigour required in value discourse does not apply to considerations of value within deep ecology; deep ecology is simply stating a potentially shared understanding that many people feel about the broader ecological world.

Deep ecology has long argued that the fundamental problem with the relationship between humanity and nature is primarily ontological rather than value-based. In other words, the issue that needs addressing is who and how we perceive ourselves to be in relationship to the broader ecological world. Once we have assessed, developed and internalised a metaphysical position that sees us as thoroughly interconnected with the rest of the world then more caring and considerate norms and behaviours will flow. As Michael Zimmerman asserts: “deep ecologists claim that before knowing what we

ought to do, we must understand who we really *are*” (1986: 22-3)⁵. This is a distinct approach, one that differs from that taken by the environmental ethicists reviewed by Light (2001). Such ethicists maintain that the real work lies in finding value within nature separate from human machinations that would impel humans to behave more responsibly toward nature. From this perspective metaphysics is not the primary determinant of human behaviour: defined, justified and enculturated values are. Deep ecology holds that without a deep internalised picture of our selves as intimately bound up with the planet, without a metaphysics that infuses our very being with a sense of existing as a small part of a larger ecological whole, such enforcement of values will always be tenuous and unreliable.

As an environmental pragmatist Light (2001) makes it very clear that he is not concerned with such metaphysical musings. Hence, his explanation of the ‘urban blind spot’ provides only a partial explanation of why deep ecology has not engaged with towns and cities in a deeper, more meaningful way.

A factor contributing to deep ecology’s relationship with towns and cities, and one that is certainly not covered by Light’s analysis of environmental ethics, can be gleaned in this statement by Devall:

even in the concrete depths of the largest cities, a person can explore the bedrock upon which the city is built and trace the watersheds of streams and rivers channeled in concrete pipes. A person can feel the suffering of city-dominated watersheds and work for reconciliation (Devall, 1988: 51).

In acknowledging the suffering of watersheds and our capacity to experience this suffering Devall takes a uniquely deep ecological position. He is pointing toward an expansive sense of self that encompasses the broader ecological world; a sense of self that is imbued with the interconnectedness of being. Such a self experiences the suffering of the world, or aspects of the world (in this case watersheds), as its own. A

disregard for relational complexity and a disvaluing of the inherent worth of entities for their own sake is ultimately a disregard for and disvalue of self. The pain and grief associated with the ongoing recognition of a disregarded and disvalued self is, within cities where instrumentalism dominates, likely to be overwhelming and debilitating. To participate in Devall's deep ecological practising (1988) or Naess's Self-realisation (Fox, 1995a) in towns and cities can place one within a realm of despair and disempowerment. Such a realm is neither an attractive nor promising place to dwell. Hence, I would contend that unresolved grief has a significant role to play in understanding deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities. If this grief is irresolvable – if deep ecological metaphysics provides no pathways beneath and beyond this grief – then deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities may certainly be diagnosed as terminal.

These observations pertaining to grief shed light on the phenomenon of 'psychological palaeontology' canvassed earlier. The pain and grief experienced by deep ecology proponents within towns and cities is not only a reflection of identification of self with the broader ecological world. It is also an expression of a loss of *places* following the rapid and ongoing development and re-development of towns and cities. Philosopher Edward Casey (1993) argues that to lose such places evokes a nostalgia – a yearning for the restoration of these places – as to lose such places is:

to lose one's 'best, truest self,' one's most intimate identity... No wonder we are nostalgic (literally, 'pained at the [non]return home'), not just over cherished childhood places but over many now inaccessible or despoiled places, often in consequence of ecological damage or negligence (Casey, 1993: 38).

In an act of place-nostalgia deep ecology proponents (and, it must be added, many others) yearn for what is beneath the concrete and the tar, and call for its restoration. Deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities signifies grief for an expansive

sense of self that is deeply rooted within place. Hence, the notions of place and placedness may provide an avenue for movement through a grief that petrifies and stupefies, and as such allow for the pursuit of further enquiry regarding deep ecological metaphysics within towns and cities. It is through consideration of the pain and longing often associated with place-based nostalgia that deep ecology can begin to engage more deeply within towns and cities.

2.3 *The Foray, within Place*

Deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities can be characterised using notions articulated by Relph. In *Place and Placelessness* (1976), Relph explores the complexities and subtleties of the human experience of place, arguing that both a sense of place and a sense of placelessness are of paramount importance for the human condition. He describes seven modes of experiencing place, modes that are held within the fluid divisions of insideness and outsideness. Of these, the current deep ecological relationship with towns and cities is best summarised as that of 'existential outsideness'. As Relph writes:

Existential outsideness involves a selfconscious and reflective uninvolvedness, an alienation from people and places, homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world, and of not belonging. From such a perspective places cannot be significant centres of existence, but are at best backgrounds to activities that are without sense, mere chimeras, and at worst are voids...

In existential outsideness all places assume the same meaningless identity and are distinguishable only by their superficial qualities (Relph, 1976: 51).

To date deep ecology discourse has found no home within towns and cities and remains alienated from (and potentially alienating of) the diversity of people who inhabit the heterogeneity of these places. It has failed to actively involve itself within

the intricacies and intimacies that are part of the nuanced flux of people inhabiting place, when the place is other than wilderness or 'free nature'. As such, towns, cities and their inhabitants remain at best something of a mystery – an apparition or abomination that makes little sense and within which meaninglessness abounds. At worst they appear as space through which the fall from grace continues at an ever increasing rate.

This experience of place is juxtaposed, by supporters of deep ecology, with that of wilderness where meaningfulness abounds. Upon a rock, beneath a waterfall and across the rolling horizon significances emerge through intimate association and the identity of the experiencer becomes wrapped up within the sense that is made there. For deep ecology, the wilderness experience may be characterised as that of 'empathetic insideness':

Empathetic insideness demands a willingness to be open to significances of a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols... This involves not merely looking at a place, but seeing into and appreciating the essential elements of its identity...

To be inside a place empathetically is to understand that place as rich in meaning, and hence to identify with it, for these meanings are not only linked to the experiences and symbols of those whose place it is, but also stem from one's own experiences... Identity is not just an address or set of appearances, but a complete personality with which the insider is intimately associated (Relph, 1976: 54-5).

While these characterisations of deep ecology rely upon some neat generalisations, through them an important point emerges. There is a realm of commonality between wilderness and towns and cities, and this realm is bound up within the notion of place. Place emerges as the synergistic means by which these two seemingly incomparable and incompatible *places* can be drawn together. In fact, it is a notion from which a comprehension emerges that as *places* wilderness and towns and cities have never

been apart. As places, towns and cities, wilderness, and all that lies in between and beyond, share much more than they keep to themselves. They are all geographies within which it is possible, to state the obvious, to experience place.

There is a smattering of articles emanating from deep ecology that explicitly discuss place and placedness. Deep ecology proponent, Robert Hay (1992), while sitting neatly within the analysis provided above pertaining to the deep ecological relationship with towns and cities, makes a call for the importance of place and sense of place. He argues for people, including environmentalists, to heed their own placedness or placelessness, as place and the relationality implied are fundamental to being and the possibilities of changing ways of being. However, such works are few and far between⁶.

It is somewhat surprising that deep ecology, the primary concern of which includes wild *places*, has not, to any significant extent, engaged with the diverse and growing literature regarding place and the relationship between place and self (Hay, P., 2002a). For example, thinking of space relationally, with its subsequent implications for place and placedness, has emerged as an important theme within cultural geography. Within such relationally oriented discourse, identities are viewed as “constituted in and through those engagements, those practices of interaction” and place – both on the local scale and the global – when considered relationally is reconfigured as “internally complex, essentially unboundable in any absolute sense, and inevitably historically changing” (Massey, 2004: 5)⁷. Deep ecology’s supposed preoccupation with the relational and with place (even if this is dominated by a particular subset of places) seems well positioned to contribute to, and to be contributed to by, such streams of thought.

Deep ecology’s metaphysical holism is underpinned by the notion that the world is in essence relational; that the world is an interconnected whole (Naess, 1995a: 240). This is an aspect of ecological science from which deep ecology receives significant

evocation, and unlike other aspects of this science that are continuing to undergo revision and renewal it is, as yet, an idea that continues to hold a significant degree of certainty. Yet the sense of interconnectivity that is leading to a plethora of work within other quarters seems, in deep ecology, little more than a worn out cliché. It has become a mantra so often repeated since the 1970s that it threatens to become a mere echo, rather than the main game. Ecofeminists⁸, for example, have heavily criticised deep ecology's take on relationality. They argue that deep ecology's inability to come to grips with the implications of a relational worldview leaves it mired within many of the constraints from which it claims to have broken free. However, there is acknowledgement within some of these critiques that the work of Arne Naess, unlike that of other prominent deep ecology proponents, offers a coherent and cogent approach to a relational worldview, one that is more closely aligned to an ecofeminist understanding of relationality and the relational self (see for example Diehm, 2002, 2006; Warren, 1999).

While there appears to be no explicit theory of place (or collection of place theories) emerging from ecofeminism, there are a number of ecofeminist writers who discuss place within their work. Judith Plant (1990), for example, writes about what she sees as the common ground between ecofeminism and bioregionalism. In particular, she focuses on the idea of becoming native to place and the role that home – the domestic sphere and its surrounds – can play in moral and behavioural change. She states:

the bioregional view values home above all else... This is not the same notion of home as the bungalow in the suburbs of Western industrialized society! Rather, it is the place where we can learn the values of caring for and nurturing each other and our environments and of paying attention to immediate human needs and feelings. It is a much broader term, reflecting the reality of human cultural requirements and our need to be sustainably adaptive within our nonhuman environments. The word ecology, in its very name,

points us in this direction: oikos, the Greek root of 'eco', means home (Plant, 1990).

Environmental philosopher, Max Oelschlaeger (1993) is one who argues that a synergy between deep ecology and ecofeminism can be found through the notion of place. He reviews the approaches taken to place by four influential ecofeminist writers – Susan Griffin, Rosemary Ruether, Elinor Gadon and Vandana Shiva – and highlights that both ecofeminism and deep ecology valorise place – “the importance of re-rooting human culture in the specific geographies of life” (Oelschlaeger, 1993: 38).

Oelschlaeger suggests that it is within the philosophical plurality inherent in deep ecology that understandings of place and placedness arise and incorporate concern for others, including women and the more-than-human.

While not necessarily refuting such an insight regarding the relationship between deep ecology and ecofeminism, I contend that with regards to conceptions of place and placedness within deep ecology, it is Naess's gestalt ontology – a philosophical aspect of 'deep ecology' that has received little attention to date – that warrants further exploration. Reflecting upon his relationship with Tvergastein, Naess argues that we are suffering from a 'place-corrosive process' and that the “movement toward the development of a sense of place... is of prime importance in the deep ecology movement” (Naess, 2008: 47). He describes many of the intricacies of himself within the place that is Tvergastein, including relationships with flora, fauna, substrate, rubbish, chemicals and structure. Tvergastein emerges, not simply as a geographical place and not as a 'wilderness' place, but as a relational gestalt within which Naess himself is just one enmeshed and fluxing part.

Philosopher Christian Diehm (2003) also points to Naess's gestalt ontology as a source of a relational view that has direct implications for place and placedness. In describing a conversation he had with Naess regarding the relationship between himself and the stones of Tvergastein, Diehm writes:

Here the stones are spoken of not as “one” with the self. Nor as beings who have interests akin to the self that elicit an empathic response... To call these beings “alive” is not to demand that we think of them in the same terms as the biologically living; it is to assert that they are active forces in the world, expressive entities that exert a kind of ‘elemental influence’ on their surroundings, imposing themselves on the landscape and making certain demands of those in their presence. These are beings that tell different stories and present different perspectives that must be taken into account, navigated, and integrated into the life of self; they are others whose unique patterns and ways of being shape those of the self. And the ecological self is the self that is in dialogue with these differences, the self that does not carve its name on things but is itself carved out by them, “contains” them. This is a self that has ‘internalised’ its relations to the world such that it can only be portrayed as a being who has as its very mode of being “being-there-together” (Diehm, 2003: 40-1).

The self is constituted through association with other entities, and it is both the agency of self and the others that participate in this constitution. As the self inhabits place, self is ‘being-there-together’ with place, and place is comprehended as ‘being-there-together’ with self. Within such a stance there is the possibility of moving beneath and beyond the geographic and nature/culture dualisms that infuse much of the relationship between deep ecology and towns and cities, and of filling the hole in the holism. It is here that we can begin to make sense of the wild synergy of the ugly, the forbidden and the sacred described within the initiation of this research.

2.4 *Phenomenology of Place*

In exploring the synergy, or interconnectivity, apparent within towns and cities I take a personal approach. Deep ecology, as articulated within Warwick Fox’s transpersonal

ecology, is explored within my home suburb of Risdon Vale – a suburb located on the outskirts of Hobart in southern Tasmania, Australia. In this, the ideas associated with transpersonal ecology meet with my self within Risdon Vale.

A phenomenological method is employed. Not only is such a method suited to the personal nature of this inquiry, it also sits well with deep ecological thought. It has been argued that phenomenology and ecophilosophy, including deep ecology, share a respect for experience (Brown, 2003), and some deep ecology proponents refer to the importance of phenomenological insights for understanding who and how we are in relation to the rest of the world⁹. Others, such as Zimmerman (2000) have, in the past, drawn heavily upon the work of phenomenologists such as Heidegger. In addition, one branch of phenomenology, ecophenomenology¹⁰, has been equated with deep ecology (Toadvine, 2001), Naess being cited as among its influential pioneers (Harris, 2004: 1).

Similarities have been identified between phenomenology and Naess's gestalt ontology, despite Naess objecting to his ontology being described as phenomenalism (Naess, 1997; Zimmerman, 1994: 122). Diehm (2004) argues that Naess has been significantly influenced by the work of Heidegger, and while the inaccessible nature of this work may have compelled Naess to distance himself from it, Diehm contends that in Naess we see:

a kind of phenomenologist at work, a thinker who draws his intuitions from experience and who strains to do philosophy in a way that bears witness to the depths to which one can take one's relations to the world. What we catch sight of, that is, is a learned Norwegian mountaineer carefully detailing the events and circumstances of a life lived in nature, returning time and time again to the things themselves (Diehm, 2004: 26).

Having said this however, it is nigh impossible to identify a philosophical method in Naess's work (Diehm, 2004: 20), and hence it is to phenomenology, particularly the phenomenology of place, that this inquiry turns for its method and encompassing methodology.

2.4.1 Methodology

The original task of philosophy, as formulated by the classical Greeks, was the search for, or attainment of the love of, wisdom. This original task has subsequently been subsumed by the apparent ability of the natural sciences to explain the world (Stewart and Mickunas, 1974), which has led to 'scientism', or 'naturalism' – the development of views based on the empirical foundation provided by these sciences. In calling for a return to the original task, phenomenology initiates an awakening to the world beyond and beneath that of empirical science and unrestrained by the presuppositions of this science. It recognises that assumptions about the nature of reality, such as the mode of the existence of physical objects being completely describable through empirical means, need to be challenged and transcended if we are to grasp the world more fully.

Phenomenology, from its conception by Edmund Husserl in the early 1900s, radically reorients the object/subject dualism flowing from Galileo and offered up by Descartes (Abram, 1997). It awakens awareness towards the primacy of lived experience, rather than relegation of such experience to the realm of intangible idiosyncrasy and illusion. The objective is not simply an expression of the real, and the subjective not a mere 'unreal' incidental or externality. Rather, the objective is conceived, birthed and raised within 'lifeworld', the world of lived experience. It is what emerges following analysis and evaluation within preconceived parameters of understanding; a particular representation of aspects of lifeworld. The subjective, or rather the intersubjective, is the lifeworld – the infinite plethora of lived experiences of the multitude of beings with which we share the world and which lets us know consistently and constantly (to such an extent that we often take it for granted) that a tree has roots even if we cannot

touch them, that a river stone is round even though we can only see one aspect of it at a time, and that chocolate tastes good even though we have yet to bite into it. It is the “taken-for-granted pattern and context of everyday living through which the person routinely conducts his day-to-day existence without having to make it an object of conscious attention” (Seamon, 1979: 20).

Phenomenology is not a simple privileging of subjectivity over objectivity, and is certainly no outright rejection of objectivity. As is described later in this chapter, the dominant objectivist epistemology, science, lives and lives well within the lifeworld. Rather, as phenomenologist David Abram observes: “the striving for objectivity is... understood, phenomenologically, as a striving to achieve greater consensus, greater agreement or consonance among a plurality of subjects, rather than as an attempt to avoid subjectivity altogether” (1997: 38).

By awakening us to the primacy of lived experience and dissolving the object/subject dualism, phenomenology offers a mode of being within the world that is open to possibilities and perspectives beyond or beneath presuppositions of dichotomy, free from frameworks imposed by Cartesian worldviews, and attentive to qualities other than those that are culturally preferenced. As such, the openness, freedom and attentiveness inherent within phenomenology offers to mediate an awakening of awareness beneath and beyond the presuppositions that frame deep ecology’s relationship with towns and cities. Moving beneath and beyond these presuppositions facilitates an encounter with deep ecology in towns and cities, and an encounter with the potentiality of towns and cities in deep ecology.

In initiating a phenomenological inquiry into the relationship between deep ecology and towns and cities, we are not approaching “a problem in need of a solution but a mystery in need of evocative comprehension” (Van Manen, 1990: 50). This is important, as in the process of framing an inquiry as a problem in need of a solution we bring to the inquiry a range of presuppositions that underpin why we apply the

label of 'problem' to a situation and this colours – confines and restricts – how we both approach and evaluate the inquiry. If I was to define deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities as purely a 'problem' I would be working from a range of moral presuppositions that act to define this relationship as singularly bad or at least inadequate. In initiating an inquiry from such a position I am confining the exploration of the relationship to a linear framework. I am moved to spell out what has caused this relationship, what such a relationship will result in if not 'fixed', and what the 'fix' is. While this remains part of this inquiry, it is far from the whole of the inquiry. As Ingrid Stefanovic points out, "the linearity inherent in casual explanations may close us off to the complexity of interdependencies between events and processes" (1994: 64). The entwined, interconnected complexities of phenomena within the dynamic and interpenetrating lifeworld cannot be wholly accounted for within such a framework. Any results presented or solutions found are likely be partial and threaten to have little relevance and meaning to lived experience. By couching this inquiry as a "mystery in need of evocative comprehension" – by treating deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities as a phenomenon – we are presented with an opportunity to be open, free and attentive to a range of possibilities, experiences and meanings. We initiate an inquiry aimed at seeking understanding rather than explanation.

Hence, while phenomenological research methods sit within a well established philosophical tradition, the indeterminable nature of lived experience requires a somewhat fluid methodological approach. Within the positivist tradition the specifics of method are certainly influenced by the object under investigation, but the broad methodological framework is set in stone and assumptions such as impartiality and reductionism remain unquestioned. In phenomenology the nature of experience dictates that once embarked upon, the methodology and the method is to some extent unknowable. It cannot be confined within a neat set of prescriptive dot points. Such an approach is exemplified by the phenomenologist Husserl describing himself as a

‘perpetual beginner’, and fellow phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger perceiving his own work to be ‘on the way’ (Stefanovic, 1994).

When we orient ourselves toward the phenomenon, we are engaging with it as lived experience so that both the phenomenological question and the researcher are animate within lifeworld. As such, phenomenological inquiry is by necessity a personal inquiry, where the researcher internalises and lives the question. “One must meet with it, go through it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and, as well, be consumed by it” (Van Manen, 1990: 153). I am not simply a researcher exploring deep ecology within Risdon Vale, I *am* a deep ecology proponent inhabiting this suburb.

In addition to living the lived experience, as it were, the researcher requires a depth of understanding of phenomenology that ensures that both methodology and method are comprehended in an intuitive way (Creswell, 1998). If the researcher is ‘not at home’ with either the ontology of phenomenology¹¹ and is not familiar with the broad methodological implications of phenomenology then the inquiry will be stilted if not stalled. In phenomenology the method cannot be abstracted from the experience of the phenomenon. Hence, in relation to this research it is, in fact, not enough to be a deep ecology proponent inhabiting a suburb; rather *I am a phenomenological deep ecology proponent inhabiting the suburb*. This is the primary reason why the phenomenological methodology and method are stated explicitly within this work.

2.4.2 Methods

Phenomenology of place is a branch of phenomenology pioneered by Edward Relph. It takes reference from the relationship between people and places – specifically towns and cities¹² – and draws its methods largely from those used in the social sciences and psychology (Relph, 1976). Phenomenologist David Seamon identifies three such methods; the existential-phenomenological method, the first-person phenomenological method and the hermeneutic-phenomenological method (Seamon, 2000).

It would be plausible to approach the phenomenon that is the interplay between deep ecology and Risdon Vale through an existential-phenomenological method. Such a method would bring together individuals and groups to contribute descriptive accounts of the phenomenon, thereby providing the researcher with a basis for exploration and reflection. However, there are limitations to using this as a starting point for this inquiry. The researcher needs a clear understanding of the phenomenon in question so as to facilitate the exploration and exposure of presuppositions (Seamon, 2000) – so that she can ‘lead’ the respondents toward the phenomenon. Hence, most phenomenological works that utilise the existential-phenomenological method involve an initial investigation of the phenomenon by the researcher. In other words, the research employs the first-person phenomenological method either formally or informally prior to employing the existential method.

The complexity of the phenomenon at the heart of this inquiry – the entwined dimensions of philosophy, self and place – suggest that there is significant value in undertaking a thorough personal exploration prior to working with others in recounting their experiences.

In utilising the first-person phenomenological method I bring to the research eight years of lived experience within Risdon Vale and, in addition, by dwelling within place through habitual immersion within the day-to-day I encounter the experience as how it is lived, rather than approaching it as an outsider:

The ‘outsider’s trap’...is that one looks at places, as it were, from an abstract sky. He or she tries to read the texts of landscapes and overt behaviour in the picture languages of maps and models and is therefore inevitably drawn toward finding in places what he or she *intends* to find in them (Buttimer, 1980: 171).

The research is provided with a depth that cannot be gained by approaching a new, perhaps previously unknown place, and the risk of experiencing the place as an abstracted observer is minimised.

Using Relph's characterisation of place and placelessness, my lived experience of Risdon Vale can be described as that of 'empathic insideness' (1976). To experience place empathetically is to experience place as richly meaningful:

Such identity of place does not present itself automatically, but must be sought by training ourselves to see and understand places in themselves; to paraphrase a statement about architecture made by Rasmussen...: "...if we ourselves are open to impression and sympathetically inclined the place will open up and reveal its true essence" (Relph, 1976: 54-5).

My experience of Risdon Vale as 'empathetic insideness' allows me to consciously awaken towards significances and meanings within place. If, on the other hand, my experience of Risdon Vale was that of 'existential insideness' – the "most fundamental form of insideness... in which a place is experienced without deliberate and selfconscious reflection yet is full with significances" (Relph, 1976: 55) – then I would potentially fall foul of the 'insider's trap'; that the taken-for-granted lifeworld would remain just that, taken-for-granted (Buttimer, 1980). The lifeworld would remain hidden and would not be recaptured during the inquiry or elements of what was recaptured would be distorted by abstractions. Such experience of place, of lifeworld, would be better explored using the existential-phenomenological method.

It is important to note that in taking the first-person approach it would be a mistake on two accounts to interpret the 'I' used throughout this dissertation as an individuated sense of self. While I am the human self at the centre of my experience, the role of the components of the phenomenon can be seen as those of collaborators. Both Risdon Vale and transpersonal ecology collaborate, in their own ways, in the research process.

Risdon Vale is not simply the setting I chose for the inquiry and transpersonal ecology is not just the set of ideas up for consideration by me. Both are active agents within the research initiation, method and product. Risdon Vale and transpersonal ecology participate in the inquiry as dynamic, responsive and embodied beings. They are not static predictable things that are at my beck and call – to be described and changed by me. Rather they are transformers and are transformed within the research process, as am I as the researcher (Van Manen, 1990). In other words – to draw from French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) – the ideas and the place are recognised as embodied entities. This recognition of the embodiment and agency of place, object, idea and so on within phenomenology can be described as *intersubjective collaboration*. In describing the lived experience of self the researcher aims to describe this broader intersubjective experience; a broader experience that becomes evident through intersubjective corroboration. Hence, in relation to the ‘I’ in the first-person method, it is an ‘I’ enmeshed within the multiplicity of the intersubjective¹³. A consequence of this is that in order to bring other voices into the work – to acknowledge the collaborative intersubjective input of others and embrace the corroboration of others – quotes are used extensively.

In addition to the first-person phenomenological method, this inquiry also employs the hermeneutic-phenomenological method. Writing is of paramount importance to the research method; it is not simply the tool used to provide the final product. Van Manen (1990) states that in phenomenology writing becomes a measure of our thoughtfulness and exercises our ability to experience, with the limitations associated with the abstractive and objectification of language providing a foil for increasing our intimacy with experience. Writing becomes part and parcel of immersion within lived experience, as both mediator of experience and a phenomenon mediated by experience. The acts of writing and re-writing, and the interpretation that goes on between the two, draw us deeper and deeper into our comprehension of experience,

and our experience draws us deeper into writing, into language, print and machine. In this inquiry, a series of journals is used to jot down observations and anecdotes, reflect upon texts, and most importantly, to record and interpret experience. The use of journals acts as a focus for responsive-reflective encounters with experience. They are the method in action, rather than a result or product within themselves.

Through the writing and re-writing process evident within these journals, and associated interpretations, encounters or stories emerge and in part focus reflection and thought. For Van Manen, encounters (or themes) “are like knots in the webs of our experience, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes” (1990: 90). The identification of such encounters is “not a rule-bound process but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (Van Manen, 1990: 79). As we open ourselves to the phenomenon certain notions stand out in our experience of that phenomenon. A happening, anecdote or presence resonates with our broader, holistic experience of the phenomenon, and we are drawn to it again and again in our reflections.

While many notions may present themselves to us as potential thematic nodes during our inquiry, some emerge as more essential and less incidental than others. A point of reference for distinguishing between those that are essential and those that are incidental is that the former are those “that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990: 107). As we deepen our comprehension of the phenomenon these encounters repeatedly present themselves to us as touchstones for our experience. By attempting to change or remove a theme completely we gain a sense of how essential that theme is to the whole of experience.

Van Manen describes this approach to identifying encounters, or thematic statements, as the holistic or sententious approach: “we tend to the text as a whole and ask ‘what sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the

text as a whole?’ We then try to express that meaning by formulating such a phrase” (1990: 93). We then move to elucidate these phrases by writing paragraphs.

David Wood describes how phenomenology activates and reactivates the “complex articulations and relations of things, restoring through description, through dramatizations, a participatory engagement (bodily, imaginative etc.) with things” (Wood, 2001: 82). Within such an embodied understanding of self within world, the relational qualities that meld into nodes identifiable as encounters or themes are not confined to the rational and the quantifiable. Imaginings are part of the participatory engagement and experience of the world, and as Merleau-Ponty eloquently describes, so too are dreams:

If one says that the void of the imaginary remains forever what it is, is never equivalent to the plenum of the perceived and never gives rise to the same certitude, that it is not taken to be worth the perceived, that the sleeping man has lost every reference mark, every model, every canon of the clear and the articulate, and that one sole particle of the perceived world introduced in it would instantaneously dissipate the enchantment, the fact remains that if we can lose our reference marks unbeknown to ourselves we are never sure of having them when we think we have them; if we can withdraw from the world of perception without knowing it, nothing proves to us that we are ever in it, nor that the observable is ever entirely observable, nor that it is made of another fabric than the dream. Then, the difference between perception and dream not being absolute, one is justified in counting them both among “our experiences”, and it is above perception itself that we must seek the guarantee and the sense of its ontological function (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 6).

In this inquiry three encounters emerge as essential elements of experience: ‘gum-tree-man’, ‘touch me, this tree’ and ‘capillary shawl’. These encounters serves a dual

function – by providing structure to experience they facilitate reflection, and they create a framework for the writing (and rewriting) process. In addition they are used as a means of structuring the final product.

In writing a phenomenological account and descriptions of individual encounters, the limitations of language and writing are ever apparent. It is one thing to capture experience as a feeling, a sense or an intuition, but it is another to express this in written form. As we put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, we, in part, move to an objective state of mind and expression, influenced by the cultural infusions inherent in language and in the case of this inquiry, the demands of the academic world.

In utilising phenomenological methods we aim to look beneath and beyond the presuppositions that colour our consideration of a phenomenon, and to describe our experience of that phenomenon as *it presents itself* to us. The power of phenomenological work lies neither in its presentation of experience as fact, nor in its representation of a universal truth. The potency of phenomenological work lies in its ability to capture the reader; to present itself to the reader as an authentic descriptor of experience, and in its relationship to other pieces of work concerning the same or similar phenomena. As each phenomenon dwells within an intersubjective field, it is through the coming together of different experiences of the same (or similar) phenomena that cohering themes and nodes of understanding and meaning emerge. Hence, the trustworthiness and reliability of the phenomenological method is found in the coalescence of intersubjective experience *and* an open and frank declaration of the partial nature of each individual experience (Seamon, 2000). This presents a strikingly different ‘measure’ of trustworthiness to that demanded of positivist research methods. The demand of the latter is for equivalence rather than coalescence.

Psychologist Ernest Keen (2003) suggests four criteria that assist in making a piece of phenomenological writing authentic: vividness, accuracy, richness and elegance:

Vividness is the quality that draws readers in, creating a feeling of genuineness. Accuracy is the dimension that makes the writing believable, creating a focus that enables readers to see the phenomenon as their own. Richness is the quality that deepens the description through colourful use of language, graphic depiction or shades of meaning and detail, relaying something of the sensual-aesthetic tones of the phenomenon. Elegance is found in an economical use of words, disclosing the essence of the phenomenon through simple expressions that unify the description and give it grace and poignancy (Polkinghorne, 1983: 46).

A phenomenological product which fulfils these aspirations provides a basis for subsequent intersubjective corroboration. Others will identify with the experience of the phenomenon described, as the experience is understood to be not simply a personal experience, but an intersubjective experience with meanings that go beyond the individual researcher. Through their own inquiries nodes of commonality with this and other works will emerge, enriching and deepening the understanding of the nature of lived experience and the phenomenon in question. Hence, every effort is made here to fulfil Keen's criteria of vividness, accuracy, richness and elegance, particularly in regard to the descriptions of the encounters.

In addition, each chapter begins with a page that contains space, a picture and a poetic piece. These pages provide a moment of quiet reflection for the reader, a necessary break from the rhythm of academic writing, a rhythm that bears little resemblance to the nature of lived experience. They provide an opportunity for the reader to engage with lived experience beyond the text, though perhaps still under the influence of the text. In the silence emanating from these pages, a break from pages walled with text, we acknowledge that "we know more than we can tell" (Van Manen, 1990: 113). These pages are an invitation to put the dissertation down and re-enter lifeworld; a

nudge toward an open door – go make yourself a cup of coffee, pull a few weeds and pat the cat!

2.4.3 Role of science

While the methodology and methods of this inquiry are phenomenological, scientific knowledge is drawn upon at times; in particular the sciences of ecology and human microbiology. Science is used in this dissertation in a phenomenological context. The knowledge emanating from human microbiology and ecology provide evocative and valuable nodes of experiencing, as well as insight into the world as experienced. They do not account for the world of lived experience, but form part of the complex tapestry of lifeworld. In this dissertation it is acknowledged that the knowledge gained by these sciences is initiated, derived and articulated within lifeworld and can only be separated and distinguished from this through abstraction of the ‘real’. As such, science is actively interpreted as part of the lived experience of the phenomenon and is thus understood as infused with metaphysical and normative suppositions. This approach is supported by both the phenomenological tradition and by the use of science in deep ecological thought.

Husserl’s anti-naturalism was a targeted critique of the purported ability of the natural sciences to explain the world (Cerbone, 2006). However the emerging ideas termed ‘phenomenology’ were not an outright rejection of science or scientific knowledge. Rather, Husserl brought to the fore the limitations of the natural sciences and presented phenomenology as providing a philosophical explanation of the factors presupposed by the natural sciences. In other words, phenomenology provided the context within which the natural sciences could be housed and understood. As Abram states, phenomenology is:

a plea that science, for its own integrity and meaningfulness, must acknowledge that it is rooted in the same world that we all engage in our everyday lives and with our unaided senses – that, for all its

technological refinements, quantitative science remains an expression of, and hence must be guided by, the qualitative world of our common experience (Abram, 1997: 43).

As an aspect of lifeworld, science is interpreted in direct relation to lived experience; its significances and meanings emerge through its inhabitation within the day-to-day. Such contextualising of science and scientific knowledge, it is argued, signals a “radical renewal of science, reason, and cultural life” (Melle, 1997: 150)¹⁴.

The use of science and scientific knowledge within ecophilosophy, including within deep ecology, is not without its critics. Philosopher Neil Evernden (1985), while acknowledging the important role that science can play within ecophilosophy, describes Theodore Roszak’s use of science as ‘wistful ecology’, claiming that such a use of science is “not one that would be recognised as any kin to academic ecology” (1985: 16). Andrew Brennan (1988) distinguishes ‘scientific ecology’ from ‘metaphysical ecology’, arguing that the latter takes “us far beyond the scope of biology” (1988: 34). And John O’Neill maintains that ecology “entails no radically holistic ontology” (1993: 150). These critics make an important point in relation to the role of science in some ecophilosophical discourse: some thinkers write as though science provides proof of their position, but they only draw on aspects of scientific knowledge, and pick and choose what best supports their case. However, an understanding of science within a phenomenological context can provide a somewhat different interpretation of how at least some of these thinkers relate to the science they cite. Environmental ethicist and philosopher J. Baird Callicott, for example, in making a case for the metaphysical implications of ecology, describes a personal experience that informed his sense of self:

For me this realization took concrete form, as I stood two decades and an ecological education later, on the banks of the Mississippi River where I had roamed as a boy. As I gazed at the brown silt-choked waters absorbing a black plume of industrial and municipal

sewage from Memphis and followed bits of some unknown beige froth floating continually down from Cincinnati, Louisville, or St. Louis, I experienced a palpable pain. It was not distinctly located in any of my extremities, nor was it like a headache or nausea. Still, it was very real. I had no real plans to swim in the river, no need to drink from it, no intention of buying real estate on its shores. My narrowly personal interests were not affected, and yet somehow I was personally injured. It occurred to me then, in a flash of self-discovery, that the river was a part of me. And I recalled a line from Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*: "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds" (Callicott, 1986: 315-16).

Callicott's 'ecological education' may have contributed to his understanding of the world and his self within it, but it was his lived experience of this ecological knowledge *within lifeworld* that fostered the metaphysical implications of this knowledge. In this sense Callicott cannot be criticised for being incorrect on scientific grounds or for his position lacking scientific foundations, as Alan Wittbecker (1990) attempts to do, as it is Callicott's lived experience of scientific knowledge that informs his position, not the science itself. A phenomenological context provides grounding for this and similar interpretations of science within a well-established philosophical tradition. It acts to refute the type of criticism levelled by Evernden, Brennan and O'Neill by articulating a clear understanding of how metaphysical and normative suppositions are derived from science and scientific knowledge.

While a thorough review of the phenomenological use of science in ecophilosophy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is possible to tentatively assert that the intersubjective corroboration provided by many diverse interpretations of science highlights a significant point of commonality both within deep ecology and within other branches of ecophilosophy. The holism suggested by ecology repeatedly raises

its head as having profound metaphysical implications in construing the human relationship with the broader ecological world. It is, as it were, a node of intersubjective meaning. How this and not other aspects of ecology (or science in general) resonates so strongly within lifeworld, at least within ecophilosophical discourse, begs that we take seriously this phenomenologically fuelled insight and its implications, especially if we are looking for ways of knowing beyond the limitations of science.

The critique of science in deep ecology resembles that provided by phenomenology. Science as it stands fails to ask the ‘deep questions’ and as such contributes to and fails to provide an anecdote for the ecological crisis, providing only a ‘shallow’ basis for knowledge and action (Naess, 1973). However, as with phenomenology, science is not dismissed outright. Mathews (1991) contends that as the dominant epistemology science provides a legitimate and culturally endorsed basis for alternative ways of being. While she acknowledges that the scope of science needs to be transformed, and that there are authentic reasons behind the discontentment and disappointment felt by many in relation to science and scientific knowledge, Mathews argues that to look elsewhere for a new worldview would be fruitless:

Divine authority, tradition, mystical revelation or divination may be the ‘reasons to believe’ that underpin the worldviews of other cultures, but salvation, if it is to come to us, must come from the reservoirs of our own culture. Our new values must be wrought out of our own experience and taught to us in our own idiom if we are truly to understand and assimilate them. And this means that they must be spelt out in scientific terms (Mathews, 1991: 49).

While Mathews builds a cosmology based on ‘new physics’ – specifically geometrodynamics – Fox (along with other writers in the deep ecology tradition) identifies the science of ecology and evolution as having broad and far reaching psychocosmological implications:

Having a deeper sense of human interconnectedness with other entities through time (evolution) and space (ecology) would be likely to lead the human race – quite spontaneously rather than because of adherence to any particular set of moral obligations – to seek to preserve the unfolding of this evolutionary tree at the most general possible level (Fox, 1994: 211).

It is the holistic account, the interconnectiveness of all entities, that leads us to construe alternative ways of being within the world. More is said later about Fox's use of science; suffice to say here that his approach echoes that articulated by Callicott:

...ecology has profoundly altered our understanding of the proximate terrestrial environment in which we live, move, and have our being... I do not mean to suggest that there are logical relationships between ecological premises, and metaphysical conclusions such that if the former are true the latter must also be true... [Rather] ecology has made plain to us the fact that we are enfolded, involved, and engaged within the living, terrestrial, environment – i.e., implicated in and implied by it... Therefore, ecology also necessarily profoundly alters our understanding of ourselves, severally, and human nature, collectively. From this altered representation of the environment, people... and the relationships in it and between it and ourselves, we may *abstract* certain general conceptual notions (Callicott, 1986: 301-2).

Hence, in this inquiry science is used within a phenomenological context, with a focus on how specific aspects of scientific knowledge are encountered within lifeworld. The embodied, rather than potential logical implications of this encounter with lifeworld are then reflected upon. In other words, within this inquiry, rather than drawing upon scientific knowledge and turning an *is* into an *ought*, I look at a range of *ises* and consider how we are implicated within and implied by these *ises* through experience of the day-to-day. In doing so, the importance of science as our current dominant

epistemology is acknowledged while its limitations are militated against within a contextual grounding.

There is one final point to be made before moving on from the role of science in this inquiry. One of the problems associated with using scientific knowledge in, for example, ethics, is that this knowledge is always up for contention and development (Biggins, 1979). An *is* can become a *maybe* can become a *not* and so on. By grounding the science in this inquiry within the phenomenological context it is ensured that such fluidity in knowledge, in experience, comes as no surprise. As is emphasised throughout this dissertation, rather than being a fractious base for metaphysical musings, such fluidity is part of the nature of lived experience; part of the ebb and flow of phenomenological experiencing. The ‘toing and froing’ between *ises* and *oughts* – there is no unidirectional casual flow necessitated by the juxtaposition of an *is* with an *ought* – is contextualised.

A feature of deep ecology, and one that is compatible with the experiential nature of phenomenological inquiry, is that ideas are extended as ‘experiential invitations’; the reader or listener are invited to experience themselves as part of a large interconnected whole, and this has significant implications for the product of this inquiry. Hence, in this dissertation there is no statement of moral-oughts in the conclusion, and no articulation of some kind of ‘solution’ or ‘fix’ in the traditional sense; there will be no recommendations of what *ought* to be. Anyone looking for the science within this inquiry to provide a scientific explanation or solutions will be sorely disappointed.

What is on offer, however, is a point of reflection upon who we conceive ourselves to be within the world, and how we conceive ourselves to be. It is a personal ontological expression that may inspire and may inform the articulation and development of other ontological insights. In this way, this dissertation is simply a story; an articulation of myth surrounding what *is* or what *could* be rather than what *should* be.

Transpersonal Ecology



*Mother, though my song's measure is like your surf-beat's ancient rhythm I
never learned it of you.*

*Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our tones flow from
the older fountain.*

Extract from 'Continent's End' by Robinson Jeffers (2003a: 30)

Chapter 3 – Transpersonal Ecology

As previously introduced, deep ecology has skirted engagement with towns and cities, and like environmental ethics as a whole, has focused its attention upon wilderness and wild 'nature'. In relation to deep ecology specifically, by abandoning or disallowing the entanglements of webworks that interconnect within – and form – towns and cities it has also left a gaping hole within its own comprehension of holism. As it stands, deep ecology is in a state of limbo, grieving for towns and cities as wilderness confined beneath concrete and tar. Explorations of place have been presented as a means of reconfiguring what deep ecology understands a town or a city to be, and hence as a means for moving towards the possibilities of holism without a hole. The methodology, and specific methods, associated with place phenomenology have been presented as a means of facilitating this move – of mediating my lived experience of the interplay between transpersonal ecology and my home suburb of Risdon Vale.

As a descriptor of the research, the above statement cannot be misconstrued as a research question in the positivist research tradition. This descriptor speaks of relationality; of the relational entwining of self, place, philosophy and method. It is a descriptor that provides focus and structure for research within a relationally complex and dynamic world. By necessity it brings some nodes within relational complexity to the fore while acknowledging and remaining open to the broader interconnected webworks within which these are enmeshed.

To begin to turn towards the phenomenon of the interrelatedness of self, philosophy and place, this chapter provides a review of the ideas associated with deep ecological metaphysics, specifically the work of philosopher Warwick Fox. Transpersonal ecology, rather than deep ecology more generally, has been chosen as it is one of the clearest and in depth articulations of deep ecological metaphysics (Kheel, 2008). The

subsequent chapter describes aspects of my sense of place within my home suburb, hence incorporating accounts of both self and place, and self within place.

Warwick Fox became a prominent voice within ecophilosophical discourse within the early 1990s. As a proponent and defender of deep ecology, his analysis of deep ecology and his subsequent formulation of his own account of it, which he termed ‘transpersonal ecology’, drew both accolades and criticism from within deep ecology. His work also inspired critique from other branches of ecophilosophy, particularly from ecofeminism. In his 1990 book, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* (1995a), Fox provides a thorough and detailed account of Arne Naess’s deep ecological work up until the late 1980s, as well as its critics, proponents and core ideas. While it is unnecessary and inappropriate to repeat Fox’s focus on Naess here, this chapter reviews the core ideas of Fox’s transpersonal ecology as distinct from the core ideas of deep ecology. It does, however, describe the relationship between deep ecology and transpersonal ecology and considers the ideas central to transpersonal ecology, including what Fox described as the philosophical sense of ‘deep ecology’, the process of identification, and its expression as ‘experiential invitations’. The criticisms levelled at both Fox’s work and the metaphysical aspects of deep ecology are then canvassed. The chapter concludes with a look at trends within deep ecology, particularly the move towards and within towns and cities by ecophilosopher Freya Mathews. This not only sets the scene for the remainder of this dissertation, but also assists in contextualising the dissertation within the realm of ecophilosophical discourse.

3.1 Fox on Deep Ecology

3.1.1 The three senses

In its short life, the ideas associated with the label ‘deep ecology’ have been at the vanguard of radical environmentalism. In its first two decades ‘deep ecology’ sat at

the centre of turbulent, thought provoking, and sometimes vitriolic ecophilosophical debate. The passionate support and dissent surrounding ‘deep ecology’ was in part due to what may be described as its double life, as ‘deep ecology’ describes both a dynamic pluralistic environmental movement and a distinct branch of ecophilosophical thought.

The label was originally put forward by Norwegian philosopher and ecological activist Arne Naess in the early 1970s. In this initial conception ‘deep ecology’ referred to a movement characterised by:

1. Rejection of the person-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total-field image;
2. In-principle support of biospherical egalitarianism;
3. An embrace of the principles of diversity and of symbiosis both within human populations and in the natural world;
4. An anti-class posture;
5. Active opposition to pollution and resource depletion;
6. A stress on complexity, not complication;
7. Support for local autonomy and decentralization (Naess, 1973).

Naess compared this to the ‘shallow ecology’ movement, which he described as opposing pollution and resource depletion with the central objective being “the health and affluence of people in the developed countries” (Naess, 1973: 95)¹⁵. In 1984 Naess and Sessions formulated the Deep Ecology Platform, a set of principles describing the aspirations shared by supporters of the Deep Ecology movement¹⁶ which was intended as replacement for the characteristics spelt out in 1973 (Sessions, 1998):

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy *vital* needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating *life quality* (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes (Naess and Sessions, 1985a: 70)¹⁷.

Both Naess's 7-point characterisation of the Deep Ecology movement and the Deep Ecology Platform were articulations of perceived pre-existing features of the movement. They were not intended to be prescriptive.

