

## 6. Place and Singularity

Jeff Malpas

Singularity ... The state, fact, quality, or condition of being singular ... A peculiarity or odd trait ... A point at which a function takes an infinite value ... Middle English: from Old French *singularite*, from late Latin *singularitas*, from *singularis* 'alone (of its kind)' (see singular).<sup>1</sup>

1. Every place is singular, having a character that is proper to it alone. It is partly this singularity that underlies the often maligned and frequently over-used idea of the 'sense of place', the *genius loci*, the spirit that belongs to a place and to it alone, and that is embodied, in ancient thinking, in the idea of the presiding deity of the place. The way the singularity of place can be seen to be at work in the idea of a 'sense of place' indicates how central the idea of singularity is to the idea of place itself – although whether the idea of the 'sense' of place, let alone notions like that of the *genius loci*, is properly adequate to capture what is at issue in the singularity of place seems questionable (if only because the notion of 'sense' is itself highly ambiguous). To understand place is, in large part, to understand the singularity that belongs to place – indeed, without an understanding of singularity, there can be no understanding of place. It is the exploration of this singularity, and so of the implications for place of its singularity, that is my aim here.

2. It might be thought that the singularity of place is most readily appreciated in those extraordinary places in which, when one first enters into their vicinity, the character of the place is so impressed upon one that it provokes a strong and immediate response, whether of pleasure, wonder, or even, perhaps, of shock. The latter is the common reaction of visitors when, to take one example, they first

encounter Queenstown, in Tasmania's West, where the sulphurous fumes of copper mining has resulted in a seemingly desolate landscape largely devoid of vegetation **[Insert image #1 – Singularity in desolation: Queenstown in Western Tasmania; photo by Ilona Schneider, by permission of the photographer. It is worth noting that although the first reaction to this landscape may well be to view it in terms of seeming desolation, Schneider's own intention is precisely to contest that reading (something more evident in the colour original and in the series of Queenstown images to which the photograph belongs).** Tasmania (in which, as Mark Twain put it, both heaven and hell appear at times to have been brought together<sup>2</sup>) also holds some of the most beautiful places in the world – places whose images have become the stuff of touristic dream: from Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake in the Cradle Mountain National park to Wineglass Bay on the Freycinet peninsula **[Insert image #2 – Singularity as touristic destination: Wineglass Bay on Tasmania's East Coast; photo by Stephen Laird, by permission of the photographer].** Such places, whether at the extremes of beauty or desolation, seem to provide striking examples of the singularity of place that is at issue here.

I have taken Tasmania as the source for these examples, rather than looking elsewhere to more commonly-known or stereotypical instances, partly because Tasmania is the place in which I now live, and so is also a place that is particularly well-known to me, but also because it is a place whose singularity, like many places 'at the edge', is evident in its own strong sense of identity (Tasmanians tend to view themselves as standing apart from mainland Australia, much like the island itself, even to the extent that they are Tasmanian more than they are Australian),<sup>3</sup> as well as in the unique character of its landscapes. Moreover, the experience of the singularity of place in a Tasmanian context – and especially the singularity of the 'wilderness' places in Tasmania's South West – provided the impetus to the founding of the world's first Green party, and so has a particular significance in the rise of environmental political activism. One might thus suggest that Tasmania itself provides, in its own exceptionality, and the exceptionality of its landscapes, a

particularly good example of the singularity of place that is at issue as well as of the way such singularity can be politically and socially affecting and effective.