Deep ecology as a branch of ecophilosophy gained momentum in the early 1980s and was very much influenced by Naess's work. It drew upon the ideas outlined within Naess's 7-point description and was heavily influenced by Ecosophy T – Naess's articulation of his personal worldview. While Naess never intended that key features of his personal view should form the basis of a branch of ecophilosophy – as an avid supporter of pluralism he encouraged people to develop their own worldviews and ultimate norms – his personal ultimate norm of Self-realisation became a central feature of deep ecology. This occurred primarily through Sessions' interpretation of Naess's work, published initially in the newsletter *Ecophilosophy* (Fox, 1995a: 64), and in conjunction with Devall in the widely circulated book, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Devall and Sessions, 1985).

By the late 1980s Naess, Devall and Sessions had been joined by a myriad of supporters. While deep ecology retained the features of the Deep Ecology movement, its embrace of aspects of Naess's Ecosophy T distinguished it from the broader movement and gave it its philosophical basis. The term 'deep', originally used to characterise a movement, evolved into the name for a branch of ecophilosophy.

Deep ecology became the touchstone for ecophilosophical discourse. Confusion, however, reigned within the ranks of deep ecology and with those who were critical of it. The Deep Ecology movement and deep ecology were theoretically intertwined to such an extent that it was nigh impossible to distinguish the two. The resulting clash between the stated plurality of the Deep Ecology movement and the narrower, more personal expressions of deep ecology contributed to a series of stinging criticisms. These were often countered with claims of misinterpretation and misunderstanding¹⁸.

The confusion surrounding the label ‘deep ecology’ cannot be wholly explained, however, by terminological binaries and the branching of ideas. The complexity of ideas associated with this term makes ‘deep ecology’ notoriously difficult to summarise without opening the door to broad, largely meaningless generalisation and misinterpretation. This complexity was in part due to the decades of philosophical work undertaken by Naess and which ultimately led to deep ecology’s conception. Born in 1912, Naess was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of Oslo at the age of 27 and produced a voluminous quantity of work in a range of philosophical areas including empirical and applied semantics, total views, normative systems theory, gestalt ontology, scepticism, democracy, Spinoza, Gandhi, and the philosophy of science (Glasser, 1998). Naess also followed the zetetic sceptic tradition in that his work was never finished but remained open for further development, improvement and elaboration, and much of his work was deliberately vague; he employed vagueness as a semantic device aimed at encouraging communication and agreement. Anyone attempting to pinpoint Naess’s ideas must strive to comprehend their complexity, and in this comprehension is bound to be influenced by both the unfinished nature of the work and the employment of vagueness, as both facilitate interpretation rather than precise understanding.

With the aim of clarifying some of the misconceptions surrounding the term ‘deep ecology’ and to identify the features that distinguished deep ecology from other branches of ecophilosophy, in the late 1980s Warwick Fox undertook a comprehensive analysis of literature associated with ‘deep ecology’. He identified three senses of ‘deep ecology’: the formal, popular and philosophical. For Fox the Deep Ecology Platform encapsulated the popular sense, Naess’s personal norm Self-realisation was central to the philosophical sense, while the formal sense provided the structural understanding that linked the popular and philosophical senses of ‘deep ecology’ (Fox, 1995a).

The popular sense will not be discussed in detail here as it has little bearing on Fox's work¹⁹. The formal sense is covered below as it provides the basis for understanding the philosophical sense – the sense that Fox considered distinctive of deep ecology and that forms the basis of his formulation and articulation of transpersonal ecology.

3.1.2 The formal sense

Naess's formal sense of 'deep ecology' is based upon the idea of asking progressively deeper questions in a process that reveals "bedrock or end-of-the-line assumptions" (Fox, 1995a: 92). Naess refers to these assumptions as *fundamentals*; the fundamentals from which deep ecological philosophies or worldviews are formulated. This is illustrated by means of a four-level derivational model:

- Level 1 refers to the fundamentals – the assumptions that we hold of who and how we are within the greater scheme of things. This may take the form of a personal set of assumptions, assumptions based on an established religion or philosophy such as Christianity or Buddhism, the assumptions underpinning scientific knowledge, and so on. These fundamentals may or may not be recognised or consciously acknowledged, hence the use of the term 'assumptions'. For many people their beliefs at this level, especially beliefs that do not take the form of an organised and well articulated religion, are subconsciously held assumptions about how the world is. This level is discussed below in more detail as this encompasses the aspect of deep ecology with which transpersonal ecology is primarily concerned.
- Level 2 refers to platform principles – the principles derived from distinctively different fundamentals that provide a platform of unification. In the case of the Deep Ecology movement these are the principles articulated within the Deep Ecology Platform. This is the popular sense of 'deep ecology' and the aspect of 'deep ecology' that is most widely recognised. Naess

describes it as the point of commonality for proponents of Deep Ecology, rather than a set of morally binding prescriptions adhered to and promoted by supporters of Deep Ecology.

- Level 3 refers to guidelines – guidelines that are derived from Level 2 principles and that describe broad lifestyle and policy positions (for example, protecting remnant bushland, having fewer children, or eating local produce).
- Level 4 refers to prescriptions – prescriptions related to the ‘real life’ implementation of Level 3 guidelines; practical actions taken by specific individuals in local places at a specific time (for example, pull weeds in the local bush reserve this Sunday, use birth control tonight, or plant carrots this spring).

By asking deeper questions, questions that lead us to consider the fundamentals of our beliefs, Naess argues that we move from a focus on the day-to-day, the technical and the scientific into the realm of philosophy; we move to asking the *how* and the *why* questions. A significant consequence of this is that while Naess proposes a point of commonality at Level 2 – the Deep Ecology Platform – this model provides for a diversity of deep ecological philosophies. Hence the ‘apron’ shape diagram (see Naess, 2003: 270) representing the diversity of Level 1 beliefs, which includes Naess’s own take on deep ecological philosophy, Ecosophy T, the shared generalised principles of Level 2, and the diversity of guidelines and prescriptions at Levels 3 and 4.

While acknowledging the potential diversity of Level 3 and 4 derivations, it is supposed by Naess that these derivations – derived from deep questioning – will not support ecologically ambivalent and destructive practices no matter what Level 1 fundamentals underpin them. In fact, “very similar or even identical conclusions may be drawn from divergent premises” (Naess, 1985: 225).

Naess derived the term ‘deep ecology’ from this deep questioning approach. He argued that current decisions and actions do not result in ecological sensitivity because the dominant western way of knowing, science, does not ask the deeper questions and hence does not tap into fundamentals. If it did, then, in Naess’s view, science would ask the deeper, philosophical questions – the *hows* and the *whys* – and as such would not support ecologically destructive activities and decisions. Naess describes approaches that do not ask the deep questions as ‘shallow’, and identifies them as forming part of the ‘shallow’ ecology movement.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is the aspect of ‘deep ecology’ that has been most heavily criticised. It has been interpreted as a labelling of all supporters of ‘deep ecology’ ‘deep’ and all others ‘shallow’. While this may be a misinterpretation of Naess’s intention – Naess states that ‘deep’ primarily refers to the level of questioning rather than the nature of the answer – this perception has stuck and as a consequence the term ‘deep ecology’ has been described as self congratulatory, patronising, pretentious and pejorative (Fox, 1995a). Fox argues that this is not a good enough reason to reject the term however, as “whether one criticizes a term in detail or in passing, the general rule applies, particularly in philosophy, that if you are prepared to criticize a term you are expected to know what the term is intended to mean” (Fox, 1995a: 127).

The assumption made by Naess that all deep questioning will lead to on-the-ground expressions of ecological sensitivity has also been criticised, not least by Fox who describes the formal sense of ‘deep ecology’ as untenable (Fox, 1988: 232). Fox provides two illustrations of ecologically insensitive views derived from fundamentals using Naess’s own normative systems. Upon asking the deeper questions in relation to the norms “Obey God!” and “Evolution!”, anthropocentric views are derived concerning humankind’s God-given dominion over the earth, and the fulfilment of evolutionary telos through genetic engineering, respectively.

Fox's dismissal of the notion that deep questioning will inevitably lead to ecologically sensitive outcomes leads him to reject the term 'deep ecology' as an appropriate descriptor of what he sees as tenable (and distinctive) about 'deep ecology'. It must be noted that Fox does not reject the elements of the formal sense of 'deep ecology' outright. He accepts deep questioning, including the four-level derivational model and associated normative systems, as a useful, as opposed to a fatally flawed tool for exploring thought processes, decision-making mechanisms and underlying assumptions.

Likewise Fox sees the usefulness of Naess's popular sense of 'deep ecology' in that it distinguishes ecocentric positions from anthropocentric positions (Fox, 1995a), but argues again that this sense of 'deep ecology' does not encapsulate the distinctive nature of 'deep ecology' as it is shared with other branches of environmental thought. For Fox, neither the formal nor the popular senses lie at the heart of 'deep ecology'; they are not the factors that set it apart from other branches of ecophilosophical thought. It is Naess's philosophical sense of 'deep ecology' that distinguishes it, says Fox, and it is this sense that underpins his formulation of transpersonal ecology.

3.2 *Transpersonal Ecology*

3.2.1 The philosophical sense

Fox summarises Naess's philosophical sense of 'deep ecology' as referring "to the this-worldly realization of as expansive a sense of self as possible in a world in which selves and things-in-the-world are conceived as processes" (Fox, 1995a: 197). 'This-worldly' refers to Gandhi's endorsement of "the reality of the phenomenal or empirical world" (Fox, 1995a: 109), rather than 'other-worldly' which "reduces the empirical world to a realm of mere appearance since reality is ultimately considered to be pure, undifferentiated consciousness" (1995a: 109). 'Realisation', or more specifically 'Self-realisation', is drawn from Spinoza's metaphysical monism: "we are

united to the whole since there is ultimately only one *substance*; reality is a unity” (1995a: 105). To realise one’s self is an expansive process as it entails ‘realisation’ of reality – the unifying whole. In other words, we may normally associate ‘self-realisation’ with a sense of self that is based on the notion of a narrow sense of individualism, but Naess uses capitalisation to denote ‘Self-realisation’ as a sense of self based on the notion of a unifying embodied reality. A consequence of this differentiation is that ‘self-realisation’ results in a narrow, ego-centred sense of self, whereas ‘Self-realisation’ leads to a wide, expansive sense of self²⁰.

Finally, in Naess’s philosophical sense of ‘deep ecology’, ‘selves and things-in-the-world are conceived as processes’ refers to the notion that no being or thing is static; rather all entities are impermanent and non-eternal. Hence, and Naess draws on Buddhism in this, it is not possible to be self-realized, but only to be self-realizing; to participate as process.

On a practical level, ‘looking after my self’ translates into looking after my expansive sense of Self – looking after the unifying whole, as opposed to looking after my narrow individualistic self. This is not to say that the former sacrifices one’s own body and mind to the whole, rather that this aspect of self is encompassed within the whole. I partake in self-care (such as washing and eating) amidst partaking in Self-care (such as feeding others with locally produced organic food). Self-care is recognised as an on-going process of caring (washing, eating local organic produce and feeding others) – I can never attain a permanent and eternal ‘cared’ status of washed, eaten and fed.

For Fox, it is Naess’s philosophical sense of ‘deep ecology’ that sets ‘deep ecology’ outside ecophilosophy’s traditional focus upon environmental axiology. It does not seek theories of value as a means of defining or redefining the human relationship with the broader ecological world; rather it looks to a re-evaluation of this relationship through Self-realisation. For Fox this is the distinctive, defining element of ‘deep ecology’²¹.

As a way of distinguishing it from the formal and popular senses of ‘deep ecology’, and in recognition of the untenable nature of ideas underpinning the choice of the term ‘deep ecology’ and of the criticism of Naess’s deep/shallow differentiation, Fox coined the term ‘transpersonal ecology’ to re-brand the philosophical sense of ‘deep ecology’. This term is drawn from the field of transpersonal psychology, where *transpersonal* refers to “beyond individuality, beyond the development of the individual person into something which is more inclusive than the individual person” (A. Maslow, cited in Fox, 1995a: 198). In transpersonal psychology, transpersonal experiences are defined as “experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider and deeper aspects of humankind, life, psyche, and cosmos” (Vaughan and Walsh, 2000: 111). While Fox points out that transpersonal psychology was, at the time of its conception in the late 1960s, a thoroughly anthropocentric affair, he argues that this set of ideas taken to its natural limits is ecocentric in nature. A person’s sense of self extends to include not only other forms of humanness, but the ecological world at large. The use of the term *transpersonal* is not simply the borrowing of a term analogous to Self-realisation, but representative of a psychological process that is described, albeit within an anthropocentric worldview, within transpersonal psychology²².

Fox states that “...transpersonal ecologists are not concerned with the question of the *logical* connection between the fact that we are intimately bound up with the world and the question of how we should behave but rather with the *psychological* connection between this fact and our behaviour” (Fox, 1995a: 246-47). Level 1 fundamentals that encompass a sense of unity or ‘oneness’ have psychological ramifications as opposed to logical ones. This can be understood when we consider that for many people fundamentals are known only at a subconscious level, as a collection of unarticulated assumptions. It is altogether possible that most people never specifically identify these assumptions or explore how they came into being; for

most people they simply reflect how the world is rather than recognising these assumptions as part of a broad personally held belief system. Hence, how these assumptions unfold during, for example, day-to-day decision-making is not a logical process of reasoned thought or argument, but, according to Fox, a psychological process – arising in the mind without reasoned thought or argument. This is not to say that such a psychological approach is illogical but that it is alogical; other than logical, rather than in opposition to logic. Like any psychological process, the path of Self-realisation cannot be systematically defined, but its route, the terrain it navigates, can be inspired by, for example, time in ‘free nature’ (for example Naess, 2005a), immersion within a wilderness experience (Devall and Sessions, 1985), and time within an ecosystem²³ (Drengson, 2006). Hence, many fundamentals can unfold along many pathways toward an expansive sense of Self, and for Naess, Fox and others, all cumulate in a greater tendency for ecological sensitivity.

3.2.2 Identification

Participation in Self-realisation is mediated through a *process of identification* – “a process through which the supposed interests of another being are *spontaneously* reacted to as our own interests” (Naess, 1999d: 200). Fox suggests three general avenues through which we can come to identify in this way – personally based identification, ontologically based identification and cosmologically based identification, and it is these forms of identification that form the basis of his articulation of transpersonal ecology.

Personally based identification refers to “...experiences of commonality with other entities that are brought about through personal involvement with these entities” (Fox, 1995a: 249). This is the most commonly recognised form of identification, expressions of which are widely accepted within western cultures. In the narrowest sense, this form of identification is contained within the individual – my process of identification encapsulates me as a physically and psychologically discrete entity. In a

more expansive sense, personally based identification can include beings, usually other humans, with which we are most familiar – family and friends, work colleagues and neighbours. If we have pets and a garden this form of identification may be so expansive as to include individuals from another species such as a dog or a garden tree, and can encompass things – the physicality of the home, the importance of the buildings where our children attend school, and the condition of the surface of our street. However, many things and beings are excluded from this type of identification as personally based identification relies upon some form of immediate spatial contact or encounter. The source of food, for example, is likely to be unknown and to lie well outside any sphere of identification.

Fox describes ontologically based identification as referring to “...experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact *that* things are” (Fox, 1995a: 250):

[A] ...sense of the specialness or privileged nature of all that exists means that “the environment” or “the world at large” is experienced not as a mere backdrop against which our privileged egos and those entities with which they are most concerned play themselves out, but rather as just as much an expression of the manifesting of Being (i.e., of existence *per se*) as we ourselves are (Fox, 1995a: 251).

This type of identification, Fox says, is often a perspective gained through consciousness training associated with disciplines such as Zen Buddhism. Hence, if “one seriously wishes to pursue the question of ontologically based identification then one must be prepared to undertake arduous practice of the kind that is associated with certain kinds of experientially based spiritual disciplines” (Fox, 1995a: 251).

Cosmologically based identification, like ontologically based identification, relates to a sense of commonality with the world at large. Cosmologically based identification:

refers to experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality. This realization can be brought about through the empathic incorporation of *any* cosmology... that sees the world as a single unfolding process” (Fox, 1995a: 252).

Cosmologically based identification, unlike personally based identification, does not rely upon direct contact or encounter with things, beings or phenomena. Rather it is a lived sense of the world at large; an intuition for the ‘unity in process’²⁴ (Fox, 1984) that encompasses all things, beings or phenomena.

When he rejects Naess’s claim that deep questioning derived from *any* fundamentals would lead to ecological sensitivity, Fox recognises that there is *a set of* fundamentals that does lead to such a state of being; an ongoing state of Self-realisation. The fundamentals within this set are many and diverse, but have the shared feature of ‘unity in process’. Devall and Sessions (1985), for example, list Aldous Huxley’s perennial philosophy, the science of ecology, the ‘new’ physics, voices within Christianity such as St Francis of Assisi and Giordano Bruno, Native American cosmologies, Heidegger, Taoism and American poet Robinson Jeffers (among others), as key influences for deep ecology. Fox himself looks to science as a source of inspiration for a unifying worldview: “modern science is providing an increasingly detailed account of the physical and biological evolution of the universe that compels us to view reality as a single unfolding process” (Fox, 1995a: 253).

Science, then, is an important source of cosmological ideas and hence of cosmologically based identification. Fox highlights the dimension of science that illustrates an understanding of the human place in the larger scheme of things:

If we empathically incorporate (i.e., have a lived sense of) the evolutionary, “branching tree” cosmology offered by modern

science then we can think of ourselves and all other presently existing entities as leaves on this tree – a tree that has developed from a single seed of energy and that has been growing for some fifteen billion years, becoming infinitely larger and infinitely more differentiated in the process. A deep-seated realization of this cosmologically based sense of commonality with all that is leads us to identify ourselves more and more with the entire tree rather than just our leaf (our personal, biographical self), the leaves on our twig (our family), the leaves we are in close proximity to on other twigs (our friends), the leaves on our minor sub-branch (our community), leaves on our major sub-branch (our cultural or ethnic grouping), the leaves on our branch (our species), and so on (Fox, 1995a: 256).

For Fox, such cosmological insights provide the ‘big picture’ context for the narrow sense of the individual. In participating in Self-realisation through the process of identification, personally based identification is expansive – beyond the narrow sense of the individual – and sits within the context of transpersonally based identification, be this cosmological and/or ontological. The acceptance of the narrow individualistic sense of self, albeit within the context of a transpersonal ecological sense of self, is, Fox argues, an important aspect of transpersonal ecology. He says that transpersonal ecologists do not dispute the existence and usefulness of this egotistic sense of self, but emphasise the need to keep the negative aspects of this self in check within a ‘big picture’ perspective²⁵.

3.2.3 Experiential invitations

One consequence of transpersonal ecology is that transpersonal ecological positions tend, to use Fox’s terminology, to be presented as *experiential invitations*. Thus, “readers or listeners are invited to experience themselves as intimately bound up with the world around them, bound up to such an extent that it becomes more or less impossible to *refrain* from wider identification” (Fox, 1995a: 244-45). An expansive

sense of Self flows or unfolds naturally from experiencing the ‘unity in process’ of the world around them, a world that transpersonal ecologists through their work are hoping to invite readers or listeners to actively encounter. Hence, Devall (1988: 82), in introducing what could be interpreted as a chapter of do’s and do nots, states that “deep ecology practising is evolving. The following ideas are intended to stimulate practising, not to be taken as a code of conduct for everyone who accepts a deep ecology philosophy”. Similarly, Fox introduces his work by claiming that: “transpersonal ecology represents the particular approach to a more ecocentric orientation toward the world that has most inspired me. I would like to invite you to see if it also inspires you” (Fox, 1995a: xi). Readers and listeners are invited to experience the articulation of transpersonal ecological ideas from fundamentals (Level 1) and as they may unfold as principles, guidelines and prescriptions (at Levels 2, 3 and 4). This invitational approach may appear modest but it is far from self effacing. Transpersonal ecologists extend their invitations with passion, determination and confidence. They are inspired to share their experience of the world with others.

This invitational expression reflects the emerging expansive sense of Self, rather than a narrow, individualistic sense of self. One consequence of this approach is that transpersonal ecologists tend to avoid statements that attempt to bind morally people to their position²⁶. Statements that appear to reflect a sense of morality, when made by transpersonal ecologists, are offered as tools, not as absolutes or truths. Hence, while Naess’s ‘deep ecology’ is generally considered to be normative – expressing value judgements or prescriptions for behaviour – the norms derived from Naess’s normative systems and that emerge from application of the four-level derivational model are prescriptive only in as far as they apply specifically to the person whose fundamentals they are derived from. They are intended as tentative personal guidelines – they are only “absolute in the sense of being either carried out or sabotaged” (Naess, 1989a: 42). One of my Level 4 norms, derived from my own Level 1 fundamentals,

may be “Eat organic food for lunch!” This does not mean I expect that others *should* eat organic this lunchtime (though I might like it if they do and there is an open invitation for them to do so), rather that as a guideline I aim to do this for my self (or rather for my Self).

Fox equates a reliance on moral-oughts with a narrow, individualistic sense of self. He subjects ecophilosophical thought to a ‘psychological analysis’ based in the tripartite conception of self found within Freudian and post-Freudian psychology. The ‘unrestrained exploitation and expansionism’ approach is illustrated as id-like – the desiring-impulsive self; the ‘resource conservation and development and resource preservation’ approaches as ego-like – the rationalizing-deciding self; and the ‘intrinsic value theory’ approaches as superego-like – the normative-judgemental self. Fox outlines how each aspect of this tripartite model refers to a narrow individualistic sense of self. The desiring-impulsive self and the rationalising-deciding self are primarily concerned with self-interest, albeit in different ways; the former:

wants to eat all the cake today even if that means that it may go hungry tomorrow and even if such heavy consumption serves to make it sick... [and the latter] ...realizes that there will be no cake left tomorrow if it eats it all today... and that it “pays” to share some of the cake with other entities of the same kind since these entities are likely to value one more if one does this and to reciprocate in the future (Fox, 1995a: 216).

The normative-judgemental self is concerned with meeting idealistic and moralistic standards, and hence is concerned, to continue Fox’s metaphor, with considering the cake’s potential intrinsic value and subsequent actions if it is found to possess such value; that is, moral-oughts concerning what one should or should not do in relation to the cake.

Fox argues that each of these conceptions is primarily concerned with a narrow, atomistic sense of self, as the particular self from which considerations and actions derive is always the nucleus of both the consideration and the action. Specifically, the moral demands of the normative-judgemental self always take the narrow sense of self as the reference point for how things should be – *I* should be vegetarian because *I* recognise the intrinsic value of sentience in other creatures as it is a faculty that *I* recognise as valuable in *myself*.

If on the other hand, the narrow sense of self sits within the context of an expansive sense of Self, then considerations and actions take on a more expansive form – I can be vegetarian because the existence of other creatures forms part of my expansive sense of Self and to unnecessarily harm these would be to harm my Self. In other words, I *feel* rather than *rationalise* relationships with other entities; as previously described it is a psychological rather than logical derivation. The articulation of a transpersonal ecology approach as being in some ways morally binding is, as Fox points out, a direct contradiction to the nature of transpersonal ecology, and is ultimately self-defeating.

The invitational style of transpersonal ecology has two important consequences. One is that it can appear frustratingly vague, especially for people looking for or used to considering specific environmental solutions derived from prescriptive/value oriented ecophilosophies. The second is that, given the personal and psychological nature of transpersonal ecology, transpersonal ecologists do not attempt to prove their ideas for the simple fact that fundamentals cannot be proven. This is not to say that transpersonal ecologists cannot be challenged on their work and ideas, and have no need to respond to such challenges. There is always room for re-evaluation, development and growth. Rather, transpersonal ecologists will tend, at least in theory, to avoid debates of the ‘I-am-right-you-are-wrong’ type.

Given the inherent plurality of transpersonal ecology – the diversity of fundamentals and the many forms that Self-realisation can take – transpersonal ecology cannot by its very nature be presented as truth, solution or a set of morally binding oughts. Each transpersonal ecologist may have their own intuition of *a* truth, *a* cluster of *potential* solutions or personal *perspectives* articulated as moral-oughts. However, as these are grounded not within a narrow personally based sense of identification, but within an expansive sense of Self, there is no sense of egoistically narrow self importance. Rather, there is a sense of participating within ‘unity in process’ that can only be undertaken as a psychological rather than logical unfolding. In other words, whilst moral-oughts are perceived to be derived by a process of logic – each must be underpinned by a rational argument that is convincing to others and hence morally binding for others – transpersonal ecology embraces a psychological approach wherein there is no expectation that others will be *convinced* but that they may be *inspired*; inspired to explore their own perspective and collaborate with others within this exploration.

3.3 The Critics

Warwick Fox coined the term ‘transpersonal ecology’ as a means of identifying the distinctive approach offered by deep ecology and in acknowledgement of criticism levelled at the term ‘deep ecology’, specifically his own reservations regarding Naess’s formal sense of ‘deep ecology’ (Fox, 1995a). However, what is perhaps most important about Fox’s work is the clarity he brought to deep ecology. While Fox himself rejects the term ‘deep ecology’, by replacing this term with ‘transpersonal ecology’ he disentangled the theory and ideas of deep ecology from that of the original concept of the Deep Ecology movement. While the broader Deep Ecology movement may (or may not) hold the features attributed to it by Naess in the early 1970s (or by the Deep Ecology Platform) – a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this dissertation – deep ecology, now relabelled transpersonal ecology, has clearly-defined

philosophical parameters and cannot be confused with a broader and more subsuming movement.

3.3.1 The heart of deep ecology

Not everyone agrees with Fox's take on deep ecology. Sessions believes that the confusion "...over what the deep ecology movement actually stands for... was further compounded" by Fox's work, describing this work as "Fox's 'transpersonal ecology' version of ecopsychology" (Sessions, 1998: 173). Another proponent of 'deep ecology', Andrew McLaughlin, prioritises the Deep Ecology Platform as lying at the heart of the Deep Ecology movement and decries those, including Fox, who explore and debate within the various Level 1 fundamentals held by supporters of the Deep Ecology Platform (McLaughlin, 1995). He states:

the most exhaustive attempt to define what is distinctive about Deep Ecology is Warwick Fox's *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*. He focuses on the nature of the self and explains Deep Ecology as involving an identification of self with all that is. But his specification of Deep Ecology, *unless* it is understood as one among many alternative justifications for the platform, creates unneeded friction. It leaves out others who accept the platform, but do not agree with Fox's notion of identification. Richard Sylvan and Jim Cheney, for example, both accept the platform, but are critics of Fox's Transpersonal Ecology. Which is more important – finding differences or realizing unity? (McLaughlin, 1995: 91-2).

McLaughlin undoubtedly makes an important point²⁷ – that the Deep Ecology movement as characterised by the Platform lies apart from deep ecology as a philosophical position. However in arguing against Fox's work, McLaughlin fails to acknowledge the evolution of ideas associated with the term 'deep ecology' *beyond* Naess's initial conception, beyond the concept of *movement*. Nor does he consider the central role that Self-realisation has taken in this evolution. In Self-realisation Fox

identifies a major component that is pivotal to most, if not all, deep ecological expressions (up until the late 1980s anyway); one that is not encompassed within the Deep Ecology Platform. In an analysis of the ideas associated with the label ‘deep ecology’ it would be remiss to consider only the original ideas associated with this term and not to consider how these ideas may have evolved and grown. For example, in a tentative revision of the Deep Ecology Platform that he hoped would stimulate debate, philosopher David Rothenberg included Self-realisation as one of seven principles: “On the inside, we must seek quality of life rather than higher standard of living, self-realization rather than material wealth” (1987: 187). To downplay or sideline this evolution and growth because it was not what was intended 40 years ago or because it may detract from pressing environmental concerns may lead one to conclude that deep ecology *and* the Deep Ecology movement are stuck in philosophical and ideological limbo.

Perhaps the strongest critique of Fox’s work also comes from within deep ecology, and again criticises Fox’s focus on Self-realisation. Harold Glasser argues that ‘deep ecology’ must be viewed as a gestalt – that its whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that its elements are more than singular discrete parts (more is said about Naess’s gestalt ontology in Chapter 6.1). Fox’s focus on Self-realisation, on Naess’s ultimate norm, as the distinctive feature of deep ecology, in effect destroys the ‘deep ecology’ gestalt, stripping it of its “focus on assisting individuals in the development of deep ecological total views and its formal tools for questioning assumptions, discerning motivations, and deriving concrete consequences” (Glasser, 1997: 84). Specifically, Glasser refutes Fox’s claims that the formal sense of ‘deep ecology’, the deep questioning, is untenable and that the popular sense of ‘deep ecology’ is not distinctive. He affirms that Self-realisation is just one of a diversity of norms that can motivate wider identification, and decries Fox for undermining the plurality of Naess’s approach to fundamentals. In relation to the latter, Glasser provides a list of examples

of other processes that can lead to wider identification, including Peter Reed's emphasis on the "wholly other", Laura Westra's "principle of integrity", Herman Daly and John Cobb's "biospheric vision", E.O. Wilson's "biophilia hypothesis" and Paul Taylor's "respect for nature" (Glasser, 1997: 77).

When Fox looked at the work of prominent deep ecologists in the late 1980s he identified interpretations of Naess's Self-realisation as a common emerging and binding theme. Whether or not Naess intended that there should be a common binding theme is another question, but this commonality existed in the late 1980s. If other pathways for wider identification have emerged after Fox's work or in parallel to Fox's work, then this is an important trend in the development of deep ecology, and undoubtedly one, given his passion for plurality, that Naess would support²⁸. While Fox's approach certainly sets more specific boundaries than Naess around the type of fundamentals that lead to wider identification, Glasser fails to recognise the plurality possible within a set of fundamentals defined as 'unity of process'. This diversity of fundamentals in turn flows on to a diversity of pathways for Self-realisation, as evidenced in the broad definition of Self-realisation embraced by Fox.

It is interesting to consider both Fox's and Glasser's interpretations of Naess's work in light of Naess's deliberate attempts at fostering diversity, such as his use of vagueness as a semantic device. Fox, whose undergraduate background is in psychology, interprets Naess as offering a predominately psychological approach, while Glasser, whose "research focuses on the evaluation of complex environmental problems and the process of making individual and social choices about using and protecting the environment", sees 'deep ecology' primarily as "contributing to overcoming the ecological crisis through systematic and methodical exploration of perceptions, values, actions, [and] policies" (Glasser, 1996: 166). Its importance resting "on its manner of structuring and focusing our thinking about decision-making" (Glasser, 1996: 159) and its significance "in its focus upon improving decision-making... its ability to help

structure and focus our thinking about environmental implications of individual and collective decisions” (Glasser, 1998: 222). The soft tenor of Naess’s responses to each of these approaches indicates that while he may not whole-heartedly agree with aspects of each, his commitment to plurality within deep ecological thought remains steadfast (for his response to Fox see, Naess, 1999b; for his response to Glasser see, Naess, 1999c²⁹). Given such a stance it seems somewhat fruitless to attempt to ascertain what *the* ‘deep ecology’ approach is as a point of fact and, thus, to initiate discussions on who is right and who is wrong. Debates that maintain an open door to diversity would seem to sit more comfortably within the ‘deep ecology’ gestalt.

Glasser’s critique of transpersonal ecology illustrates that debate under the banner of ‘deep ecology’ and concerning its central tenets is ongoing. The pluralistic nature of the Deep Ecology movement, and the pluralistic possibilities within transpersonal ecology, ensure that this debate can continue to provide valuable insights and developments within and beyond the realm of ecophilosophical discourse.

While Glasser’s critique is one of only a handful that specifically address Fox’s transpersonal ecology, there are numerous critiques of deep ecology that focus on factors that are covered by Fox’s transpersonal ecology. These include the ecofeminist critique of the notions of Self-realisation, the process of identification and concepts of self, and Richard Sylvan’s concerns pertaining to holistic worldviews that emerge from emphasising the interconnectivity of all beings and things. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

3.3.2 Identification and self

A number of ecofeminists criticise the deep ecological concept of self and the process of Self-realisation, arguing that they represent a masculine notion of self; a notion of self that is subject to the flaws of masculine ego and will (Salleh, 1984). Jim Cheney, for example, describes the metaphysical approach offered by Self-realisation³⁰ as a totalizing vision imposed by the metaphysical account that he terms Ecosophy S,

rather than emanating from experience and encounter with the real. He sees this approach as stemming from "...distorted forms of connectedness in which connectedness is achieved either by forgoing the development of a genuinely autonomous self or by an assimilation of the other by the statically autonomous self, an assimilation which constitutes a subtle form of control or domination" (Cheney, 1989: 309). For Cheney, Self-realisation is "imbued with the masculine consciousness of an imperialist culture" (Cheney, 1989: 316). The net result is self-aggrandisement and an annihilation of difference, with potential totalitarian implications (Cheney, 1987)³¹. For Cheney, deep ecology is merely another articulation of the masculine voice that dominates ethics and that has resulted in the drive to control and dominate the broader ecological world. As such Cheney contends that ethics should be abandoned³².

Val Plumwood, while disagreeing with Cheney's call for an abandonment of ethics, argues that "what is needed is not so much the abandonment of ethics as a different and richer understanding of it" (Plumwood, 1991: 9). For Plumwood ethics must incorporate the feminine voice with its focus on emotionality and particularity. She identifies within deep ecology (and ecophilosophy in general) a reliance on a rationalist conception of ethics focusing on the universal and the abstract, and supporting dualistic accounts of reality. Deep ecology fails to recognise and reflect upon its own connections to rationalism, Plumwood argues, as it lacks an adequate historical analysis needed to illuminate these connections³³. She describes this manifestation as the discontinuity problem: "a deeply entrenched view of the genuine or ideal human self as not including features shared with nature, and as defined against or in opposition to the nonhuman realm, so that the human sphere and that of nature cannot significantly overlap" (Plumwood, 1991: 11). For Plumwood, this discontinuity problem within deep ecology manifests in its account of selfhood. She identifies three such problematic accounts. The *indistinguishability account* results in a merging of the

self with the whole which strips the distinctiveness and independence from humans and nonhumans alike. Hence, when deep ecology practitioner John Seed states “I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking” (Seed *et al.*, 1988: 36), Plumwood contends that by not distinguishing himself from the rainforest there is no guarantee that Seed will not confuse his own needs for those of the rainforest.

The second discontinuity problem is the *expanded self account* that Plumwood sees as emerging not from “a critique of egoism; rather, it is an enlargement and an extension of egoism” (Plumwood, 1991: 14). By failing to address egoism, deep ecology assumes that there are only two options for changing the human relationship with the broader ecological world – self-sacrifice or self-interest. The expanded self allows for the concerns of the broader ecological world to be encompassed within self-interest. Again, Plumwood emphasises that this account fails to recognise the distinctiveness and independence of other entities encompassed within an expanded sense of self. The third problematic account of self emerging from deep ecology is that of the *transpersonal self*; what Plumwood describes as the “transcendence or overcoming of self” (Plumwood, 1991: 15). The emphasis that is placed by transpersonal ecology on the cosmological is interpreted as a devaluing or a discarding of personal concerns and attachments.

Psychologist Ralph Metzner (1991) is also concerned with what he describes as deep ecology’s poorly understood concept of ‘identification’ and its use in providing a basis for effective environmental outcomes. He sees Fox’s placement of personally based identification within the context of transpersonally based identification as a means of overcoming, for example, possessiveness, greed, exploitation and war, as problematic. He contends that “the act of identification always implies an ‘other’, and ‘not-self’ – which inevitably leads to dualisms, divisions, separations, conflicts, boundaries” (Metzner, 1991: 152).

While Michael Zimmerman is somewhat critical of Cheney's reading of deep ecology and Self-realisation, he does urge that deep ecology take ecofeminist critique as a constructive basis for self analysis (Zimmerman, 1994). He suggests that Fox's emphasis upon cosmologically based identification should be replaced by an ontologically based identification derived from Buddhism:

Ontological identification is made possible when the ego-subject is revealed not as a solid entity, but rather as a shifting and changing phenomenon that is merely one among the countless manifestations arising, and passing away, moment by moment. Often associated with this revelation is the insight that all spatiotemporal phenomena arise "within" an all-encompassing, generative, "emptiness"... sometimes called "absolute nondual consciousness" (Zimmerman, 1994: 53).

Zimmerman argues that this may assist in addressing ecofeminist concerns regarding the non-engagement with the personal in favour of identification with the abstract that is discernible in much deep ecological literature.

Some ecofeminist critics, such as Karen Warren, distinguish between the work of Naess and that of Devall, Fox and Sessions. Supporting Cheney's take on Ecosophy S and Plumwood's analysis of the deep ecological account of self, Warren suggests that Naess's Ecosophy T is not necessarily incompatible with ecofeminist notions of the relational self:

It is certainly consistent with Naess's Ecosophy T, that the concept of self-realization be understood not as involving the *identity*, *expansion*, or *transcendence* of the self, but rather as the notion, that the construction of an ethic is the construction of one's world, a world in relationship to which one *defines* one's self; or perhaps as the view that we define ourselves by means of the ethical orientations we take to the world and that our various self-

realizations are a function of these defining relations to the world.

Either way, this is what the notion of a *relational self* in ecofeminist philosophy attempts to get at (Warren, 1999: 265).

Christian Diehm affirms Warren's case, pointing to Naess's gestalt ontology as evoking a sense of identification and self significantly different to that emerging in the work of Devall, Sessions and Fox. However Diehm maintains that there is a tendency within Naess's 'identification' to emphasise sameness rather than difference. As such he offers a revision of the notion of identification that would further align Naess's work with that of ecofeminism:

what is called for is not an outright rejection of Naess's ecosophy
but a careful supplementation of it, one that takes seriously feminist
insights on the way towards a more responsive, more responsible
deep ecology in which identification is regarded as a mode of
response, rooted in responsibility (Diehm, 2002: 255-56).

Recounting an interview in which Naess speaks of himself in relation to Tvergastein, Diehm subsequently argues that Naess's sense of self is best described not in terms of 'identification' but in terms of togetherness and intimacy: a "self of stars and stones" (Diehm, 2003: 41). This insight, Diehm believes, alleviates ecofeminist concerns, specifically those of Plumwood canvassed above.

Most of the prominent voices within deep ecology have been male. Given this and the status of gender relations in the societies within which these men are grounded, it is perhaps unsurprising that ecofeminists discern within deep ecology the "familiar masculinist quest to escape the unpredictable world of particularity for something more distant, enduring, and abstract" (Kheel, 2008: 195). There is a tendency within deep ecology metaphysics to state the importance of relations – the interconnections that bind all beings and things – but to leave this notion and possible implications largely unexplored. The expansive Self espoused by Fox and others is one that may

move to transcend the everyday and/or may embrace an interconnectivity that allows individualised entities to be bound to and drawn in towards the Self in a process that is only possible through the denial or annihilation of difference. As such, for ecofeminists, the deep ecological Self, and that of transpersonal ecology, is understood not as an “expression of self ... as embedded in a network of essential relationships with distinct others” (Plumwood, 1991: 20), but as a totalizing vision embedded within masculine notions of interconnection through submission and absorption.

3.3.3 Holism

Before proceeding, it is important to consider one final criticism that has been levelled at deep ecology³⁴. In a scathing critique philosopher and environmentalist Richard Sylvan describes the metaphysics of deep ecology as “*extreme* holism, to the shocker that there are no separate things in the world, no wilderness to traverse or for Muir to save” (Sylvan, 1985: 27). His interpretation of how deep ecology perceives the world – something equivalent to an amorphous all-consuming blancmange with no discernible parts and no discrete entities – is just one of a range of reasons why he feels deep ecology is a “conceptual bog” (Sylvan, 1985: 1), the ideas of which “should at least be disentangled and, if feasible, renovated or recycled” (Sylvan, 1985: 4).

In responding to this critique, Fox (1986) highlights the difference between a holistic account that denies any kind of autonomy for entities and merges them into an indiscernible state of oneness, and a holistic account based on the notion of internal relations – that entities are constituted through the relations they hold and that hold them within the world. He argues that the focus of the unifying nature of deep ecology metaphysics is not upon the entities themselves. It is the relationships between entities that constitute the unifying factor, not some kind of, to use Fox’s descriptor, ‘silly’ denial of physical form (Fox, 1986).

In his response Fox is in part correct in his assertion that the type of holism described by Sylvan is incompatible with the theory of internal relations. Sylvan’s argument is

premised on an understanding of relations as external to the entities themselves; that the interconnections between entities lie outside these entities and are not in some way essential to who and how these entities are. The unifying power of such a view of relationality is significantly less than that emerging from perceptions of relations as internal. For the former, it is only through a merging of entities themselves that unity may be achieved, whereas for the latter it is the relationships themselves that provide the basis for a holist account. As such, Sylvan's reading of deep ecological holism comprehends the world *out there* as a *blancmange*, a reading that is incompatible with an understanding of entities as internally related.

This does not, however, free Fox and deep ecology as a whole from the ecofeminist assertions of a relational *blancmange on the insideness* of an expansive sense of Self. Ecofeminists, with an understanding of relationality akin to the theory of internal relations (Salleh, 2000: 121), recognise within deep ecology an amorphous blend of relationality on the inside; a kind of internalised *blancmange* of world that is under the mandate of the internaliser. While deep ecology can successfully defend itself against critiques such as Sylvan's by drawing upon a rudimentary understanding of relationality as internal, it has to date failed to address the concerns emanating from ecofeminists who have, by and large, a much better grasp on the theory of internal relations, albeit without necessarily directly referencing this theory. It is through a deeper understanding of relations as internal to their bearer that a deep ecological conception of self distinct from that offered by Fox can be envisaged, and through which many of the concerns levelled from within ecofeminism can be addressed. It is also, I believe, a stance that provides free movement beneath and beyond dualistic suppositions such as the polarisation of wilderness and of towns and cities.

3.4 Some Trends...

3.4.1 ...in ecophilosophy

It has been almost forty years since Naess published his paper that introduced the term ‘deep ecology’, ‘The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement’ (Naess, 1973), and twenty years since the publication of Fox’s *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*. In an explanation of his extensive use of references in his book Fox states that “...given the rate at which the volume of literature on deep ecology is growing, it seems unlikely that there will in the future be available such a nearly exhaustive listing of the literature – at least not one short of a book-length annotated bibliography” (Fox, 1995a: xi).

By the end of the 1980s deep ecology was at the centre of ecophilosophical discourse, and it was also influencing environmental debates, decision-making and ideas in the broader community:

The influence of deep ecology upon ecophilosophical discussion has been such that it has now become common for ecophilosophical thinkers to employ the ideas associated with deep ecology... as a sort of standard reference point against which to proceed in presenting their own preferred solutions to ecophilosophical problems (Fox, 1995a: 44).

However, during the 1990s interest in ecophilosophy dissipated and with it the considerable momentum held by deep ecology.

Deep ecology as a whole, however, has continued to attract advocates and dissenters alike, albeit fewer than during the 1980s; there have been no more articles in *Rolling Stone*³⁵! Hay describes a switch in the tenor of environmental thought, a move away from ecophilosophical discourse and onto that of more ‘real world’ issues (Hay, P.,

2002a) – the priorities of the former appearing incongruent with the pragmatism required for urgently needed policy formulation.

Transpersonal ecology, as a term and as a set of ideas, has neither been widely critiqued nor adopted. The main interest in Fox's work has come from the fledgling field of ecopsychology, but even this has been marginal³⁶. 'Transpersonal ecology' remains more a technical definition for what Fox sees as distinctive about deep ecology, rather than its own branch of ecophilosophical thought or a replacement for the term 'deep ecology'. That is not to say that transpersonal ecological ideas have not continued to emerge within deep ecology – people are still engaged with the metaphysical and psychological aspects of deep ecology³⁷. But Fox's work is not *the*, or even *a* touchstone for these engagements.

Fox himself describes transpersonal ecology as a post deep ecology development, stating that interest within the realm of deep ecology remains rooted in the popular and formal senses of 'deep ecology' (Fox, 1995b). He argues that Self-realisation – and transpersonal ecology – is an approach to ecophilosophy that borders on ecopsychology (Fox, 1995c), and that apart from his work it is yet to be elaborated:

Its original proponents have not developed this emphasis into a coherent theory that address the obvious, more detailed questions that must necessarily follow from a focus on the psychological capacity for identification: How precisely can the concept and experience of identification be delineated?; Are there various forms of identification and, if so, what are they?; Can these forms of identification be actively developed and, if so, how?; and What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of these forms of identification? (Fox, 1995b: 166).

3.4.2 ...toward the built environment

In the mid 1990s Fox's work moved out of the arena of ecophilosophy, and away from transpersonal ecology (Fox, 2007). More recently he has turned his attention to what he terms the 'built environment'. Fox argues that the ethical issues associated with the 'natural environment' and the 'built environment' are quite different. He develops what he describes as a General Ethic that he sees as capable of dealing with ethical questions that arise in each, as well as incorporating the concerns of traditional 'interhuman' ethics. Fox searches for a comprehensive approach that surpasses the blinkered anthropocentric outlook of traditional interhuman ethics and the 'blind-spot' that environmental ethics maintains for towns and cities – in short, he attempts an ethic of everything (Fox, 2006).

His move out of the realm of environmental ethics is certainly one approach to addressing the 'blind spot'. However it is an approach that fails to cast a critical eye on *why* this blind spot exists, and as a consequence it sidesteps rather than questions the locale of past and current debate. As previously described, there is a small but growing body of literature within ecophilosophy that does look toward towns and cities. Andrew Light (2001), for one, argues that a misconception of anthropocentrism, associated implications for what is considered valuable and valueless, and resulting dualistic suppositions, are the reasons for the anti-urban bias within environmental ethics. In an attempt to re-engage within towns and cities, thinkers such as Light have begun to explore the possibilities of an urban environmental ethic, taking an overtly pragmatic approach and addressing issues such as architecture (for example, Light and Wallace, 2005) and urban animal populations – both domestic and wild³⁸.

I have argued that Light's explanation inadequately describes deep ecology's relationship with towns and cities, as deep ecology offers a point of reflection beyond and beneath the axiology of traditional value theory. While I propose grief for an expansive sense of Self that is deeply rooted within place as an alternative

explanation, Freya Mathews³⁹, also working outside the borders of environmental axiology, takes a somewhat different tack and offers an alternative approach that integrates both the ‘natural’ and the ‘built’. Though Fox and Mathews make no reference to each other’s work, nor to the body of work that includes writers such as Light, concurrent with these thinkers Mathews (2005) notes that definitions of ‘environment’ deployed within radical environmental thought, including deep ecology, exclude aspects of the physical world impacted upon by human agency – the non-natural or artefactual, or what Fox terms the ‘built environment’. The emphasis of radical environmentalism is on the protection and preservation of the aspects of the world that are perceived to remain largely free of human agency. Such an approach, Mathews maintains, rests on an inappropriate Cartesian dualism; the separation and oppositional juxtaposition of mind and matter where the human mind is the sole custodian of value, meaning and telos, and matter only obtains such properties through the agency of the human mind. This is despite recognition within radical environmentalism that such duality provides an inadequate account of reality, and the flawed and destructive nature of outcomes emanating from such an account. While both deep ecology and ecofeminism reject distinctions of a dualistic nature, Mathews argues that by failing to integrate towns and cities into theory and practice, radical environmentalism remains incomplete, providing a dubious base from which to address the environmental crisis (Mathews, 2005).

Mathews’ critique of radical environmentalism focuses particularly on the perceived shortcomings of deep ecology. Despite best intentions, deep ecology assumes that humanity retains the capacity to transform and shape the world for the better, particularly towns and cities and their inhabitants. It offers “a *posture of opposition* to the contemporary world, but no true *praxis* for it, no way of living harmoniously in it” (Mathews, 2005: 72-3). For Mathews, deep ecology offers insights, a modality of being and a platform for protection of wild beings and places, but by upholding

ecology at the expense of towns and cities, it falls short of providing a consistent challenge to the “modern contempt for matter that lies at the root of the present environmental crisis” (Mathews, 2005: 74). She writes:

Deep ecology has achieved a certain depth of inquiry, but I think a further level of inquiry about the relation of humankind to the rest of reality is coming into view. Ecophilosophy has rightly invited us to resist the machines of modernity in defence of “nature”, but at the same time it has left most of its followers still helplessly hooked up to the industries and technologies and modes of production of modern society in their everyday lives. There is an inconsistency here that undermines the ecological stance. In order to be consistent, ecophilosophy needs to complete or deepen the project of reanimation. It needs to take the final nondualist step and acknowledge an inner impulse or psychic principle, not only in the natural and biological order, but in the order of matter generally. Only when ensoulment is thus taken to its logical conclusion can we discover how to live attuned to soul in the world as it is, the world of cement, tar, and steel, of degradation and contamination, of the messes we have made (Mathews, 2005: 73).

Like Mathews’ “letting-be”(2005: 38), Devall and Sessions’s “not do” (1985: 147) reflects an acceptance of the given emanating from rootedness in place, but in Devall and Sessions’ work this only applies to a specific aspect of the physical world – free nature and wilderness. In maintaining this geographic dualism, deep ecology reinforces that there is something that we, as humans, have the power to transform. In calling for things to be saved, changed and restored, particularly within towns and cities, deep ecology reinforces notions of humans as having the capacity to fulfil the position of controllers, manipulators and saviours of the planet.

For Mathews, it is a deep cultural malaise based on blindness to the value, meaning and telos inherent within *all* matter, not just that of a ‘wild’ nature, that contributes significantly to western society’s brutish relationship with the world. In challenging dualistic notions of how we perceive matter and who we perceive ourselves to be in relation to matter, Mathews explores the potentialities of a panpsychic culture – a culture based on nondualism, that ascribes a “‘psychist’ or mentalistic dimension to all of matter, or to the physical realm generally” (Mathews, 2005: 14). It is from this perspective – this love of all matter – that Mathews reflects upon, and within, towns and cities. She turns to her own experience of the actual and the local in her personal relationships with suburban Melbourne, and locations throughout rural Australia. She explores both the “affirmation of the actual, as opposed to the abstractly imagined possible, and ... an affirmation of the local, that which is accessible to us here and now in place” (Mathews, 2005: 25). What emerges through Mathews’ reinhabitation of towns and cities, however, “may not always match our ecological aspirations” (Mathews, 2005: 74). She argues that her approach “offers a deeper response to the challenge of modernity than do philosophies that are purely ecological in scope” (Mathews, 2005: 73): “identification with place undercuts the consumerist imperative of capitalism and provides foundations for a conserver psychology. In this sense nativist attitudes contribute to environmentalism even when they are focused on sites of little ecological significance” (Mathews, 2005: 80).

Two assumptions about ecology, particularly urban ecology, appear to premise Mathews’ position regarding the limitations of ecologically inspired stances such as deep ecology. One is that towns and cities are in some sense *a-ecological*, or at least ecologically corrupt. Like Fox, Mathews feels that there is a distinct determinate difference between the ‘built’ and the ‘natural’:

The greater part of the population... lives in large cities, or on commercial agricultural lands, where original ecosystems have been

dramatically modified or simplified, if they have not been outright demolished. Our selves are not in fact presently constituted within complex webs of ecological relations, at least at a local level, and many of the biological systems on which we depend are currently maintained not ecologically but artificially, with human intervention rather than ecological checks and balances sustaining production and other vital biological outcomes (Mathews, 2005: 69).

A sense of an ‘original’ ecology is prioritised as it is free from the abstractive machinations of modernity, and while the artificial humanised products of such machinations remain *matter* their conative directionality only actualises through their return to nature; through a “process to begin anew” (Mathews, 2005: 31). As Mathews’ relationship with matter is premised on the establishment of a delineation between abstraction and what she describes as nativism, albeit more fluid than delineations associated with traditional Cartesian dualism, she maintains the ‘built’ as other to the ecological.

Second, Mathews accepts the broad assumption emanating from conservation biology that there is a hierarchy of ecological significance that is humanly discernible. For Mathews, ecologism, such as deep ecology, cannot engage with places of little ecological significance, such as towns and cities, as there is no ecological imperative to do so. In other words, for towns and cities, with their lack of ecology and ecological significance, ecophilosophies that prioritise ecology (such as deep ecology) have no means of engaging with the actual and the local – with human place – as these places are a-ecological or ecological insignificant.

Resonating with a perceived disjunction between ecological ideals and life in the city, Mathews, unlike Fox, remains grounded within ecophilosophical discourse, but contends that the project of radical environmentalism will remain unfulfilled if it continues to embrace only ‘wild’ matter. She perceives this as an inherent limitation of

ecologism, and one that inhibits engagement with towns and cities as *places*. If the transpersonal ecology conception of relationality is confined to that associated with ‘natural’ wilderness areas, and if this relationality has on the whole been buried and destroyed beneath towns and cities, then it would appear that transpersonal ecology has little to say and even less to do within these places. However, as cited at the beginning of this dissertation, deep ecological metaphysics are premised on the comprehension that *everything* is interconnected (Naess, 1995a). Such a stance leads one towards a conception of relationality far exceeding that defined by ecological science and conservation biology, and potentially beneath and beyond the mind/matter dualism that is of concern for Mathews. Despite Mathews’ assertions about ecologism, and because of her insightful and compelling account of matter within towns and cities, the door remains open for exploration with regard to transpersonal ecology and towns and cities.

Risdon Vale 1



I am a new wave washing old shores

I am a flag unfurling

one yard of cloth an island wide

Extract from 'Wave over wave over Tasmania' by Linda Napier (2004: 221)

Chapter 4 – Risdon Vale 1

In the previous chapter, one of the relational collaborators in this inquiry was introduced. The metaphysics of deep ecology, particularly those outlined by Warwick Fox under the banner ‘transpersonal ecology’, was described. Criticisms levelled at Self-realisation, the process of identification and the emerging Self were reviewed, responded to, and in regards to some of the concerns raised within ecofeminism, were accepted as a basis for further consideration. Finally, trends in ecophilosophy, particularly deep ecology, were outlined, including Freya Mathews’ work concerning towns and cities. The subsequent critique of her approach to ecologism was found to provide fertile ground for further exploration.

This chapter continues to set the scene for the inquiry by introducing the second significant research collaborator – Risdon Vale. Risdon Vale is introduced through reflection upon my sense of place within the suburb, specifically my home in Linden Road. By focusing on sense of place, the enmeshment of self and place is both acknowledged and brought to the fore. Three stand-alone, yet interrelated pieces that describe my sense of place within Risdon Vale are presented. The first describes Risdon Vale in terms of the day-to-day experience of location and locale. The second, ‘Just got in here’, explores place as process. Doreen Massey’s ‘global sense of place’ (Massey, 1997) is critiqued in light of Risdon Vale as both bounded and boundless, and through the understanding of place as so much more than human. The third piece, ‘The Dowlocks’, delves into the notion of ‘place and memory’ and offers the interplay of personal, collective, mythical and evolved memory as a means of defining place as both human and more-than-human. The relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Tasmanians, as evoked by the Risdon Cove Historic Site, illustrates the unfinished nature of place and sense of place as experienced within Risdon Vale.

The chapter concludes with a notion of place as emerging from the three preceding pieces, and this is drawn upon later in the dissertation for further exploration of the

entwining of self, place and philosophy. Specifically, it paves the way for a more in-depth understanding of the role and priority that place plays in subsequent chapters.

4.1 *Place*

*Away I walked for hours
whence stands the linden tree,
and still I hear it whisp'ring:
You'll find your peace with me!*

Extract from 'The Linden Tree' by W. Muller (1822).

Place continually beckons. When I am away from home it is the norm for me to nurture the thought of return, and when I return I frequently contemplate the possibility of being elsewhere. Some place is always whispering through me, even within my dreams.

The mobility afforded by the appropriation of earthly things, beings and happenings means that attachment to place is often transitory, and has, for many, become increasingly so in recent times. In the 38 years of my life I have lived, for example, in 24 houses, in three nations, and travelled globally as a tourist and backpacker. With 'no reason to stay' and every reason to move (on or up) many of us can and do experience place in an infinite array of ways. As such, understandings of place can appear fluid and highly relativistic, if not blatantly esoteric. As Carter, Dyer and Sharma state: "the notion of place within geographical literature is complex, multilayered and not readily typified" (2007: 755). As such, place is a highly contested notion (Cresswell, 2004)⁴⁰.

Edward Relph's (1976) seven categories of 'insideness' and 'outsideness' regarding place resonate with experiences gleaned within our constant shift from one place to the next. Lima, 4am, on the way to the airport. The taxi driver instructs me to crouch low on the back seat so my white face is not visible as we navigate through a poor neighbourhood – I feel utterly rejected by this place (existential outsideness). Writing

grant applications for a walking track proposal. The language required positions me as a dispassionate observer of the Derwent estuary foreshore (objective outsidersness). At a conference in the Adelaide Hills the surrounds of Hahndorf are purely incidental to my experience there (incidental outsidersness). Folding a calendar to the next month I view the familiar and evocative skyline of Federation Peak, a mountain I have never visited and yet feel deeply involved with (vicarious insidersness). Taking up residency in Bahrain airport during a 13 hour delay I am *here* – toileting, eating, and trying to sleep – within the enclosedness of the transcendence of airport life (behavioural insidersness). At home in Risdon Vale I am open to this place and its meanings as a manifestation of my sense of home (empathetic insidersness). And as a child in the Lake District of England I experience the significances of this place of my birth without self-conscious reflection (existential insidersness).

Constant transition from one place to the next can, in one sense, mask the possible depth and meaning of place through the recurrent experience of places from the perspective of an outsider. On the other hand, moving towards places and away from places creates an opportunity for place to assert itself. Through the transition from one place to the next we recognise changes in who and how we are within a place and, as such, place slips from the realm of the taken-for-granted and its existence and its significance spring forth.

In striving to comprehend and articulate place, John Agnew (1987) argues that there are three aspects that define place as a ‘meaningful location’ – locale, location and sense of place. *Locales* are “the settings in which social relations are constituted...; *location*, the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction as defined by social and economic processes operating at a wider scale; and *sense of place*, the local ‘structure of feeling’” (Agnew, 1987: 28). In the simplest sense locale is the social and physical materiality of place, location refers to a place’s fixed and

objective co-ordinates on the surface of the Earth, and sense of place is the subjective emotional attachment to a place by people (Cresswell, 2004).

While offering an insight into its multidimensionality, Agnew's understanding of place is framed around an object/subject dualism, a dualism that clearly delineates between that which is conceived to be objective and that which is conceived to be subjective. Precedence is given to the pole perceived to be rational and real – the objectivity ascribed to location and locale. Drawing upon previous discussion, a move can be made to reframe the role that the notions *locale*, *location* and *sense of place* play in the understanding and interpretation of place. Rather than location and locale being categorised in some way as objective and 'sense of place' relegated to the realm of subjectivity, it is possible to understand each of these as differing intersubjective experiences of place or, rather, umbrella terms for collections of intersubjective experiences of place. A person's experience of locale may differ significantly from another's, yet still remain focused on the materiality of the same geographic place.

Similarly, the experience of a place gained through a description of location, for example through the measurements of longitude and latitude, may be understood as one of a range of intersubjective possibilities, rather than a description of place that is in some way more 'objective' and more 'real' than other understandings of place. Longitude and latitude belong to an intersubjective 'sense of place'.

In this light, the term 'sense of place' may best be seen as a descriptor for the range of possible intersubjective experiences of place. The conception of grid coordinates, facts and figures concerning the social materiality of a place, and my personal 'sense of a place', can all be framed as differing 'senses of place' in that 'senses of place' refers to the intersubjective experience of place. One intersubjective experience of place cannot claim to be more 'real' or 'objective' than the others, and it is the coming together – the corroboration – offered by a range of intersubjectivities that leads to an understanding of place and the meaningfulness of place. It is the coming together of

differing intersubjective perspectives and nodes of commonality in understandings that subsequently emerge that allow us to both describe the meaning of place and ascribe meaning to place.

The diversity of perspectives and positions within place discourse can be conceived as a dynamic collection of intersubjective experiences of place – be this Doreen Massey’s ‘global sense of place’ (Massey, 1997) or Tim Cresswell’s addition of ‘space’ and ‘landscape’ to Agnew’s three points for defining place as a ‘meaningful location’ (Cresswell, 2004). Each place theorist describes a ‘sense of place’ – an intersubjective experience of place – whether this is rooted within the actual and particular of a specific place or within the abstractions of pure theory.

Most theories of place are senses of place that have been abstracted from the actuality and particularity of place. Such abstraction may at times be necessary. Philosopher Jeff Malpas asserts that:

arriving at some understanding of the structure of place – albeit a structure always instantiated in diverse ways – is ... crucial if place is to have any theoretical significance at all. To reject the attempt to arrive at any sort of conceptual clarification in regard to place is effectively to reject its usefulness as a concept – moreover to reject all such clarification is to reject the very attempt to understand it (Malpas, 1998: 22).

Abstraction may also be useful – by viewing one’s own place through the lens of someone else’s place theory it is possible to experience both the place and the theory in a new light. However, it can be fraught with limitations. As Hay writes, he feels compelled toward a rejection of:

a theoretical understanding of place on the ground that this is a more contrived and artificial and hence less insightful path to a deep place-knowing... I now turn increasingly to the *experiencers*

of place for insights and inspiration. I wish to learn place from people whose intermediation with it is unencumbered by the shaping insights of theory (Hay, P., 2003: 272-85).

The act of abstracting an intersubjective experience, a sense of place, into theory is an act that disembodies idea from actuality and particularity. This disembodiment is a reinforcement of Descartes' mind/matter dualism, in that the mind – the ideas – are separated (or perceived to be separable) from matter and the physicality of experience. The ideas as abstracted from the body receive priority, and as a consequence much of the experience is either lost or denigrated. It is by returning or re-turning towards place as it is known in the day-to-day that vivid and meaningful understandings of place and our self within place may emerge beyond the abstractions and universalisations of theory. As such, it is by returning and re-turning towards the day-to-day of place through the broadly understood intersubjective perspectives of location and locale that a place can perhaps best be introduced.

4.2 *Senses of Risdon Vale*

4.2.1 Location and locale

13 Linden Road is a weather-board, largely unrenovated home with naked-dancing-women-wallpaper in the toilet and wood-smoke stains on the ceilings – three bedrooms, one 30-year-old hot water tank, Burnie-board interior walls⁴¹ and a tin roof. Inside, the house feels great with bare feet in summer and in winter grows moss on the window sill of the southernmost room. When I walk down the hall first thing in the morning the house creaks and cracks as if it's waking up and having a good stretch.

The house was constructed in 1963 and purchased by me in 2002. Marbles and toy soldiers unearthed during gardening tell that there were children living here at some time. There is also the grave of a dog below the back bedroom window and four concrete slabs, one of which retains a shed. When I moved into the house there was a

Hills hoist⁴² out back that stood amongst the woodland of Hills hoists on view from my kitchen window. I can see nine in all and twelve sheds of various shapes and sizes.

13 Linden Road is one of the 900-odd homes that together cover approximately 1km² at the intersection of Risdon Vale Creek and Grasstree Hill Rivulet (see Figure 1).

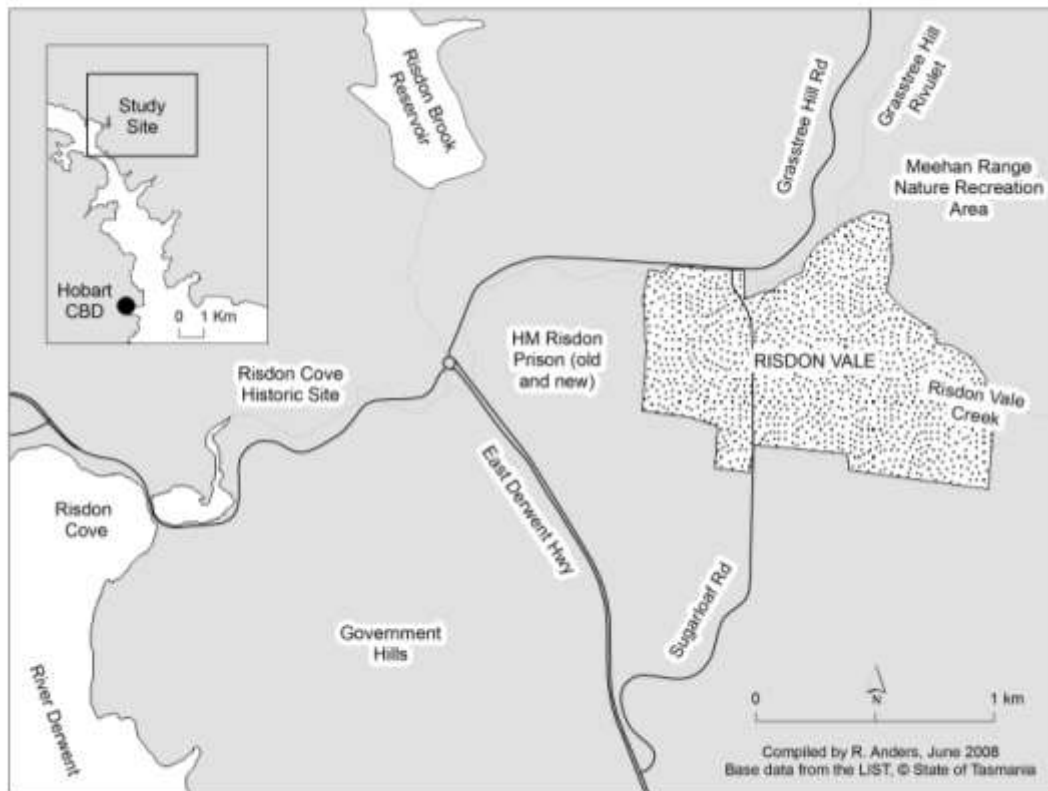
These were, by and large, constructed by the Tasmanian Government in the late 1950s and early 1960s in response to the growing need for low cost housing (Lewis, 2000).

Following the Second World War marriages increased, the age at which people chose to marry decreased, and migration to Tasmania increased, as did intrastate migration from bush to urban areas. During this time two thirds of the houses constructed by the government were sold, while the rest were retained as public rental housing. Risdon Vale was just one in a suite of subdivisions built by the government – state-wide over 27,000 homes were constructed; 16 percent of all of Tasmania's houses (Lewis, 2000).

Risdon Vale now has a population of almost 3000, and is an outlying suburb of Tasmania's capital city, Hobart – population just over 200,000 (ABS, 2008a). As the crow flies Risdon Vale is 8km northeast of Hobart's central business district – 15 minutes by car, and half an hour by bus.

In the course of building suburbs the Tasmanian Government did more than build houses. It also constructed parks, playgrounds, shops, churches and community centres. 'The Shops' lie at the heart of Risdon Vale, alongside the oval, Catholic church, community hall and primary school. Located at latitude 42°49' and longitude 147°21' and 40 metres above sea level (the suburb itself extends from 30 to 90 metres above sea level), The Shops form the community hub that also includes the Neighbourhood Centre, Community Health Centre, hairdresser, supermarket, butcher, newsagency, takeaway, pharmacy, bakery, tattooist and petrol station. There are also several long-term vacant shopfronts.

Figure 1. Risdon Vale and surrounds (CBD – central business district)



Each house that was constructed came with its own garden. Fifty years on these gardens offer an interesting reflection of individual mores and community demographics. In fact, there is a demonstrated relationship in Hobart between garden vegetation and neighbourhood socio-economic status (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2007). Risdon Vale is dominated by gardens that are either ‘exotic shrub gardens’ or ‘non-gardens’. The former is defined as “species poor (<40), usually treeless, dominated by hedging shrubs and lawn, with herbs and bulbs rare or absent”, and the latter as consisting of “lawn and/or artificial surfaces with less than 10 ornamental or productive plant species, usually hardy survivors from a previous garden, sprouting from places difficult to mow” (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2007: 317). The ‘exotic shrub’ garden type makes up approximately 40 percent of gardens in low socio-economic suburbs in Hobart. This type of garden correlates with high unemployment, a high

percentage of rental households, low household income and a low percentage of inhabitants with tertiary qualifications and working as professional/managerial employees (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2007). According to the 2006 census (ABS, 2008b), the national unemployment rate was 5.2 percent, while Risdon Vale's was 13 percent. Most of those in work identified as labourers (22.1 percent as compared to the national average of 10.5 percent). Median household income was \$637 per week compared to the national median of \$1027. There were many one parent families (28.6 percent compared to 15.8 percent nationally), the divorce and separation rate was higher and the marriage rate lower. One quarter of homes in Risdon Vale were rented, with half of these forming part of the public housing system. Risdon Vale's 'working class' roots are reflected in the suburb's long-term support of the Australian Labor Party – in the 2007 federal election for the House of Representatives, 65 percent of the primary vote went to the Labor candidate (AEC, 2008).

There is some variation in houses and gardens within the suburb. The houses along Linden Road, as it curls around the northern tip of Risdon Vale, splitting at one point to embrace a small park with trees, swings, slide and bouncy wombat, appear a little better maintained than those in some other streets. Linden Road is one of the higher streets, with views southwest across the rest of the suburb, Government Hills and the Wellington Range. Central within this view is the old Risdon Prison, nicknamed the 'pink palace' due to its original colour scheme (Alexander, 2003). The old prison was constructed in 1960 and is still used as a minimum security facility. However, following years of disquiet both inside and outside the prison regarding conditions – including the death of five prisoners during a four month period in 1999 (ABC, 2008) – a new prison was opened adjacent to the old one in 2006.

Views of the new HM Prison Risdon from Linden Road are largely obscured by trees, but a defining characteristic of the suburb, of both the exotic shrub and non garden types, is the absence of trees. Geographer Jamie Kirkpatrick (2006) posits a number of

theories for what he describes as the arboriphobia of low socio-economic areas. These include poorer families needing room for children to play, the need of the wealthy to demonstrate their status by not having to control everything while the poor strive to control what little they can, the visibility afforded by little vegetation creating a sense of security in communities where criminal activity may be more of a problem, and poorer people having been recently displaced from land where 'nature' is more likely to be something to be contended with than a passive backdrop. Another explanation proffered by Kirkpatrick is the social and community interaction that is facilitated by open treeless gardens. In Risdon Vale the predominance of low fences along the front and the anterior sides of each property, in combination with the lack of dense treed front gardens, means that interactions with neighbours and passers-by contributes greatly to a sense of community that is perhaps harder to find in the more affluent suburbs. While gardening out front it is usual to spend (at least) half your time chattering over the fence – conversations that are continued on the regular bus service and at the local shops.

There is also a relationship between the presence of trees and substrate type. The higher the income and the more clayey the soils, the greater the proportion of gardens with trees (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2007). Triassic sandstone underlies Linden Road and much of the northern side of Risdon Vale. I only have to dig half a metre through sandy soil to hit the solid smoothed base, and I have had to introduce clay into my veggie patch to aid with water absorption and retention. The gardens in Risdon Vale not only tend to be arboriphobic, but also hydrophobic. Aside from the sandstone most of the suburb is spread out upon the flatter land dominated by Quaternary alluvial deposits surrounding Risdon Vale Creek and its intersection with Grasstree Hill Rivulet (MRT, 2001; 2003).

Despite its location within the drowned river valley that defines the Derwent estuary (Green and Coughanowr, 2003), Risdon Vale sits apart from the majority of suburbs

that line the River Derwent. Between it and the Derwent lie Government Hills and the suburb itself is surrounded by bush and rural land. To Risdon Vale's north and south is a collection of large privately owned blocks. The west of the suburb is bordered by the prison, which in turn borders the Risdon Cove Historic Site. Risdon Cove is both the site of first British occupation of the island in 1803 and the site of the first massacre of Aboriginal Tasmanians by the British in 1804 (Boyce, 2008). The bush to the east of Risdon Vale forms part of the Meehan Range (Mt Direction) Nature Recreation Area, a tract of protected land that covers 430 hectares. Named after James Meehan, the surveyor attached to the British settlement party in 1803 (Leaman, 1999), the Meehan Range is a collection of low-lying hills extending along Hobart's eastern shore.

The vegetation in the part of the Meehan Range that borders Risdon Vale is dominated by *Eucalyptus risdonii*, known commonly as the Risdon peppermint. This small tree is endemic to Hobart's eastern shore, growing predominantly on the Permian mudstone from sea level to 150 metres (Williams and Potts, 1996). The Risdon peppermint is adapted to extremely dry conditions and requires fire to limit competition from other species. It is listed as rare under the Threatened Species Protection Act (1995). A distinctive feature of the Risdon peppermint is the retention of juvenile foliage into adulthood. The leaves are stalkless and occur opposite one another along the stem, with the base of opposing leaves fused. The leaves are a soft powdery green/blue/purple, and are used worldwide in floral arrangements. Due to its close proximity to urban areas the Risdon peppermint is considered to be under threat from subdivision (TSU, 2003).

The dryness of Hobart's eastern shore, to which the Risdon peppermint is well adapted, is a factor that distinguishes it from the western shore. A distinctive feature of Tasmania's cool temperate climate is a cool wet western half and a warmer drier east. The River Derwent lies on the cusp of this climatic gradient and while the Derwent region has a mean maximum of 23°C in January and 11°C in July and rainfall is

approximately 570mm per annum, its eastern shore tends to be warmer, drier and with more clear days than the western shore (BOM, 2008).

The locale of Risdon Vale has over recent years experienced a shift at least in part influenced by the housing ‘boom’ of the mid-2000s. 10 years ago it was possible to buy a house in decent condition for around \$50,000. Now the going rate may be over \$200,000. You can pay \$250 per week to rent a modest three bedroom home. While it may still be possible to refer to Risdon Vale as low socio-economic, within the context of broad economic trends this may be somewhat misleading. Affordable housing has become increasingly scarce (a trend that looks likely to continue for some time) and even homes in suburbs like Risdon Vale are out of the reach of many. There is a new burgeoning underclass, as evidenced by growing homelessness rates and increases in dependency on welfare agencies (ACOSS, 2005). While it is important not to dismiss the economic hardship of many in Risdon Vale – many windows are hung with sheets rather than curtains and untreated dental problems are a frequent occurrence – there exist in Risdon Vale pockets of relative affluence. High front fences have begun to spring up along certain sections of certain streets, and the prevalence of ‘home makeovers’ with the latest styles and colours reflect a national trend in urban and suburban gentrification (Allon, 2008). 13 Linden Road has had a fresh lick of ‘Norwegian spruce’, a new ‘energysaver’ gas heater has replaced the old wood heater and two layers of nylon carpet have given way to ‘enchant’ – 100 percent New Zealand wool. A stepped pathway wanders through a dense native front garden dominated by trees.

4.2.2 “Just got in here”

“You’ve just got in here” was the explanation given by a boy when he discovered I didn’t know where the local waterfall was.

Risdon Vale, when viewed from Sphinx Rock upon the forested slopes of Mt Wellington, sits apart from the string of suburbs that follow the River Derwent

foreshore. It also sits apart from the river, lying behind Government Hills and embraced by an arc in the Meehan Range. It remains, despite the parcelling of farmland for housing, ringed by bush and distinct from the sprawl of neighbouring Geilston Bay. As I turn from the East Derwent Highway and drive the curve of Sugarloaf Road, having left the throb of Macquarie Street in the central business district and the push and pull between the traffic lights that string the eastern shore, I descend from 70 to 50 to 40 kilometres per hour into Risdon Vale. There is a feeling, underlain by geology and geomorphology and associated entwined responses to this place by humans – the burning carried out by the Paredarerme and the colonising and planning of non-Aboriginal Tasmania – of leaving somewhere else and ‘getting into’ Risdon Vale.

There is also the ‘getting in’ associated with the government housing history of Risdon Vale – the application for, the wait upon, and the allocation of a place within this place. This legacy of placement hangs on despite three quarters of the houses in Risdon Vale being privately owned and only about 13 percent remaining in government hands (ABS, 2008b). It perhaps represents for some people a ‘getting in’ which carries relief and security, while for others ‘getting in’ reflects the confines more often associated with the adjacent Risdon Prison. There always lies the possibility of a potent mixture of two – a coming home to an imposition of limitations and constraints.

‘Got in here’ like walking through prison gates and the slow swing of the gate before it crashes behind you. ‘Got in’ amongst the ring of bushy hills, once the domain of the murderous bushranger Rocky Whelan (Alexander, 2003), ‘got in’ after crossing over from the outside. The Shops are arranged on a slope, in a ‘U’ – the lowest point lies at the base. They look inward upon the car park and their back is turned from oval, hall, playground and school. There is a feeling of falling down into them, and tumbling up against the prison-grey blocks, roller barricades and steel mesh. Kids hang and perch

on railings at The Shops' highest point, resisting the downward tug and the walled enclosure. Overhung by cheery pictures of freshly cooked pasta and dew-picked lettuce, The Shops catch you and you quickly clamber out, back into the openness of the streetscape, yet still held within the vale.

The sense of apartness within Risdon Vale gives the place the feel of a small country town. This isolation is attractive for me, yet the options provided by money for a bus fare, a full tank of petrol, a decent bike (and the health to ride), and friends and family elsewhere makes going out an integral part of the pleasure of coming home. Being at home in Risdon Vale carries with it both the day-to-day ability to go elsewhere and the desire to dream about the possibilities of other places. Being trapped within this place during the confinement of early motherhood – bihourly breast feeds, nappies to wash and the binds of sleep – although a transitory period, threatened a disintegration of self, a corrosion of well-being back to the core. Faced with the potential challenge of a new and unwanted sense of this place and of self within this place – one that at least appeared to be stubbornly bounded – resistance born of the knowledge that an ability to leave would return meant that this core was never developed in a different way and the familiar self was, at least in part, retained. Had I lived in Risdon Vale in the 1960s the possibility of such resistance would have been much less likely. Fewer cars and an infrequent bus service enhanced the sense of the boundedness of this place. To get groceries involved a trip to the Derwent foreshore, a ferry ride across the river and a laden return (Alexander, 2003).

In Relph's words, the "essence of place lies... in the experience of an 'inside' that is distinct from an 'outside'... To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place" (Relph, 1976: 49). To talk about 'getting in here' carries with it the possibility of outsideness and the possibilities of insideness, an understanding that a sense of place within Risdon Vale is grounded within both a sense of the inside and the outside, and

movement and situatedness in between. To be in Risdon Vale you have more than likely come from somewhere else, to have experienced Risdon Vale from the outside before moving to the inside. And once inside there still lies the possibility of retaining the extreme of outsideness – an awareness of personal non-involvement with a place and its inhabitants; a sense of not belonging, of unreality and homelessness (Relph, 1976), as well as the possibilities of a drift or a reach towards an insideness – at its most deep when “a place is experienced without deliberate and selfconscious reflection yet is full of significances... of knowing implicitly that *this* place is where you belong” (Relph, 1976: 55). A sense of Risdon Vale is inevitably linked to mobility and the probability of constant change to where and what is ‘inside’ and where and what is ‘outside’. In this, the boundedness of being ‘inside’ is but a part within an unbounded whole. The inside is only defined as such through its attachments to what lies beyond, as the outside is tied to what lies within. Where slipping between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ is the norm, a case can be made for a focus upon this slippage, upon the ground and experiences between arrival and departure both within the physicality of place and within sense of place. To focus on the slippage in between is to focus on the relationships that bind Risdon Vale within the world and to focus on the inherent dynamism and open-endedness of these relationships.

Relationships are always in a state of flux, be these ecological relations, social interactions, geological processes, or the interconnectivities between these. While beings, things and happenings retain within this flux their own unique apparentness, the complexity entailed decrees an open-endedness to the ongoing becoming of place, and hence to an ongoing becoming of sense of place. This notion of process rests upon an understanding of the relational nature of place; of place as the shifting manifestation of internal relations. For Doreen Massey (1997) the relational nature of place is configured as process; as unbounded – stretching out along relational pathways within a globalising world; as not having a unique identity, but “full of

internal differences” (Massey, 1993: 67); yet retaining a uniqueness, a specificity that results, at least in part, from the differential nature of relationships – for a complexity of reasons relationships are not reproduced in a homologising fashion. Massey describes what ensues as a “global sense of the local, a global sense of place” (Massey, 1997: 323).

In contemplating the role of Skiddaw, a mountain in the north of the English Lake District in the ‘event’ that is the town of Keswick, Massey (2005) describes what she terms the “elusiveness of place” (2005: 130). “This is the event of place... in the simple sense of the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of process rather than a thing... it is a uniqueness, and a locus of the generation of new trajectories and new configurations” (Massey, 2005: 141). The uniqueness of each place represents a “throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman” (Massey, 2005: 140). As such, places “necessitate invention ... They implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in our relations with nonhumans they ask how we shall respond to our temporary meeting-up with these particular rocks and stones and trees” (Massey, 2005: 141).

In challenging notions of a static, timeless ‘nature’ as providing the foundations for a place-based grounding, Massey argues that: “the stake is not change itself... for change of some sort is inevitable; rather it is the character and the terms of that change” (Massey, 2006: 40). In her critique of generalised and homogenising descriptors of change, in particular David Harvey’s time-space compression (Harvey, 1989), Massey offers the notion of ‘power-geometry’ as a means of accounting for and engaging with the complex, fluxing and differentiated nature of social relations, and as a way of avoiding what she identifies as ‘unprogressive’ senses of place. By focusing predominantly upon social relations and only making tentative engagement with the

more-than-human, however, Massey's comprehension of relational change and her emerging sense of place remains embedded within the human realm, particularly that perceived through the lens of contemporary globalisation.

Given that it is process, Massey argues that place is both the here and the now so that "it won't be the same 'here' when it is no longer now" (Massey, 2005: 139). Implicit within her ideas, particularly within the notions of 'throwntogetherness' and the 'elusiveness' of place, is her experience of the rapidity of global change. While acknowledging the slow, somewhat impenetrable process of the geological, Massey describes encounters with the more-than-human as 'temporary', a perception that couches both human and more-than-human relationality within the rapidity of process, of change implicit within contemporary globalisation. As Massey notes, globalisation has always existed – relations have always tied the local to the global – but the rate of globalisation has increased significantly over recent centuries and as such relationships between the local and global have increased (and are increasing) in complexity (Massey, 1995). Negotiation within the rapidity of contemporary change leads to a sense of place that is so dynamic as to appear somewhat random and blurry – to use Massey's terms, as 'throwntogether' and 'elusive'.

It is this that leads Massey to refer to interactions with the more-than-human as 'temporary'. While couching her understanding of the temporary within the geological time scale (Massey, 2006, Massey, 2005) – in part as an attempt to bypass the human-centreness she perceives in, for example, the work of Tim Ingold (Massey, 2006: 41) – such a characterisation fails to adequately acknowledge the 'boundupness' of relational change. While relations between the human and the more-than-human are in constant flux, the multidimensionality of relational qualities and how these are internally related means that describing relations as 'temporary' can lead to a focus on transience without recognition that such transience is bound within *togetherness*. Massey's account remains embedded within an experience of the rapidity of change as

predominantly about the social and diminishes the role of other complex and highly differentiated enmeshed relational webworks. It militates against the *coherence* afforded by an understanding of internal relations – not a coherence that is fixed and determinate, but a coherence that is relationally unifying.

An alternative sense of place is one that remains globally enmeshed, but that negates the characterisation of engagements with rocks, stones and trees as ‘temporary’.

Rather, in such a sense of place the notion of ‘throwntogetherness’ is replaced by the notion of ‘evolvedtogetherness’ – a notion that expresses relational interdependency, and the human, the social, as coevolved and coevolving within the more-than-human. Such an understanding of place still retains Massey’s sense of unboundedness, process and heterogeneity, yet offers a more holistic perspective of place and acknowledges the ‘being-there-togetherness’ of self within place (Diehm, 2003). Incorporating ecological relationality, for one, within Massey’s power-geometry, leads, I believe, to an understanding of place that is anything but elusive.

Massey’s ‘elusiveness of place’ is simply an illusion fuelled by the ability of a powerful few to transcend the necessity of the local and to instead play free-for-all within the global; not only to the disadvantage of many people, but also inherently reliant upon the disadvantage, degradation and destruction of the more-than-human. The *impressiveness* of place is made apparent through the experience of rapid climate change – a phenomenon that is one consequence of such exploitation and a phenomenon that, as it intensifies, carries the agency of the atmosphere and the planet as a whole largely beyond the ken and ultimately the adaptability of many. Climate change provides an illustration Massey’s of global sense of the local, but also highlights how firmly we are bound up with other entities. Faced with growing uncertainty the local impresses upon us a consideration of vital needs – food, water, shelter, community and so on. The *impressiveness* of place is brought to the fore and the place in which we *reside* asserts itself with increasing strength as the place we

inhabit. The relations we hold, and hold us, within the local bind us more tightly to these places, but not, importantly, to the exclusion of global relationality.

The availability of local drinking water, which promises to be increasingly problematic under the influence of climate change, brings to the fore both a global sense of the local, and the impressiveness of place. Risdon Vale sits at the intersection of two creeks – two winter flowing, summer stagnating creeks. Grasstree Hill Rivulet has a bushy route dropping down below Grasstree Hill Road, after a millennium of hewing sandstone clefts and cliffs that skirt the hillsides above. Risdon Vale Creek comes as well from the bush. A gentler run slowed by a widening valley, it trickles, sometimes gushes, through the suburb, bridging beneath Sycamore Road and Heather Street. Where it cuts past the school this creek gives an illusion of depth – a 2-foot infill of plastic drink bottles offers a solid transparency to an otherwise puddle of water. On a flat rock surface above Grasstree Hill Rivulet someone has painted ‘RVB’ in a hand matching ‘Risdon Vale Bogan’ splashed across the newsagent’s roller door. In Canada, according to the Collins Dictionary, ‘bogan’ is a sluggish side stream – an apt description of the state of flow of the rivulet and the creek – though in Australia ‘bogan’⁴³, twentieth century origin unknown, is a class-based slur meaning fool or hooligan.

The illusion of water was one of the factors that attracted the colonising British to Risdon Cove in 1803 and also contributed to them establishing a new settlement on the other side of the River Derwent in 1804 (Boyce, 2008). Risdon Vale is no leafy green suburb, yet many of the street names recall a yearning for the water sorely missed at the time of first invasion – water to nourish the lindens in Linden Road, the magnolias of Magnolia Street and the lantana of Lantana Street. There is one street name that rings true imaginatively if not ecologically – spinifex. Broad and treeless, on one of those wind-blown afternoons with a bush-smoke tinge to the summer blue, when even the cats are inside behind closed curtains, as a gust whirls through it is easy

to imagine spinifex shimmering under a desert sun, or bouncing its own way across the undulating bitumen.

There is water, enough for swarms of mosquitoes during the summer to pester Hawthorn and Poplar Street residents, but up-hill unscreened windows remain wide open through hot summer nights. Yet between Risdon Cove and the suburb of Risdon Vale sits 3,600 megalitres of water (HW, n.d.) – a wide wet temptation between the parched and wrinkled hills. A walk to the head of the dam that contains this water reveals no river and no large stream supply, just a rocky gully that is next to dry for much of the year. In this sense Risdon Brook Reservoir is a mirage – a shimmering sheet of water within the quavering dryness of browned-off grass and sclerophyll scrub. The low ring of hills surrounding it and marking the northern end of the Meehan Range is not a rainmaker. Mount Wellington hummocks water from laden westerlies soaking Hobart's western shore in disparate bursts and week long deluges. From Risdon Vale the view to the west is often backed by low dense cloud, while out the back door concrete burns bare feet, soil is blown to dusty sand and flowers crisp brown. As Clarence City Council announces via its 'sunburst' logo and in its positioning statement, it's a 'brighter place' on the eastern shore.

The Risdon Brook Reservoir was constructed in 1968, a century and a half after the British translocated from Risdon Cove to the western shore. The water in Risdon Brook comes from the Bryn Estyn outtake tens of kilometres upstream on the River Derwent. Pumped, carried, filtered, cleansed, treated and piped, while this water springs from the Tasmanian highlands, once removed from the Derwent it dwells within the realm of globalisation and all the relations that this entails. The infrastructure alone binds this water within an enmeshment of past and present relations that implicate beings, things and happenings all over the planet. Risdon Vale as it stands spills out across the globe, flowing out beyond any possible containment

within the bounded notion of watershed. The ‘getting in’ of water to Risdon Vale is a global affair.

In Risdon Vale I drink water infused with relational memories past and present – the evolved and evolving chemical, ecological, geological, hydrological and social relations that are implicit within the presence of water in the world and in my home. This tap water carries within it the rapidity of process of contemporary globalisation, a rapidity that seems to speak of the dissolution of the local, of *genus loci*, yet is also a manifestation of the non-sustainable. Running my hand along the waterworn sandstone at Risdon Vale’s local (and usually bone dry) waterfall, however, I encounter a slowness through which the spirit of this place most certainly flows. It is a spirit of place imbued by processes so gradual that by human reckoning they are construed as a deep essence underpinning a sensing of place. In Risdon Vale the sandstone bedrock, sandy soil, dry tussling spring winds, the enclosing curve of the Meehan Range, the *Eucalyptus risdonii* perspire a Risdon Vale *genius loci*, a tangible meaningful fluxing essence of the local. For me it is this that promises continuance beyond the problematic nature of current change, and our participation within this continuance holds the key to challenges such as the lack of ecologically sustainable water in Risdon Vale.