The experience of the singularity of place as it presents itself in the sort of self-evident and immediate way that seems true of the Tasmanian examples I have cited has often been what underpins the treatment of place in many different contexts – artistic, literary, or even philosophical.<sup>4</sup> The extraordinary character of the places with which such singularity is associated in such contexts may suggest that the singularity of place is itself something extraordinary – that it is something opposed to the familiar and the everyday – even that the very idea of place refers only to certain superlative places, often to places that are apart from regular human habitation. Experiencing the singularity of place, even just experiencing place, might even be thought to be possible only in the midst of the beautiful, the sublime, the wild or the desolate, or even to require the sort of separation from ordinary life that Thoreau might be seen to have undertaken during the writing of *Walden*.<sup>5</sup>

3. The experience of the extraordinary, of beauty, for instance, or of desolation, can have important effects upon us and can indeed provoke us to reflection and self-reflection<sup>6</sup> – and it may well lead us to think again about the places that appear as beautiful or as desolate. Similarly, the separation from the ordinary and the everyday can also allow the necessary space in which reflection, whether on place or self, can arise. Yet the identification of place with the experience of the extraordinary in place, and the expectation that the encounter with place depends on the separation from the ordinary, can also lead to a loss of place as well as a loss of singularity.

Precisely because it is extraordinary, and because its extraordinariness is often taken to be captured in the extraordinariness of what is *seen*, so the extraordinary place is able, all too readily, to be re-presented in the form simply of the picture or the *view*. The experience of the singularity of place as given in the extraordinariness of place can thus give rise, or at least to contribute, to what might be thought of as

the 'postcard' idea of place. The very use of images of Wineglass Bay and Queenstown as illustrations of the extraordinary place, both the beautiful and the desolate, could itself be seen to be in keeping with such an idea (which is not to say that it cannot also be used to contest it).<sup>7</sup> On this basis, the paradigmatic experience of place becomes that of the 'spectator' or viewer, and the place may itself come to be identified with the 'view' – with what may appear as actually an abstraction from the place as such. In this way even the extraordinary place can become generic – submerged in the repeatability of its image, transformed into a set of *merely* pictorial elements<sup>8</sup> – perhaps reduced to a stereotype, to kitsch.

The singularity of place is not evident, however, only in the experience of the extraordinary or in those places that are removed from the everyday. Even though their singularity is not always so dramatically or self-evidently brought to our attention, the singularity of place is also a feature of those places that are closest to us, that we know most intimately (and in which we are ourselves most intimately known), and to which our lives are most closely bound. Here the singular character of the places in which we live – our homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods – is itself almost indistinguishable from the singularity that belongs to our own lives, our own selves, our own identities, and this is so precisely because of the close tie, whether explicitly recognised or affirmed, between our lives and the places in which those lives are lived.<sup>9</sup>

If we frequently overlook the singular character of even the most ordinary of places – including those places that we take to be generic – then this is partly because, for the most part, we attend to place only infrequently, and often only partially. We move in and through places constantly, but seldom do we pay attention to their character *as places*. Even within the 'place professions' (as they might provocatively be called), among which I would include architecture and planning, in which explicit attention is supposed to be given to place and to places,<sup>10</sup> still this is a highly specialized mode of attentiveness, and it is all too prone to be

overtaken by instrumental and pragmatic considerations that frequently lead to the treatment of places in terms of certain stereotypical or standardized forms.

Since we so seldom attend directly to place, and even less to the singularity of places, we readily identify the experience of place with the experience of those extraordinary places that make so great an impression on us that they jolt us out of our usual inattentiveness to place – that they force the place to the forefront of our attention. This experience of singularity as given in the extraordinary is also typically given in the immediate experience of or encounter with the place. It arises on those occasions when we self-consciously find ourselves affected by the place and given over to an often strongly-felt response – when we experience the extraordinary and recognise it as such. The immediacy of the experience, as well as the power of its effect, reinforces its self-evident and salient character as an experience of the singularity of place – the singularity *of the experience* of place thus serves to reinforce that experience as an experience *of the singularity* of place.