This focus on the slower of the processes points towards a stability of place that both underpins and undercuts the current rapidity of globalising processes. This stability reflects our boundupness within the evolved and evolving world. Unlike the expressions of stability criticised by Massey (2006) which are instilled with a sense of timeless authenticity, this stability is not a walled refuge but an opportunity for a reawakening to the ecological enmeshment of being. Reflections upon a childhood of growing up at Ullswater in the Lake District, near where Massey is in part unearthing her understanding and theorising of place (Massey, 2005, Massey, 2006), I have kenned a stability of place. Ullswater, 25 years after moving to Australia, remains a

potent and vivid force within my dreamscapes. While some of these dreams are exciting, calming and uplifting, others are melancholy, dangerous and terrifying – the revving of an approaching truck on a narrow road with no room for escape, and the air-sucking roar of fighter jets doing low level practice runs through valleys and over my home are childhood terrors that revolve within my adult dreamscapes. In two trips back to the Lake District as an adult the slowness of place is evident – I walk the same paths, climb the same mountains, jump the same stiles, recognise family traits in children on the local school bus and struggled to cross country roads hemmed by tourist traffic. With my back to a blasting easterly, perched on top of Hallin Fell, I watch two people dive off the boathouse jetty into Ullswater and swim out to the cormorant post and back, just as people had done within this place when I was a child. There is nothing static about this experience of stability; just as a boat adrift is not static yet remains stable, the Lake District and my experience within it are not the same ‘here’ when it is not the same ‘now’, yet there remains a ‘hereness’ and ‘nowness’ that means it is still *the* Lake District for me. Hence the spirit of place, the *genius loci* of the Lake District can be perceived, interpreted and understood to rest within the slower of slow processes within the entwining web of processes that make up place.

It could be argued that a sense of the ‘stable’ within the Lake District is an aberration reliant largely upon its status as a national park⁴⁴. There can be no doubt that national park status cushions this place from some aspects of the globalising world, as the Meehan Range’s status as ‘Nature Recreation Area’ contributes to its protection. On the other hand this status also opens the way for the global and its rapidity of change – the predominance of tourism, the movement of goods and services, communication technologies and a dependence upon oil are all present, are all at home within the Lake District. The Lake District is thoroughly enmeshed within the rapidity of a contemporary global sense of place. This enmeshment is certainly different from that

of London (Massey, 2007), but is still implicated within the global. Its status as national park is just part of its uniqueness within a non-homologising relational whole. Rather than creating a false impression of stability, national park status can be seen as bringing to the fore certain slow processes that contribute to its unique spirit of place. The processes that are slow enough to bring the perception of stability will, within this relational world, vary from place to place.

Boundaries cannot be drawn around a place based on its *genius loci* as relationality merges the spirit of place between places and the experience of spirit of place is based on situatedness rather than enclosure. There can also be no drawing back to a sense of place as rooted within something true, pure and timeless. Place remains in process, unbounded and non-homologising. However there can most certainly be a reverencing of the spirit of place; an enunciation of the coevolving participation of beings, things and happenings (including human participation) within the uniqueness of the local. Identification with the local becomes a sensing of and a bonding with the familiar within a coevolving world – openness to what lies around the next bend, but with a focus upon participation within the actuality and particularity of ‘hereness’ and ‘nowness’.

The defence of place, of spirit of place, is a defence of the slower of the processes that make up this spirit – the slow processes that, to human ken, give place a sense of stability. It is neither a defence of place as static, nor of the place and its inhabitants as in some way infused with a timeless quality. Rather, the defence of place is a defence of the slow and the coevolving participation of beings, things and happenings within this slowness. More often than not, particularly within the rapidity of contemporary globalisation, these slow processes are the processes of biological and physical evolution – the ecological and the geological. Climate change threatens the biological processes that imbue spirit of place, and as such the current upsurge in concern and response to rapid global climate change is perhaps the greatest defence of place yet to

be undertaken. In moving to mitigate the impacts of climate change we are moving to defend our local places as they are enmeshed within the global. We are moving to protect our local spirits of place as they have sustained us, be this in a somewhat superficial level for those of us who are privileged enough to negotiate and negotiate well within a global sense of place, or at the deeper level of peoples reliant upon their locale for many of their vital needs. Hence the green slogan ‘act locally think globally’ can be seen as a defence of the local – local spirit of place – within the unboundedness of evolutionary processes.

Climate change pushes us beyond defences of place that may be construed as bounded and hence falling foul of NIMBYism⁴⁵, parochialism and nationalism. It brings to the fore the relational nature of the world and the non-sustainability of contemporary globalisation. As we move towards more ecologically sustainable modes of living the impressiveness of the local is brought increasingly to the fore. Crossing dry creek beds and visiting the local waterless waterfall brings home my reliance on the global. My water, along with my food and other goods and services come from a myriad of elsewhere that are bound up within the non-sustainable. As such, there remains a persistent doubt in my sensing of Risdon Vale, a persistent sense of outsideness, for without water what is Risdon Vale to me?

4.2.3 The Dowlocks

Walks with Grandad Treloar were particular highlights in the earlier years and he told me that the local, grassy, rounded, quarry-hollowed hills were called the Dowlocks. I later realised that no one else called them by that name – the name must have come from his childhood in Cornwall, before the tin mines closed and his family were transported by rail (reputedly in cattle trucks) to Lancashire to work in the cotton mills (Booth, P. T., 2007: 3).

Memory is decisively formative, yet perpetually malleable and always shifting. What is remembered becomes forgotten, clouded through the passage of time and the nebulous nature of experience. What is forgotten arises to the fore, sometimes swiftly, at other times heralded by a quiet reverberation of a distant echo. Remembering a memory adds highlights and colours otherwise absent, and remembering to forget shapes and moulds the gap remaining into something altogether different. To perceive *genius loci*, spirit of place, in terms of memory and memory alone unleashes a spirit of Puck-like qualities – unpredictable, chaotic, mischievous, with ever-present mirth and looming pitfalls. Rooted within the physicality of place, of specific places, Puck is no longer so elusive as to be explained away as a dream. Rather, the physicality of place grounds memory within the local and the particular and offers a pathway towards an understanding of sense of place.

Memory is multi-dimensional and holds considerable depth beyond the day-to-day experience of the individual⁴⁶. We each garner personal memories of experiences within our own lifetime. Such memories can be described as “subjective remembrances” (Chang and Huang, 2005: 268), but with a rethinking, a repositioning of subjectivity offered by phenomenology, a move away from the ‘merely’ personal, into an experiential understanding of such recollections provides a more integrated understanding of the role that this type of memory can play. The personal memory of an individual is perceived as enmeshed within a whole, ultimately indivisible from its contextual webwork, yet personally unique and situationally distinctive. As such, a focus on the personal remembrance of an individual can provide insights into memories and meanings beyond that of the individual, yet the uniqueness and distinctiveness of such experiences provides an esoteric base that has the power to enliven and embolden contemplations upon memory and upon place.

Personal memories are fused within the collective memory, the latter a notion that Duncan Bell describes as an “experientially formatted inter-subjective phenomenon”

(2003: 65). As I remember the day of my child's birth, the birthday itself becomes the intersubjective phenomenon that is remembered and re-remembered through annual ritual and place-based gathering. 'Memory and place' discourse has largely focused upon personal memory and collective memory (also termed social memory, public memory, historical memory, popular memory or cultural memory) and the role of power and domination – the power of elites to choose what is remembered and what is forgotten in the memorialisation of place and places⁴⁷. Steve Hoelscher and Derek Alderman contend that "social [collective] memory is inherently instrumental: individuals and groups recall the past not for its own sake, but as a tool to bolster different aims and agendas" (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004: 349).

The interpretation of collective memory as a 'top-down' instigation – a one-way street if you like – is a far cry from the notion of memory evoked by a Puck-like spirit, and Gareth Hoskins (2004) provides a brief review of work that challenges this linear reading of remembrance. He cites as an example, Graceland, Tennessee, where "memories of Elvis, far from being controlled by the site's authors, are reshaped and reworked constantly by visitors to Graceland by writing messages to Presley on an exterior wall" (Hoskins, 2004: 690). In reference to the 'birth day' example, as an 'authoritative' parent I may, at my child's birthday party, present a collection of images and tellings that evoke my memories of my child. This, however, is just one remembrance amongst many, and there is no clear linear relationship between my chosen remembrances and how collective memory will form. My chosen 'subjective' remembrance is just one within a webwork of other remembrances, and it is the coming together of these as intersubjective remembrances that determines the consolidation of a collective memory. Collective memory, as such, has an anarchic quality within which 'top-down' manipulations are at work, and sometimes dominate, but also within which other more nebulous forces can play a decisive Puck-like role.

The intersubjectivity of the personal and the collective is enmeshed within an inherited, often subconsciously held complex of mythologies that shape our understanding of place and ourselves within place. As historian Simon Schama contends in *Landscape and Memory* (1996), a consideration of place and memory involves, at least in part, an “excavation below our conventional sight-level to recover the veins of myth and memory that lie beneath the surface” (1996: 14):

The designation of the suburban yard as a cure for the afflictions of city life marks the greensward as a remnant of an old pastoral dream, even though its goatherds and threshers have been replaced by tanks of pesticide and industrial-strength mowing machines. And it is just because ancient places are constantly being given the topdressings of modernity ... that the antiquity of the myths at their core is sometimes hard to make out. It is there, all the same
(Schama, 1996: 16).

The role of myth within memory adds a temporal dimension to the understanding of memory described above. Not only is memory the intersubjective corroboration and possible collaboration as described by the day-to-day nature of personal and collective memory, it also feeds upon and is fed by the remembrances of intersubjectivities past. These intersubjectivities have largely moved beyond the contestations associated with the many lived dialogues of personal and collective memory, and as such are consolidated within powerful and coherent (though, as previously stated, subconsciously held) wholes.

A recognition of myth as part of the memory mix brings to considerations of ‘memory and place’ a nuanced complexity, and yet personal and collective memories and the mythology that infuses them may only be the tip of the iceberg. Humans evolved and continue to evolve within place. In this light the existence of deep remembrances can be recognised, evolutionary memories that are embedded in us as we are embedded within the earth. Such evolved memory lies largely within the realm of the taken-for-

granted and yet this notion undoubtedly infuses our very being. We are first and foremost earth dwelling inhabitants rooted amidst a world of earthly things, beings and happenings. When we are deprived of air our bodies and minds react within the remembrance of oxygen; a newborn perceives and grasps within some form of intuitive or instinctive remembrance of the significance of near and far; bacterial DNA remnants within our cells are a memory of symbiotic relationships past. All these things and more speak of a deep evolved embodiment within the history of earth and the evolution of life. As Casey states: “What is memory-laden exceeds the scope of the human: memory takes us into the environing world as well as into our individual lives” (Casey, 2000: xix). This evolved memory of rootedness within the earth, framed by atmosphere and substrate, and decorated within things, beings and happenings, steadies us within place, captivating both our minds and our bodies within the complex gestures of earthly inhabitation. It is perhaps the most powerful, yet the most diminished, of all memories.

Evolved memory sustains us upon the earth, constrains us to the earth and is the dense tapestry within which personal and collective memory and mythologies are interwoven. In this sense Descartes’ separation of mind and matter can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to forget our evolved memory; to diminish the earthiness of our selves. In modernity’s drive to remember to forget evolved memory the dense tapestry has been punched with holes and its threads have become entangled. Bewitched by modernity’s desires, when we turn towards our personal and collective memories and delve within the memories encompassed within myth we are forever floundering within the estrangement of forgetfulness and ultimately of placelessness. The modern human thus struggles to remember its place and ultimately its self.

The notion of evolved memory is in part reflected within the notion of embodiment, a notion heavily influenced by the writings of Merleau-Ponty. The “world is something our bodies are woven into over time... Embodiment is the ongoing dynamic process

of unfolding with those things to which it is sufficiently related” (Mazis, 2007: 133). Merleau-Ponty described ‘the flesh of the world’: “that means that my body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is perceived), and moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world reflects it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 248)⁴⁸. As David Abram writes:

For these other shapes and species have coevolved, like ourselves, with the rest of the shifting earth; their rhythms and forms are composed of layers upon layers of earlier rhythms, and in engaging them our own senses are led into an inexhaustible depth that echoes that of our own flesh. The patterns on the stream’s surface as it ripples over the rocks, or on the bark of an elm tree, or in a cluster of weeds, are all composed of repetitive figures that *never exactly repeat themselves*, of iterated shapes to which our sense may attune themselves even while the gradual drift and metamorphosis of those shapes draws our own awareness in unexpected and unpredictable directions (Abram, 1997: 63-4).

This understanding of self as melded within the world at large, both within the here and now emphasised by the discourse of ‘embodiment’ and within the co-evolved past of the earth, leads us towards a consideration of the role of ‘the world at large’, both within memory and as memory itself. We are compelled to consider the physicality of place not only as a distinctive thing to be remembered and which is shaped by remembering and forgetting, but as active and decisive intersubjective memory itself. As such, we are moved to recognise the agency of place (as memory) within the memory of self – personal, collective and mythical. The physicality of place not only has mnemonic powers and is not only open to manipulation in the pursuit of remembrances, it is both an embodiment of memory and embodiment within memory. Ken Foote (1997) offers a perspective upon the agency of place within memory. With particular reference to the barbed wire and brick crematoria of Nazi concentration

camps, he contends that such places “cannot be ignored; they demand interpretation” (Foote, 1997: 5). It is not simply a matter of the application of a groomed and potentially sanitised memory to a place that forms our sense of that place, nor is it the potential power of the subaltern, but a grounding of the Puck-like spirit within the local and the particular that gives us a local and particular understanding of place; as place comprised internally of relational memories. In other words, places themselves, even within an understanding of places as mere physicality, present themselves to us and push forth their meanings toward us. They are neither simply mnemonic nor are they simply mnemonic filters: they are themselves participants within a complexity of relational memories, from the personal to the collective, within myth, and as evolved.

Risdon Cove and upstream – part of the grassy Aboriginal hunting ground that begot farmland that begot the suburb of Risdon Vale – is a place that has been a powerful force within Tasmania’s recent history. In 1798 this place presented itself to explorers Bass and Flinders as rich pasture (Boyce, 2008); the picture of pastoral arcadia. As John Bowen described upon his establishment of the British ‘first settlement’ at Risdon Cove, it is a region “more like a nobleman’s park in England than an uncultivated country” (Glover, 1978: 10). This ‘imaginative geography’ – a geography that pays little attention to the actualities of a place or its inhabitants, but reflects instead the mythscapes and preoccupations of colonisers (Said, 2000: 2003) – was, within only a few months, subject to a ‘reality check’ – namely, limited water and the ramifications of invading a major hunting ground of the Paredarerme (Oyster Bay) tribe (Boyce, 2008). With the arrival of David Collins in February 1804 the main settlement was moved to Sullivan’s Cove on the Derwent’s western shore.

In May 1804 the group of soldiers that remained at Risdon Cove – still under the command of Bowen, but in Bowen’s absence – opened fire on a group of Aboriginal men, women and children who were approaching the Cove (Boyce, 2008). What is known is that shooting continued for three hours and the bodies of three Aboriginal

people were recovered, along with a purportedly orphaned two year old Aboriginal boy. What is not known is the precise number killed and what triggered the event – the frayed nerves of demoralised, possibly drunk soldiers or an attack from the Paredarerme, though the latter appears unlikely given the presence of women and children, along with evidence provided by an eyewitness account⁴⁹. This was the first documented massacre of Aboriginal people in Van Diemen's Land⁵⁰ (now Tasmania).

As a non-Aboriginal I am ever conscious of the restless, shifting shape of the colonial myth within Tasmania, and within Risdon Vale and at the Cove there is an incessant whisper of 'massacre'. Skirting an eroding bank in the surrounding bushland or excavating earth under the house, I wonder where the bullet-shattered bones lie. Out of the corner of my eye I catch the movement of black and of white shadows, only sometimes explained by the presence of a ghostly stag⁵¹ or a fire-charred stump.

Within the soil there is an uncertainty tinged with fear and edged with doubt. There is also a persistent wondering about what the Tasmanian Aborigines knew here, what richness of understandings and meanings have been stripped from the land with the murder and castigation of a whole land of people and the disregard for their descendants. How we interpret colonialism and the blood shed by the Aboriginal Tasmanians is still a matter of contestation, and the very notion of place within this land remains unresolved (Hay, P., 2003). Until recently this contestation took the form of the powerful assertions of a small white Tasmanian elite – assertions embodied in a denial of the continuing survival of Aboriginal Tasmanians – counteracted by the determined vocal disquiet of the Aboriginal Tasmanian community itself.

Risdon Cove was one of the sites of first discovery for me as a child; of first discovery of Tasmania, having moved with my family from the United Kingdom. We called at the distinctive pyramid-shaped visitor's centre and followed the path to the landing, pausing to read the inscription on the monument to Bowen and 'first settlement'.

Risdon Cove at this time was a site of sanctification. It was a "site set apart from its

surroundings and dedicated to the memory of an event, person, or group” (Foote, 1997: 8). It was a place that recalled chosen memories of colonisation, memories centred upon an effort to re-create a Little England. It was a place where the instrumentalist potentials of memory within the remembrance of place were palpable; where the small but highly influential white Tasmanian elite wrote the history. As historian James Boyce writes:

re-creating England was actually never a path chosen by many, especially in the earliest years. This is mainly the story of one group, that of a small but powerful elite who seized economic, social and, eventually, political control in this island from black and white alike during the 1820s and 30s, and to a significant extent have held on to it since... We have allowed our history to be defined by the actions of this small group of very powerful men whose direct experience of living here was buffered by capital and privilege (Boyce, 1996: 40).

The persistence of Georgian sandstone buildings and the decomposition of dwellings made from local timber and bark have acted to reinforce this sanitised view of Tasmania’s past. The re-creation of Little England is in this sense ‘evidenced’ by these buildings and the architecture at Risdon Cove – the pyramid design – was inspired by these Georgian buildings (NPWS, n.d).

When I returned to Risdon Cove in a period of exploration that preceded my move to Risdon Vale, the place had changed. An open gate, a closed visitor’s centre, the unkempt path to a weed-obscured memorial stone, and no signage and no brochures. No explicit and authoritative interpretation. Between these two visits, two decades apart, the disquiet voices of Tasmania’s colonial past had asserted themselves. The legacy of Risdon Cove – of occupation, colonisation, massacre and the near annihilation of the Aboriginal Tasmanians – revealed itself as still deeply contested despite two centuries of white history telling. Risdon Cove became one of a few

parcels of land handed ‘back’ to the Aboriginal Tasmanian community (Ryan, 1996) and this community asserted its right to control its own knowledge and its own stories and interpretations of its past, present and future. And for some time, at Risdon Cove, Aboriginal Tasmanians chose not to tell and not to interpret.

Risdon Cove as it stood upon my return, like the barbed wire and bricks of concentration camp crematoria, compelled interpretation. The very silence of the place, the open gate and closed doors, begged the question ‘why?’ In answering this question the word ‘massacre’ was pushed to the fore again and again and again. The silence of the place brought to the surface the very thing that the white Tasmanian elite had wished to diminish in its two centuries of instrumentalist collective memory formation. Confined to the oral telling, freed from written statements claiming historic factuality, remembrance took on a dynamic open-endedness beyond the control of the elite.

In one sense the silence of Risdon Cove created room for the doubt, fear and uncertainty about our colonial past to be given voice. As Foote proposes, the legends which emerge through oral tellings:

allow people to come to terms with shameful events – and the fears and anxieties produced by such events – when other remedies are unavailable or thwarted by the power of shame. In these situations people may actually find it helpful to localize their fears to particular places. A generalized sense of anxiety can thus be isolated and confined. A diffuse sense of fear or foreboding may then be faced more directly at a single site (Foote, 1997: 212).

However, in their silence the Aboriginal Tasmanians not only resisted the historic account asserted by the white Tasmania elite, and they certainly were not deliberately facilitating some kind of catharsis for white Tasmanians. What was also being resisted was a settling within self – within myself of my sense of place here within Risdon

Vale and within Tasmania. There has been a sentiment expressed from within the Aboriginal Tasmanian community that “the more displaced Europeans remain, the better for the claims of the Palawa”⁵² (Hay, P., 2003: 279). While the silence opened the door to a more subversive form of contestation, it also paved the way for an endless telling by whites that can only be ended through consolidation, and this means that it can only be ended by Aboriginal Tasmanians choosing to speak; by this community adding their voice to the mix. In other words, some kind of settlement within this place is only possible through a coming together of black and white tellings. Until this happens white tellings will remain in flux, and they will only be consolidated through acknowledgement and some kind of affirmation by the Aboriginal Tasmanian community. Thus, the possibility for the settling or continuing unsettledness of non-Aboriginals in this land is inescapably bound up with the Aboriginal Tasmanian community.

The bondedness between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Tasmania has been starkly brought to the fore in the recent work of historian James Boyce (2008). Boyce has recounted a vision of Tasmania’s earliest years following British invasion. He had earlier argued that the remembrances of the white Tasmanian elite deliberately obscure the “story of their [convicts] adaptation to the bush, and the subsequent survival of the first invasion fleet ... the story of the negotiation and interaction between Aboriginal and European peoples” (Boyce, 1996: 46-8). The adaptations of the early convicts within the Tasmanian bush and in liaison with the Aboriginal Tasmanians ensured not only the survival of the ‘first settlement’ through, for example, the trade in dogs and the sharing of bush knowledge. It also remains a distinctive and decisive element within contemporary Tasmania. As Hay states:

[This] has remained a potent divide through subsequent phases of Tasmanian history. On the one hand there is a powerful, monopolistic elite... this elite is sustained by a hidebound, mediocre official culture, one characterised by a mentality of

cringe, seeing the source of all cultural value and human ingenuity to lie elsewhere, and defining its role as ‘agent’ to distant economic and social ‘betters’...

On the other hand ‘an enduring Vandemonian spirit’ ... perseveres... the persistence of a vernacular social and economic resilience; a combative communal and individual independence ... ongoing contempt for authority and its trappings... [and] the quiet persistence of the view that Tasmanians are capable of providing home-grown solutions to their own social and economic dilemmas (Hay, P., 2002b: viii-ix).

As the voices of these early Vandemonians and their descendants emerge, and Boyce’s book *Van Diemen’s Land* (2008) is central to this emergence, the contestation for remembrance is brought to the fore, though within a context significantly different to that formed by 200 years of white history tellings and the ongoing efforts of Aboriginal Tasmanian activists (Ryan, 1996, Boyce, 2008). Rather, it turns the contestation toward a process of reconciliation. There is no clear path provided within this reconciliation, but as Tasmanians fill the interpretative space provided by Risdon Cove with tellings of the massacre, and as the story of the Vandemonians is told, new possibilities quite apart from the contestation between the white Tasmanian elite and the Aboriginal Tasmanians emerge. Infused with the Vandemonian spirit that placed a “premium on self help and endurance” (Alex Castles in Boyce, 1996: 56), this offers the possibility for a settling *within* place, rather than the settling *of* place that has been pursued for the last 160 years by the colonising elite.

Within the perspective presented by Boyce, the black and white shadows that inhabit my experience of Risdon Vale’s bush fringe take on a meaning that can consolidate an aspect of my sensing of Risdon Vale. Without sidestepping the horrors inflicted upon the Aboriginal Tasmanians by my culture, there appears a way for myself as a non-Aboriginal to dwell within this place with a measure of peace and at-homeness.

Interpretative signs have now been erected at Risdon Cove⁵³. After passing the sign at the gate that marks this land as Aboriginal, and pulling up in the deserted car park, a board provides an Aboriginal Tasmanian account of the history of the place and its people. Other signs depicting the continuance and vibrancy of the contemporary Aboriginal Tasmanian community partially ring Bowen's monument. While defiance tinges both the location and content of these interpretations, and there remains at Risdon Cove a stillness – an opening for oral tellings – this speaking-out by the Aboriginal community represents a significant moment within the quest for placedness within Tasmania by non-Aboriginals. It is part of a reach towards the consolidation of black and white tellings, and perhaps towards some kind of reconciliation.

Alongside the unresolved though potentially resolving memories of the colonial past, my sense of Risdon Vale contains other interrelated memories. For me there is a potent mixture within Risdon Vale of the familiar and the very unfamiliar. In my bones I know this place well – it is a place upon the planet earth and it is within the earth that my very being has evolved and within which I have been born and borne. By choosing to put down roots in this specific place, by cultivating a home here, I remember that I am a being born and borne of earth. In this sense, putting down roots is an act of pursuing a remembrance of evolved memory; an embodied attempt to unearth that which is diminished.

However, in another way I remember no place like Risdon Vale. Neither, to my knowledge, does my father, nor my mother, nor my grandparents, nor their parents carry personal memories of a place like Risdon Vale. The irate winds that whip up in October, too-ing and fro-ing, desiccating flowers and trundling the empty bin across the driveway; the sandy soil that bakes free of organic matter if left exposed; the rattle of *risdonii* leaves as they spin stem-bound and dried-out with the sense of juvenility of a child's paper windmill; the creeks that puddle, stagnate and then evaporate away

each summer. All these things, all these aspects of Risdon Vale, hold no memory for me beyond the 8 years that I have lived here.

Yet I recognise the streetscapes as part of my experiential (the personal and collective) remembrances. The government housing option, the slow steady march of high front fences along Sycamore Street, the growl of the trucks between kerbside coupling of bins each Monday morning, and the customs and traditions of my community – births, deaths, marriages, tax time and public holidays – are all part of a collective memory. It is my short eight-year memory that means I physically do not get lost here, during the day-to-day, and it is my participation within collective memorialisation that means I can talk about a sense of place at all. But there is a significant component of myself that is forever searching. In the bush hills and dry gullies of Risdon Vale, beyond the tar and concrete, my culture has only a smattering of memories that straddle no more than a couple of centuries. These memories are forged with the certainty of a confident colonising culture, yet carry an uncertainty that undermines what these memories actually mean and imply. As Australian academic Kate Rigby states, as a colonised place “the dominant cultural imagery in Australia is still haunted by the spirit of another place” (Rigby, 2003: 110). This provides a strange, somewhat disjunctive sense from which to reflect upon place. Of her own experience of place within Australia, Rigby writes of feeling “on some level like a visitor” (2003: 112).

From within Risdon Vale the surrounding bushscape holds two contrasting mythscapes, both of which have their roots within the mythologies of European, particularly English landscapes. Neighbours voice a fear of the unknown wild beyond the streets and fences, and a suspicion of those who transgress the boundary between suburb and bush. Their concerns are not only a suburban reflection of the idea of the wild as beast-filled and human-to-beast-transforming (Schama, 1996). These concerns seem infused also with a sense of puzzlement at the stalling of the colonial instinct – the faith to makeover, make anew within a foreign wild land. Magnolia Street ends

abruptly, tar eroding into vegetation, as if unexpectedly thwarted in its efforts to push further with the unquestioned righteousness of civilisation. A boom gate, chained and padlocked, is a paradoxical phenomenon curtailing the onward march of the lush green of exotic watered gardens.

The transgressors themselves represent another side of the English understanding of wild places – the notion of these places as common land whose availability to all represents a form of egalitarian justice. Firewood collection, rubbish disposal, trail bike riding, wallaby shooting, dog walking and fires for cooking are all an expression of the common sovereignty of land beyond the limitations of private property blocks and the authoritative prescripts of the state. Robin Hood’s mythical woods were “an elegy for a world of liberty and justice” (Schama, 1996: 149), a place where a living could be made and a life be had apart from authoritative constraints and the tyranny of despotically inclined middlemen. Someone once accused me of ‘romancing the bogan’ when I tried to describe what it was about the people in Risdon Vale that I liked – a certain tenacity, a little rough round the edges, infused with a no-nonsense lack of pretensions. Perhaps what I ken here, in a place to which people have drifted over the last 50 years through the necessity of housing and work, and who often carry with them stories of bush lives that came before, is in fact something of the spirit of the Vandiemonians.

When my great grandfather named the hills around Rawtenstall in Lancashire after the Dowlocks in Cornwall he was doing more than expressing a sentimental yearning for another place within another time. He was speaking to my father of a sense of placedness that had bound his family within a small part of Cornwall for generations; a sense of place that carried with it stories and meanings that are often associated with indigeneity. In looking towards the hills round Rawtenstall, in naming them the Dowlocks, Great Grandfather Treloar perceived the possibility of a return home, not necessarily geographically, but at least within spirit. The Dowlocks represent not the

mere physicality of a place, but the *genius loci* that binds humanity within the earth experientially, mythically and evolutionarily. Like the Vandemonians who emerged from openness to the *genius loci* within which the early convicts found themselves, the Dowlocks for me embody an openness to the *genius loci* of where I find myself within Risdon Vale. My sensing of Risdon Vale, infused as it is with a complexity of resolved and resolving memories, carries with it my great grandfather's memories of the Dowlocks, and humanity's memory of all the Dowlocks – the hills and the valleys – that have gone before.

4.3 A Notion of Place

The three dimensions of my sense of place within Risdon Vale narrated in this chapter provide an opportunity to present a notion or a theory of place. However, the limitations of abstracting ideas from the actualities and particularities of place – the perpetration of the mind/matter dualism – speak of a need to approach such an undertaking with caution. Naess, in writing about his sense of place and emplacement at Tvergastein, identifies eight terms that are central to his lifestyle there: unruffledness, equanimity, austerity, distance, aloofness, nonviolence, diversity and egalitarianism (Naess, 2008: 55). He concludes with two things that may be of use to others based on his experience at Tvergastein: “choose a place that is not so specific that it discourages your intimates. Furthermore, choose a place that you will be likely to be able to master when you are older. Then, this is a place where you can live and die” (Naess, 2008: 64). He makes no attempt to abstract his experience from the place, nor does he move to abstract the place from his experience. In this, he acknowledges the intersubjectivity of place, and self within place, and most significantly, Naess affirms the limitations of place theory.

Hence, the following distillation of the three dimensions of my sense of place to a list of dot points is to be read not as a theory of place that may be extricated out of the actuality and particularities of Risdon Vale and into and onto other places, but as a

notion of place implicitly bound to a specific suite of dynamic relations that include myself and Risdon Vale among its intersubjective collaborators. This is not to say that this notion bears no relevance or point of reflection for others within other places, but that it is recognised as ‘myself-within-Risdon-Vale-centric’.

The notion of place that emerges here includes the following features:

- Place as *internally related* – that place is constituted through the relations it holds, and holds it, within world;
- Place as *intersubjective* – that place is constituted through both human and more-than-human collaboration and corroboration;
- Place as *process* – that the relations that constitute place are dynamic, though the rate of dynamism ebbs and flows, and is situationally unique;
- Place as *unbounded* – that the constituting relations are implicated within, and have implications for broader, wider or deeper webworks (through both time and space);
- Place as *evolvedtogether* – that, as internally related, a fluid interdependence is inherent within place;
- Place as *impressive* – that due to this fluid interdependence, place *matters*.

Risdon Vale 2



We are now in the mountains and they are in us...

filling every pore and cell of us

John Muir (1998: 15-16)

Chapter 5 – Risdon Vale 2

Previous chapters have introduced the research focus, methodology, specific methods, and the collaborators on the inquiry – transpersonal ecology and Risdon Vale. I have described Risdon Vale as manifest within my sense of place, and the notion of place emanating from this has been outlined. Risdon Vale was described as internally related and intersubjective (as exemplified through the exploration of place and memory); as in process and unbounded (along the lines of Massey's global sense of place); yet also as evolved and evolving together, and as impressive. The place that is Risdon Vale is as constituting and cohesive as it is dynamically unbounded.

This chapter introduces and interprets the three encounters that have emerged through my experience of the interplay of transpersonal ecology and Risdon Vale. 'Gum-tree-man' is the description of an ongoing encounter I have with a man who inhabits Risdon Vale and who first came to my attention because, like me, he spends a significant amount of time frequenting the bush fringe of the suburb. This man has never spoken to me, has never even made eye contact, and perhaps it is this lack of social formality that has led to his presence evoking the suburb for me in a way that has been both compelling and embracing. The discussion of this piece of work pivots upon Naess's gestalt ontology and an emerging place gestalt.

'Touch me, this tree' is an encounter between a woman and the pillars of the Myer department store, located in Hobart's central business district. It is an imagining – an exploration of qualities that form part of the complexity of lived experience, but that are not necessarily physically apparent. In geographic terms this encounter takes place outside of Risdon Vale, yet it is an encounter inspired by and within this suburb.

Going into town and shopping at Myer is an indelible part of life in Risdon Vale. This was brought to the fore on the 22nd September 2007 when the historic Myer building was engulfed and destroyed by fire. For weeks conversations on the Risdon Vale bus and at the shops were dominated by this event and its possible implications. There was

a very real sense of personal loss within the community. Combined with my experience of forestry and forests in Tasmania – many of which are deliberately destroyed and burnt each year – Myer came alive to me in a quite unexpected way. Exploration of this encounter focuses upon two concepts that are central to deep ecological literature – wilderness and wildness.

The final encounter, ‘capillary shawl’ narrates the ongoing and vivid experience of the relationship between myself and my washing machine. This description has implications for how we relate to and understand machines – specifically those that inhabit our homes. The interpretation offered here considers self and the notion of consciousness, in relation to the scientific notion of symbiosis.

5.1 Encounter 1

5.1.1 Gum-tree-man

Gum-tree-man is often smelt before he is seen, never heard. Smell is, I think, usually sensed bodily before it is isolated as a phenomenon within the nostrils. This is certainly the way with gum-tree-man. The sense of him surprises, before the physicality of him can. A sense, followed by a rapid intermingling – butt on mudstone, blunnie⁵⁴ sole’s dusty depression, leaves windmilling. Smoke on the downward drift of breeze.

His presence is most strong on the track above the houses that line the topside of Magnolia Road. It is a place where risdonii frame the view. (The brittle dryness of these trees, their spontaneous crack and combustion, speaks little to the moist malleability of peppermint rendering ‘Risdon peppermint’ an uncommon name for them). Gutter to gutter, street and house combine, held between wandering branchlets of powdery blue-green and purple. At this spot the track heads into the drift of the breeze, and the smoke tails down within the flow of the air. Unseen yet sensed then smelt.

Coming upon the sense of gum-tree-man when heading up hill is a jolt upon an apparition. There appears some danger in making an approach, unseen from behind. Yet with both on the same path, one slow and one fast, approach holds constancy. He senses something, someone and he slows, waiting. He slows down, I speed up and we briefly meet and quickly part. My presence can be as much an uncertain and unfathomed apparition to him as his presence can be to me.

Though sometimes he is avoidable and avoided, at most times our passing carries within it rhythmic familiarity.

Walking down hill and him walking up, I am likely to come upon him unsensed – the breeze in his favour. He knows me before I know him and he is prepared. Head low, eyes downcast and stride even, focusing on his dust-stirring feet, or once, on a computer manual upside down. Within his absence of interest, his enclosure, he maintains his place, his space apart. Gum-tree-man does not feign his indifference; his eyes are not cast aside. There is intelligence well hidden that means no more, no less than an inability to die of a stress related disease.

In the first encounter he was unsensed, caught stretched beneath a humpy, fire lazing. Roughed up, a stringy, straggly-barked old gum. Skinny legs in baggy bruised pants and his bush-green jacket feathered at the cuffs. Old man's beard⁵⁵ before the grey takes hold. Much of him slips me by; it is the bush-earth of him that holds me and contains me within this place. This is not the sum total of it though. Another encounter within the supermarket – him in black, binging-belt-buckle and combed-out-hair and me in the fog at the end of a damaged year. That damage within here where smells are pushed in steady reliable streams, came undone. What holds me and contains me within this place is him.

Did the kangaroo hunters sense him? Did children follow him begging a smoke, snatching at his coat? Did adults tip him a nod or did their eyes slip towards something further field? Or did he arrive later from some place else where his roots

were steeped in moisture. He's had roots down somewhere, though the dry of here resists much penetration. In his rootedlessness he travels elsewhere for the many things that he needs and for many things he doesn't, and yet always he remains here. This rootlessness is not a freedom borne of flight and a trampoline-strung-summersault. He isn't free, this gum-tree-man. Threads hang bare collecting in dust – merging and shifting, as things go. There is always something that's caught up in it all. Sometimes roots, oftentimes something unsuspected – the drag of trouser leg in road-pooled rain, hair tangled in garden bush, urine leaking with a cough or a chuckle towards the sea. Never free, always bound. Stretched and sprung to rootlessness, yes. But always drifting shifting stirring up within some of all of it. Within all of some of it!

Elsewhere, elsewhere the possibilities explode.

5.1.2 Place gestalt

Gum-tree-man began with a gentle nudge, oft repeated until it became a quiet and persistent tapping. Although I had been looking for a place within a place in my purchase of a house and garden, while I was craning forward to see what I could see, this place snuck up from behind in the form of this man. Hence, putting roots down within Risdon Vale was not so much an affirming, grounding and deepening of what I already expected and knew, but a slow awakening, a reawakening to something that seems to have been always there but had remained diminished, overlooked and compartmentalised. From behind me, Risdon Vale said 'hello' and I'm still in the process of turning, of re-turning towards it. Has eye contact been made? Have we touched? Perhaps within a dreamscape, but not I think within the landscape of the low valley and intersecting creeks. Then again when I dream within the land, or land within a dream, some kind of tentative contact appears most certainly to have been made!

But how to comprehend gum-tree-man? Arne Naess's gestalt ontology is one of the facets of deep ecology that provides an account of place and self within place, albeit tentatively and with Naess's characteristic lack of precision (Rothenberg, 1993). David Rothenberg provides an interesting interpretation of Naess's gestalt ontology using a comparison with phenomenology to argue that the notion of 'concrete contents' implicit within Naess's work is on the way to the expression of things "through their relation with each other" (Rothenberg, 2000: 152) – on the way to poetry. Like phenomenology, gestalt ontology rejects the division of the world into Galileo's primary, secondary and tertiary qualities and rejects the dualistic split between that which is deemed objective and that which is deemed subjective. Both phenomenology and gestalt ontology turn to spontaneous experience as a means of perceiving and valuing other qualities in the world and as a way of taking the world as a whole seriously. However, unlike phenomenology, gestalt ontology not only brings to the fore these other qualities as meaningful and real from the experience of the human subject (Rothenberg, 2000: 154). It also identifies these qualities – these 'contents' – as real or 'concrete' in the experience of the world its self. In other words, what is experienced not only shapes the experiencer's life in meaningful ways and as such is recognised as being of value. What is experienced are real qualities – are concrete contents – that exist not simply within the perception of the experiencer but within the world itself.

The understanding of phenomenology critiqued by Rothenberg (2000) differs somewhat from that presented previously. For Rothenberg, traditional phenomenology maintains the human subject as the centre of experiencing, whereas the phenomenology explored herein includes more-than-humans entities within the realm of intersubjectivity. More-than-human entities experience the world, as humans do, and hence can offer intersubjective corroboration to the meaningfulness of such experiences. The 'beyond human' inclusiveness of this phenomenological approach

lessens the divide between phenomenology and gestalt ontology emphasised by Rothenberg (2000) in that the human subject is just one amongst many others that make the world meaningfully real – value is not ascribed through human experience alone. In fact Naess's description of gestalt ontology resonates strongly with my understanding of phenomenology⁵⁶. He states:

Gestalt thinking combined with nominalism results in saying that the subject/object dualism is simply a projection of subjective states of consciousness on the outside world. But the joyfulness, liveliness, threatening size, dejectedness, gravity, or solemnity of a tree are properties of a tree on par with tallness, weight, and chemical structure. More precisely: the properties refer to situations or states of the world (Nature) which have gestalt character. The chemical or physical tree is an abstraction referring to elements, subordinate gestalts of the total gestalt (Naess, 2005b: 121).

I would argue that it is an understanding of internal relations that distinguishes gestalt ontology from phenomenology. Within phenomenology, while the world and things may be experienced as internally related – as all relations being internal to their bearers, in the sense that they are essential to them and the bearers would not be what they are without them – internal relations is not an idea inherent within phenomenology. Gestalt ontology on the other hand is premised on an understanding of internal relations; it brings the relational quality or contents of things (of world) to the fore. This is perhaps best illustrated through an example.

Naess claims that during an encounter with trees, birches smiled and firs wept. He argues that this should not be explained simply as a projection of his mind onto the trees (Rothenberg, 1993), but, rather, that these emotions and expressions are part of the trees, part of the world, prior to his perception of them. For Naess the smiles and tears are part of the concrete contents, the real qualities, of the world. If the tree is understood as internally related, then Naess's experience of the tree is part of the tree

itself (just as the tree's experience of Naess is part of Naess himself). In other words, the tree is not itself without the relations that bind it within the world – Naess as part of world and as relating with the tree is part of the tree's internal relations. As such, the smile or tears experienced by Naess are as much a part of the tree itself as part of Naess. Gestalt ontology emphasises the relationships that bind rather than the things themselves, yet always returns to the things themselves as all relations are internal to their bearer.

While language is often a hindrance in comprehending such radical ideas, there are expressions within English that do reflect such an understanding. We speak of 'having a restless night', where the restlessness itself is recognised not only within our selves but within the night its self. The relationship between self and night is imbued with restlessness, and as both self and night are only themselves through the relations that bind them within the world, 'restlessness' is understood as inherent within each and not merely a projection of the human mind upon the night. As such it makes as much sense to speak of the night as restless, as it does to speak of oneself as restless.

'Restlessness' is a concrete content – a very real quality – of self, night and world. In describing things in this way we are acknowledging that these qualities lie within the things themselves and are not mere projections, and that as such these qualities are *real* qualities.

By bringing the relationships to the fore, gestalt ontology offers to us a world that is not only whole, but is comprised of a matrix (or patterning) of relational parts. In such a world the whole is of course greater than the sum of the parts, and in addition, and using an example of a melody, the more

characteristic feature is the influence of the whole upon each part.

Whatever the part of the melody that is heard, the particular

character of the whole influences the experience of the part. A

'part' of a gestalt is more than a part. That is, if we listen to a part

of an unknown melody the experience is different from listening to that part when the melody is known (Naess, 2005b: 119).

“The experience of the part somehow contains an experience of the whole” (Naess, 2005b: 119). Each part is a gestalt that encompasses the whole yet is more than the ‘mere’ whole, and each whole is so much more than the sum of its parts. Instead of ‘parts’ and ‘wholes’, the linguistical separation of which is incompatible with the relational character of the world (particularly as ‘part’ tends to prioritise spatiality over other qualities), Naess chooses the word ‘gestalt’. Gestalt describes the relations between and yet also the things themselves as the relations between are understood to be part of the things themselves as internally related.

Naess describes the world as made up of a matrix of subordinate and superordinate gestalts:

It is ... better to talk about subordinate and superordinate gestalts, when the structural unit of the first is part of the structural unit of the second. The movements of [Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony] as gestalts are subordinate under the gestalt of the whole. But as spontaneous experience of reality this gestalt is again subordinate under more comprehensive ones, like the experience of a concrete occasion of listening or performing as a member of the orchestra (Naess, 1989b: 136).

This is why, when a mobile phone rings during the Second Movement, it is not possible to ‘unrelate’ this aspect (or intrusion) upon the subordinate gestalt of this movement from the superordinate gestalt of the whole Symphony. The phone’s ring becomes an aspect of both the ‘part’ and the ‘whole’, even though the actual occurrence can be isolated in time to the Second Movement and within space on the music sheet. As stated previously, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and each part is more than the whole.

In terms of place, gestalt ontology elevates the notion of ‘sense of place’ – the intersubjective experience of place – from the realm of subjectivity, through the realm of phenomenological meaningfulness, landing it firmly within the realm of reality. As a concrete content, a sense of a place is as real to the place as it is to the experiencer: “Feelings for water as well as the rootedness of sense of place are contents of reality, because they are there in the sea we swim in or in the place with which we identify” (Rothenberg, 2000: 153). Gestalt ontology deepens our resonance with meanings discerned within place through a reawakening to lived experience by recognising place, our sense of place, as *real*. As such our understanding of place and of ourselves within place is both enriched and empowered. We are offered a means of escaping the confines of how ‘reality’ is expressed, and we can move towards more imaginative explorations of place. Such explorations may lead us towards something altogether other.

Gum-tree-man⁵⁷ is a concrete manifestation of the relationship between myself and Risdon Vale and as such lies as a reality both within myself and within Risdon Vale. It is a superordinate gestalt of which the ‘parts’ – the three subordinate gestalts described in the previous chapter – are encompassed but not contained. ‘Gum-tree-man’ is in no sense *the* superordinate gestalt of Risdon Vale (or my relationship with this suburb). The relational nature of place gestalts denies any possibility of there being a definitive close to the sensing of a place. Place and relations with place remain forever shifting and open. Gum-tree-man remains part of the dynamic matrix of the whole.

While the phenomenon that is this gum-tree-man gestalt has been evoked by actual encounters with a strolling, smoking man within the fringes of the suburb, it must be emphasised that it is not within this man as a physical entity that the concreteness of this reality arises. I know next to nothing of the man himself, and it is not about him as a human, male being that I write. As Rothenberg suggests, concrete contents are “better evoked than explained”⁵⁸ (2000: 166), and this self-as-related-to-place gestalt –

for one reason or another – has received evocation from a tall, bearded wandering man⁵⁹. For Naess, his place gestalt takes its name from the geographic place Tvergastein, and its impetus centres on the cottage there (Naess, 2008).