In contrast, the singularity of the places that we already know is much more likely to pass unnoticed just because it is so close, so familiar, and so much already 'our own'. We thus tend to ignore or overlook the ordinary places that are embedded in our lives, and in which our lives are themselves embedded, because they are indeed so much a part of us and we so much a part of them – *their* singularity is thus *our* singularity. Moreover, whilst the singularity of the extraordinary place seems evident in the immediacy of the experience of or encounter with that place, the singularity of the ordinary place frequently comes to the fore only in our removal from that place. It is often not until we leave the familiar places in which we live that the singularity of those places, the character that belongs to them, and so also to us, becomes evident and is recognised as significant (a process that is itself usually gradual rather than immediate).<sup>11</sup>

4. Not only is there a singularity that belongs to the most ordinary and familiar of places, however, but even those seemingly genericized places – the shopping mall,

the airport, the supermarket, the high-rise tower – whose character might seem otherwise to be erased by the globalised trappings of contemporary capitalism and its accompanying technologies,<sup>12</sup> nevertheless retain their own singularity and so their own character *as places*.

This point is demonstrated, at one level, by the way in which such generic impositions onto places, although typically viewed as entirely corrosive of the character of those places (and they undoubtedly do have corrosive effects in this regard), nevertheless tend, over time, to be themselves corroded by the character of the place. The attempt to resist such corrosion typically results in the failure of the imposition. The way in which the American fast food industry has penetrated markets outside the United States provides an excellent, if highly specific, demonstration of the limited character of the genericization of place that is at issue here. A McDonalds restaurant in Beijing or Delhi replicates much of what one will find in a McDonalds in Boston, but the restaurants will not be identical, and the differences will be a result both of unintended changes that arise as direct consequences of the different places in which the restaurants are located, and out of deliberate responses to the difference in those places on the part of McDonalds' own management that are intended to ensure the viability of the business in those places **[Image #3: MacDonallds restaurant in Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi; photo by Simon de Trey-White, by permission of the photographer].**

At a more basic level, the resistance of place to genericization and globalization, and so the persistence of place in its singularity, is evident in the simple fact that any and every place retains, in virtue of its character as a place, a distinctiveness that marks it out as different from any and every other place. Such difference is not simply a numerical difference (indeed it is not clear what mere numerical difference could mean here) since it is a difference embedded, first of all, in the way any and every place both nests other places within it,<sup>13</sup> and in the way any and every place is also nested within other places. The MacDonallds restaurant in Beijing is thus nested within a complex of other places that already marks it out

from the restaurant in Delhi, and even from the other McDonalds restaurant around the corner; and if the places nested within any particular McDonalds may be thought to be the same since they are built to much the same plan, still they will grow, as the larger place will also grow, into different histories and narratives, become entangled with different individuals, different actions and events, different and often accidental configurations of use and re-use, wear and repair, dust and debris, atmosphere, odour, texture and sound.

The idea that the singularity of a place is lost simply through the imposition of a generic or globalized 'form' suggests an over-estimation of the power of that form and the ability to impose it (an overestimation, even, of the human capacity to shape places to human ends and conceptions), but also, perhaps, a tendency to think of places in a way that looks only to their most obvious, but also their most 'superficial', features, and to neglect the character of even the most mundane of places as encompassing an inexhaustible richness of elements if only one cares to attend closely enough. For the most part, however, such closeness of attention is absent, and the singularity of the place is indeed all-too readily lost in the generic form by which it is represented or that is imposed upon it.

5. One might say that even the most ordinary or seemingly generic of places, in the singularity that nonetheless belongs to it, is also extraordinary – and it is this extraordinariness that itself becomes evident when one attends to the richness that is given in the mundane place no less than in the apparently exceptional. Yet although the singularity that belongs to any and every place may indeed be evident in the extraordinariness of the ordinary, and in the inexhaustible richness that every place encompasses, still the singularity of place cannot simply be identical with such extraordinariness or richness – in fact, one probably ought to say that the latter are consequences of singularity rather than constituting it or providing the means to explain it. In what, then, does the singularity of place consist? In what does place

consist such that it can be singular? How is the singularity of place apprehended, understood, 'known'?