To use the term ‘man’ within the naming of a gestalt may be foolish. It could be construed as an anthropomorphisation of place or sense of place – ascribing to place the features of the human individual. In addition it could be construed as an epiphenomenological description, where what is being described is not the experience itself – not the world as it presents itself to me or me as I present myself to world – but a kind of metaphor for what I already see the world, in this case the place, as being. In both instances, the limitations of such a description in relation to place abound.

Anthropomorphism often goes hand in hand with anthropocentrism, in which human features are perceived as the only defining and meaningful axis for contemplation. By identifying the humanness within something, such as a place, what remains central and primary is that which is recognisable as human. The world at large is indistinct and irrelevant unless there are features within it of human quality. Epiphenomenological descriptions, while not inherently invalid – Emerson’s writings about nature and the relationship between nature, God and humans have been described as epiphenomenological, a point that distinguishes his work from the phenomenology of Thoreau (Oelschlaeger, 1991) – are nonetheless steeped in unquestioned presuppositions. When the aim is to delve beneath and look beyond such presuppositions, recourse to an epiphenomenological description would not suffice.

By understanding gum-tree-man as a gestalt the concern of anthropomorphism and the limitations of an epiphenomenological description are alleviated. In gestalt ontology the humanness within the place is acknowledged but can never be the whole story, as place and place gestalts are a manifestation of a myriad of relations that extend way beyond the human. There always remains within place aspects of the more-than-human world, and all these aspects, both human and beyond human, are realities of the

place. There is no mere human-projected metaphor, just another part within the patterning of the whole.

There is also the complication of issues pertaining to gender. What does it mean, it could be asked, that this gestalt is presented as ‘man’? It is important to stress that Risdon Vale for me feels neither male nor masculine; in fact there are few places that evokes a sense of gender within me. However, if the person I encountered had been female I doubt very much that she would have acted as an evocation for the relationship I hold with Risdon Vale. Encountering a female wandering the fringes in the manner of this man would be unusual and would not speak to me of Risdon Vale. There is nothing to me that is particularly unusual in Risdon Vale. Risdon Vale is unique and may be described as special, yet it is not unexpected. In my experience neither is a lone male wandering the suburban fringes.

Gum-tree-man is my experience or my expression of the agency that lies between my self and Risdon Vale. Gum-tree-man is not mine alone, as he is the happenings between self and place that dwell within both self and place. ‘Gum-tree-man’ also exceeds both self and place because of the relational complexity that lies beyond both self and place, yet that both self and place inhabit. He slips in and out of dreamscapes, and he surfaces through bush and at the checkout because there is no boundary in between. He is alive with the possibilities beyond that which we already think we know⁶⁰.

5.2 Encounter 2

5.2.1 Touch me, this tree

Padding in from the heat of tar to the aircon chill of polished cream stone. Outside, the sun, wedged between multistorey and revved up by traffic, sinks into asphalt turning viscid black between the crush of rock. Dust and dirt hit sticky and stay. Soles, fuelled by petroleum-ignite, collect the warmth in grimy waves. A watery mirage

would form if there was a remembrance of rain, if there was some clear-view distance to be had.

Padding on. The tan of heat is bled from the toughed-up feet by the cool calm of stone sliced and sheen, leaving only a lingering of warmth on the floor of cutaneous valleys. Toes tentatively feel for the tiled divides – curl forward for some sense of placement; some sense of legitimacy. Then forget the need for it. A tree is seen, then the forest perceived.

She starts forward, swirling a drift of old-forest mud from cuff and collar. The turbulence, brought to rest by the footings of display case and counter, adds a silt dry dark to places slighted by overhead gaze.

The first-seen-tree, fenced within an oblong of plastic glam display, is beyond her touch, but her eyes reach up, following its trunk to the ceiling. Beyond the plaster shekens old boughs and a flourish of leaves; a patterning of bark beneath the squared off, whited-out façade. Skirting rack of cotton, heap of nylon, she rounds the counter and meets with a second tree. This one she touches. Hands loosen from pockets, palm down and arm reaching, her fingers rise to meet with this second tree. There are more to her left and right, and yet more before her, behind this one. Each rooted deep and rising up – their age disguised with plaster and paint, their presence distracted by cosmetic, cloth, steel and glass.

So. They have been here all along, after all, maintaining their place as upholders, shapers and bearers. When once their visibility was just one sensual fragment of the whole, here they have slipped right out of sight, their place presumed within the rush and push of product. Their presence ignored, and their essential positioning diminished to chance occurrences amidst a priority of sales.

Yet, as her fingers angle up to expose tips to bark, she feels them fully. Water rising, growth rings turning, oxygen freeing. The strength! The solidity!

Still standing. Still creating an opening for human occurrence; still upholding, shaping and bearing space within time for humans to take place.

What is not seen, what is imperceptible, is the sagacity of Thor's oak and Nemetona that lies deep within memory's wane. The humans no longer sense their reliance upon the resilience of trees. Vanished within their essentialness; taken for granted in store, factory and foyer. Lent on, hung upon, bumped into, built around, but never seen, let alone divined. Trees have become transparent to humans, forces without a name, without a voice, without a presence. Forces diminished towards the point of obliteration. Humans to trees are becoming increasingly irrelevant. The reverberant holler of a tree bred for progress, but ending at the ripe old age of five with a twisted explosion of strung out fury and fibre.

Her hand stretches around the trunk and her body pulls in close. Forehead, resting for a moment, rolls sideways, making way for tear and cheek. With eyes closed the invisibility falls and she is with tree. The cream-white glare pinging off gold, plastic, steel, plastic blim and blam, deflecting eyes and sucking air, is no longer there. Holding tight she touches me, this tree.

There are two suggestions within the silence that enfolds her, one gentle enough to let slip by and the other incessant in its demand. Within a callidendrous cathedral there are echos, patterings and whispers nudging to and fro, between and through. Breeze stirs nano-stars through a stream of light and then out the other side, gone now within a broad, shady shaft. A browned-off leaf curling, a web without spider drifting, and a giant shifting with a creak above and moan below. Brittalic moss with lush green upon the tips of its desiccated fingers. A hush of happenings.

The more insidious silence is of humans stalled, stranded within a perfumed inhale, fingering of fabric and the mid-swipe catch of a card. Startled out of time for a moment by her with the closed eyes and circling arms. This is the silence of a snap freeze. Silver gilds the faces beside frosted glass beneath a whiteout bright. Eyes wide

open, mouths pursed and pulses frozen – petrified just below the crest and the downhill thump. She feels their insistence on returning the tree to the hidden realm, the desire for a melting of gaze, moistening of lips and a quickening of beat in the returning to shelves and trinkets. A label spilling free of a hanger clips floorward and slips upon ice.

One more moment with tree and she breaks from it. Eyes open to the floor and hands curl into pockets. Padding towards the door, heading for the heat, for the street, the road. Towards a forest of another kind.

5.2.2 In wilderness and wildness

Columns, pillars, what are they called? When I mention them to people, this idea of people, they have no recollection of these ‘posts’, these ‘poles’ even existing. They dwell deep within the taken-for-granted. Invisible so as not to remember the trees – those original rooted, grafted denizens of structure, shelter and seclusion. In the library, the truncated pillars are ringed with seats. You can sit tailbone nudging against bark, shaded from the fluores, and finger through the leaves of books; sensing with each new page a new forest, a different species, the hum of the insects, the patter of rain, the patter of feet. However, even with *Landscape and Memory* (Schama, 1996) clasped between fingers and prehensile thumb, it is more than likely that there will be no seeing, no sensing of the massive, ancient chameleon carrying it all, supporting it all.

Yet within the relational memories of humans and trees, there is a complexity of entities and happenings embodied within each of the pillars that frame the doorways in our homes and support the broad flat spaces that form supermarkets and department stores. Each pillar speaks to the mythology encircling the origins of Gothic architecture; the ideas surrounding the shift from the trunks and boughs of the sacred grove towards the columns, arches and vaults of church and cathedral (Schama, 1996). The use of cut or live trees (perhaps cut trees that had taken root) and branches in the

construction of a basic dwelling is remembered within the steel, concrete and plaster of pillars and posts of the department store and the office block. Beyond this, yet still remembered within it is the evolved memory of the trees themselves – following the swirl of gas, fusion of mineral, whisperings of life was the evolution of gymnosperm and the coming of angiosperm – well before humans walked beneath them and before our ancestors swung through them. This intersubjectivity of trees dwells just beneath the layerings of paint and the plaster. In a relational sense these trees and contemporaneous columns cannot be cut off from each other. With an openness to the relationality embodied within the notions of evolved memory, myth and collective memory each entity and each happening such as a tree or a column is a webwork of infinite complexity, a shifting entanglement of interrelations. There lies within the world, within suburban places like Risdon Vale and within the shops and factories that sustain much within these places, the embodied memory of trees and of the process of evolution, the history of the earth.

What does it mean to awaken to the earthiness within that which we are so used to experiencing as human, humanly derived or human artefacts? If each entity we approach, each happening we participate within, embodies not only personal and collective memories, but those of myth and biological and geological evolution, what does this mean for the notions of wilderness and wildness so prevalent in deep ecological literature? If we can conceive of a pillar in a department store relationally and understand that this relationality extends temporally and spatially within realms where and when humans were a mere twinkle in the preverbal eye, then what becomes of the relationship between towns and cities, and the wild? While the subsequent section looks specifically at the implications of such thoughts for self and consciousness, the remainder of this section explores how the notions of wildness and wilderness may be understood in relation to the ideas emerging in this dissertation. It does this for two reasons. One, because the notions of wildness and wilderness remain

central within deep ecological literature and as such it would be remiss not to consider them here. And two, because the idea of wilderness has, since the 1980s, come under considerable scrutiny and has suffered significantly from some astute, though not necessarily resolved observations. As Val Plumwood points out:

We should not abandon concepts of nature and wilderness... but we need to create new, non-colonizing understandings and situate them within the context of a renewed, radical ecology committed to healing the nature/culture split and ending the war on the Other (Plumwood, 1998: 659).

While it may appear disjunctive to be talking about trees, forests and wilderness when the research focus is on the suburbs, the apparent interconnectivities do not sanction the drawing of a clean line between them in the way of some other deep ecological writings.

Wildness, within ecophilosophical discourse, has struggled to break free of the confines of wilderness. This confinement within a bounded geographical notion has meant that the two terms are often used interchangeably. Thoreau's oft quoted "in Wildness is the preservation of the world" (Thoreau, 1982: 309) has been occasionally translated to or misquoted as 'in wilderness is the preservation of the world' (see for example, Drengson, 1986b; 1; Devall, 1986: 23). Yet the very word 'wildness' suggests a notion that defies boundaries, not only because it entails some implicit sense of anarchy, but because it was apparent long before humans began to usefully construct boundaries around things, beings and happenings. It is a notion that precedes and supersedes boundedness and categorisation.

William Cronon has been one of the most prominent and perhaps controversial questioners of the association of wildness with wilderness. In his paper 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature' Cronon states that we can "join Thoreau in declaring that 'in Wildness is the preservation of the World,' for

wildness (as opposed to wilderness) can be found anywhere” (1995: 89). While wildness can offer positive and inclusive environmentalism, wilderness carries with it dualistic cultural baggage that renders it exclusive and a “serious threat to responsible environmentalism at the end of the twentieth century” (1995: 81). In his case against wilderness Cronon argues that “there is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness. It is entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear, a product of the very history it seeks to deny” (1995: 79). While he makes a distinction between the humanly articulated *concept* of wilderness and the actual more-than-human world that inhabits places identified as wilderness, Cronon, in his assertion that the *concept* of wilderness is a problematic cultural and thoroughly human projection upon the more-than-human, denies the agency of the more-than-human within the development of a humanly articulated concept. To put it another way, while Cronon celebrates the “power of the things it [wilderness] contains” (1995: 70), he goes on to acknowledge this power within the more-than-humanness experienced within wilderness while denying this power a role and a voice within the *concept* of wilderness⁶¹. This is despite Cronon himself providing a stimulating historic review of the concept of wilderness in which wilderness experiencing is described as playing a central role: be this the wilderness experiencing portrayed in biblical terms or more recently by thinkers such as Thoreau and Muir. As such, Cronon’s case diminishes the agency of the more-than-human relationality that is found within geographic wilderness, and in effect denies the more-than-human a voice.

The very development, articulation and embodiment of a *concept* is construed within the relationship between the person (or peoples) and that with which the relationship is occurring. Any emerging concept hence carries within it the agency that emerges from the relationship itself, not only that from one side of the relationship. The relationship between humans and something as relationally complex as wilderness will emerge in a variety of forms that may be understood and classified in a myriad of ways, including

those cited by Cronon – romanticism, frontierism and religiosity. Yet these classifications, which are used to understand and dissect the concept of wilderness, also contain the voice, the agency of the relational complexity that is wilderness itself.

Whatmore (2002) points out that many critiques of the notion of wilderness fall foul of human/nature dualism, albeit from a different vantage point. In describing the notion of wilderness as humanly derived or as culturally constructed, human agency is given precedence and the agency of all the rest – the more-than-human – is diminished or denied. In other words, saying wilderness is ‘culture’ is as meaningless as saying that culture is ‘wilderness’, particularly if you are attempting to delve beneath and beyond such duality. Both purport the significance of one side of the dualism over the other and hence the divide is reinforced rather than challenged and moved beyond.

Cronon’s observations about the potential problems of privileging a humanless wilderness over a natureless civilisation, of maintaining an unreal dualism and offering this up as a solution to environmental ills, are certainly of value. They offer a perspective concurrent with those reviewed regarding the relationship between environmental ethics, and towns and cities. How is it possible to revere wilderness and attempt to disallow civilisation, when the embodied act of approaching wilderness is imbued with civilisation – be this within the ideas associated with wilderness or within the use of equipment essential to the contemporary wilderness experience – the car, the tent, the stove, the fuel and the food? However, as previously emphasised, it is not possible, as Cronon has done, to divorce the concept from the entities and happenings that inhabit places we understand as wilderness. Hence, while we can draw attention to the limitations or potential deficiencies inherent within some understandings of wilderness and the wilderness experience, there remains a need to recognise that even within these, wilderness is voicing itself. The diverse entities and happenings that are wilderness assert themselves within our own assertions of them. To assert that these experiences are merely cultural constructs is to deny the agency of wilderness within

the embodiment of the human; within the *embodiment of concept*. Hence, perhaps one of the most significant things about the deep ecological concept of wilderness, despite the potential slippage towards oppositional dualisms⁶², is an articulation of more-than-human intersubjectivity embodied within this concept.

The meaning of the word ‘wilderness’ has been traced back to that of ‘self-willed land’ or ‘self-willed place’ that carries within it an “emphasis upon its own intrinsic volition” (Vest, 1986: 4). Jay Griffiths went in search for the “*will of the wild*” (2007: 2). Deep ecology proponent Alan Drengson has written: “...wilderness is something in itself and has a will of its own...” (1986a: 1), and the “romantic poets and wilderness explorers like John Muir rediscovered the *voice of nature*...” (1986a, emphasis added). For example, Muir wrote:

Camped beside a little pool and a group of crinkled dwarf pines;
and as I sit by the fire trying to write notes the shallow pool seems
fathomless with the infinite starry heavens in it, while the onlooking
rocks and trees, tiny shrubs and daisies and sedges, brought forward
in the fire-glow, seem full of thought as if about to speak aloud and
tell all their wild stories. A marvellously impressive meeting in
which every one has something worth while to tell (Muir, 1998:
251).

This volition, this voice – this agency – of the more-than-human within wilderness, within world, is also evident within the work of poet Robinson Jeffers whose work, like that of Muir, is a touchstone for deep ecology:

*Great-enough both accepts and subdues; the great frame takes all
creatures;
From the greatness of their element they all take beauty.
Gulls; and the dingy freightship lurching south in the eye of a rain-
wind;
The air-plane dipping over the hill; hawks hovering*

*The white grass of the headland; cormorants roosting upon the
 guano-
 Whitened skerries; pelicans awind; sea-slime
 Shining at night in the wave-stir like drowned men's lanterns;
 smugglers signaling
 A cargo to land; or the old Point Pinos lighthouse
 Lawfully winking over dark waters; the flight of the twilight
 herons,
 Lonely wings and a cry; or the motor-vibrations
 That hum in the rock like a new storm-tone of the ocean's to turn
 eyes westward
 The navy's new-bought Zeppelin going by in the twilight,
 Far out seaward; relative only to the evening star and the ocean
 It slides into a cloud over Point Lobos.*

'Phenomena' by Robinson Jeffers (2003b: 40)

Jeffers places the human within the more-than-human and often blatantly emphasises the more-than-human over the human, particularly in his assertions of human fallibility. It is the latter that have caused critics to sideline Jeffers as a misanthrope, misunderstanding his articulations of a philosophical position of inhumanism as that of anti-humanism (Oelschlaeger, 1991). As Jeffers himself states, his inhumanism is “based on a recognition of the astonishing beauty of things, and on a rational acceptance of the fact that mankind is neither central nor important in the universe; our vices and abilities are [as] insignificant as our happiness” (cited in Oelschlaeger, 1991: 247). Wilderness may appear as not human, yet this is not because it does not include humans and humanness. Rather it is starkly apparent within both wilderness as a place and wilderness as a concept that humans are just one small part of a relationally enmeshed whole. Hence, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to talk ‘human’ all the time. Oelschlaeger argues that the “focus of the thinking poet is not on the world as that which is culturally given but rather on that dimension of being

concealed behind that presence” (Oelschlaeger, 1991: 280). So, too, is the focus of *wilderness*.

In his paper, Cronon does identify positive contributions that the concept of wilderness has made, and continues to make. For example, he states:

To the extent that wilderness has served as an important vehicle for articulating deep moral values regarding our obligations and responsibilities to the nonhuman world, I would not want to jettison the contributions it has made to our culture’s ways of thinking about nature (Cronon, 1995: 87).

However, by holding the concept wilderness to be a human construct that “hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural” (1995: 69), Cronon is left with only human machinations – in this case axiological juxtaposition – for understanding the relationship between ourselves and wilderness. In other words, there is little or no room within this denial or diminishment of the agency of wilderness, for anything other than a response that pivots upon an assumed privileging and monopoly of human agency. A response that involves participation within the agency of the whole takes quite a different form (see Chapter 7.2). The agency for change does not, can simply not dwell within the human realm alone. It always dwells within enmeshment with the more-than-human. This perspective lies in stark contrast to the following statement made by Cronon: “Wilderness is the place where, symbolically at least, we try to withhold our power to dominate” (1995: 87). The human ‘power to dominate’ and even the prospect of withholding this power is an illusion perpetuated by a suite of unquestioned assumptions and perpetrated upon the more-than-human.

Where does this leave the notion of wilderness? Wilderness can be understood as a gestalt that gains increasing credence and meaning with a coming together of many such gestalts. Most importantly, wilderness embodies within it an intersubjectivity that

entwines both the human and the more-than-human. It is an expression formed not of a few culturally-bound experiences of wilderness. Rather, wilderness is a superordinate gestalt infused with the collaboration and corroboration of a multiplicity of intersubjectivities, human and more-than-human, that may be envisaged through the notion of memory – of the personal, the collective, within myth and in terms of evolution. It is the more-than-human intersubjectivity of the wilderness gestalt that allows the nodes of commonality and the diversity of difference to offer the possibility of meaningfulness and of embodied responsiveness⁶³.

Like any place, wilderness only becomes broadly meaningful and the nexus for action and activity, if it is understood in terms of intersubjective corroboration and collaboration. It is the coming together of senses of place that gives us in relation to wilderness, or wilderness in relation to us, its imperative⁶⁴. Wilderness as an embodied concept is only ‘dangerous’ if it is pursued with a sense of absolutism (and perhaps the work of prominent Deep Ecology activist Dave Foreman, cited by Cronon, is an example of this). Where one sense of wilderness takes priority, and excludes or diminishes others, then this sense of wilderness becomes constricting and quite possibly dangerous. In similar fashion, Cronon’s argument that the concept of wilderness is a cultural construct can be understood as constricting. It denies the intersubjectivity that is at the heart of this concept and this results in the ongoing diminishment of the more-than-human agency inherent within the concept. While not going as far as decrying Cronon’s position as dangerous, if taken alone its limitations are certainly significant and curtailing to the more-than-human.

One thing Cronon’s paper does well is begin to unravel the relationship between wilderness and wildness. Cronon argues that the juxtaposition of wilderness and wildness is far fetched and falls foul of dualistic understandings of civilisation versus wilderness. Instead, Cronon offers wilderness as a reminder – a provocative nudge – for rekindling our recognition of the wildness that surrounds us at all times:

The special power of the tree in the wilderness is to remind us of this fact. It can teach us to recognize the wildness we did not see in the tree we planted in our own backyard. By seeing the otherness in that which is most unfamiliar, we can learn to see it too in that which at first seemed merely ordinary (Cronon, 1995: 88).

Again, as previously noted, such statements deny or at least diminish the more-than-human within the concept of wilderness. Cronon claims that wilderness is “more a state of mind than a fact of nature” (1995: 88). However, he then goes on to espouse the virtues of the conscious recognition of wildness which he describes as “the autonomy of the other” (1995: 89). As such he encounters wildness in the “seemingly tame fields and woodlots of Massachusetts, in the cracks of a Manhattan sidewalk, even in the cells of our bodies” (Cronon, 1995: 89). Wildness, for Cronon, is what wilderness has the potential to awaken us towards, particularly within our towns and cities – within places where the ‘natural’ is so often denied. In recognising otherness Cronon conceives that it is possible to have an experience with qualities akin to that had in wilderness, but in towns, cities and homes.

Understandings of ‘wildness’ vary within ecophilosophical literature. They are, if you like, a little wild. Rothenberg, for example, perceives wildness as the rough and tumble of a chaotic world:

The wild is more than a named place, an area to demarcate. It is a quality that beguiles us, a tendency we both flee and seek. It is the unruly, that which won’t be kept down, that crazy love, that path that no one advises us to take – it’s against the rules, it’s too far, too fast, beyond order, irreconcilable with what we are told is right. Wild Thing. Wild Life. Wild One. Wild Child. Wild Culture. You make my heart sing. But who knows what tomorrow will bring (Rothenberg, 1995: xvii).

Rothenberg (1995) claims that in stating “in Wildness is the preservation of the world” Thoreau (1982: 309) was referring to breaking rules and pushing the boundaries of social norms. These disparate understandings of wildness – Cronon’s ‘autonomy of the other’ and Rothenberg’s ‘crazy love’ – provide an opportunity for further exploration of the notion of wildness, this time in light of Naess’s gestalt ontology.

Within the relational in-betweens lies a fluxing, pulsing somethingness. Within a moment between Naess and the firs there is weeping. Between myself and Risdon Vale, the happening of gum-tree-man. While there has been significant movement away from agency as lying solely within the domain of the individuated human towards recognition of agency within the myriad of other entities (Anderson and Braun, 2008: xv), there is another possible way for understanding agency and entities within a relational context. If entities are constituted through the relations they hold within the world and these relations that constitute each entity are in flux, then the ‘power’ of change lies within the relations and not within some sense of each entity as an individuated ‘thing’. Thus, agency can be understood as dwelling within the relationship itself; agency inhabits the fluxing and pulsing in-betweenness of the relational. In fact, agency can be understood as the relational in-betweenness itself. Agency and relationship are co-equivalent terms, and the wild or wildness can be understood as another descriptor for the same thing – a descriptor for the shifting, sometimes slow and seemingly steady, sometimes so fast as to be termed unpredictable and chaotic, of what lies between.

This does not divest entities and happenings of agency, as each side of the relationship is in part constituted by the relationship and hence is a manifestation of the agency and manifests agency. In fact, this approach to agency offers to contextualise both Cronon’s ‘autonomy of the other’ and Rothenberg’s ‘crazy love’. It is possible to understand the ‘autonomy of the other’ as a human experience of the agency in-between and of the agency as manifest within the ‘other’, and to understand the ‘crazy

love’ as one aspect of a manifestation of agency – an unpredictable and chaotic one of a world in process and in process in such a complex way as to slip beyond human reckoning and ken. ‘Everything is interconnected’ goes the deep ecology maxim. All is wild – from the slow, steady interaction of rock and rain, the violent skid of tyre on tar, Naess’s experience of the emotionality within trees, and, as described in the next section, our relationship with machines.

The columns in the Myer department store are wild; the enmeshment of relationality that constitutes their being through time and space. Despite their seemingly static existence, their wildness remains in flux, a constant shift of patterning encompassing the human and deeply rooted within the more-than-human. This flux includes the relationship between product movement and placement, between the relational complexity that lies within a new or an old coat of paint, between the imagining of a hug from a woman and the imaginer, a shift in understanding about evolutionary processes past, and so on and so on *ad infinitum*. The columns of Myer include Rothenberg’s ‘crazy love’ as exemplified during the fire that swept through half of the building in September 2007. They also are the voice of Cronon’s ‘autonomy of the other’ – the woman experiences two kinds of forests and recognises one within the other. The forests in the wilderness do participate in the relationality at play within the department store and, importantly, the denizens of the built are also at work within the trees within the wilderness.

It is nigh impossible to write about place within Tasmania and not return to the trees, to the forests, at least once – at least for a time. For forests have been on the move in Tasmania in a way that has, over the last two hundred odd years, brought them repeatedly to the fore. Today the forests are on the move across our newspapers, down our streets, through the eye of the camera and during conversations over dinner. As my car hits another pothole dug deep and shaken out by the log truck stream – forest to sea – this movement of forests has become and continues to become embodied

within the trip to the beach or the drive home from work. Forests, the movement of forests, are a feature of the familiarity within the relationship between people and place here, the jolt and bounce of the car against a thing, toward a thing that is out of sight yet remains part of the fabric of who and how we are in Tasmania. Out of sight too are the trees that have become and continue to become the pillars and posts in our homes, shops and offices. Yet, like Tasmania's moving forests, their existence and their persistence remains part of our embodied selves. Awakening towards the relational agency at play – the complexity of wildness at work – within the 'humanly derived' and within the 'inanimate', opens us towards a reawakening of self. Within the humanness, within culture, we recover the world at large, and as such we are presented with the possibilities of re-understanding who we are in relation to this world and its many inhabitants.

I want you to see the trees, the forest supporting it all. When you walk into Myer, I want you to slip your gaze past the trinkets and the baubles and see the trees!

Then touch one – just drift your fingers over one's towering trunk.

That's enough. Now leave. Do not buy anything!

5.3 Encounter 3

5.3.1 Capillary shawl

The washing machine arrives under the burden of necessity. Years of quiet, deliberate handwashing succumb to the threat of soiled nappies and are given away. Purr, whiz, whir replaces slosh, splash, slop.

The 2005 machine fits nicely into its 1963 designed spot, as if it is meant to be. The kitchen feels balanced; fridge block white and tall down one end, and the washing machine white and squat down the other. Next to the new addition the laundry sink

loses status and becomes drain – a repository for excess suds, grimy gushes and spun-off trickles.

The number of dials and buttons on the washing machine announce a prowess, a complexity of being, that surpasses that of the fridge. One dial is all there is to fridge – less cool, mild, cooler, coolest. Washing machine, on the other hand has 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, A, B, C, D. Spin speed, temperature. Start delay, eco, rapid, intensive rinse, rinse hold, easy ironing. And ON/OFF. The fridge is always ON, washing machine chooses its moment; enough to fill the ‘tub’, detergent in, taps open – this is its time.

I listen to the gurgling of water through pipes, watch spinning colours through the rounded glass, hear the murmuring of well-engineered mechanics, and the smart computerised ‘click’ as the switch is made from wash to rinse. The sounds my machine makes are reassuring. My machine purrs – gently warmly round and round caressing fabric, gathering garments. It whizzes – in an instant, no delay, it will be done! And whirs – this is my purpose, I am here for no other reason.

It is happy, I am happy. The damp washing is spotless and as I hang it out in a prayer-flag line, my toes nestled in grass and my face to the sun, a sense of profound well-being swells up, through and around my pregnant belly.

The first loads are exciting. Bedding is stripped, covers torn off, and spreads unfurled. Everything washable and perhaps a little dirty is gleaned. As I load I squat, face to face with washing and heart to heart with machine. As the tumbling of clothes begins vibrations shimmer from machine through floorboard, penetrating the soles of my feet, stimulating skin, bone and muscle; nudging and snuggling in one continuous thrilling movement. Travelling on up, embedding within calf, skirting knee, wrapping thigh, these vibrations come to rest finally, nestling deep and certain within my womb.

I breeze about my springtime home. I tell my friends about my machine; about this new presence in my life. As they push through fly beading into my kitchen, I introduce them to it. I throw my head back laughing as they acknowledge me and my machine with the self-consciousness of unintentional voyeurs.

The vacant lot on top of the machine rapidly becomes colonised. Seeds to be sown, tools, uncertain socks, bags, odd bits and stray pieces jostle and joust. Like lichen on concrete these colonisers do the initial works of homemaking before the hard blank substrate begins to soften and yield.

Washing machine presents space for its own affiliation. It announces its beingness through rhythmic undulations of sound and movement that resonate through me and the timbered stirrings of my home. My machine emerges from its factory finish, the cool monotony of the showroom floor, into the haphazard warmth and kitchen clutter of family life.

A friend tells me that my machine is a water guzzler. The four and a half stars tacked on its front are four and a half stars for outdated efficiency and an industry rigged rating system. I return home bothered and confront my machine.

There is a seismic shift in understanding between myself and my machine. Its strangeness I find overwhelming; the mess of litter on its top annoying, and now interlaced with grime and garbage; its noise too loud, jarring with the buzz and hum of the summer's day. Anything other than a No. 5 wash forces me to rummage through the machine manual of mistranslation.

My friend tells me that there are machines – water-friendly and rating-wise – about to enter the market. And that they provide the perfect upgrade opportunity for my machine!

My machine now whines on the spin cycle. A ceaseless eeeeeeeeeee rounds the corner, echos down the hall, steals under my newborn's door and shimmies through the cot bars. The whine becomes a wail.

Waking baby, wasting water, obsolete and out of step. The washing is clean, true, but I'm being tugged and towed away from my machine toward a newer one, a better one; one with more responsibility in regards to water; one that doesn't gather grime and garbage as it takes its place within my home; one that perhaps sings and sings sweetly to my unsettled child. What is my old machine to me now, in the face of this?

I know what this machine is now! Flayed fingers fiddling knobs from plastic moulding; an open cut mine ten rings deep and falling daily; shadows fleeting across a cinder floor; the sun-burned sienna through oil-hung smoke. The once-was-water river lancing the arid-creeper plain; the missionised slumber of no-place people; underground chess in a far eastern pit; carrion on corpse of carrion past.

I ken threads connecting far flung places and absolute strangers, threads that run taut, crossing, tangling, entwining and bunching in a global webwork of progress and development. And all leading across ocean, over hill, through air to my home, to my kitchen and my machine.

My machine – a hub of the careless chaos of extraction, production, competition and consumption. This thing in my home! How can I live with this, be with this thing now I know what it is?

To acknowledge it is pain. When it captures my eye, as I touch it as I must – pressing, turning, sliding and stuffing – I attempt to hold it apart from me. I attempt to leave this machine to its own devices; to let it be within its own machinations, but the monstrosity of it subsumes me. Mixed with some ghostly vestiges of pain, guilt and despair I now attempt to contain my knowledge of this machine, but the booming

dynamic complexity of it all ricochets throughout. A mass of nausea tattles and tolls in my throat, and I reach for my machine with flu-ache arms, touching it with reluctance once, maybe twice a week. The matting of insipid threads that is my machine holds tight around my neck.

Its presence puts my kitchen on an uneven keel. It gouges, sinking lino into water-soft boards; wave upon wave of hammering pounds strut and beam to breaking point.

Stoved debris shifts, falling over board, marooned within a whirlpool of dust, awash between wall and machine. T-shirt underarms retain the stench of stressed out sweat; seams unravel around the cut and thrust of wash and rinse; and there is no shifting stains seeping, straining deep within warp and weft.

Gasping why, how, another way, get rid of it, hand wash, someone else, something else take responsibility for this thing!

I fill it with nappies that have cradled the bottom of my eating, growing, thriving little boy. Week upon week this machine takes the clothes that rub up against me, caressing my nakedness and speaking my name. It dwells within my home as part of me, and it can be nothing but my responsibility.

So I grieve.

My machine becomes the locus of lament for how the world is. I grieve the futility of my society that necessitates subjugation and subsumption as a means of handling a bit of baby poo. I grieve the systems, beings and things, the waterways, hillsides, caves, ice, wind and fire that are my machine. I grieve also the slaughter, mayhem and madness that are my machine. And I grieve me – a loss of strength as weakness of arms steals through torso and clambers up neck; a loss of certainty in the choices I make for living right within this world. Who am I and how should I be within a home, a community and culture that are bound to the earth through machine?

There are no pathways out of here, no cairns marking an old trail, the land too dry for mossy-trunk guidance. A westerly billows with bytes of eco-info, but here these speak only of dislocation and disassociation. As my machine cycles and autumn stirs I sit in my kitchen, toes curled off the cooling lino and dry lips drawing dampening air, helpless.

Options for escapism present themselves – rationalism, computerism, sensationalism, and televism – but all are temporal and all are conceited in their denial. To opt-out, drop-out the most futile and craven form of abdication.

While this grief is not all consuming, it surprises me as put-aside pains and spliced longings come to join my feelings for my machine. I do not grieve my machine in isolation but as part of the fabric of my life, the fabric of world. The interconnected, interrelated world is bound within my sadness for me and my machine.

Calling it a machine, a mere contraption of cause and effect, now seems absurd. This entity is the rough and raw of how we are within the world, and the manifestation of who we perceive ourselves to be. It is the interrelations of us, earth and all the happenings, things and beings that these entail.

There is no need and, indeed, no possibility of hiding from this entity and the grief it evokes. I can't hide from world! Instead my grief lies across my chest, heavy, perpetual and wide awake. The insipid necklace has unfurled and fallen; now blanketing my ribs as a capillary shawl. It is warm, emanating a power potent with certainty.

I load with purpose; the very act of washing has become a mark of a different way of being. As I sense this entity through touch, smell, sight, sound and motion I experience the wonder and the crudity of this world, and I affirm my place within it all.

5.3.2 Self and machine

For a while the relationship between myself and my washing machine held a sense of progression; now it is cycling and we return to each other, each return signalling another awakening to what lies in-between. It was within one of these returns that thoughts about this machine and the relationship appeared not in my head, but out there within this in-betweenness. In relating with my machine I did not inhabit my own headspace as would be expected if I was *the* source of thought and agency in this relationship. Rather, when in active commune with my machine I dwelt within the in-betweenness. In relation to the machine I was drawn into the in-between and held there within the manifestation of the agency of us both.

There is a colloquial expression describing ‘one being drawn out of oneself’. It is possible to experience someone or something drawing one out of oneself in such a way as to feel out and about within the world, as opposed to dwelling within a sense of self that may feel bounded and confining. To be drawn out of oneself is, by and large, viewed as a positive experience, an experience that is sought as a way of maintaining oneself as whole and integrated. In times of introversion brought on by despair and distress, being drawn out of oneself is a noticeable transition – one can feel, in the embodied sense, a sizeable shift in self inhabitation. Perhaps it becomes easier to smile – shoulders slacken and the desire to talk – for the tongue to wag – rises. What brings one out of oneself in such a noticeable way can vary and is often unpredictable. It may be another person, something treasured, a TV show or participation in an activity or a hobby.

This sense of being brought out of oneself is not only confined to times of distress or depression. This noticeable shift in the sense of oneself can occur when encountering entities and happenings that surprise, overwhelm or confront. An encounter with wilderness may, for some, be such an experience. It is not unusual within wilderness

literature for people to express a sense of being drawn out of themselves as part of the wilderness experience (see, for example, Schuster *et al.*, 2006: 193).

In addition, I would argue that these types of experiences are not only confined to relationships of a poignant or extreme nature; it is only the intensity of these relationships that makes this phenomenon more noticeable than at other, more mundane times. The significance of the encounter and resulting relationship allows what is normally taken-for-granted to present itself with alacrity and definition. At more mundane times, when there is little to awaken us to what is going on and when the self as an atomistic, individuated human subject is assumed, the outsideness of dwelling remains concealed. A sense of oneself as contained inside is presupposed.

Philosopher Mary Midgley argues that to conceive of consciousnesses as “self-contained, isolated both from each other and from the world around” is terminally solipsistic (2001: 85). She argues instead that consciousness is the “crowded scene of our daily lives”; that which does the thinking has to be the “whole person, living in a public world” (2001: 87). For Midgley the fact that we interact with other humans is a basic condition that each of us needs for our own thoughts. Children learn first what is going on with other people and this is central in forming their own sense of self. She identifies ‘a problem of one’s own mind’ – the difficulty we can have in grappling with our own thoughts and actions – as exemplifying just how unself-contained we really are.

Midgley (2001) focuses her consideration of emergence of human consciousness on the human domain – for Midgley the significant communication is between beings significantly like us⁶⁵. However, by recognising entities as constituted by the relations they hold within the world irrespective of whether they are human or otherwise, she allows that the ability to think can be understood as manifest not only between human and human, but between human and plant, human and insect, human and house, and human and washing machine. Consciousness – that awareness of self, others and the

world at large – is then understood as a manifestation of relationality and manifest within relationality. When I commune with my washing machine, the manifestation of consciousness within myself is part of that relationship. Not only that, but because the consciousness is relationship based – it arises in-between – then what I experience as consciousness is not mine alone. As it dwells in the relationship itself, this consciousness is also manifested within and a manifestation of the washing machine.

That is not to say that the washing machine is conscious as I am conscious. To make such a leap would be an act of anthropomorphism. As humans we apply the term ‘consciousness’ to our human experience, our embodied human articulation of the relations we hold within the world. The washing machine has its own experience and its own way of being within the relationship, because the relationality of both myself and it extend well beyond our one-on-one interaction. The washing machine is a unique patterning of relationships, just as I am, and the relationship between myself and my washing machine is only a small part of the relationality of each. My washing machine is not conscious as I am conscious; it is washing machine-conscious while I am myself-conscious. We each bring our own unique selves to our experience of consciousness.

Traditionally consciousness and emotionality have been assigned to humans alone. While this has been successfully challenged in more recent times from a variety of angles, it is useful to fall back on this absolutism to illustrate a point. If this traditional view were true, then it begs a question – where did this emotionality and consciousness come from so that it was isolated within the human species alone? A possible answer is that it originated via the agency of a deity or range of deities; that a supreme other-than-worldly super-being descended from elsewhere carrying a range of things – including emotionality and consciousness – and bestowed them upon humans. This makes phenomena like consciousness, in a sense, ‘out-of-this-world’. As such, humans may be perceived to be ‘out-of-this-world’ – to lack the normal array of

interconnectivity that binds the rest of the world together. While the soils, animals, plants and waterways are of this world, humans stand and remain somewhat apart.

Yet if we accept that humans have always been and remain a thoroughly interconnected part of the world – akin to other entities evolved within this world – then traditionally ascribed human traits like consciousness can also be understood as thoroughly interconnected within the world. Phenomena such as consciousness are embodied within the evolutionary history of the earth and are not sited within the human as though the human has existed, or evolved, in isolation from all else. Consciousness is embedded within the earth. Consciousness is manifest within earth and a manifestation of earth. Consciousness is an embodiment of earth, and earth in part is an embodiment of consciousness. We do not just watch a bird fly, we feel it fly. We do not simply witness a rock crack in a fire, we feel it crack within ourselves, and we feel ourselves crack within the fire.

When consciousness is conceived in such a way, it comes as no surprise that animal behavioural scientists are continuing to discover and make an evocative case for consciousness – or phenomena akin to consciousness – in a growing array of other species (for an illuminating example of this work see Bekoff and Pierce, 2009). However, these species, like humans, evolved in relation with rocks, soil and trees, amongst a myriad of others – entities traditionally assumed to be inanimate and certainly as lacking consciousness. Hence, it is possible to take the claims made by behavioural scientists further, and argue that the phenomenon of consciousness dwells well beyond specific phyla within the kingdom Animalia. As David Abram, reflecting on the work of Merleau-Ponty, points out:

Once I acknowledge that my own sentience, or subjectivity, does not preclude my visible, tactile, objective existence for others, I find myself forced to acknowledge that *any* visible, tangible form that

meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me (Abram, 1997: 67).

Not only does consciousness dwell within the relationships that humans hold between themselves and other entities: it also dwells between a dog, ball and track; it dwells between rock, rain and wind; it dwells between sand, wave and penguin-landing. Within these more-than-human relationalities is a manifestation of something akin to what we humans experience and articulate as consciousness, but ultimately is something unique to each relationship and each entity's experience within each relationship. The sand is sand-conscious, the wave is wave-conscious and the penguin-landing, penguin-landing conscious. The phenomenon we term 'consciousness' is alive and kicking within the world at large both within and beyond the human.

In arguing for the 'outsideness of self', however, I am not dismissing experiences of consciousness on the inside. This is no denial of our experience of awareness and thought inside our selves. Rather, this is an opening up to a sense of ourselves within the broader relational webworks we inhabit. In understanding that we are constituted by the relations we hold in the world and in experiencing ourselves out and about within this relationality, how then to understand this awareness on the inside?

Comprehending the human as not only constituted by relationships held with the world out there, but also by those inside, is the key here. The human, so often referred to as mammal, is in fact a gathering of relationality more accurately referred to as mammalian microbial symbiosis (Wilson, 2005: xvii). The average human consists, in part, of living cells – 10 percent of which are mammalian cells and 90 percent microbial cells (McFarland, 2000)⁶⁶. The human microflora comprises 7000 species (Shenderov, 2007), some of which have the capacity to cause disease, but in the healthy human body most live in a state of symbiosis. These bacteria form "microcolonies that become biofilms, the complex, matrix-enclosed ecosystems... Bacteria regulate their community activities using secreted peptides or small

molecules, and hosts detect or interfere with this cross-talk to either cooperate with or kill the newcomers” (Toumanen, 2005: 635). The interaction between what we can call our ‘mammalian self’ and our ‘microbial self’⁶⁷ is mutually beneficial.

The coevolution of our mammalian and microbial selves means that one cannot exist without the other. While we are their habitat, they help to protect us against disease-causing microbes, provide us with approximately 10 percent of our energy requirements, supply a range of vitamins, and play a key role in the development of our immune system and some organs (Wilson, 2005: xvii). There is also evidence that human microbes are involved in the regulation of behaviour reactions including appetite, sleep, mood and biorhythms (Shenderov, 2007).

The only time that we are microbe-free is in our mother’s womb. As soon as we are born colonisation begins – we pick up microbes from our mother and other people present at the birth, and we pick up microbes from our surrounds; from bedding, water and perhaps plants. As we descend the birth canal we are not simply an organism being born, but habitat being inhabited. Like any habitat, the human body has sites of high biodiversity – the colon, dental plaque and vagina have the most complex microbial communities. The lungs and internal tissues are normally microbe-free. No two humans have an identical microbial self though there is a correlation with genetic relatedness. Age, sex, diet, hygiene practises, clothing and occupation also influence the make up of our microbial self. Hence, as each mammalian self is unique and distinctive, so too is each microbial self, and so too is all the relationality in-between (Booth, K. I., 2007).

Symbiosis – a mutually beneficial interaction between two or more organisms – not only plays a role in the interaction between our mammalian and microbial selves; it also plays a role in the evolutionary history of our mammalian self. The cells that make up our mammalian self, eukaryotic cells, evolved from interactions between simpler prokaryotic cells. Over 2 billion years ago prokaryotic cells entered other

prokaryotic cells as undigested prey or internal parasites. A symbiotic relationship ensued in which both cells benefited each other. For example, one cell provided habitat for the smaller cell and in return used nutrients released by the smaller cell. As a result of this interdependence the cells evolved into a single organism, and this was the catalyst for the evolution of increasing structural diversity that eventually resulted in us and other animals (Campbell *et al.*, 2006). “The eukaryotic cell is a chimera of prokaryotic parts, its mitochondria derived from one type of bacteria, its plastids from another, and its nuclear genome from parts of these endosymbionts’ genomes and from at least one other cell, the cell that hosted the endosymbionts” (Campbell *et al.*, 2006: 524-25).

The human being is not a discrete single organism, but a teeming, tingling mass of beings playing out a range of interactions that we more commonly associate with ecosystems *out there* (Booth, K. I., 2007). And as previously described, this relationality includes both the ecology of the here and now, and the collective, mythological and evolved memories embodied within each of our selves and entities in general. Such relationality is the site – the manifestation – of our sense of an insideness of consciousness⁶⁸.

The microbes do not recognise my skin as a boundary but as habitat that merges with neighbouring habitats, both within me and outside of me. I am no mere backdrop for the lives of microbes; I am habitat that is interconnected and dynamic. I am ecosystem not in an incidental way; it is me as I exist. I am an ecosystem that is manifest within, and a manifestation of mammal-microbe symbiosis. Within myself there are ecosystems formed, maintained and dwelled within. These ecosystems are places that take place within my self as place. As such, symbiosis is a procreation of place; it is the bringing into being of place. This procreation of place originates my self; it constructs and constitutes what, who and how I am. As the procreation of place is ongoing and expansive, my self is ongoing and expansive. Within it all, I am aware.

As manifestation of place both inside and outside, and as manifest within place, I know and I am awake.

The word *consciousness* is derived from two roots. The first is the latin *con scienta*, meaning knowledge-with or knowing something with another. The second is the suffix *ness*, meaning quality, state or condition of being (Barnhart, 2000). The word *ness* is also Anglo-Saxon for land. While the *ness* in *wilderness* has been linked to the suffix, rather than the word (Skeat, 1989), Vest (1986) uses the word rather than the suffix to define wilderness as self-will-land or self-willed place. It is possible to imagine that a language that has evolved within communities more closely connected to the land – to specific places – than our own would see little to distinguish the word from the suffix – it is possible to imagine that the state or condition of being reflects and is reflected in place and self within place. This notion is in part supported by the overlap apparent in the origin of the two (Klein, 1971). Hence, an interpretation of the word consciousness is possible, along the lines of Vest's definition of wilderness, which defines consciousness as *knowing-something-with-land* or *knowing-something-with-place*.

In this sense, we become conscious and we are conscious through knowing ourselves in relation with place. It is through the relationships that we hold – in the multiple dimensions of personal, collective, mythological and evolved memories, and through place inside of us and place outside of us – that we are who we are and that we are aware. I am aware because of the relationships that hold me within place.

Consciousness is my experience of relationality; my experience of that agency manifest within and manifestation of the relationships that I hold in the world and that hold me within the world. If unrelated I am not myself, and I am certainly not awake or conscious. To be self-aware, to be self-conscious, is to be awake within the relationality as a whole.

Just using the word ‘consciousness’ implies that what is being discussed here is not matter. Yet neither is it a mental phenomenon. What is being recognised here is not mentality within the world at large. Consciousness is rather an embodied phenomenon, in that when we relate to something in the place where we live we are not just thinking about it, we are acting *within* this relationality. I do not just think about my washing machine, I reach for it, touch it, fill it, wipe it, lean on it and nudge up against it. When it spins the vibrations resonate up my legs and the sound reverberates through my ears and within my mind. The relationship between my self and my machine is the whole of it. Hence, the manifestation of consciousness inherent within this is the embodiment of all that is in-between. When I touch my machine my machine touches me, and when I am aware of my machine, my machine is aware of me. As I experience this relationality my machine experiences this relationality; as I am conscious of my machine my machine is conscious of me.

When we slip from consciousness, either through accident or illness, part of the recommended treatment for the patient is to facilitate their ongoing engagement with entities familiar to them. Friends and family are encouraged to talk to the unconscious person, and familiar things may be brought in to stimulate the senses through touch, sound and smell. A need to retain and reinforce connectivity is understood as important if the person is to regain consciousness. To be touched by the hand of a loved one, to be touched by an animal companion or to be scented by your own garden flower holds the potential of awakening one in relation with that encounter. It offers the possibility of touching the hand of a loved one or the fur of an animal companion, or of smelling the garden flower. Following a loss of consciousness, a return may be possible through familiarities that came before.

Merleau-Ponty (1968) describes a dual notion with regards to the touched and the touching – the possibility of awareness moving backwards and forwards between experiencing oneself as being touched and touching. He observes the difficulty of

experiencing both at the same time, describing this as reversibility, or the circularity of experience (Brook, 2005: 360). The very act of touching carries within it the act of being touched, and vice versa. However, Merleau-Ponty observed that being aware of touching makes invisible the reverse of this, being touched, just as being aware of being touched makes invisible the sense of touching. In Merleau-Ponty's work the "reversibility of touch and touching brings home the... sense of separation that at the same time demonstrates inseparability" (Brook, 2005: 360).

However, if we accept that consciousness is embodied, a possibility of experiencing both touching and being touched at once emerges, but not, importantly, within the cerebral awareness alone. It is possible to be so engrossed within something that the touching and the being touched is fused within an embodied knowing of which the cerebral is only an integrated part. Reading a good book, using skills fine-tuned within the relationality of tool, material and self, or with instrument, score, and self, are just a couple of examples of where and when we may be embraced within the relationality to such an extent that our consciousness is *body* and not simply *cerebral*. Such an experience relies upon a level of familiarity within the relational enmeshments that is deep and concentrated. When we become cerebrally aware within such experiences we may catch a glimpse of ourselves anywhere within the relational realm – so 'up close and personal' with the entities as to feel the embodiment of these as that of oneself. Or so deep within one's own sense of self as to ignite a deep and personal meditative state. Or perhaps, as I first encountered in commune with my washing machine, very much within the in-between. Within this commune is an embodied freedom of movement rather than the simple possibility of circularity; in a sense there is ability for the 'mind' to wander.

Focusing on the qualities of a one-on-one relationship, as Merleau-Ponty does with his notion of circularity, offers an insightful though perhaps simplistic stance from which to contemplate relationality. Focusing upon this alone, however, does not necessary

account for the complexity that arises within the multiplicity of the relational. The very act of touching an entity and being touched by that entity is enmeshed within an infinite complexity of relationships that hold both self and the entity within place. To be cerebrally conscious of being embraced within this complexity is simply not possible – it is a complexity that cerebral consciousness cannot comprehend. However, because embodied consciousness is itself a manifestation of, and manifest within, this complexity, it is embodied consciousness that allows us to be conscious *more fully* within place.

To experience embodied awareness within place at large is a phenomenon not often reflected upon within western cultures. To have a sense of relational familiarity that extends beyond a specific art form, hobby, one-on-one, or one-with-two interaction and that inhabits within the relationality of, for example, a place such as a valley, street or suburb is arguably not widespread. In Risdon Vale, for example, the relational memories I embody are still resolving within this place. The familiarity I hold with this place is very much on-the-way-to-greater-familiarity and is may be significantly less intimate than that held by the Palawa.

In addition, the disvalue and disallowance of the multiplicity of place – in prioritising Gallileo’s primary qualities and in assuming that relationality is, by and large, external – cripples embodied consciousness, as what is embodied is devalued and denied. Yet it is the broader and complex relationality that is place that offers at least the possibility of a more whole and complete comprehension of self.

A consequence of consciousness being embodied rather than simply cerebral, is that notions such as ‘subconscious thoughts’ and the ‘unconscious mind’ can be understood as misnomers. These phenomena are not hidden within or behind the insideness of consciousness. Rather they are a manifestation of awareness embodied within the complexity of the entwining of insideness and outsideness, and to which terms such as instinct, intuition and sixth sense may be applied. That something is not

happening in or from the cerebral mind does not imply a lack of consciousness; rather it is a demonstration of embodied consciousness – it is gut-instinct, heart-felt, finger-licking-good, felt in one's waters, and spine-chilling. So relying (or attempting to rely) upon what we know in our heads alone has some obvious and rather extreme limitations. It assumes a disembodied, unrelated, out-of-this-world self, when self is in actual fact embodied, related, and thoroughly and deeply within-this-world. The kind of knowledge emerging from the former, while still holding some relevance simply because it is ultimately part of this world, remains always only partial.

Knowing in other ways – in embodied ways – seems like a leap of faith, but only because we are used to these being diminished, disallowed and distrusted. Even those exploring beyond and beneath these bounds struggle here. Massey's *elusiveness* of place and sociologist John Law's claim that "much of reality is ephemeral and elusive" (2004: 2) appear both to be reflections of an awareness of something beyond what our minds tell us we know and yet express an inability to grasp more fully what this may be. There is no easy path here as our own tentative assertions of embodied knowledge can also be our worst enemy. We seem to prove ourselves wrong within the fallibility resulting from a lack of familiarity with our own selves as embodied, because we simply are 'out of practise', and most importantly for many of us, out of place. There lies the possibility of either being dismissed as 'new age' loonies, or being subverted by new age practitioners who work within a potentially dangerous mix of narrow human egotism and a certain dexterity within the relational world at large. It is not possible to know and act deeply within an embodied sense if one is not familiar within one's own webwork of relationality. A deep and personal sense of place is fundamental within this knowing.

Relationality knows no bounds. As we dwell with our machines we relate to them as they relate to us. Our experience within these relationships manifests as part of our consciousness. As I experience the relational complexity that makes me my self and

the machine it self, I become alive to it and conscious within it all – the horror and the wonder. Within all dwells gum-tree-man, within gum-tree-man dwells my washing machine, and within each dwells it all. As the washing machine spins, I spin upon the arm of gum-tree-man and within the giddiness of the spinning earth we all spin on. And within this dizziness we are all awake.

The Locality of Place



*Fish, it is said,
Cannot survive unless they adapt themselves to their environments,
And certain environments will not survive unless they are inhabited
By ecologically
Knowledgeable
Fish.*

*Am I not subject for a similar ecological case-history?
Striped like my kitchen floor with sunlight and shadow,
I stand by the sink and my fingers shoot forth teaspoons
As the light rays out from the silver sides of canisters.*

Extract from 'The Ecology of Fishes' by Rosemary Dobson (1970: 181-182)

Chapter 6 – The Locality of Place

In the previous chapter deep ecological metaphysics, particularly transpersonal ecology, entwined with my sense of Risdon Vale, and emerged as reflection upon relationality, agency, gestalt ontology, wilderness, wildness, self, consciousness and machines. The encounters – ‘gum-tree-man’, ‘touch me, this tree’, and ‘capillary shawl’ – and associated discussion, enforce the interconnectivity of the notion of place previously described and particularities of my life in Risdon Vale. Within gum-tree-man, the notion of place is embodied as a place gestalt; it is bound within the particularities of the relationship between my self and Risdon Vale. ‘Touch me, this tree’ brings to the fore ‘wilderness’ as a dynamic and multidimensional gestalt that inhabits both wilderness places and towns and cities, and wildness as a descriptor for the agency of the relational in-between. Finally, in ‘capillary shawl’ the ongoing encounter between my self and my washing machine spurs consideration of consciousness as embodied within the world at large. However, a broader question remains unanswered: how do we make sense of, and make sense within, the relational complexity that we embody and within which we are embodied? How do I make sense within the tentative milieu evoking and evoked by gum-tree-man, a place gestalt of seemingly infinite unbounded complexity?

Within a relational comprehension of place, and of self in relation to place, the complexity entailed means that there can be no definitive answer to this question, at least no answer abstracted from the particularities of place. Hence this chapter offers two perspectives from which the question, rather than the answer are approached. *The locality of place* is offered as a notion through which the particularities of place may be contextualised, but it is a notion that does not attempt to define what these particularities are and how they may be construed. The locality of place is as much about opening towards possibilities inherent within relational complexity as about developing the notion of place presented previously. As a means of sense-making, the

locality of place is initially approached via two commonly understood sense-making devices – linear time and geometric spatiality.

I have proposed that this inquiry has the capacity to change both our understanding of deep ecology and how we conceive towns and cities. While the latter is discussed in the next chapter, this current chapter concludes by discussing the metaphysical implications of the locality of place for transpersonal ecology specifically and deep ecology generally. The locality of place is presented as an approach that is distinct from Fox's transpersonal ecology, and an elaboration of biological science's conception of symbiosis is offered as an alternative to Fox's understanding of Self-realisation. Finally, critiques that argue that deep ecology's conception of place and sense of place hold and inspire fascist tendencies are reviewed. I contend that the understanding of place developed herein avoids these concerns.

6.1 *Sense-Making*

Within western cultures, people and communities make sense of the world around them and their place within the world in a variety of nuanced yet intermingling ways. Linear time and geometric spatiality are two forms of sense-making that are frequently articulated, commonly acknowledged and rarely disputed in the day-to-day⁶⁹. Both notions are accepted as forms of sense-making that appear, at least on the surface, to be beyond dispute. In offering up place as a form of sense-making, it is useful to intervene in these everyday certainties and contextualise these notions within a relational understanding of the world; when looking towards place, specifically the locality of place as a means of making sense within the shifting entanglement of a relational worldview, it is of benefit to see how this notion looks in relation to the colloquial sense-making devices of linear time and geometric spatiality. What follows is neither a comprehensive nor definitive exposé of 'time' and 'space', but a re-conceptualisation of how we may understand linear time and geometric space as a means of facilitating how we can understand the notion of the locality of place.

The predominant everyday comprehension of time is that it is linear. Time travels as a conveyor belt, moving from past, present to future in one easy, continuous and consistent stream, a stream that is independent of human thought, action and agency. In the day-to-day, evidence of such an understanding of time manifests all around us. Yesterday I was 37 years and 53 days old, today I am 37 years and 54 days old, and tomorrow I will be 37 years and 55 days old and so forth. I will never be 37 years and 53 days old again as that is in the past, and the number will keep increasing in linear fashion (at least up until a point). Using a numeric base we can arrange a whole range of entities and happenings in a sequential line and time manifests as linear throughout our lived experience of the day-to-day.

Yet the numeric basis of counting also allows for a manifestation of time as linear. The colloquial understanding of the sequencing of numbers – 1,2,3,4,5, and so on – is a culturally imbibed understanding that allows us to repeatedly produce experiences of the phenomenon of linear time. That is not to say that the numeric sequencing that orders so much in our daily lives or the notion of linear time itself can simply be confined or identified within the realm of the social or cultural. The fact that the notion of linear time does make some kind of sense on a regular and meaningful basis is indicative of a realness that exists between this notion and the world itself, and is not merely some artefact isolatable within a cultural domain. Hence, in this discussion it is neither necessary nor sufficient to do away with this notion. Rather, such insights provide an opportunity to contextualise this notion within a relational understanding of the world.

Let us imagine an array of entities within the place that is Risdon Vale – Permian mudstone that is between 250 and 300 million years old, the track along the banks of Grasstree Hill Rivulet that possibly follows an Aboriginal road that dates back 20,000 years, the convict hew-marks on a piece of sandstone at 180 years of age, my house constructed in 1963 and Topsy, my neighbour's cat, who is 5 years old. Arranging

these entities in chronological order appears, at least initially, a straight forward exercise. A little reflection however, and this chronology becomes more complicated. If each entity is understood as constituted by the relations it holds – as a unique patterning of relationships – then the numbers ascribed above can be understood to represent only one small facet of the relationality of each entity. With regards to mudstone, in identifying the date of (approximated) creation I am ignoring, for example, the nature of sediments, the forces that act to compact the sediments and the relationality of the fossilised creatures that are an inherent part of the rock. Instead I have prioritised one aspect of this mass of relationality, one aspect that fits into and supports a linear understanding of time. I have, in fact, presupposed the prioritisation of one node of the rationality that constitutes the mudstone and this presupposition has granted me a conception of the mudstone's location on the conveyor belt of linear time.

In recognising only one aspect (or a discrete suite) of this relationality I am able to arrange all the entities listed above in an order that appears to make some kind of absolute sense. However, this arrangement makes sense only because the broader relational complexity inherent within each of these entities is occluded. By ignoring, disallowing or simply not recognising the relationality beyond that which is prioritised it is possible to isolate each entity, arrange it and understand it within a specific linear temporal arrangement. First the mudstone solidified, then Aboriginal people began using and maintaining the road over the Grasstree Hill saddle, then convicts hewed the sandstone, my house on Linden Road was constructed and finally Topsy was born. In recognising that a node from each mass of relational complexity has been pulled out and lined up and imaginatively divested from the rest, we begin to conceive that there are other forms of sense-making within the entangling complexity that remains hidden behind the neat straight line that supports and is supported by the conveyor belt imagery.

An assumption that some relationships matter more than others, or a straight out dismissal (or denial) of relationality altogether, allows the notion of linear time to be considerably more meaningful than it actually is. The simplification offered by such an approach certainly has its temptations, if not its uses. However, recognition of its limitations opens a door towards understandings that are potentially less simplistic and that make more use of that which is concealed. Such an understanding – one in which entities do not by necessity hold a fixed position on a temporal conveyor belt and one in which complexity plays a central part – may even make *more* sense than that already on offer.

Similar observations may be made about the notion of geometric spatiality. Places and features of places may appear fixed within the certainty of longitude and latitude, yet this fixivity relies on only certain qualities – certain relational nodes – of the place and the feature being prioritised, and the disallowance and denial of an infinite complexity of others. Rather than qualities or nodes being pulled out and lined up, as previously described with regards to linear time, certain qualities and nodes within the sense-making device of geometric spatiality are pulled out of the relational entanglement, are spread and flattened out and affixed by a numeric coordinate. This is a useful tool, like linear time, but one that again relies on denial or ignorance of the relational complexity entailed. Hence geometric spatiality, like linear time, is exposed within a relational worldview as having significant limitations.

In the day-to-day we deal with these limitations within largely unarticulated frameworks of meaningfulness, the contents of which receive little cultural validation or reinforcement. The 1:25,000 maps that cover the suburb of Risdon Vale and surrounds (TASMAP, 1986; 2008) represent what appears to be fixed – the topography, roads and buildings all adhere to a specific set of numeric coordinates. Grasstree Hill Rivulet is defined in terms of the measureable components of longitude and latitude. Its southerly route through forest, around boulder and over waterfall is a

simple fine blue line; the meaningfulness is, by and large, confined within the string of numbers along the periphery of the map. If you let your mind wander, however, through the nomenclature and within the twists and turns of the creek bed, qualities of this creek as embedded within the map come alive. If you know a place well, viewing its representation on a map is an intricate and intimate affair. Relational components, beyond those encompassed by geometric spatiality, include the qualities inherent within the particularities of the place. Entities stand out from the flatness of paper, creek beds are full or empty of water, rocks and soil shift under the pressure of a wallaby's bounce. 'Basin Hills', the name of the ridge on the Meehan Range I most often frequent, draws me closer into the rock platform pitted with basin-like hollows and overhung with oldgrowth blue gums. These hollows fill with leaves and water, and, like the potholes of Linden Road, attract thirsty bees and dusty birds.

When perusing a map of an unknown place it also comes alive not through the particularities of the place, but within the realm of imaginings. On old seafaring maps unknown waters were inscribed with the descriptor 'here lie monsters'. An unknown place, viewed through its mappable qualities, is alive with the possibilities beyond that defined by geometric spatiality. The magic of maps lies in imaginings manifest within our embodied knowledge of place within self and self within place. As a map casts its spell, how its features are arranged within the configuration of longitude and latitude is a sideshow within the carnival of storied possibilities.

Places described as wilderness also manifest a sense of the spatial that is distinctly a-geometric; in experiencing wilderness we encounter a world that is other than geometric reckoning. When we turn our gaze to the 1:25,000 we are concerned primarily with the flow of contour, the patterning of vegetation, and the rise and fall of peaks and valleys. While significant focus may be directed towards these details, what is experienced on the ground contextualises the mapped spatiality within the immediacy of pushing through thick scrub and the seeming boundlessness of a rolling

or rugged horizon. The geometric component of maps may provide some additional clues, but it is previous experience and sensorial gleanings that are essential for the navigation within terrain. Geometric spatiality only becomes primary during a prescribed navigational exercise, if equipped with a GPS or within the depths of thick mist. Within the latter, it is a far from comfortable experience to find oneself reliant primarily on the geometric.

The a-geometric spatiality of wilderness is also evident as wilderness spills across the pages of deep ecological literature, within the discourse of environmental ethics and within nature writing. It slips beyond the neat confines of the geometric and enters imaginings and dreamscapes within the heart of those places that appear, at least within the confines of geometric spatiality, so far removed from wilderness places. Qualities within wilderness manifest upon walls as slogans, in calendars and posters, in a banner-painting workshop for the protection of oldgrowth forest, and in the rumble of the log trucks down a city's main street. The intersubjective immensity of that which is termed 'wilderness' transcends perceived geographical boundaries and a cultural obsession with qualities conceived as quantifiable and measurable.

Within wilderness the notion of linear time is also dramatically destabilised. So often described as in some way timeless, wilderness can now be understood as distinctly a-linear rather than a-temporal. Within wilderness we sense possibilities as not embedded within the past, but as manifest within wilderness as a relationally complex and compelling place. The sentimental yearning – a kind of nostalgia for the prehistoric – that some ascribe to deep ecology (dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7.2.2) is no simple desire for a return to a home that is temporally past. Rather it may be understood as a yearning towards the possibilities inherent within place, within the relational complexity that constitutes and is constituted by places. As we imagine and plan for the future, qualities of the future are folded within and upon the past and the present. In this way a relational worldview incorporates what will happen, or what is

in process of becoming, within the here and now of lived experience. Within wilderness we find ourselves struck by the possibilities of other ways of being. If we can encounter what is 'past', and we can be encountered by what is 'past', then possibilities beyond what is 'present' begin to unfold.

Such ontological insights into places, be these wilderness or otherwise, do not prescribe any specific form of sense-making. They are most significant in relation to the doors that they open rather than to the nature and structure of what lies within. Particularly in relation to deep ecology as it has emerged within the post-colonial settler societies of North America and Australia, wilderness is a way towards possibilities other than those present within the complexities of western cultures. Wilderness and wilderness experiencing have offered an evocative 'first-base' for deep ecological thought, but within a world steeped in qualities that defy the absolutism of geometric spatiality, the cityscape and settled lands also provide such openings. In other words, there is nothing about wilderness that is essential to deep ecological thought. In considering the interplay between deep ecological metaphysics and my home suburb of Risdon Vale I am in part doing no more and no less than looking towards other possibilities as they manifest within the cityscape. I am also, however, offering up a means of sense-making that remains open rather than closed and absolutist within these possibilities; that is open to complexity and dynamism, and reliant upon them. This is a comprehension of sense-making that I term *the locality of place*.

The locality of place offers a framing within which to make sense and by which to make sense, but not in a way that equates to the type of sense made within notions such as linear time and geometric space. It is not a device with clear and definite boundaries that enable neat and concise description. It is a form of sense-making that is neither simple nor universal. The locality of place is not bordered in a geometric spatial sense nor fixed in relation to linear time. It does not rely on some nodes to be

brought to the fore – to be lined up or spread out – while the relational complexity remains hidden. Rather it is a descriptor for the relational flux that makes place, and that, while offering a means of sense-making, is infused with qualities that are not necessarily thought about or rationalised or rationalisable in the cerebral sense. These are qualities that are manifest within and a manifestation of embodied sense-making. The locality of place is arational, a potent shakeup of the primary, secondary and tertiary delineations, a blending of the poles and movements within the insideness of the world. Thus, the term ‘locality’ is used not as a descriptor of a fixed position in space or a specific neighbourhood or area, but as a descriptor for a scene of an event or happening. The locality of place is understood as a meandering and disparate relational webwork that holds the possibility of corroboration, and a spun out and strung out happening of collaborating relational entanglements. It is place alive within a comprehension of interconnectivity and intersubjectivity.

Expressed as a place gestalt – such as gum-tree-man – the locality of place is at once effusive and grounding, anarchic and democratic, unreal and real, esoteric and apparent. Its articulation is necessarily an intersubjective collaboration and this articulation is primarily embodied, not rationalised, thought or spoken, though each of these aspects (and more) participate within its broader articulations. It is as simple and as complex as hanging washing on the line to dry, as looking out the window towards Mt Wellington first thing each morning, walking the same path day after day, and of dreaming within the landscape. Each doing appears a simple event, yet encompasses a relational complexity that extends far, wide and deep, wrapping up and being wrapped up within the movement and multiplicity of the qualities of the world, and of self within world. Storied as a place gestalt, the locality of place slips under the radar of policy and politics, of planning and governance, yet it diffuses out and about within the day-to-day giving meaning and resilience to self within world and the world within self.

The locality of place is a form of sense-making that is often denied and sometimes decried within western cultural parameters, though it most certainly exists in multiple manifestations. When my great grandfather summoned up the Cornish Dowlocks within the industrial hills and valleys of Lancashire, his experience is understood as other than a simplistic longing for a time that was gone and a space that was elsewhere. It seems to me that in evoking the Dowlocks my great grandfather was kenning towards the possibilities inherent within the place he now dwelt. As a place gestalt, the Dowlocks emitted stories to my father, when he was a child, that have and continue to revibrate within his understanding of who and how he is within the world (Booth. P. T., 2007). There is within this place gestalt a yearning to know more – a desire for some kind of fulfilment of embodied consciousness – though not, importantly, for some kind of return delineated by the parameters of geometric space and linear time. A return home, or rather the becoming of embodied consciousness, is grounded deep within the parameters of the here and now; within the day-to-day of the locality of place. As such, the sentiments of pain, grief and isolation associated with place and placedness that are so often labelled ‘nostalgia’ are in fact a consequence of the robust and often brutal cultural denial of other possibilities that lie at the heart of place and placedness, and of the repression and oppression of large and constituting aspects of the relational self.

When I yearn towards the Lake District – the qualities of which manifest within my dreams, on postcards, imaginings and remembrances, within the works of Beatrice Potter and William Wordsworth and chats with my family – I am not yearning back to something that is quantifiable within the parameters of geometric spatiality and linear time – to a childhood past and spent. I am, at least in part, lost within the denial inherent within my culture and perpetrated upon and within self (as self is entwined within the foresaid culture) of the import and even the existence of any of these qualities within my self and within the world at large. So far, in the embodied sense,

from aspects of my self in relation to the Lake District, I am alone within aspects of myself that are so much a part of me. This deep and bewildering aloneness is not a loneliness for the company of people. It is loneliness for aspects of the unique patterning of relations of self within place and place within self that is exacerbated by extensive mobility and that are repressed and oppressed within the presupposition of general non-relationality. Major aspects of my self as a unique patterning of relations are denied or dismissed. Hence, within my reminiscences of a damp Lake District that are grounded within the dryness of Risdon Vale, as proposed for my great grandfather and the Dowlocks, there is no sentimental yearning back through linear time towards a point definable within geometric space. Instead there is yearning beyond the pain and the grief and towards the possibilities of at-homeness – with all its diverse and complex manifestations – that lie within the heart of the locality of place.

Casey (1993) argues that our cultural fixation with time and space have displaced the priority of place. He writes: “we calculate, and move at rapid speeds, in time and space. But we do not live in these abstract parameters; instead, we are displaced in them and by them” (1993: 38). However, we are not necessarily without place within this displacement. Rather, the relationality that holds us within place is set aside as some kind of esoteric irrelevance. What constitutes us – that which is deeply meaningful to who and how we are – is continually marginalised and disallowed. Hence, we are faced with apparent contradictions; we feel aloneness in our embedment and embodiment within a relationally complex world and we feel disassociated from that to which we are closest. Alone within a world so full of stuff, the abdication of relationality demanded in part by the notions of linear time and geometric space is an abdication of embodied consciousness and the role that the richness of place plays within sense of self. Malaise may follow – anxiety as we struggle with the demands of disallowance, depression as we bottle up that which is real and meaningful as if we were bordered, insular creatures, and disorientation as we

reach old age and what is ourselves is overlooked, patronised and assumed compartmentable. The ongoing process of ontological individualisation pushes further apart that which is in fact bonded together and we can be left with an exhausted, memory-dulled, concentration-waning loss of consciousness.

As an alternative to the fixation upon time and space described by Casey (1993), in acknowledging the relational complexity of the world and by moving beyond attempts that simplify and disallow, the locality of place embraces relational complexity while still offering a means of navigating and participating within it. Rather than nodes in the relational webwork being pulled out and isolated from the remainder, the locality of place with its fuzzy boundaries and constant drift allows for a form of sense-making – of place-making – that contains, but does not constrain the whole. We can situate ourselves and all that we know within this openness and, importantly still maintain a sense of self within the complexity.

6.2 *Deep Ecology Revisited*

6.2.1 Symbiosis and the process of identification

What implications does the notion of the locality of place have for deep ecology generally, and transpersonal ecology specifically?

Fox argues that Naess's personal fundamental norm of Self-realisation is commonly articulated within the work of deep ecology proponents, although this was not what was intended by Naess himself (Fox, 1995a). Self-realisation as originally espoused by Naess was never meant to be descriptive of a universal process or prescriptive for those wishing to participate within the Deep Ecology movement. It was always there as an *agent provocateur* – an incitement for personal interpretation and an esoteric dive into the process of identification. However, in identifying Self-realisation as a common theme within a diversity of deep ecological writings, Fox (1995a) moves away from some of the plurality inherent within Naess's work and towards a more

generalising approach. For Fox it is Self-realisation that is the defining feature of the philosophical sense of ‘deep ecology’, and it is Self-realisation that underpins Fox’s interpretation of deep ecology as transpersonal ecology. The key to Self-realisation, writes Fox, is the “process of identification” (Fox, 1995a: 249). He identifies three aspects of identification – the personal, the cosmological and the ontological. He argues that while we are all embedded within a personal sense of identification, the process of Self-realisation moves us to expand our sense of identification into the realms of the cosmological and the ontological; into the transpersonal.

Before detailing how locality of place and symbiosis differ from transpersonal ecology and Self-realisation, it must be stressed that I am not claiming that deep ecology as a whole must make the switch from, for example, Self-realisation to the understanding of symbiosis contained herein. As previously stated, there is a plurality inherent within deep ecological thought in that each person holds (or develops) their own understanding of themselves in relation to the rest of the world. Self-realisation works for Naess – whose personal conception of Self-realisation is influenced by Spinoza and Gandhi (Fox, 1995a); Fox identifies a node of commonality in other people’s articulations of deep ecology that resonated with Naess’s Self-realisation and focuses on his understanding of the process of identification; and through my exploration of deep ecological metaphysics within towns and cities something else has emerged. It is the latter that I offer here, not as some claim to having unearthed the real heart of ‘deep ecology’, but as a means of adding to the richness of deep ecology and as a means of reconfiguring how we may experience and comprehend towns and cities.

The term ‘symbiosis’ is an amalgam of the Greek *syn*, meaning ‘with’, and *biosis*, meaning ‘living’. Since its conception in 1879, definitions of ‘symbiosis’ have varied and remain variable. In its broadest sense, and in line with Heinrich Anton de Bary’s original conception, it is understood as a permanent or long-lasting “association between two or more different species of organisms” (Ahmadjian and Paracer, 2000:

3). This includes the phenomena of commensalism (an association in which one symbiont benefits and the other neither benefits nor is harmed); parasitism (an association in which one benefits and the other is harmed); and mutualism (an association in which both symbionts benefit). Such relationships are, by and large, determined, and the possibilities of harm or benefit quantified, through how much the association increases or decreases the probability of the survival of the symbionts, measured through variables such as nutrition, protection and transportation (Margulis, 1986). For example, a symbiont may be harmed through a reduction in access to nutrients, or a symbiont may benefit through dispersal facilitated within the symbiotic association. The categorisation of these relationships is based on the following characteristics: location of symbionts (one of the symbionts is often identifiable as the host and the other symbiont in relation to this host may be an endosymbiont – inside the cells of the host – or an ectosymbiont – external to the host’s cells); the persistence of the symbiosis; dependence on the symbiosis (some symbionts are obligate – they cannot exist outside the relationship – whilst others are facultative – they can live without the relationship); and specificity of the symbionts (Ahmadjian and Paracer, 2000: 10). None of these characteristics is absolute or clearly definable, and it is not uncommon for there to be transition between them.

By embracing the concept of symbiosis, the biological sciences, including the science of ecology⁷⁰, have been granted a means of defining, formalising and prioritising aspects of relationality, specifically those of quantifiable value for the symbionts. There is a hint here of the theory of internal relations – that there exist relationships between organisms that have some kind of internal bearing on who and how these organisms *are*. There is acknowledgement that some relationships are internal to their bearers, in that at least some types of relationships constitute part of who and how an organism *is*. In the symbiotic relationship between the mammalian self and the microbial self, for example, neither exists without the other. The symbiosis – the

relationship between the mammal and the microbes – is integral to who and how I am as human. I am not my self without the microbes and without the relationships themselves. However there remains within biological science's conception of symbiosis a perception that a vast majority of relationality is external; as having no internal bearing, or as having only external bearing upon who and how the organism is. As such, where we live, the place we inhabit (and all the relationality implied), is deemed, unlike our microbes, external to who and how we actually are.

It is claimed that only half of the species in the animal kingdom are symbionts (Margulis, 1986), implying that the other half participate in associations that are tenuous, insubstantial and/or inconsequential to survival. Such relationships may be acknowledged but are deemed to be mere externalities with little or no internal bearing upon the organisms themselves. It is indirect, as opposed to direct (Ahmadjian and Paracer, 2000: 3). From the perspective offered by the biological sciences an organism or a species is pared back to a collection of qualities associated with the notion of physiological or genetic survival. Relationality, in the form of biological science's conception of symbiosis, is reduced to something of a novel participant within this broader agenda of 'survival'. Meanings within life and existence inherent within a more holistic embrace of relational qualities beyond those delineated within the 'drive to survive' are deemed to lie outside the pursuit of truth, belonging rather to the immaterial categorisations of, say, religion, culture and fiction. For more-than-human organisms the possibility that there is more to life than genetic and physiological survival is, by and large, denied.

It may at times be useful to focus on one suite of relationships or a specific delineated understanding of relationality. However, there is a need for this focus and understanding to be couched within a holistic sense of relationality, otherwise assumptions may be made that what is known is the whole when it is only ever a part. If the part is assumed to be the whole, then the account of the part is more than likely a

distortion both of the part and of the whole. Thus, the delineation inherent within the scientific definition of symbiosis, while initially provocative, is in essence both limiting and misleading.

In taking a more holistic approach to the entangling multiplicity of relational qualities we comprehend relationships as always and inevitably internal to their bearers (or symbionts), in that the relationships one holds within the world constitute self. To state what is so obvious to so many of us during the day-to-day – there is more to life for the world's organisms, including ourselves, than physiological and genetic survival. In other words, as each organism is constituted by the relationships it holds irrespective of the quantifiable value of the relationship to the organism's survival (this is only part of the organism's webwork or unique patterning of relationships), the phenomenon of symbiosis can be understood as referring to each and every relationship. Confining it to only the quantifiable appears a strange and dubious thing to do.

One important ramification of the opening up of the biological notion of symbiosis in light of the theory of internal relations is that it allows us to recognise the role played by entities other than those classified as 'organisms'; it allows us to recognise *all* entities as active participants within a symbiotic world. As we are no longer constrained to a notion of relationality that is valued or made meaningful through the mechanics of physiological and genetic survival, the role of, for example, a wall cavity in relation to an inhabiting spider is recognised as at once symbiotic and internally related to both symbionts. The value and meaningfulness prescribed by the biological sciences in its use of the term 'symbiosis' may now be understood as only an interconnected *part* of a world of symbiosis in which it is not just a selection of organisms that relate in deeply significant ways, but all entities⁷¹.

In her poem 'Habitat', Judith Wright (1996: 159) proclaims:

Symbiosis—

that's our fate,
my wooden house.

For Wright the house is food and shelter, and in relational motion – emotionally, physically and all the possible in-between entanglements of the two. Furniture wears out and passes away, possums and spiders share living spaces created by the house, and the house as sensual being responds to weather events. The house is no simple human structure for human habitation, it is habitat itself; a place procreated within the togetherness of dwelling. Hence, having moved beyond a scientific understanding of symbiosis, we now move towards a conception of symbiosis in its broadest sense – as the togetherness of dwelling. Such togetherness includes what is traditionally classified as the subject and object, the human and more-than-human, and the animate and inanimate. Its qualities manifest as, and are a manifestation of, the engaged entwining of the physical, the emotional, the imaginative and dreamscapes, amongst others. Within this togetherness of dwelling, symbiosis can be understood as the procreation of place; a bringing into being of place. This procreation of place originates one's self; it constructs and constitutes what, who and how I am (Booth, K. I., 2007). As a unique patterning of relationships I hold awareness of the agency that constitutes my self; I am conscious within the insideness and outsideness of the places which dwell as the insideness and outsideness of me.

While it is possible to describe one's self as a symbiont it is important to acknowledge that this term, like 'symbiosis', has moved beyond its biological conception. A symbiont is understood not as a fixture, but as an active site of symbiosis itself. I am constituted not only by that which I encounter ecto-skin, but also myself as encountering endo-skin. While the microbes for which my mammalian self is habitat create a complexity of relationality on my inside, perhaps what is most definitive about a symbiont as newly conceived is what happens between the *endo* and the *ecto*. Some aspects of my microbial self participate within associations with the outside

world – I am passing on or picking up microbes all the time. In addition to this aspect of the active engagement between the *ecto* and the *endo*, there is the quantifiable intake of air, food and water and outtake of breath and excreta. These are all aspects of how we embody and are embodied by the world around us, but, importantly, they are only the quantifiable ones. The procreation of place that is self includes not only that which quantifiably passes in and out; it is also the aquantifiable aspects of relationality. All those seemingly effusive and effervescent qualities of relationality that lie beyond and beneath the quantifiable are also at work (or at play) within the ongoing morphing of the *ecto* and the *endo*. Thus, we are not purely conscious within the measurable, but also within our imaginings, dreamscapes and stories, as these are also a manifestation of and are manifest within relational qualities. This also means that that which we have traditionally referred to as ‘doing’ is part of the embodying of relationality (discussed in more detail in Chapter 8). Within this *ecto* and *endo* morphing we ‘do’ to the world and the world ‘does’ to us.

To be a symbiont is distinct from being a participant within the process of identification as articulated in Fox’s transpersonal ecology. Fox contends that the ‘first base’ for identification is that of the personal. He argues that this is the form of identification that we all experience in the day-to-day. He places strong emphasis on proximity in this, arguing that “personally based identification refers to experiences of commonality with other entities that are brought about through personal involvement with these entities” (Fox, 1995a: 249). Personally based identification “*inevitably* leads one to identify most with those entities with which one is most involved. That is, one tends to identify with *my* self first, followed by *my* family, then *my* friends and more distant relations, *my* cultural or ethnic grouping next, *my* species, and so on” (Fox, 1995a: 262). From this base there is opportunity for the process of transpersonally based identification – an expanding sense of self beyond the personal and moving to incorporate the world at large within a sense of self. The personal sense of self is

contextualised; a sense of self is attained that incorporates the personal within the larger context of the cosmological and/or the ontological. For Fox this move towards the transpersonal is a process of expanding psychological awareness of the self to that of a small yet interconnected part of the world.

There is an assumption within Fox's notion of the personal sense of self that the self is certainly constituted by and through identification with other entities. Yet Fox's focus on direct experience within personally based identification appears premised on an understanding that the day-to-day is definable by the parameters of geometric spatial proximity and linear time. Family members and pets that we co-habit with, homes we occupy, nations we live in are all things that occur in close spatial proximity to us and within the present (as determined by the notion of linear time). While it is quite possible within Fox's sense of personally based identification to live apart from family members and live in a different nation to that with which we most closely identify, there is certainly a prioritisation within Fox's notion of the personal self of direct interaction with that with which we are closest during the day-to-day. These are the things and aspects with which we are most familiar, according to Fox, and which constitute our most fundamental sense of self. In other words, for Fox that which is closest to us both in time and space is that which is *most* internal to us. Entwined with these observations is, I believe, Fox's inadequate understanding of the role and importance of the theory of internal relations in Naess's work.

Within Fox's conception there is a sense that all that he defines as transpersonal fails to make an imprint within personally based identification and only does make an imprint on who and how we are through mediation by the mind. Within transpersonal ecology, the transpersonal aspects of relationality remain external to who and how we are, until their embodiment is mediated within the psychological process of expanding awareness. Or, that the relationality inherent within transpersonally based identification lies latent within us; in a sense, waiting to be awoken through the

process of psychological awareness. In other words, according to Fox, the realm of relationality defined 'transpersonal' remains peripheral and perhaps altogether external to who and how we are unless we become psychologically aware of and engaged with it. Only then does the transpersonal become internalised and only then do we begin to embody care and consideration towards the rest of the world; only then does the transpersonal become alive enough to become embodied and active within our 'doing'. Thus, it is clear that Fox's conception relies on the traditional separation of mind and body, and upon the ability of the mind to overrule and determine how we act and what we do.

In light of this it is unsurprising that Fox, amongst other deep ecology proponents (for example, Todesco, 2003; Villaseñor-Galarza, 2008), calls for reconnection – a kind of mental welding of the personal and the transpersonal, rather than reawakening towards the connections that are already and always there. Counter to this, I would argue that much of what Fox identifies as lying within the realm of the transpersonal is part of who and how we are within the day-to-day. We are already 'connected', and there is no need to rebuild, re-establish or appropriate new connections. Relationships are always, inevitably internal – they always constitute that which is doing the relating. There is no room in the clutter and chaos of such a world for the notion of 'external relations'; there is no opportunity for negation of, or dissociation from that thing, that person, that happening with a claim that it is a mere externality. There is nothing definable as an externality that can be brushed up against or dreamt about, but that ultimately leaves no trace or no imprint, no patterning within one's self. We each embody the process of biological and geological evolution (the transpersonal as Fox defines it) within our evolved memories, and additionally we each embody within our selves culturally dynamic myths, and collective and personal memories. The entangling of all these embodied memories constitutes who and how we are in the day-to-day. In other words, this complex and shifting webwork *is* our personally based

identification. To know this webwork is beyond the ability of human psychological or cerebral awareness, and is only known fully in the embodied sense. Thus, Fox's focus on the psychological process of identification remains only partial; psychological awareness is only a dynamic, interconnected part of embodied consciousness. Rather than forging new connections, what is awakened towards is the dynamic embodiment of self within place and place within self – towards the alreadiness of the locality of place.

Within the notion of the locality of place the deep ecological vision of the process of identification as a series of concentric circles that emanate out from the individual to family, friends, pets, nature and ultimately world – what Massey terms the “Russian doll geography of care and responsibility” (2004: 9) – no longer makes sense. The person at the centre has never existed without the aspects confined within each concentric ring. The person is constituted by what lies within each of these expanding rings first and foremost. We only become ourselves – our core selves – through that which lies out and about in relation to us. There is no predetermined and fixed relational hierarchy.

The concentric ring vision can act to reinforce a narrow and egotistical sense of self. With priority placed on the ability of the mind to reach out and incorporate all else, and upon the mind in process rather than the mind as a small part of the world in process, there is an inherent risk within Fox's interpretation of deep ecological metaphysics for the ongoing appropriation and subsumption of the world by the human mind. It is within the relational webwork, the unique patterning of relationships that constitutes self and is constituted by self, that the dynamism and hence the agency lies, not within a narrow conception of psychological awareness that is attempting to process the whole cosmos.

Naess himself has stated that he considers ‘universal symbiosis’⁷² to be a viable alternative to his usual ultimate norm of ‘Self realisation!’ (Naess, 2003: 272). Such a

statement can appear confusing in light of Fox's conception of Self-realisation and the process of identification. Fox's self appears more likely to expand and incorporate others and otherness than be internalising in relation to others and otherness; more akin to an amorphous blancmange than a symbiont. As noted previously, a range of ecofeminist thinkers have criticised deep ecology, including the work of Fox, arguing that Self-realisation and the process of identification speak of a masculine urge for duality that includes the dilution of difference, and hence offer no radical ontological alternative to modernity. Christian Diehm argues, however, that Naess's ideas do not necessarily fall foul of such concerns. In an analysis based on Plumwood's critique of deep ecology (1991), Diehm describes Naess's self as:

A version of the self that recognizes other as other, as unique presences with a certain density, an opacity in relation to which the self's own boundaries are shaped and defined. It is a model of ecological selfhood that, in Plumwood's words, allows for both "the tension of sameness and difference" and for "the other to play an active role in the creation of self in discovery and interaction with the world." ... it is a self of stars and stone (Diehm, 2003: 41).

It is, as cited previously, a "self that has 'internalized' its relations to the world such that it can only be portrayed as a being who has as its very mode of being 'being-there-together' (Diehm, 2003: 41). Or a self, with regards to the notion of the locality of place, alive within a comprehension of dynamic and effuse interconnectivity and open and complex intersubjectivity; a self internally constituted within a world of difference and diversity.

In *Towards a Transpersonal Ecology* (1995a), Fox makes only passing reference to the theory of internal relations, and while this theory rates a mention in at least one of his quotes from other deep ecology proponents (Andrew McLaughlin, cited in Fox, 1995a: 236), this idea and associated philosophers are not listed in the index. Neither is Naess's gestalt ontology, nor relationality in general. Without an adequate

understanding of the theory of internal relations and Naess's gestalt ontology Fox's transpersonal ecology demonstrates some significant limitations. Transpersonal ecology remains mired within dualistic assumptions, is trapped within the absolutism of notions of geometric space and linear time, and remains tight-lipped on the relational qualities and possibilities manifest through gestalt ontology. Most significantly, within Fox's conception of Self-realisation the purported tendency for the psychological process of identification to result in more caring and considerate behaviour remains a theoretical leap of faith and an oversimplification of what is in fact extraordinarily complex.