It might seem, however, that there is an obvious answer to the questions at issue here that already lies before us: the singularity of place is given *in the sense of place*, and it is precisely in terms of its 'sense' or 'meaning' that a place is known and apprehended. Such an answer fits with the notion, mentioned at the outset, that the idea of the sense of place is itself an expression of the singularity of place. Moreover, the appeal to the idea of the sense of place might be thought to explain the apparent difficulty that appears here as well as resolve it. No matter the context, sense and meaning can never be specified in any absolute fashion – even the sense or meaning of a word relies on a prior understanding of language as a whole, and there can be no final or complete definition of any word taken alone nor of any group of words taken together (not even of any sentence). Moreover, the 'sense' or 'meaning' *of a place*, especially, is not something 'objective', and what it encompasses is more than can be given in language anyway. One might even be tempted to say that the sense of place has a content that is not open to conceptualisation, that it is 'non-conceptual', to use a term popular in some contemporary philosophical circles.

Commonplace though the idea of the sense of place may be (and that it is indeed commonplace is evident from even a cursory glance at much of the existing literature that draws on notions of the 'sense of place'), it is not clear, however, that it offers any genuine elucidation or resolution of the matters at issue – and especially not in relation to the understanding place considered in its singularity. Perhaps the most obvious reason for this is simply the fact that that the singularity of place does indeed seem to underlie the idea of a sense of place – whatever else it may be, the sense of a place must itself be singular, or carry a sense of singularity, and we can ask what that might be and in what it might consist just as we can ask it of place itself. Appeal to the 'sense' of place alone, then, cannot dispel the obscurity that appears to attach to the singularity at issue, since that singularity is a singularity of sense just as much as it is a singularity of place.

The ideas of 'sense' or 'meaning' as applied in this context also seem to lack any clear elucidation in their own terms. We can offer some plausible accounts of what sense or meaning might be, or at least of the structure into which they fit, when it comes to sense or meaning *in language*, but when it comes to sense *of place*, and to a context that is so often to be asserted to be more than just linguistic, then it seems much less obvious how sense and meaning are to be understood – the more broadly the notions of sense and meaning are deployed, the less clear it is what they might themselves mean.<sup>14</sup> Just as there is a problem as to how to understand the 'sense' of place, then, so there is also a problem of how to understand the 'place' of sense – and so no appeal to 'sense' or to 'meaning' is likely, taken on its own, to elucidate the question of the singularity of place. It may well be that the problem of 'place' and of 'sense' or 'meaning' are connected – that sense or meaning is itself to be understood only on the basis of an analysis of place<sup>15</sup> – although if this is so, then it will be partly because language and place are themselves essentially connected, rather than standing apart from one another.<sup>16</sup>

There is one further issue that should also be noted. The very idea of the sense of place, and especially the tendency to treat the sense of place as not 'objective', brings with it the idea that the sense of place is itself something 'subjective'. Ideas of sense and meaning are often construed as 'projections' or even as 'constructions' that derive either from individual subjects or from the inter-subjective engagement of subjects or the structures within which such engagement is determined ('the social', 'the political', 'the economic'). Since the very idea of a sense of place often seems to imply a view of place as nothing but its sense, so place seems open to construal as itself a projection or construction (when place is distinguished as apart from the sense of place, it is simply inasmuch as place is identified with a mere spatial location – as a space or part of space rather than a place as such). Such a construal threatens to undermine the idea that what is at issue here is indeed a sense *of place*, and especially to undermine the supposed *singularity* that belongs *to place*. Any such

sense, and any such singularity, will be derivative of something else, just as, on such an account, place seems to become derivative also.