The key principle obtained by deep ecology from the science of ecology – prior to all the theories and laws that have led a number of environmental ethicists into difficulties⁷³ – is that all things are interconnected. This simple, seemingly straightforward idea is the most significant notion that deep ecology has to offer and is what ensures that the science of ecology remains, despite heavy critique, ultimately a science of subversion and subterfuge. As everything is interconnected, relationships in all their complexity and within all their shifting qualities *matter*. Each entity is a unique patterning of relationality, a symbiont within the process of the togetherness of dwelling. Within the uniqueness and particularity of the locality of place each entity is embodied and embodying, ensuring that *place matters* very deeply.

In Risdon Vale, that which is categorised as ugly (the rubbish, broken glass, dumped cars and decaying infrastructure), forbidden (the animal and plant invaders), and sacred (the species with provenance) exist in symbiosis. They exist in a wild synergy that is the procreation of place. Within this wild synergy I dwell, not with the kind of extensive personal and collective memories that my great grandfather may have had within Cornwall, but within the tentative manifestations of possibilities borne of a smattering of personal and collective remembrances and a depth of mythological and evolved memories that cohere within the place gestalt of gum-tree-man. Within gum-

tree-man is an infinity of relations that embody me within the place that is Risdon Vale, and that embody Risdon Vale within the self that is me.

Within this relationality I dwell irrespective of my cerebral awareness of the interconnectivities that hold and emplace me. To be psychologically aware of the relational webwork – of the unique patterning of relations – that are part of my identification of my self here, is simply not possible. This is not only because so much lies beyond human ken and because of the complexity entailed, but because this relationality is embodied. Conscious awareness of it is not a matter for the mind; it is a matter for the whole of oneself. It is an awareness that inhabits the unique patterning of relations that is oneself. As this unique patterning extends well beyond the notional boundary of skin and our perceptions of ‘personal space,’ this has dramatic implications for how one is within place, or how one ‘does’ within place.

Before moving on to what this may mean with regards to towns and cities, it is important to address a particular suite of critiques that focus upon deep ecology and its understandings of place. These critiques raise the possibilities of fascist tendencies within deep ecology and draw parallels between the rise of National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s and the rise of radical environmentalism. Some see threats to democracy and human rights as inherent within aspects of place discourse and contemporary radical environmentalism, including deep ecology.

6.2.2 Fascist tendencies?

Within the place gestalt of gum-tree-man is a slumbering, lumbering giant of a challenge to western cultural assumptions. A fixture in process and a thing beyond what we know and expect a thing to be, gum-tree-man tangles us up and is an entanglement of us, and so springs upon us considerations of place and placedness. Within a culture with so many other-worldly concerns, he appears adrift within the breeze, in repose beneath a humpy, in the queue at the checkout and pushing up with

the weeds in the concrete crack. To our turned backs and our elsewhere-minds he hollers 'how about this world?'

The calling of gum-tree-man may carry within it the uniqueness of myself in relation with Risdon Vale, yet he emits a frequency akin to much that has been said and felt before. Within environmental ethics bioregionalism has been a predominant voice in relation to place and placedness and has been touted as closely aligned, if not analogous to deep ecological thought and practise (Hay, P., 2002a: 163, Taylor, 2000)⁷⁴. Stewart Davidson (2007) describes bioregionalism as challenging the arbitrary overlay of political boundaries across natural ones and supporting a move towards boundaries that are naturally defined, usually by watershed. In bioregionalism the catchment boundary offers some kind of natural encasement for not only ecological processes but for a range of agricultural, political and social activities as these are ecologically grounded rather than rooted in abstract notions such as nation or municipality. As Berg writes:

We all live in some geographic place. And... the places where we live are alive. They are *bioregions*, unique life-places with their own soils and land forms, watersheds and climates, native plants and animals, and many other distinct natural characteristics. Each characteristic affects the others and is affected by them as in any other living system or body. And bioregions are all different from each other...

People are also an integral part of life-places. What we do affects them and we are in turn affected by them. The lives of bioregions ultimately support our own lives, and the way we live is becoming crucial to their ability to continue to do so (Berg, 1990: 137).

Yet such accounts of place and placedness have drawn significant criticism. Accusations of exclusivity, parochialism and nationalism have been levelled, and parallels and interconnections have been drawn between bioregionalism, deep ecology

and Nazism. As previously described, some have argued that deep ecology has potential totalitarian implications (Cheney, 1987)⁷⁵.

In part, these critiques have their roots within the association of German philosopher Martin Heidegger with both place discourse in general and deep ecology in particular (Hay, P., 2002a). Heidegger was an active supporter of, and participant in the German National Socialism movement from the mid-1930s. His involvement included a desire to become the “spiritual leader of the Nazi revolution, which could then carry out its true mission of awakening German existence from its blindness to the transcendent being of entities” (Zimmerman, 2000: 178). Though he eventually criticised National Socialism as yet another example of modernity’s blinkered ontological base, he never renounced or critiqued his own involvement within the movement or the atrocities committed by the Nazis.

Heidegger’s ontological ideas were introduced into deep ecology by philosopher Michael Zimmerman, who subsequently reassessed both his reliance on Heidegger’s work and his affiliation with deep ecology. As he states:

Nazi reverence for and identification with nature were not merely opportunistic. Affirming that humanity is but one strand in the great web of life, Nazi ideologues trumpeted that now famous slogan *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil), which may be understood as a racist version of bioregionalism (Zimmerman, 2000: 171).

Another critic of deep ecology, Peter van Wyck, argues that “deep ecology manifests a similar condition of reactionary modernism that preceded the rise of National Socialism” (1997: 73). He argues that radical environmentalism, in particular deep ecology, tends to:

privilege a strategy of a return to what was deemed a prehistoric condition... Humans, on this account, having strayed from a path of authenticity and connection, must return to a prior state; a state

exemplified by the imagined (and imaginary) existence of the “primitive.” And the place where these “primitives” live, is of course “wilderness” (van Wyck, 1997: 8).

With reference to Heidegger’s notion of authenticity – a notion grounded within the idea of dwelling within the especialness of place (Hay, P., 2002a) – van Wyck draws a parallel between the privileging of the mythology of the Nazi’s Ahnenerbe (Race Ancestry) and deep ecology’s concern with the metaphysics of some indigenous cultures and the agency of wilderness. In making such a connection he claims that deep ecology has the propensity to incite, if not commit violence as the Nazis did, in pursuit of *the* authentic way of being as derived from the homogenised and homogenising ‘primitive in wilderness’.

Mathew Humphrey issues a similar warning with regards to deep ecology and a “sense of rootedness in bioregional place” (2000: 85). He claims that the sense of self, place, and self in relation to place that emerges through the process of Self-realisation leads to a position akin to integral nationalism⁷⁶. He argues that deep ecology’s focus on the ontological and subsequent action, rather than on moral values, is one potentially deadly consequence of this. He describes this as “ontological nationalism” (2000: 97) and cites a story by French novelist and integral nationalist, Maurice Barres. The central character, in the realisation of himself through his community, protects murderers simply because they are part of *his* local sense of place within a specific geographic location.

The warnings issued by Zimmerman, van Wyck and Humphrey are an important and poignant reminder of the fragility of democracy and the misuse of seemingly benign ideas to achieve dubious and horrific ends. However, it is important to note that Humphrey emphasises that he is not doing away with the importance of a sense of rootedness in place, and Zimmerman himself describes his critique as a “cautionary tale”, stating that:

I do not wish to say that fascist versions of environmentalism are an inevitable outcome of Earth-oriented religions, or that people concerned about the sacred dimension of their own homelands are somehow crypto-Nazi. The loss of a sense of place... is one of the regrettable outcomes of modernity... [E]cofascism involves militaristic and xenophobic dimensions that are not discernible in most forms of bioregionalism, deep ecology, and ecofeminism (Zimmerman, 2000: 171).

Despite these clarifying statements, the issues raised by Zimmerman, van Wyck, Humphrey and others continue to resonate and significantly influence how deep ecology and its articulation of place are received and perceived. Hence, it is important to review and clarify the sense of place – the reliance on the locality of place – that has emerged within this dissertation. Does a focus upon the locality of place call for a step *back* into place, or call for *seclusion* within the mapability of longitude and latitude? Does gum-tree-man potentially provide the foundations for exclusion, the basis for the sprouting of Nazi-like tendencies, or even a curious form of Risdon Vale-centred protectionism? Would I protect murderers simply because they dwell within Risdon Vale? Do I encounter the Palawa stone tools with a yearning for a return to the primitive in the wilderness? Does this lead me to remonstrate against anything and everyone that does not belong within this vision?

Within the locality of place there is certainly no mappable place to step back into and no past (as characterised in the linear sense) to hark back to; there is no place that offers a sense of bordered seclusion and security. The locality of place is very much out and about in the world and cannot be neatly confined within the boundaries of the suburb's fenced backyards or even the Risdon Vale Creek watershed. As described by Relph, the outsideness of Risdon Vale is very much part of the insideness of this place. That is not to say that the fence line that runs between the houses and the bushland, and the catchment boundaries hold no significance, but that the very

existence of these boundaries relies on the interweaving of both the insideness and the outsideness of relationality. Hence these boundaries are always open. In fact, their very existence encourages and necessitates frequent cross boundary forays. This openness does not, however, disallow or distil the specialness and uniqueness of place and places.

With regards to Heidegger's notion of place authenticity, Hay writes, in line with Zimmerman, that while it is argued that a:

concern for the durability of 'authentic' place articulates a conservative's nostalgia for the social rigidities (and hence, inequalities) embodied within relic landscapes, as well as a Tory suspicion of the progressive forces of industrial change. ...this is hardly an appeal to place 'authenticity', for authenticity lodges in the especialness and uniqueness inherent within each uncompromised place; social relations generalises place rather than particularising it. Place cannot be valued in the abstract; it can only be valued in the concrete... in the celebration of individual uniqueness (Hay, P., 2002a: 172).

What makes each place unique and special – and that allows the manifestation of place gestalts – is grounded within the *genius loci* of that place. Within the slow shifting and drifting of the rocks, soil and the cycles of seasonality, there is a sense of cohesion and familiarity that gives each place its specialness and uniqueness. Yet it would be a mistake to equate this cohesion and familiarity of place to place as in some way fixed; to assume that the spirit of place is bordered, bounded and bonded within something discrete and static. The opportunity for a sense of *genius loci* is not based on inert, detached observation, but immediate participation within the relationality entailed. When my foot hits the sandstone the meeting of two unique patternings of relationships – that of myself and that of the substrate – is a meeting that relies upon difference and results in nodes of relational commonality. Each of our patternings is

drawn more closely into an intimate shifting, entanglement of commonality, yet this is only possible because of our differences. In the acts of corroboration and collaboration inherent within the intersubjective it is the dance and play of difference – of foot on rock for instance – which informs us and place, and instils within us and place a sense of cohesion and stability. Hence, to attempt to disallow or diminish the different and the unknown is to attempt to take one's self out of place; to attempt to remove oneself from the intersubjective mix that is self within place and place within self. When such a turn is taken place gestalts are abstracted into meaninglessness. Gum-tree-man is lost in an instant.

Heidegger's enmeshment within fascism may provide a salient reminder that the possibilities of place can include the brutal and the oppressive, but it in no way invalidates a preoccupation with place itself. Particularly, it in no way invalidates deep ecological understandings of place that are premised by the understandings that *everything* is interconnected and that all is in process. Van Wyck's (1997) assertion that deep ecology sees a virtual disappearance of the human individual and the dissolution of difference does not figure within the notion of the locality of place. There is no denying the ongoing and significant participation of the individual within the broader webwork of relationality. The self as a unique patterning of relationships is an active and engaging corroborator and collaborator, and it is within frequent entanglements with the different and the unfamiliar that intersubjectivity arises. In other words, the references made in deep ecology to both the agency of wilderness and the metaphysics of some indigenous cultures are not nostalgia for some homogenised and homogenising prehistoric condition of people within place. They constitute instead an awakening within a culture's denial of relational complexity, and a move towards the possibilities inherent within the locality of place of the here and now.

Each entity is a unique patterning of relationships, as is each place.

Acknowledgement, respect and facilitation of difference are as important to the acts of

collaboration and corroboration, as a sense of commonality. They are essential if we are to participate within the intricate complexity of the world, and neither simply wallow within this complexity nor attempt to subsume and subvert it.

The Nazis relied both on a time and a mappable place as the basis for what they saw as their determined supremacy – “*Germanentum* – the idea of a biologically pure and inviolate race, as ‘natural’ to its terrain as indigenous species of trees and flowers” (Schama, 1996: 118). Their expansionist program called for dissolution of the uniqueness of people and place in light of this. While some argue that this attempted grounding in the natural world made the Nazis “ecologically conscientious” (Schama, 1996: 119), such a claim relies upon an understanding of the ecological as fixed or fixable, and as disembodied, or rather as embodying a small, discrete, seemingly controllable and, most importantly for the Nazis, readily discernible set of relations – that of lineage from a mythologised tribe dwelling within the woodlands of first century Germania. A more appropriate description for the nature awareness of the Nazis is perhaps ‘eco-fixation’, characterised by an obsession with linearly based determinism and where the home (eco) inhabits and is inhabited by a heavily and brutally censored subset of relations. In light of this many of their actions can be described as ecological appropriation and repression. This is supported by the seeming paradox of ‘ecological’ awareness with the industrial and technological might of German National Socialism (Hay, P., 2002a: 170-71). With all other relationships outside the predetermined, exclusionist suite either denigrated or marginalised there was neither incentive nor the will to venerate, nurture or even propagandise these. Complexity and its inherent diversity was targeted, distilled and destroyed, and in a bid for control over the uncontrollable the relational suite was continually finetuned and increasingly rarefied. Paranoia and flight were perhaps the inevitable outcomes of this – though not before a heavy price had paid by many; the millions of people killed and the war-borne destruction of the more-than-human.

To protect murderers within a locality of place is to protect the relational embodiment of violence and injustice. To not speak out against this or similar acts, as Heidegger did not, is to choose to ignore not only violence as embodied within a specific act of murder; it is to deny and downplay the broader relational manifestations of this violence. A violent relationship is not contained and isolated within that relationship alone, but slips out along relational pathways that *are* each unique patterning of relationships. As such it is not possible to draw a clean divide between the brutality and oppression of humans and of the more-than-human. Violence within our relations with any entity is an ongoing part of our embodied selves and our embodied consciousness. Though we may claim as individuals to not be racist, being part of a society and culture that carries racism within its relational fabric means that each of us embodies racism at least as a possibility, if not within our day-to-day choices and actions. To blank out such potential does not make such possibilities go away, and may in fact allow them to brew and fester. The adage of the taxi driver who claims “I’m not a racist, but...” may make our heart sink and our hand fly for the door handle, but his utterances carry a truth that is avoided with peril. To deny that the wanton destruction of more-than-human entities matters and does not implicate our selves or have implications for ourselves is also naïve if not downright dangerous.

To be ‘ecologically conscientious’ from a deep ecological point of view, and in light of gum-tree-man, is to be open to the complexity of it all, aware that such complexity lies beyond the cerebral ken of the human and aware that the possibilities inherent within such complexity are constantly unfolding. It is to negotiate and participate within a world of shifting difference and diversity, and to come together through collaboration and corroboration within the intersubjectivity that is the locality of place. Place within self and self within place, within this locality, becomes the nexus of sense-making within the world at large and, importantly, not to the exclusion of the world at large. Claims that deep ecology has Nazi tendencies or carries within it the

seeds of social and geographical protectionism, I believe, hold little water in the possibilities inherent within the unfolding of the locality of place.

However, I do not argue that such claims should not be taken seriously. Deep ecology cannot isolate itself from broader societal and cultural potentialities. Some of the rhetoric that has emerged from radical environmentalism, including deep ecology, certainly falls foul of observations made by critics – there is enough credibility within some of van Wyck’s arguments to allow them at least some currency. However, a critique based on the disparate, diverse and ‘on-the-way-to’ nature of emerging radical environmental thought, and which by and large ignores the comprehensive and thorough work of Arne Naess, is certainly up for challenge. Van Wyck mentions Naess only in passing, claiming only that ‘North American deep ecology’ is different from Naess’s deep ecology:

On a macro level there are two orientations to deep ecology. On the one hand there is Naess the philosopher, working on the philosophical and normative foundations of his own deep ecology, his own *ecosophy*. For Naess this project is (and ought to be) a highly idiosyncratic endeavour. On the other hand, there is the North American deep ecology scene. For the latter, Naess functions as an authorial and inspirational signifier. But the immigration of Naess’s ideas into the North American milieu has involved much more than translation from the Norwegian (van Wyck, 1997: 36).

Van Wyck’s critique of deep ecology (and radical environmentalism) is a critique of what he terms ‘North American deep ecology’, and in his critique he does not ground the work of, for example Devall and Sessions, within the work of Naess. This is despite both of these authors themselves grounding their ideas within those of Naess, even if their more popular incarnation of this, the book *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (1985), does not detail Naess’s work *per se*. Perhaps the most significant thing that ‘North American deep ecology’ can be accused of is that in the

clamour to communicate ideas as complex and radical as those of Naess, popularist language and a striving for simplification has in some cases let it down. This is not to say that consequently they are beyond critique, but that by failing to come to grips with Naess, critiques such as van Wyck's lack the very depth that 'North American deep ecology' is itself accused of lacking.

Naess's gestalt ontology and my interpretation of this within the notion of place gestalts offers a significantly different understanding of both deep ecology and deep ecological understandings of place and emplacement. Bioregionalism, so often touted as offering a deep ecological articulation of place, can appear somewhat constrained within the boundedness of watersheds. It also lacks a critique of what the qualities of 'watershed' may or may not be. Without such a critique, conceptions and perceptions of a watershed may remain dominated by that which is quantifiable, particularly as it emerges into contemporary political discourse. Then again, notions of the bioregion may also offer a pragmatic opening within traditionally defined realms, and offer a suite of ideas that, while no longer definable as radical, is to a significant extent comprehensible within existing cultural milieux. Those who pursue such a development, however, must understand that to be 'ecologically conscientious' is to embody an open and complex intersubjectivity and a dynamic and effuse interconnectivity.

Within Towns and Cities



*Furniture likes its own place,
wears its way into carpets.
Move it around, even,
it looks dispossessed.
People are all it has left
Of forests, of living and growing;
which is why furniture likes us,
can be betrayed.*

Extract from 'Habitat' by Judith Wright (1996: 159-160)

Chapter 7 – Within Towns and Cities

In the previous chapter, the locality of place was described as encompassing possibilities inherent within a relational conception of place, and was posited as an alternative to Warwick Fox's transpersonal ecology. Aspects of transpersonal ecology were critiqued and the embodied self was acknowledged as already and always interconnected with that identified as the 'transpersonal'. It was argued that the reliance and emphasis on spatial and temporal proximity in Fox's work militated against the aquantifiable aspects of relationality. In addition, the emphasis on the psychological, in prioritising mind over matter, failed to account for the embodied enmeshment of self. A conception of symbiosis, developed beyond that of the biological sciences, was offered as an alternative to Self-realisation and the process of identification. The awakening towards deep ecology, as emerging through the notions of the locality of place and symbiosis, was reviewed in light of concerns about the potential relationship between deep ecology and fascism.

Having revisited deep ecology in the previous chapter, this chapter turns towards towns and cities as they emerge within this inquiry. Initially towns and cities are presented as scenes of intensification; as places drawing in relational webworks from across the globe. Some aspects that manifest within, and that are a manifestation of, this ongoing process of intensification are discussed, including the emergence of the new and the novel, the loss of familiarity within our own relational webworks and the drift towards and within the embodiment of displacement. The chapter concludes by turning towards the possibilities of embodied emplacement; of becoming more familiar, or re-familiarising ourselves, within our own relational webworks. A move is made away from the conception of 'doing' as a striving within, and towards the unfamiliar – as an act of displacement – and en route for emplacement within the familiarity of the here and now.

7.1 Where we are at

When Michael Zimmerman stated that “before knowing what we *ought* to do, we must understand who we really *are*” (1986: 22-3) he was emphasising the ontological nature of deep ecology as distinct from a preoccupation with environmental axiology. However, if ‘who we are’ is inexplicitly linked with ‘where we are’ – if we are constituted through the relations we hold within the world and grow through this constitution throughout our lives – then ‘who we are’ and ‘where we are’ are not two distinct notions. Rather, they equate into an ontological consideration of self as a relational embodiment of place and placedness.

It is not unusual to find ‘where’ used in an ontological sense; in a way that is more open and more fluid than a statement of longitude and latitude, or a description of locale. To ask ‘where are you at?’ as a means of asking ‘how are you?’ opens the door for a response that is couched within the relational world. Such a question asks for more than a response about wellbeing, and is not so easy to respond to with normal social graces. What you say, the other entities that spring forth in your vocalisations, allows for freedom of movement within the ontological, the ethical and the societal. Our locality is understood relationally; as including the intersubjective and a convoluted combining of gestalts. In a sense, the question ‘where are you at?’ is a leading one – leading one away from expressions pertaining to geometric spatiality, and leading towards a revelation of embodied relational webworks⁷⁷. Where is it that you find yourself? In relation to what other entities and forces are you dwelling? Where are you awake within the world? Where is it that your consciousness arises at this moment? Within which relational agency are you at work, at rest, or at play? This is a type of ontological whereabouts that is lived and breathed within the day-to-day. This is the lived experience of ontology within which the animate and inanimate, and the valuable and valueless are on the move.

A news report states that police are anxious to hear about the whereabouts of a man. This is not a request for information based solely on a statement of geometric spatiality, but where he may be located as a participant within the agency of the relational. His location in terms of longitude and latitude is only part of the bigger picture that includes concern for how he is where he is, or for *where he is at*. The police are anxious to hear about the man's place – the locality of place within which he inhabits. While the man as relationally constituted is the node within the relational complexity that maintains the attention of the police, other nodes may also hold significance, at least for a time. A knife in his pocket, medication discarded in a park bin, an abandoned vehicle and the electronic tracings of a phone call or a credit card transaction may all move to the fore within the agency of the relational world. They may all ebb and flow, in and out of focus as the police continue their search for and preoccupation with the missing man.

In an essay about the lives and metaphysics of the northern Ojibwa in Canada, anthropologist Tim Ingold recounts an anecdote recorded by A. Irving Hallowell in which an old man responds to a question about whether all stones are alive by stating: 'No! But *some* are' (Hallowell, cited in Ingold, 2000: 96). In explaining what is happening in this response, and how western conceptions of the animate and inanimate fail to provide an adequate account of the Ojibwa understanding of the world, Ingold highlights that it is not some essential quality of the stones that categorise them as alive or not, but the stones' "positioning and involvement within wider fields of relations" (Ingold, 2000: 96). For the Ojibwa:

the liveliness of stones emerges in the context of their close involvement with certain persons, and relatively powerful ones at that. Animacy, in other words, is a property not of stones *as such*, but of their positioning within a relational field which includes persons as foci of power. Or to put in another way, the power concentrated in persons enlivens that which falls within its sphere

of influence. Thus the animate stone is not so much a living thing as a 'being alive'... whether a stone is alive or not will depend upon the context in which it is placed and experienced (Ingold, 2000: 97)⁷⁸.

To a passerby or to the bin within which the missing man's discarded medication lies, there may be little of significance or little *alive* about the medication in and of itself. Yet to an investigating officer – likely a person who holds some dexterity within the relational world, such that 'hunches' and 'instincts' make her good at her job – the medication may be alive with significances and meaning. It captures her attention, speaks to and with her, inhabits her ponderings and imaginings, and for a time is a central and animated participant within the search for the missing man. *Where the man is at*, in this moment, is linked explicitly to *where the medication is at*. The medication, similarly to the Ojibwa stones, is at this time *alive* within wider fields of relations⁷⁹.

In answering the inquiry, 'where are we at?' all kinds of entities may assert themselves within the response. As such, *where are we at* provides an articulation of what many experience within the day-to-day – a world of relationality within which *aliveness* escapes and moves beyond neat, preconceived categorisations, and a world in which more-than-human intersubjectivities assert themselves as confidently as more human-centred ones. As such, when we ask *where are we at* within towns and cities, we can expect a response that reflects the dynamic enmeshment of the human and the more-than-human, and a response that carries within it a nuanced complexity that means we are and can never be at the same place as some other entity. As unique patternings of relationships each of us is but one of a plethora of symbionts enmeshed within the internal relationality of a multi-dimensional symbiosis. We are participants within a state of participating – melding, turning and navigating into being ourselves along with fellow symbionts – human and more-than-human – through varying

manifestations of dexterity and power. *Where each of us is at* within towns and cities is in process and is multi-dimensionally unique.

Despite this nuanced, fluxing complexity, there are some generalisations that can be made about *where we are at* within towns and cities. Towns and cities are not the only places where humans dwell, but they are most certainly some of the most intense and dynamic scenes of symbiosis within which humans are participating symbionts. As locality of places, towns and cities cast their influence and draw in towards them webworks from far, wide and deep. Relational fields, once distant and seemingly distinct, have come to be embodied as concentrated webworks within towns and cities.

Towns and cities are, in this sense, nodes of intense relationality, and within towns and cities even a single entity embodies a concentration, an intensification, of relational patternings. My washing machine, for example, is constituted through the complex enmeshment of evolved, mythological, collective and personal memories from places and entities once spread across the earth. Even the stone tool that lies on the banks of Grasstree Hill Rivulet is neither distant nor dissectible from this intensity. It is no relic, but is alive within claims of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Tasmania, claims which are couched within the dynamics of contemporary relationality. Its memories here and now include the roar of the trail bike, hand cream from my fingertips and the unseasonable patternings of weather in transition. Within the realm of towns and cities nothing escapes this intensification; everything is enmeshed within it.

Intensification means that towns and cities can be rich and exciting places for inhabitation. However, for some – both human and more-than-human – this intensification can be overwhelming, degrading and crippling. Like the array of symbiosis types ascribed by the biological sciences – including commensalism, parasitism and mutualism – within the immense and dynamic symbiosis that are towns and cities there is a multitude of possible manifestations within which symbionts can

find themselves enmeshed. Unlike the confines of the categorisations applied by the biological sciences, the subtlety and complexity of the relational symbioisms can be understood as entwining both the quantifiable and the aquantifiable. How well you do, or *where you are at* within the intensification – how this intensification implicates you, and what implications it has for you – will vary and is, of course, in constant flux.

Biologist Tim Low provides a compelling account of ‘winners and losers’ within Australian ecology (Low, 2002). He identifies both ‘natives’ and ‘exotics’ that thrive within towns and cities. For example, he cites the example of the endangered green and gold bell frog (*Litoria aurea*), once abundant within the state of New South Wales and now living mainly in highly disturbed, industrial wastelands in and around Sydney. Labelled an ‘endangered weed’, this native frog species appears in large numbers where earth has been excavated and water has collected. It prefers pools dug by people, surrounded by exotic plants, and appears at home under building debris, rubbish and sheds (Low, 2002: 22-3). Another native species, the silver gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*), thrives within Australian towns and cities. Once confined to small colonies numbering no more than 2000 birds (Low, 2002: 67), silver gull populations now prosper within towns and cities – they are so successful that Low describes our cities and towns as “seagull factories pumping out garbage-guzzling birds” (Low, 2002: 66-7). They are characterised by behaviourists as ‘neophilic’ – as a species that readily engages with new things (Low, 2002: 116)⁸⁰. Seagulls have the power and dexterity to thrive within the intensification of towns and cities, and as successful wielders of relational agency within a realm we assume as our own, they both take us by surprise and inspire within us a sense of trepidation.

Other aspects of the more-than-human also ‘do well’; many entities – cars, buildings and the internet – emerge, with towns and cities, as entities of significance, standing and proliferation. Cultural theorist Gay Hawkins describes how one collection of such entities, labelled ‘waste’, is an integral part of who and how we are within the places

we live (Hawkins, 2006). Like ‘pests’, ‘waste’ presents us with such an ontological challenge that we often respond to it with derision and denial. Waste is identified as a ‘problem’, as some kind of oversight that can and will be fixed with a little rational thought and technological ingenuity. However, as Hawkins states: “to reduce waste to an effect of human action and classification is to ignore the materiality of waste, its role in making us act; the ways in which waste is *both* a provocation to action and itself a result of that action” (Hawkins, 2006: 4-5).

As labels and categories, ‘wastes’ and ‘pests’ speak of our frustrations and confusions relating to the challenges posed by the existence of these entities. The relational qualities of the entities housed under such labels are diminished within what often equates to a demand for non-existence; we don’t want or like to know that they exist. We fail to grasp that these entities are a consequence of our enmeshment within the agency of others; they are the embodiment of the things we miss when we assume that the agency is all ours and that the relationality within which all else is enmeshed either does not exist or does not matter. These entities assert themselves within relational fields; they emit the power and dexterity of a world that is so much more-than-human. Our responses to them typify our ongoing denial and disvalue of anything other than the human, and we turn towards them often with contempt and sometimes with violence. ‘Rubbish’ is compressed, dumped and buried. Exotic species are exterminated, eradicated and repressed. Such responses, however, only act to further the process of intensification as they so often involve and call for new and novel interventions within relational fields. New research is undertaken, a new sterilisation procedure trialled, or a new waste treatment plant constructed, each embodying further intensification and each manifest within, and a manifestation of, the new and the novel.

The manifestation of the new and novel – the coming together of webworks that were once spread far, wide and deep – is a central feature of the process of intensification

that characterises towns and cities. As webworks are drawn in, the agency of these asserts itself in new and novel ways. When this agency is assumed to be ours alone, then there is a perception that what emerges as new and novel is ours alone. The new model of washing machine is *our* creation, *our* invention and *our* product. However, as the relational agency that is the washing machine lies within the in-between of ourselves and all that we relate with during the ‘creation’ of the washing machine, the relational agency extends far beyond that of ourselves and far beyond the new machine. Hence, when we participate within the agency of our relational webworks to create something new and novel, things new and novel – such as ‘pests’ and ‘wastes’ are happening within a much broader relational field. A new washing machine is not a discrete individualised entity; its newness implicates and has implications for webworks that extend far, wide and deep. The newness and the novelty of a new ‘creation’ is, in fact, newness and novelty within the relational webworks as internally related to this machine.

By adhering to the assumption that agency is ours alone, and by continuing to deny the realness and the significance of quantifiable aspects of relationality, it is often possible to deny, ignore or dismiss the new and novel things emerging beyond those that we feel we have deliberately created ourselves. However, as this intensification asserts itself – as the increasing rapidity of change and/or increasing relational complexity – the agency that is a manifestation of, and manifest within the new and the novel becomes increasingly prominent. In simplest terms, the agency of others is increasingly likely to capture our attention and catch us up within its power. As the intensification continues to unfold, beings and happenings that we may have been able to ignore or manage assert themselves with increasing power and dexterity so that we are less likely to be able to deny or dismiss them. We become increasingly embodied within the new and novel of relational webworks beyond that of our own ‘discrete’ creations.

It is important to emphasise that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the new and the novel *per se*. As noted previously, encountering difference is not, in and of its self, problematic. It is part and parcel of dwelling within a dynamic, interconnected and intersubjective world. Without difference everything stops. The world is static; it no longer *is*. The experience of difference is an embodied aspect of emplacement – of being and of dwelling within the world. However, encountering so much that is new and novel, and which itself is in rapid transition, has some significant limitations. An extreme example is that of a disaster – a volcanic eruption or a hurricane – where enmeshment within the emergence of the new and the novel can have devastating consequences. Within towns and cities – by and large, but not necessarily free of disastrous events – the ongoing process of intensification has implications for how familiar we are within the webworks we inhabit. As we experience such intensification we are less likely to be as familiar within the relationships we hold; we are more likely to be unfamiliar within our own unique patterning of relations.

It is important to note that this lack of relational familiarity cannot be equated with a lack of relational embodiment. We are already, always, embodied. In our participation within the symbiosis of towns and cities we remain embodied within the more-than-human. When we build a bridge, draw breath, brush our teeth or walk the dog we are at work within relationality of a multi-dimensional nature; we embody and are an embodiment of relational enmeshment. In addition, our participation implies that we are, in a sense, aware of our enmeshment with multiple aspects of the more-than-human, even if we rarely openly acknowledge this enmeshment. As such, it is important not to confuse unfamiliarity with disembodiment or even estrangement.

It is also important to emphasise that what is being spoken of here is not familiarity with other entities – for example, how familiar I am with my washing machine – but familiarity with and within the relationships themselves. It is familiarity or unfamiliarity with *where we are at*, with our dwelling within the relationality that we

hold and within which we are held in the world. It is not about knowing your local flora or fauna well or better, as commonly emphasised within deep ecology, or about knowing the machines that inhabit your home, but being familiar within the relational in-between of self and other.

Within deep ecology it has been traditionally assumed that recent unfamiliarity has dominated relationships between the human and that which has been categorised as the 'natural' more-than-human. The relationships within which we are most familiar are those between humans – those we hold with family and friends for example – and those within which we are most unfamiliar lie between ourselves and the 'natural' more-than-human (this view is exemplified in the work of Fox). Within the settler societies of Australia and North America, this perception of a lack of familiarity may be understood as a consequence of the intensification instigated by the processes of colonisation and settlement. The new and the novel that arose (and continues to arise) through the meeting of once distant and seemingly distinct relational fields, and the entwining and melding of these, is infused with a sense of unfamiliarity. It is, in part, also the result of cultural denial and disregard of relationality, particularly the aquantifiable aspects of relationality. Within this diminishment is a Cartesian demand for unfamiliarity; a quiet, but consistent demand that we do not get too close and do not know that which is presupposed not to matter and, perhaps, not even to *really* exist.

However, this deep ecological assumption masks the nuanced complexity of each entity as internally related and also rejects or bypasses the enmeshment of the human and the more-than-human, including the more-than-human that is other than 'natural'; the realm sometimes termed 'human artefacts' – machines, devices, tools, systems, products and so on. Any entity is in relationship with a plethora of others, and it is entirely possible that many of these relationships carry a degree of familiarity irrespective of culturally prioritised categorisations. A person may be as familiar

within the relationship they hold with a pet dog as with their computer (or washing machine). This familiarity or unfamiliarity can also not be assumed to be a static or permanent occurrence. As it lies within the relationship it ebbs and flows, and is part of the dynamism of the relationship itself. As with human-to-human relationships, there is a nuanced fluxing within all relationships – between humans and more-than-human entities, and between more-than-human entities themselves. There may be a sense of coherence and stability within the relationship, but never anything that can be conceived as stasis.

In masking the nuanced, fluxing heterogeneity of relational familiarity and unfamiliarity, the usefulness of generalisations based on the traditionally prescribed categorisations of the human, the natural and so on, is significantly limited. However, it is, I believe, possible to bring to the fore a particular pattern within the intensification as manifest in towns and cities. This is that the process of intensification as it is manifest within, and a manifestation of, relational unfamiliarity is gaining pace. We hold an increasing (albeit fluxing and nuanced) degree of unfamiliarity with the relationships that we hold within the world. Enmeshed as we are within the new and the novel, *where we are at* is becoming increasingly unfamiliar for us; within towns and cities, *where we are at* is becoming increasingly hazy and decreasingly cohesive. In short, we are *less conscious of where we are at* in that our experience of the relational agency that embodies us, and that we embody, is becoming increasingly unfamiliar terrain.

A ramification of this loss of consciousness is that important and significant stuff happens and, at least in the here and now, passes us by (as previously described with regards to wastes and pests). By conceiving that which happens through and within towns and cities as ours alone – is brought about for and by humans alone (albeit a powerful and dextrous few) – these happenings remain in many ways unproblematic. If we are the only entities with agency and if we are, by and large, only externally

related to that within which we dwell, then any repercussions that may eventuate are also ours and ours alone. Any problems that may arise, for example, we as humans can deal with: our faith in ourselves and human ingenuity remain steadfast. It is when we begin to understand ourselves as internally related and as participants within an enmeshment of more-than-human agency that the problematic nature of this stance is revealed. It is also when the agency of the other asserts itself – with us enmeshed within it – in ways that can no longer be ignored or easily responded to, that things potentiality begin to unravel. It dawns upon us that it is entirely possible that we have a very limited understanding of what is in play; we have a limited understanding of *where we are at*.

To summarise: within the process of intensification each unique patterning of relationships is enmeshed within a growing unfamiliarity with self and place. This is not linear and unidirectional, but is heterogeneous, multidimensional and nuanced, with relationships ebbing and flowing within this intensity. However, in general, intensification within towns and cities means that unfamiliarity is becoming increasingly common, that familiarity is becoming increasingly uncommon, and that this phenomenon cuts across all kinds of relationships, not just those between humans, and between humans and more-than-humans. Towns and cities are becoming increasingly unfamiliar places, not only for our selves, but for all earthbound entities.

What does it mean to embody and be an embodiment of the unfamiliar? It means, in part, that *where we are at* is at home within unfamiliarity. Within the process of intensification we are becoming increasingly at home within relationships that we do not know so well, that we do not know ourselves within. In losing familiarity with that which is embodied, we are undergoing embodied displacement in that we are becoming increasingly unfamiliar with *where we are at*. We remain always and consistently constituted through the relations we hold and which hold us in the world, but how familiar we are within many of these relationships has diminished and is

continuing to diminish. In a world where we are internally related, we increasingly find ourselves in surprising and sometimes unfathomable localities of place.

There is much that can be said about what it means to be displaced rather than emplaced; when we have a degree of agency unfamiliarity, rather than familiarity; when meanings and significances appear fabricated, rather than profound. We are, to put it simply, constantly missing stuff. Not trivial stuff, definable as an externality or happenstance, but deeply significant and meaningful stuff with deeply significant and meaningful implications. We participate within relational webworks in ways that speak of our ignorance and denial. It is participation often characterised by randomness, as we are largely unaware of the patternings we are caught up within and hence our participation is not necessarily patterned. This is then perpetrated upon other entities as neglect at best and barbarity at worst as these entities, to put it bluntly, are continuously trampled underfoot.

Where we are at within towns and cities is displaced within the enmeshed act of displacing. We are significantly unfamiliar with self, with place and, as intensification continues (at least in the short term), ultimately with world. In short, we, along with the other symbionts that we co-inhabit with, are losing *place*.

7.2 Towards Emplacement

In an attempt to redefine our relationship with waste Hawkins cites *The Gleaners*, in which filmmaker Agnes Varda invites us to “experience a kind of intimacy and enchantment with the sensuousness of rubbish” (2006: 81). In inviting interactions with waste that are more creative and more meaningful, Hawkins is recognising the possibilities beyond denial and disallowance. However, using terms such as ‘enchantment’ and ‘intimacy’ may lead to an interpretation of relational engagement as privileging good and positive relational experiences and romanticising the sensuousity of our relationships with waste. Such interpretations (perhaps

misinterpretations) may in turn lead to an understanding that what is being called for is an embrace of the forbidden and the ugly so as to become the sacred.

Relational sensuousity encompasses a myriad of qualities, of which the sublime, the pleasant and the joyous are just some. Relationships can, of course, also be sad, frightening, brutal, grief stricken and destructive. The issue here is not that we become happier or more resplendent within the relationships we hold and that hold us in the world, but that we become more *aware* of them in all their fluxing manifestations.

To turn towards the forbidden and ugly is to begin to become familiar within the relationships we hold with entities such as pests and wastes. It is to begin to drift towards clearer and more emplaced articulations of *where we are at*. It is a trend towards – within the ebb and flow of relationality – a reduction in the diminishment of relationality and subsequent neglect of our own webworks, and a drift towards possibilities beyond and beneath intensification. It is to be at home, emplaced within the here and now. As Tim Low attempts in regards to exotic and native species, it is (in part) to draw attention to the nuanced, fluxing complexity of Australia's ecology. We are invited to delve beneath and beyond the neat, bounded dualisms of native/exotic, and nature/culture. Knowledge gained through both science and personal experience increases our familiarity with both the relational examples Low provides, and within our own localities of place. How do the seagulls participate within our neighbourhood? Is the weed-infested local creek really devoid of ecological meaning and significance? Is the post-industrial land up the road nothing more than an eyesore? How is it we *feel* in relation to these entities? When we turn our awareness towards them, *where are we at* in our relations with these entities? What we experience here is not necessarily all that pleasant nor is it necessarily particularly enlightening. It is, however, emplacing.

As we become more familiar with *where we are at*, we can begin to speak – and speak well – *from within* the relationships we hold. As we begin to give credence and value

to the agency within which we are just one participant, through embodied emplacement we can start to take on board the agency of others. Never can we speak *for* other entities – they are already always their own unique patterning of relationships, much of which lies beyond our ken. Such an act, if attempted, would be a gross demonstration of arrogance and incompetence. Rather, in knowing our own relationship with an entity well, we can begin carefully and tentatively to speak from within the relationship itself, and hence, as each is constituted in part through this relationship, to give voice to the volition we find ourselves enmeshed and emplaced within. We will no longer be drawn to speak *about* place and *for* place, but we will speak *from within* place. We will tell within a world of agency and volition – gum-tree-man is one small and tentative drift towards this. We will not speak about or for some kind of withering mass of voicelessness.

Calling for awareness to be turned towards relational in-betweens must not be confused with moving to develop some kind of familiarity with *every* relationship we hold. Even within places less relationally intense than many towns and cities, the relational complexity entailed makes nigh impossible such an effort. However, when we turn towards some of the relationships we hold, when we perhaps turn towards just one, then this allows for the seepage of familiarity out within broader relational fields. For example, the familiarity I hold in the relational in-between of myself and my washing machine has implications and implicates the entire relational enmeshment of my life: from this dissertation, to the purchase of clothes, mowing the lawn beneath the washing line, and in conversation with friends and colleagues, to name a few.

In our enmeshment within a diversity of relationships, it is more than likely that we already hold meaningful and significant familiarity with some of these. Our relationship with our children, partner, pets, a computer or the relational webwork that entails a hobby or the home as a whole, may already hold familiarity for us. Hence, rather than needing to turn our attention towards a relationship (or suite of

relationships) and wakening towards the possibilities of familiarity, we may simply begin to take notice of existing familiar entanglements. Previously not brought to the fore because of the disvalue traditionally ascribed to such relational experiences – fuelled by the limitations inherent within language or because of such a relationship simply being taken for granted – there is the possibility of enunciating ourselves in relation to the other; of bringing to the fore the aquantifiable and the intersubjective dimensions of the relationship as deeply meaningful and significant.

It is important to make a distinction here between that which is unfamiliar and that which is different. As previously stated, each entity, as its own dynamic and unique relational patterning, is always and necessarily different from other entities. As such, it is entirely normal to be familiar within a relationship with an entity that is significantly different from oneself – between self and rock, for example. Similarly, it is just as usual to be unfamiliar within a relationship with an entity with which one, at least on the surface, holds significant commonality – a human neighbour perhaps. Hence, a move towards increasingly familiarity is not to be confused with a move towards a conception of commonality that results from an annihilation of difference. What is called for here is movement and wakefulness within the relational in-between, not for an appropriation of another entity in its entirety. It is about knowing oneself more fully within the relationship, where one's self is acknowledged as constituted (in part) through the relationship itself. It is *not* about knowing the other entity in its entirety to the extent that that entity becomes internalised within one's own discrete or expansive sense of self.

In bringing to the fore the familiarity we may hold within our relational entanglements we find our voice, not as atomistic individuals, but as relationally embodied selves. We find our voice amidst the relational clutter of our lives and we can speak from *where we are at* with increasing depth and with increasing confidence. Our consciousness – our experience of the relational agency of the in-between – gains a

clarity and meaningfulness that may have been previously missing. Rather than feeling empty in a world so full of stuff we awaken towards a fullness within our relationships. We begin to feel fulfilment rather than loneliness in relation to the other entities that inhabit our lives. As we become increasingly inhabited by the meanings and significances of the relations we hold, we are perhaps less likely to dedicate so much of our selves to the pursuit of new and novel creations; overt desire for the new and the novel may begin to dissipate simply because there is no room within the fluxing nuances of relational familiarity for more *stuff*.

In part, such a move can be conceived as a process of simplification that militates against the process of intensification. However, while it may be possible to quantify simplification based on the number of goods owned and acquired, and the amount of money spent or energy consumed, the aquantifiable aspects of the relational in-betweens continue to assert themselves with diversity and complexity. Hence, our lives are not simplified through the lack of acquisition of the new and the novel: rather are they enriched through immersion and emergences within the relational in-between. Intensity remains, not in the density, rapidity and complexity of the webworks, but in our deepening familiarity within our own unique patterning of relations. In experiencing the now familiar terrain of the agency of such patternings, there lies an intensity of fluxing, entwining and interconnecting embodied ken. This intensity, rather than clouding articulations of *where we are at*, decisively grounds enunciation of *where we are at* within our embodied relational selves.

Such a stance has important ramifications for what and how we ‘do’ within the intensification manifest within, and a manifestation of, towns and cities. How we understand ourselves as ‘doing’ is dictated by constant movement within the unfamiliar; it is manifest within, and a manifestation of, the act of displacing. Our embodied doing, as enmeshed within our embodied ken, is an expression of unfamiliarity and displacement. Thus, ‘doing’ is coloured by the emptiness and

loneliness of a diminished consciousness, and manifests as striving; a striving out along the conveyor belt of linear time and across the grid of geometric spatiality in search of fulfilment and fullness. It is, in short, a yearning and nostalgia for emplacement.

This is not nostalgia for a return home in the sense of a return to a time and a space past and elsewhere. Neither is it nostalgia for what I have previously described as emplacement within the here and now. Within the perception of linear time, going back is a fantastical and impossible whim – the conveyor belt travels uni-directionally – and within such a perception, emplacement within the here and now appears like some farfetched call to turn the conveyor belt off. The nostalgia grounded within the unfamiliar is rather nostalgia for emplacement within the construction of a *new* place or *new* places. Within the displacement of unfamiliarity what is striven towards is a new home that is just up ahead and just around the next corner. It is a home that is reliant upon the process of intensification and it is a home that, as an embodiment of unfamiliarity, is already and always just out of sight, in the future and someplace else. Ultimately, such ‘doing’ is the endless and thankless pursuit of the unachievable.

Where are we at within towns and cities? We are at home within the displacement of the displacing. Within this displacement we are nostalgic for a place just up ahead and just around the next corner. We conceive ‘doing’ as infused with ‘striving’, as what is up for grabs, or what will make things meaningful, is perceived to be just there in front of us. Such doing, such striving, is embodied within the desire to make the world over and to fix things up. As well as manifesting within, and a manifestation of, the notions ‘progress’ and ‘development’, this striving also is encompassed within much doing that is described as environmental and sustainable. As Freya Matthews states:

When we say, “let’s fix the world up...” we are just as much in the grip of the old ethos of domination and control... In remaining in the grip of the old ethos, in nursing the desire to make things better,

we are simply continuing to water the modernist roots of the present predatory system (Mathews, 2005: 37).

A striving for environmental outcomes and a striving for emplacement that may include the addition of household eco-techno fixes, an ecological makeover disguised as restoration or a new 'eco-friendly' house, are all embedded within assumptions that have us striving out within 'new house' nostalgia. Just up ahead and just around the corner is the perfect eco-friendly washing machine, the heralded return of an extinct species, and the futuristic flourishing of a diminished ecosystem. The ultimate eco-friendly house is just a job, a home loan, a government policy, a subdivision, a block of land, an invention, an idea, an architect, a builder, a joiner, a plumber, an electrician, and a subsidy away. And as each of these entities themselves embodies the intensification discussed previously, a new house is, in short, the whole planet away. As we continue, within the process of intensification, to draw webworks once flung far, wide and deep, into the nodes we call towns and cities, our striving to fix the world up continues to implicate the earth and have profound implications for inhabiting symbionts, both human and more-than-human. 'New house' nostalgia, even within the guise of environmental sustainability, is manifest within, and a manifestation of, embodied unfamiliarity within the act of displacing. It relies upon the new and the novel in its construction and as such the new and novel continues to manifest within agency far beyond our expectations, and as the process of intensification continues, well beyond anything we feel we may be able to manipulate or control.

Another possibility exists, somewhat akin to Mathews' notion of "letting the world grow old" (2005: 25), and imbued with a conception of nostalgia for emplacement within the here and now. As growing familiarity draws us in towards embodied emplacement, ponderings of the possibilities of a new house in a new location may not necessarily dissipate altogether, but may increasingly revolve around more familiar

terrain, closer to home. Up until recently I was regularly contemplating a move elsewhere. Now my 'new house' musings travel up and down the banks of Grasstree Hill Rivulet – the rivulet I currently live adjacent to and whose route I follow frequently on foot and by car. My movements up and down this terrain appear less driven by a yearning for something or someplace new than by an entwining response to the disparate flow of water, the acceleration of traffic up and over the Grasstree Hill saddle, the drift of cold air down the valley, the illegal travel of firewood collectors along the creek-side fire-trail, and the knowledge that Aboriginal people have also passed this way. I may one day move further up the Rivulet, but futuristic yearnings towards someplace else continue to mellow.

In Risdon Vale and within the here and now of my unique patterning of relations, as Mathews (2005) contends, I 'grow old' within the familiarity of the day-to-day. I use energy in response to the ebb and flow of the seasons and of night and day, eventually ebbing out altogether as both myself and upriver hydroelectric schemes age towards something else. I inhabit fashions arising from a spontaneous clothes swap, take food from the hands of a friend at the market, and I am embraced by a favourite jumper within the chill of an upcoming winter. I play around within the possibilities of using less water, sense the tussle of flapping, dripping plastic bags on the washing line, and stand in the driveway with the recycling bin as an incidental companion and chat to my neighbour. I read the erosion patterns along the banks of the local creeks, engage with friends in local politics, and argue a point over coffee. I sink slowly but certainly within the place that I inhabit. I 'do', not with a sense of striving, but within a sense of the growing familiarity of emplacement. I feel less likely to be drawn to *do things to* my home, and more likely to comfortably inhabit myself and my locality as *embodying emplacement*⁸¹.

In light of this, Zimmerman's statement cited at the beginning of this chapter, a statement which preferences an ontological prerequisite but leaves room for the notion

that there is still something that we ought to be *doing*, requires further clarification and amendment. Within a conception of myself as ‘sole washing agent’, I strive to wash with a yearning and a compulsion to make anew. The clothes are in a sense made over, through my agency, within the newness of cleanness; through washing I achieve ‘that fresh new feel’ and the clothes become ‘as good as new’.

Yet ‘what we do’ is something that neither can be cleaved off from ontological considerations, nor considered in isolation from them. ‘Doing’ is not something that can be primarily directed by the rational mind. It is not an action that is perpetrated from the inside out, from the individual upon the world. I certainly manifest the agency ‘to do’ – this is no denial of the relational self as having volition and affect. However, when I ‘do’ the washing it is the agency that lies within the relational in-between and that coheres through collaboration and corroboration that makes the event a possibility. The act of washing is a unique patterning of relationships with a node within my kitchen and home, but with interconnectivities that extend far, wide and deep.

Hence, what we ought to do emerges, not as considered articulations of the rational mind, but as nodes within relational fields of shifting, embodied, intersubjective commonality. ‘What we ought to do’ emerges within the volition of self within place. “I ought to get the washing on” is an articulation of myself in familiar relation with clothes, bacteria, dirt, a sunny morning with a light breeze, the sound of the neighbour’s Hills hoist spinning and pegs snapping, and the complexities of how I am entwined culturally and socially with others. It is an ethic within the act of dwelling, and neither a prescript emanating from some place else nor from some isolated and discrete delineation of self. *Where I am at* within washing is the physical, the ethical, the ontological, the place and the self as embodied entwined. *Where I am at* within washing is *where I am at* within my suburb, within my city.

Conclusion



*I keep the rustic gate closed
For fear somebody might step
On the green moss. The sun grows
Warmer. You can tell it's Spring.
Once in a while, when the breeze
Shifts, I can hear the sounds of the
Village. My wife is reading
The classics. Now and then she
Asks me the meaning of a word.
I call for wine and my son
Fills my cup till it runs over.
I have only a little
Garden, but it is planted
With yellow and purple plums.
'Idleness' by Lu Yu (1971: 109)*

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This thesis began within a garden, a garden which compelled me to explore my lived experience of the interplay between transpersonal ecology and my home suburb of Risdon Vale. Exploration has taken thought and idea far, wide and deep – into deep ecological thought and its critics, through the methodology and methods of phenomenology, into my sense of place that is Risdon Vale and within some of the particulars of Risdon Vale – a frequented department store, my washing machine and the gum-tree-man gestalt. I have traversed wilderness, encountered consciousness and emphasised the importance of the theory of internal relations within deep ecological thought. Deep ecology has emerged as emplaced within the complex, dynamic and largely aquantifiable symbiosis that is my home within Risdon Vale; it has emerged, not as a relic of modernity trapped within the realm ‘wilderness’, but as a poignant ontological perspective holding relevance and significance for considerations of self, place and world. Towns and cities have revealed themselves to be on the move, as scenes of intensification and places of increasing displacement. *Where we are at* within towns and cities has been shown to be increasingly unfamiliar terrain.

The thesis began in a garden, a garden that is currently enmeshed within a multifaceted global furore termed climate change, and I conclude my thesis also within this place and this enmeshment. Climate change is, like ‘pests’ and ‘waste’, a manifestation of, and manifest within, what we have been missing as a consequence of relational intensification and associated growing unfamiliarity. Unlike the entities categorised as ‘pests’ and ‘waste’ which have appeared containable within discrete parcels of time and space, climate change is an entity that embodies both the global nature of this intensification and displacement within an increasingly unfamiliar world. It is a relational entity that asserts the more-than-humanness of the world, such that even if we asserted our agency within the negotiation of the quantifiable and slashed carbon emissions today, the agency of the whole still finds us enmeshed

within a world where the uncertainty of now is infused with and infuses the uncertainty of what will be.

A turn towards relationality, and the possibilities of familiarity therein, offers a more holistic and nuanced way to navigate and participate with such an entity and within such a complex world. However, some caution is required here, for 'relationality' is a gestalt of immense proportions that, as well as offering some kind of 'in,' carries the potential to conceal as much as it reveals. If the world is as complex, as dynamic and as nuanced as asserted, then 'relationality' can only be a radical over-simplification of that which is, of course, complex, dynamic and nuanced. There must be more happening here than a concern for, and some sense of, the relational in-between; there must be so much more to be known than something containable and describable within the singularity implied by the word 'relationship'.

Some of philosophy's most influential thinkers, such as Bertrand Russell, Gottfried Leibniz and Alfred Whitehead, have considered the nature and the occurrence of relationships (Sprigge, 2005). Over the past 100 years, the theory of internal relations has attracted both advocates and dissenters (Bogen, 2005)⁸². However, despite its prominence within the work of Naess, little has been said within environmental ethics and deep ecology with regards to this theory. Yet, returning the agency of things to the things themselves – as the theory of internal relations does – offers insights into the complexities of relationality that may allow for more nuanced comprehension to emerge.

When a pen is moved from one side of my desk to the other, through the theory of internal relations we can comprehend that this change is not my doing alone and it is not simply quantifiable as change within the parameters of linear time and geometric space. What is so often described as a change in location and locale is in fact a change in the pen's locality of place, a shift in itself as a unique patterning of relations. This change in *where the pen is at* remains only a small part of its broader relational

complexity, hence it is possible to recognise it as the same pen. Nevertheless, the pen itself has *moved* – it is no longer *exactly* the same pen. Through an overt expression of agency, the pen presents itself – asserts its place – as an entity infused with volition.

What this may mean for our relations in the places we inhabit is a potent area for future investigation within environmental ethics generally and deep ecology specifically. What this may mean for comprehending the nuances of relationality is a realm that, I believe, warrants particular attention, not least because it will deepen our familiarity with *where we are at*, and such deepening will help us to ‘do well’ within our unique locality of place.

As well as infusing our comprehension of relationships with increasing uniqueness and subtlety, and facilitating our ability to ‘do well’, couching and articulating localities of place within gestalt ontology will assist in infusing them with the power and dexterity to participate within the corroboration and collaboration required for communal ken.

As it stands, the place gestalt that is gum-tree-man remains open for broader corroboration and collaboration and his contribution to communal ken is very much in the making. Within gum-tree-man is the infinite relationality that embodies me within the place that is Risdon Vale, and that embodies Risdon Vale within the self that is me. Within gum-tree-man strolls the restlessness of the colonial myth and the unresolved nature of the colonised and the colonisers. He has had his roots down some place else where water was plentiful and within Risdon Vale the roots are there but penetration is problematic. Within the Lake District, where I was born and spent my childhood, water was never in short supply. My view of the dry creek beds in and around Risdon Vale is coloured by confusion and doubt about this lack of moisture. I keep returning to the waterless waterfall feeling somewhat perplexed. The plan is, after heavy rain, to rush along the track and catch it in a wet and torrid moment – to experience the waterfall as I presuppose it should be.

But this is more complicated than a coloniser doing a bit of colonising. Now largely without water, this creek-feature is waterborn. Where once there was water, now there is none. There are changes afoot within Risdon Vale of which the legacy of colonisation is just a small interconnected part. There are things taking place here well beyond the confines of the suburb's boundaries, changes that speak strongly of gum-tree-man's embodiment within the communal. He is not confined within this place, though he is also not free of it either. He is always here even when he is elsewhere.

Gum-tree-man is not under threat in a way that we may normally construe threat. Place remains no matter what. He will not die of what we might expect – heart disease, emphysema or cancer. His existence in relation to me is only a small part of who and how he is. I may have glimpsed him within a dreamscape and encountered him briefly on track and at checkout, but we have not met eye-to-eye, and perhaps never will. I suspect such a meeting requires an attentiveness that colonisers only gain if their rootlessness inspires freedom within the boundedness and unboundedness of place rather than a zeal for the appropriation of place. It is an attentiveness towards which this dissertation – my experience with exotic species, suburban discards, my washing machine, columns and pillars, and gum-tree-man himself – is but a tentative step.

In regard to gum-tree-man, however, what can be stated categorically is that *where we are at*, as world internally related to self, matters; that *place matters*.

Expressions of place gestalts, such as gum-tree-man, allow for place and self to assert themselves within the intensification of towns and cities; they bring to the fore our familiarity or potential for familiarity, with *where we are at*. At the very least, when we write from within a relational *more-than-human* world, place gestalts potentially facilitate a depth and dexterity more frequently associated with writings from within the relational *human* realm.

Unearthing place gestalts is a phenomenological quest, but importantly not a quest premised on discovery of a fixed or determinate essence or spirit of place. It is about participation within the dynamics of the here and now, with openness to the intersubjectivity of place and an acceptance of the complex interconnectivity of place.

It is also not a phenomenological quest that lies within the realm of the individual, as the emergence of place gestalts also provides an avenue for speaking of self within place that is distinct from speaking about the individuated 'I' of the non-relational.

This is not a time to turn towards washing as though washing inhabited only the individuated kitchen and backyard. My self as a discrete autonomous individual does not and never has soiled the clothes, carried the water, bubbled the detergent, spun the machine, swung the door and dried the washing. What the underarm bacteria are to the fabric, the rain to the cloud, the petrochemical to the scientist, knob to steel and water to wind, are all participants and negotiators within the entity of 'washing'. It is a time to turn towards washing as the wild synergistic node that embodies interconnections spread far, wide and deep. It is a turn towards the evolution of washing, the mythology of washing, the globalisation of washing, the politics of washing, the economics of washing and the justice (or lack there of) of washing, not from some abstracted grounding within cerebral thought and theory, but with feet rooted firm within the uniqueness and especialness of each washing machine's locality of place.

It is to acknowledge the constituting importance of place; it is to acknowledge that place matters. It is to become emplaced.

Epilogue

Seven years after the fact and it's a wallaby grassland that once was my front garden and which is now something not particularly recognisable as anything else round here. I mistook grass for lawn and turned native into native, and within the process displaced place.

An act I regret. But I'm still here.

Out walking again, and there are footprints in the clay and damp sand. I'm in a hurry, and towards me along the track a cigarette pack strides – brand shining and dew-free – until within reach. It draws my hand down and I know whose it is. Furtively into pocket it proceeds and zip fastens tight. I'll do him a favour, this place that is still sprouting green amongst the char of the last fire.

Now it's him that strides towards me with unfamiliar bearing. He's searching, looking in no relation to me. Dropped in amongst debris that I have decided does certainly not belong, the cigarettes are sent packing.

I mistook the place for the man. Another act I regret.

So I return again to hang washing on the line like there is no tomorrow; like the light cool breeze of a mild autumn, damp grass cuttings on boots and dewdrops on pegs are all there is to need and know.

To hug the pillars in the department store and to spin, again, upon the arm of gum-tree-man.

To ken the taut smooth line pulling you as you pull it. To feel the fibre of wooden peg stretch and straighten as you flex and release it. To sense the movement of water as it leaps from cloth to air, astride the flux of the morning sun. To recognise the rise of the grass beneath emptying washing basket. And the snap as wind picks up and sheet asserts itself as sail, flag and shelter.

This is an expedition for which I don't need to leave home. It is an exploration that leaves intact the place encountered; where I settle to be colonised by others and where I settle to be a pioneer within the intimacies and intricacies of the familiar.

Within the spirit of this place I find myself – again – out amongst it all.

Notes

¹ ‘Ecophilosophy’ has been defined as the search for a “new metaphysics, epistemology, cosmology, and environmental ethics for person/planet” (Devall, 1994: 125). It is distinct, and in historic terms a divergence, from axiological considerations that dominate environmental ethics (Kheel, 2008: 164).

² For reasons outlined in Chapter 3.1.1 there is a need to distinguish between deep ecology as a branch of ecophilosophy, Deep Ecology as a movement, and ‘deep ecology’ as a label. In this dissertation, capitalisation is used to distinguish between the branch and the movement, and single inverted commas for the label.

³ Half the human population currently live in cities, and this will rise to 60 percent within the next twenty years (UN, 2008: x). In developing countries urban growth rates average 5 million new urban residents each month, while developed countries largely remain unchanged. These cities and their inhabitants demonstrate a high rate of heterogeneity both within each city and between cities. In less developed regions like Africa and Latin America there are very high levels of urban inequality, particularly when compared to Europe and Asia (UN, 2008: xii). In some cities slum dwellers make up a majority of the urban population. The worst of these can be characterised by a lack of clean water and sanitation, overcrowding, non-durable housing and insecure tenure. Households that are headed by women tend to suffer disproportionately from these characteristics (UN, 2008: xiii).

Australia continues to follow international trends for developed nations and is becoming increasingly urbanised. Over two-thirds (68 percent) of this country’s 21 million residents live in major cities – Sydney being the largest, followed by Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra. A further 20 percent live in inner regional areas – which include smaller cities such as Hobart in Tasmania (ABS, 2008c). While the growth of major cities has slowed recently, it is projected that Sydney will remain Australia’s largest city and will grow approximately 1.0 percent each year, reaching a population of 7 million by 2056. The fastest growing cities are projected to be Brisbane and Perth, averaging an increase of 1.6 percent per year each (ABS, 2009). In the past decade, inner regional areas have grown by 0.8 percent, while outer regional and remote areas have declined slightly (ABS, 2008c).

In Tasmania, the island state within which this dissertation is grounded, 65 percent of residents live in cities and major towns (ABS, 2008c). The capital, Hobart, is the state’s largest city, with the population in the greater Hobart area rising from 197,964 to 207,484 between 2002 and 2007 (ABS, 2008a).

⁴ Quinn and Scott (1997) provide another example of how deep ecology relates to towns and cities. In a phenomenological exploration of the American mega-mall they describe these places as homogenous and homogenising. They conclude that:

The mega-mall is the arrogance of this façade [of heterogeneity], a paper-thin illusion that may indeed keep some... 'happy for a while'. To experience joy and the cultivation of happiness we might again turn our attention from the mall, and explore ...the forested banks of a Minnesota river (Quinn and Scott, 1997: 6).

Once back in the wild – the heterogeneity of the river bank – the real work may begin, in this case environmental education:

we have to recognize that the participants of our outdoor environmental education programs will likely have been weaned on mega-malls. By providing them with an environment conducive to organically meaningful experience, reflection and practice, perhaps we can counter the consumeristic tendencies. Perhaps we and they can learn to be more than 'happy for a while' with new trinkets and discover the joy inherent in the biota with whom we share the planet (Quinn and Scott, 1997: 10).

Another example comes from Andrew McLaughlin, who writes:

Most industrial people live lives that are fairly similar in structure, despite surface differences... At a sensory level, urban life is relentlessly distracting. The hum of machines and vehicles and the sounds of radios and televisions surrounds city life. Silence is lost. People live by clocks and by schedules set by work and amusement. Daily life is a celebration of material consumption, as people are surrounded by things to be purchased and exotic foods to be consumed (McLaughlin, 1993: 70-71).

For other examples see Drengson (1996) and Hay, R. (1992).

A recent paper by deep ecology proponent David Ward draws on the work of Heidegger and offers a significantly different understanding of the juxtaposition of the 'built' and the 'wild'. He concludes: "cities become, potentially, the product of a wild technology. Therefore it is up to us to disclose the being of cities in such a way that we can dwell in poetic relation to them" (Ward, 2008: 100-101).

⁵ Martin Zimmerman has since moved away from his involvement with, and interest in deep ecology, citing the influence of the Nazi-aligned philosopher, Martin Heidegger as the central reason (Zimmerman, 2000).

⁶ Another example is Cuthbertson, *et al.* (1997), where it is argued that mobility can have a decisive role to play in the development of a deep sense of place.

Deep ecology is not alone in its lack of interest in place discourse. As Casey (1997) asserts, place has not featured significantly in much of western thought and as a notion 'place' continues to lack clarity. An Australian exception to this general lack of interest in place is Cameron (2003).

⁷ Also see Whatmore (2007) for the implications of relationality within geography.

⁸ Ecofeminist Marti Kheel defines 'ecofeminism' at the "broadest level as a loosely knit philosophical and practical orientation linking the concerns of women to the larger natural world. More specifically, ecofeminism examines and critiques the historical and mutually reinforcing devaluation of women and nature with a view to transforming existing forms of exploitation" (2008: 8). For a review of work by some key ecofeminists see Ruether (2007).

⁹ David Abram (1997) provides what is perhaps the most comprehensive and well developed phenomenological contribution to deep ecology.

¹⁰ The descriptor 'ecophenomenology' has been applied to the offshoot of phenomenology that provides a method with which to explore a reconceptualisation of nature (Brown and Toadvine, 2003). Amy Lavender Harris defines ecophenomenology as an "interdisciplinary enquiry grounded in our pre-theoretical experiences of an 'alternative conception' of nature" (Harris, 2004: 1). Such definitions of ecophenomenology, however, threaten to mire this fledgling discourse within dualisms, particularly in the use of the term 'nature'. Phenomenologist David Wood takes a somewhat different tack, and one more in keeping with this inquiry. He describes ecophenomenology as the "pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and those of other creatures" (Wood, 2001: 80). Through such an understanding of ecophenomenology the nexus of concern is the self as enmeshed within the world rather than something distinct and discrete enough to be labelled 'nature'.

Phenomenologist Ted Toadvine (2001) describes two intertwined facets of ecophenomenology – the phenomenology of ecology and ecological phenomenology. While the latter is primarily concerned with phenomenology as informed by ecological insights, it is the former that defines the focus of this inquiry. Toadvine describes the phenomenology of ecology as:

The employment of the phenomenological method broadly understood – in simplest terms, the non-reductive explication of matters as experienced and the experiencing of those matters – to ecological issues, that is, issues raised by considering the conjunction of self and world or the logos of the home (Toadvine, 2001: 77).

He goes on to state that "phenomenology of ecology may lay the groundwork for ecological phenomenology. Thus ecophenomenology may be more than simply 'applied phenomenology' and may indeed reveal insights important for the practice of phenomenology more generally" (Toadvine, 2001: 81). While a direct consideration of potential implications of deep ecological insights for phenomenology is beyond the scope of this inquiry – the focus here begin on an

awakening towards deep ecology rather than phenomenology – this inquiry may inform the work of others in relation to ecological phenomenology.

¹¹ Phenomenology is described as a movement rather than a discreet discipline (Stefanovic, 1994) and as such the expectation is not that the research *conforms* to a specific ontology; rather, that the ontological facets of phenomenology are *comprehended*.

¹² For a piece of work that provides an overview of the concerns of phenomenology of place, as well as having particular relevance to deep ecology, see Seamon (1991).

¹³ There are of course a multitude of collaborators involved in this research project, not the least being the academic world of postgraduate study. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve into this immense ‘being’ – its very nature makes exclusion desirable, though not necessarily essential – it is, I feel important to note (albeit briefly) the role it plays in this inquiry. Spatially, the academic world of postgraduate study removes me for at least three days a week from Risdon Vale and places me within small, computer-filled rooms in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies in Sandy Bay, on the other side of the River Derwent. In doing so it allows space for reflection and provides collegial support. It sets temporal boundaries to my experience – not that experience can end with a deadline, but it will certainly be transformed by the removal of this powerful collaborator. And it provides for my corporeality and that of my family by ensuring the lived experience of the phenomenon is sustained with food, shelter and warmth.

¹⁴ Thomas Maxwell makes a similar call to science, though not from within the context of phenomenology:

Healing the fragmentation and alienation that is at the root of the current world crisis requires an integrated epistemology that embraces both the rational knowledge of scientific empiricism and the inner knowledge of spiritual experience. This integrated epistemology is fostering the emergence of an integral worldview that is consistent with modern science and rooted in the perennial wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions (Maxwell, 2003: 273).

¹⁵ While most cite the 1973 version of this paper, an earlier version, described as philosophically more refined, has been unearthed. For a copy of this and comments on its significance see Anker (2008).

¹⁶ Naess originally developed an eighteen-point platform (Fox, 1995a: 114).

¹⁷ Naess and Sessions provide notes clarifying the meaning and intention of each point (Naess and Sessions, 1985b).

¹⁸ The critique by philosopher Richard Sylvan (1985) and associated response by Warwick Fox (1986) is a classic example of this.

¹⁹ For a review of the Deep Ecology movement from 1960 to 2000 see Devall (2001).

²⁰ To do real justice to the complexity and sophistication of the concept of ‘Self-realisation’ – i.e. the works of Naess, Gandhi and Spinoza – is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Fox (1995c) provides a clear and concise introduction that may lead readers into a deeper exploration of their own.

²¹ Others do not necessarily agree with Fox. Eric Katz (2000), for example, lists three features that he sees as distinguishing deep ecology from other branches of ecophilosophy: identification with the nonhuman world; the pre-eminent value of Self-realisation; and a relational holistic ontology as the basis of normative values and decisions.

²² See Zimmerman (1994) for a review of transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber’s work, including commonalities and clashes with deep ecology.

²³ Deep ecology proponent Alan Drengson, whose approach to the process of identification is that of ‘self work’ as envisioned through many eastern traditions, is working with others to create ecoasteries – an ecological equivalent of monasteries (TEFNA, 2009).

²⁴ Fox adopts this term from Theodore Roszak: “ecology does not systematize by mathematical generalization or materialist reductionism, but by the almost sensuous intuiting of natural harmonies on the largest scale. Its patterns are not those of numbers, but of unity in process; its psychology borrows from Gestalt and is an awakening awareness of wholes greater than the sum of their parts” (Roszak, 1972: 400). Fox describes ‘unity of process’ as “the idea that all ‘things’ are fundamentally (i.e., internally) related and the idea that these interrelationships are in constant flux (i.e., they are characterized by process/dynamism/instability/novelty/creativity, etc)” (Fox, 1984: 195).

²⁵ Although Fox states that transpersonal ecologists agree on this point, he does not provide direct evidence for this and a reading of the quotes taken by him from transpersonal ecologists also does not support this assertion. In fact, Naess states that deep ecology calls for the “development of the narrow ego of the small child into the comprehensive structure of a self that comprises all human beings... [and] all life forms” (1989a: 85), rather than for the contextualising of one within the other.

²⁶ The irrelevance of morality in transpersonal ecology is challenged by E.H. Reitan. He argues that “the achievement of the ecological Self is a precondition for being a truly moral person, both from the perspective of a robust Kantian moral framework and from the perspective of Aristotelian virtue ethics” (1996: 424), thus placing transpersonal ecology and Naess’s Ecosophy T within the tradition of moral philosophy rather than outside it. In a footnote Reitan states that the criticism levelled by Fox and Naess at the narrowness of moral traditions may reflect:

current trends in environmental ethics [that] fail to do justice to the richness of our moral heritage. The aim of this paper is to show that deep ecology has succeeded (perhaps unintentionally) in recapturing that heritage; it may be that the environmental ethics which Fox distances himself from is more opposed to morality, properly conceived, than is deep ecology (Reitan, 1996: 413)

Interestingly, in 2000 paper, Fox equates Aristotelian virtue ethics with the notion of wider identification found within deep ecology, describing deep ecology not only as being psychological in nature, but “also as an ecologically sensitive form of virtue ethics” (Fox, 2000a: 23). Recent developments within virtue ethics and its relationship to environmentalism include Sandler and Cafaro (2005).

²⁷ McLaughlin’s assertion that Sylvan and Cheney accept the Deep Ecology Platform does not cohere with their sweeping and negative critiques of this branch of ecophilosophy. It is perhaps possible however to state that they may agree with the Platform in an informal way rather than a formal way.

²⁸ For example, Reed and Westra’s work emerged after Fox’s analysis of deep ecology, whilst Daly, Cobb, Wilson and Taylor do not identify as deep ecology proponents. In fact, Fox identifies Taylor as concerned with life-based ethics (see Fox 1995c: 174).

²⁹ In a comment concerning Fox’s interpretation of his work Naess states that when “Fox professes to feel as a leaf on the tree of life, he embraces a stronger or more radical form of holism than I do. I assume that, as long as the intrinsic value of each living being is respected, such radical kinds of holism may be compatible with support for the Deep Ecology movement” (Naess, 1999a: 272).

³⁰ Cheney prefers the term ‘ecological consciousness’ as used by Devall and Sessions (1985).

³¹ In this paper (1987) Cheney makes the mistake of reading the statement of biocentric egalitarianism in the Deep Ecology Platform as defining deep ecology’s central facet as rights/value based. He uses this as the basis for a critic of the masculine nature of deep ecology, arguing that such an approach hinges on domination and oppression fostered by a masculine need for control and security. He acknowledges in the footnote that if this is not the central tenet of deep ecology then some of his observations may not hold. In his 1989 paper he shifts his focus of criticism from this to the emphasis that deep ecology places on the metaphysical through Naess’ norm of Self-realisation.

³² Subsequently Cheney, in collaboration with Anthony Weston, has argued the case for the development of an ethics-based epistemology – a kind of proto-ethics. They identify this as distinct from the epistemology-based ethics that dominates most philosophical discourse, including that within environmental ethics (Cheney and Weston, 1999).

³³ Plumwood (1991) specifically criticises Fox for not recognising that the debate between ecofeminism and deep ecology is primarily concerned with the failure by deep ecology, and ecophilosophy as a whole, to observe the historic linkages between anthropocentrism and androcentrism. This debate is not, she contends, about whether the cause of the ecological crisis is anthropocentrism or androcentrism (see Fox, 1989).

³⁴ Sylvan's (1985) critique of deep ecology preceded the publication of Fox's *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* (1990), but the criticisms levelled at the holism inherent in deep ecology can be applied to the metaphysics of transpersonal ecology and as such are addressed here.

³⁵ See Fox (1995c: 54).

³⁶ Ralph Metzner describes Fox's work as a "bold and original effort at conceptual bridge building between" (1991: 147) ecophilosophy and ecopsychology. In addition, see Hibbard (2003), Schroll (2007) and Stavely and McNamara (1992).

³⁷ Post-1990 examples include Abram (1997) and Mathews (1991). Also see the deep ecology journal *The Trumpeter*.

³⁸ For a summary of issues and approaches in urban environmental ethics see NASSP (2003).

³⁹ Mathews is one of the twenty-one prominent transpersonal ecologists identified by Fox in the late 1980s. While Mathews maintains an allegiance to deep ecology – she has published in *The Trumpeter*, a deep ecological journal – she describes her own approach as panpsychism.

⁴⁰ For a comprehensive historic account of the notion of place, see Casey (1997).

⁴¹ Burnie board is a reconstituted fibre building material that was produced at Burnie on Tasmania's northwest coast from 1951 to 1968 (Frankcombe, 2000). It is approximately 6mm thick and was used to line houses. Gaps between the boards were covered by a strip of timber beading.

⁴² The Hills hoist is an Australian version of the rotary clothes line.

⁴³ 'Bogan' is also a descriptor for an Australian sub-culture often associated with a low-socio-economic demographic.

⁴⁴ The Lake District National Park was created by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) and came into being on 15 August 1951. It covers 885 square miles and is the largest of England's National Parks (LDNPA, 2008).

⁴⁵ An acronym for 'Not In My Back Yard' – a derogatory descriptor for people who oppose developments (and the like) close to their home, but have little concern for similar developments occurring elsewhere.

⁴⁶ For an in-depth phenomenological exploration of memory, or more specifically, remembering, see Casey (2000). This includes considerations of place memory and body memory.

⁴⁷ John Wylie (2009) provides a brief review of work in this and associated fields.

⁴⁸ Phenomenologist Isis Brook argues that Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh is of value to environmental thinking as it avoids the "idea of immersion, of losing oneself in the world to the point of extinction of difference" – the latter being one of the criticisms levelled at deep ecology by ecofeminists – and also avoids the idea that the world exists, or is only knowable, as our own projections upon it (Brook, 2005: 361).

⁴⁹ Evidence relating to this event was collated 27 years after the fact, and included the eye witness account of convict Edward White. He claimed, contra to the report made by the commander of the soldiers who opened fire, that the approach of the Aborigines was peaceful and not an attack. He also stated that a great many Aboriginal people were killed and wounded (Boyce, 2008: 38).

⁵⁰ Tasmania, Australia's southern island state, was previously known as Van Diemen's Land – a name given to it in 1642 by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman. The change of name to Tasmania in 1856 followed the end of convict transportation and was spurred by a desire to 'forget' the island's convict legacy (Boyce, 2008).

⁵¹ 'Stag' is a colloquial term for trees killed by fire. The trunk and branches, free of leaves, twigs and bark, are light grey in colour and can resemble the antlers of a male deer.

⁵² Palawa (or Pallawah) is the name used by Aboriginal Tasmanians to identify themselves among the First Nation Aboriginal groups (Ryan, 1996: xx).

⁵³ Risdon Cove is managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. Management activities include environmental rehabilitation and community education initiatives. The management plan for the site includes the provision of interpretations and the maintenance of visitor facilities (IPAP, 2008).

⁵⁴ An affectionate term for Blundstone boots – an iconic Tasmanian brand of Australian footwear.

⁵⁵ A type of lichen that grows beard-like on tree branches.

⁵⁶ While Naess objects to his ontology being described as phenomenism (Zimmerman, 1994: 122), Christian Diehm argues that Naess is perhaps more influenced by the work of Heidegger than he makes apparent, and it may be the inaccessible nature of the work of phenomenologists such as Heidegger that has spurred Naess to keep his distance from this realm of thought. Despite this, however, Diehm contends that in Naess we see:

a kind of phenomenologist at work, a thinker who draws his intuitions from experience and who strains to do philosophy in a way that bears witness to the depths to which one can take one's relations to the world. What we catch sight of, that is, is a learned Norwegian mountaineer carefully detailing the events and circumstances of a life lived in nature, returning time and time again to the things themselves (Diehm, 2004: 26).

⁵⁷ While not used here, Naess states that descriptions of gestalts should be appropriately marked with an exclamation mark, and full stops should be avoided (Naess, 2005b).

⁵⁸ Naess himself is far more pragmatic in his gestalt descriptions (see for example Naess, 1995b).

⁵⁹ Irene Javors' 'Goddess in the Metropolis' (1990) can also be read as a description of gestalts evoked by people that transcend the people themselves.

⁶⁰ Diehm (2006) argues, in relation to Naess's gestalt ontology, that the emphasis of deep ecology "ought not to lie primarily on expanding the self but on expanding the possibilities for new forms of encounter with nature and for a deeper understanding of the values it holds" (2006: 33).

⁶¹ Philosopher Paul Keeling (2008) argues that the concept of wilderness and associated debate reach an insurmountable hurdle when focused upon whether or not wilderness actually exists; on whether there is a human-free nature or nature-free human artefacts. He argues instead for 'wilderness' and 'nature' to be comprehended as expressions of the more-than-human and more-than-human agency, and hence attaining value irrespective of human involvement or non-involvement.

⁶² This is, of course, not the only criticism levelled at the concept of wilderness. For example, as Cronon himself states, the application of western models of conservation, including the culturally entwined – as perhaps overly narrow – notion of wilderness within countries and cultures of significant difference has been criticised as being another form of imperialism. People and ecosystems have suffered as a consequence. See Callicott and Nelson (1998) for a broad ranging discussion of wilderness and the wilderness debate. For an insightful and comprehensive eco-feminist review see Plumwood (1998).

⁶³ Two volumes on the wilderness debate speak to this: *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Callicott and Nelson, 1998) and *The Wilderness Debate Rages On* (Nelson and Callicott, 2008b).

⁶⁴ Philosophers Michael Nelson and J. Baird Callicott (2008a) identify what they describe as 'the received wilderness idea' – one that encompasses preservation for recreational purposes, spiritual, experiential aesthetics and for artistic endeavour. This is, they argue, *the* idea of wilderness that has by and large prevailed. However, a second conception, which they term 'the unreceived wilderness idea', has also existed. This is wilderness preservation for scientific

study and as wildlife habitat. Debate is still fierce, not only regarding what wilderness is or is not, but also about why it should be preserved. The wilderness gestalt remains in significant flux.

⁶⁵ Mary Midgley has written extensively, however, on the consciousness of animals (Midgley, 1983; 2002).

⁶⁶ This is by number rather than volume, in that there are nine microbial cells to each mammalian cell.

⁶⁷ The term 'self' is used advisably here as the two 'selves' described cannot be separated from each other. As such, 'self' must be taken to imply interconnectivity beyond and within.

⁶⁸ For an alternative view of the role of microorganisms in environmental ethics see Cockell (2005).

⁶⁹ The absolutism often associated with these notions has, of course, been extensively critiqued. For example, in topology, a facet of geography that studies the properties of geometric models which are independent of position, notions of time and space have been and continue to be explored (see for example Massey, 2001; 2005; Jones, 2009).

The concept of linear time has also been heavily and successfully critiqued within mathematics and physics, and is contested by anthropological understandings of temporality within other, non-western cultures (see, for example, Ingold, 2000).

It is important to note that the relationship between the notions of place and space is still problematic – both concepts remain indistinct and the relationship between the two is effuse. For a review of historic and contemporary understandings of place and space, and how these two notions have or have not been distinguished, see Malpas (1999).

⁷⁰ Research on symbiosis is taking place across the biological sciences – within cell biology and biochemistry, immunology, evolutionary biology, genetics, ecology, epidemiology, virology, bacteriology, mycology, plant pathology, entomology, parasitological and behavioural biology (Ahmadjian and Paracer, 2000). For a concise summary of research in this area see Moran (2006).

⁷¹ Such a perspective of symbiosis has significant implications for the theory of evolution. Within the biological sciences, symbiosis has been identified as a, if not the, driving force in evolution and the origin of life (Wallin, 1927; Margulis and Sagan 1997). It provides a source of inherited variation and as such is an indispensable mechanism for the origins of new forms of plants and animals (Margulis, 1986). In light of this dissertation, it is comprehensible that the origin and evolution of life implicates and implies relational qualities beyond the quantifiable – those most often associated with the concept of survival – and the entwining of the quantifiable and the aquantifiable may begin to be imagined.

It must be noted that the significance of the role of symbiosis in evolution is hotly contested within the biological sciences (Margulis and Sagan, 1997; Margulis, 1998).

⁷² Naess defines ‘symbiosis’ as “life together” (Naess, 1989a: 203).

⁷³ A number of ecocentric thinkers have used ecological scientific knowledge to formulate values or have observed that ecological principles and theories have implications for human psychology and behaviour. Linking values with science – deriving an *ought* from an *is* – has proved a problematic exercise for many of these thinkers.

Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop (1999) provide a synopsis of the use of the ecological principles of balance and stability by ecocentric thinkers, including Callicott’s (1989) embrace of Aldo Leopold’s statement: “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community; it is wrong when it tends otherwise” (1966: 240). In this statement moral worth is accorded on the basis of assumptions within aspects of ecological science, i.e. those of stability and balance within an ecosystem. But Hettinger and Throop (1999) highlight theories in ecological science that question the idea that ecosystems are in fact balanced and stable. They cite trends in ecology that “argue that disturbance is the norm for many ecosystems, and that natural systems typically do not tend toward mature, stable, integrated states” (1999: 7). They paint a picture of sets or patches of life, the components of which are interconnected, but in a state of flux. In fact, “some ecologists suggest that many interacting populations are chaotic systems, in the mathematical sense of *chaos*. Although these systems are fully deterministic, accurate predictions about them are impossible because tiny (and thus hard to measure) differences in initial conditions can produce drastically different results” (1999: 8).

It was precisely in acknowledgment of the new chaos-based theory in ecological science that Callicott modified Aldo Leopold’s maxim so it read: “A thing is right when it tends to disturb the biotic community only at normal spatial and temporal scales. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (1996: 372). Shifts in ecological scientific theories and trends in ideas, as well as internal struggles within the science itself (as detailed in Shrader-Frechette and McCoy, 1993), can provide shaky foundations for value formulation.

⁷⁴ Deep ecology literature has cited bioregionalism as a source of ideas and inspiration (see for example, Devall and Sessions, 1985), and bioregionalism has drawn upon the articulations of deep ecology. For example, in his paper ‘Growing a Life-place Politics’, bioregionalist Peter Berg makes reference to “thinking like a continent” (1990: 142), a reflection of deep ecology’s “thinking like a mountain” (Seed *et al.*, 1988). Not everyone agrees that there is a synergy between deep ecology and bioregionalism. For example, Davidson (2007), commenting on the idea that bioregionalism is the politics or social philosophy of deep ecology, describes the relationship between the two as a ‘troubled marriage’.

⁷⁵ Another, more prominent critic of deep ecology is historian Anna Bramwell (1989). She maintains that the green or ‘ecology’ movement has its roots within national socialism and as such carries within it the potential for supporting and instigating fascist regimes. Peter Hay (2002a) for one, contests Bramwell’s account, demonstrating that there is no historic link between German Nazism and the current environmental movement and that the interconnectivity identified by Bramwell is at best tentative, if not oblique.

⁷⁶ Integral Nationalism is one of five types of nationalism defined by Hayes (1968). It:

makes the nation, not a means to humanity, not a stepping stone to a new world order, but an end in itself. It puts national interests alike above those of the individual and above those of humanity. It refuses cooperation with other nations except as such cooperation may serve its own interests real or fancied. It is jingoistic, distrusts other nations, labors to exalt one nation at the expense of others, and relies on physical force. It is militarist and tends to be imperialist (Hayes, 1968: 165-66).

Examples cited by Hayes include Mussolini and his followers, the Russian Bolsheviks and the German National Socialists.

⁷⁷ Devall and Sessions (1985) present a self-scoring test entitled ‘Where you at?’, the purpose of which is to cultivate a sense of place and of ecological consciousness. Questions cover knowledge of local soil types, the names of neighbours, where rubbish goes and the nature of local energy resources.

⁷⁸ Persons, for the northern Ojibwa, include human persons and more-than-human persons such as the sun, a bear and mythological figures (Ingold, 2000: 90-92).

⁷⁹ Writer John Cameron (2008) provides an account of the agency of the heron in his move to, and inhabitation of land on Bruny Island in southern Tasmania. The heron is not simply *alive* in a biological sense. In relation to John, his partner and the place the heron is a powerful and informing participant in *where John and his partner are at*:

we have said on more than one occasion that “heron” helped bring us here because we would never have ventured so far otherwise, and that the place called to us that morning...

It is a matter of the heart as well as thought to pay attention to the feeling of affinity that sometimes rises in me when heron appears...

saying that the heron guided us here seems to be a way of expressing a feeling that something larger than my own conceptual mind or mere accident is at play (Cameron 2008: 14).

⁸⁰ Sheer weight of numbers can be a poor indicator for how well a species may or may not be doing, for numbers alone provide a homogenising account that masks intra-species relational complexity. For example, with regard to seagulls, while urban seagulls are in general larger

than their non-urban counterparts, their health is poorer and reproductive success lower (Auman, 2008). As with humans, gulls demonstrate a significant degree of heterogeneity – some do better than others.

⁸¹ Such a statement begs the question; what if one's relationship with where one lives – *where one is at* – is not so comfortable? In finding ourselves in relation with something that is harmful or violent we may gain familiarity within this relationship, but it must be emphasised that gaining familiarity is akin neither to passive acceptance nor complacency. The very nature of this relationship includes the possibility and the probability of change. Asbestos in our home includes the knowledge gained about health risks, legislative requirements for removal and our concern for the welfare of family and friends. If a local creek is poisoned we move to gain familiarity with our relationship with the creek and the poison, and this familiarity includes chemical, ecological and medical awareness, and participation within local politics for change. Domestic violence in the house next door includes our relationship with our telephone, the police and our knowledge of the rights of others to live free of violence and repression. In sinking to place – in becoming emplaced – there is no abdication of participation in relational change. In recognising ourselves within the locality of place, the way we articulate this change and our participation within it may alter significantly, and some priorities may shift. Yet we remain always and already at work within that which we are embodied and is an embodiment of us.

⁸² For example, philosopher G. E. Moore (1951) argued that a relationship between a father and a son is internal as it is insufficient for there to be father, son and the relationship of fatherhood, and for the father and son not to be considered *related* in a very specific way. He also contended that not all relations change those entities doing the relating and hence refutes claims made by philosophers such as F. H. Bradley that *all* relations are internal. Moore strives to avoid claims of holism based on the notion of internal relations.

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