One might ask what singularity place itself can have if it is indeed merely a projection of the subject or a construction of the social – and the answer, surely, is that it cannot possess any singularity *of its own*. This does not imply that place must be understood *as objective* if it is properly to be understood *as singular* (objectivity itself belongs, along with subjectivity, to a particular framing of the world that gives little or no room to place), but it does mean that if the singularity of place is to be adequately addressed, then place must be understood in its own terms, and not as derivative of anything else – neither as merely *derivative* of subjects nor, indeed, of objects, and this is even though every place stands in an important relation to both subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>17</sup>

Appeal to the idea of the sense of place alone cannot explain or resolve the question as to the difficulty to which the idea of the singularity of place gives rise – it cannot provide an adequate answer to the question as to how that singularity should be understood, to the question as to that in which place consists, or to the question as to how place, in its singularity, can be known or apprehended. Moreover, if the idea of the sense of place is still seen as having some relevance to the understanding of place – if it is indeed a genuine expression of the singularity of place – then the question as to the nature of place and our knowledge of it, must be seen to be a question that attaches to the sense of place also. Understanding the sense of place requires that we first understand place and, with it, the singularity of place.

6. That we are familiar with places, with the different character of places (their 'senses' if one wishes to use that notion), and with different characterizations of places seems to be both a fundamental and an everyday feature of our lives. Ordinarily, of course, such familiarity usually remains implicit and unthematized – just as we tend not to attend directly to place, so we tend not to attend to the manner in which place is given to us, to the manner in which place is known or to the

content of that knowing. Even when we make appeal to the idea of the sense of place, leaving aside the other difficulties associated with that notion, we often do so in a ways that do little to give real content to the 'sense' or the place at issue. Yet accounts of place or characterizations of places are certainly not hard to find. Literature and art provides us with innumerable of such characterizations – characterizations that often seem to have great power and immediacy in evoking the places that they address.

Here, for instance (crossing from Tasmania to New Zealand) is C. K. Stead, remembering the Kawaika farm<sup>18</sup> on which he used to holiday when young, in his poem 'After the Wedding':

wooden verandah  
hot dry garden sheltered by macrocarpa  
dogs panting in shade, my face black  
from the summer burn-off  
...  
In sleep I still trace those tracks  
below gum trees  
  
skirting the swamp  
through bush to that pool of pools  
where the small brown fish suspend themselves  
in shafts of light  
  
My feet sink  
midstream in heaped silt  
clouding the flow  
  
Water had cut its way

through black rock greened with moss  
down to that glassy stillness  
overhung with trees

In the rock cleft  
a deep hole water-worn and cold and dark –  
I caught the eel that lived there  
its sinuous spirit<sup>19</sup>

It might be disputed that what Stead gives us here is indeed a genuine characterization of a place or that it penetrates to the genuine character of the place it addresses – to the singularity of that place.<sup>20</sup> Yet although any judgment of this will depend on the manner in which we are affected by, and respond to, the poem, still it seems reasonable to suppose, at the very least, that the poem does capture something of the Kawaika farm, or Stead's experience of it, that is significant and does indeed relate to its character as a place (one might argue, in fact, that if it does not do this then it cannot be counted as having any success *as a poem*). That being so, what does an account such as this tell us about what place itself might be, about the nature of the singularity that surely belongs to it, or about the manner in which such place, such singularity, is apprehended and even 'known'?

On a cursory reading, it may seem as if what Stead presents in these lines is a characterisation of a place, and the places that belong with it, in terms simply of an enumeration of features and events – in terms of a set of characteristic elements that belong to the place and places described. Those places, the place that is the Kawaika farm, the more intimate and mysterious place that encloses Stead's "pool of pools", might be thought to be just the sum of the features sketched. Yet Stead's account is not, and makes no pretence at being, an enumeration of all the features of the place at issue. It takes up only some features, and those features, although undoubtedly significant, are surely not exhaustive of the place. Many of the features to which

Stead draws attention could be seen as characteristic, especially when taken together, of a certain 'Australasian' mode of place (one that might encompass Tasmania and New Zealand) – not just the macrocarpa, but the wooden verandah, the bush, the gum trees, the summer heat – and so as belonging to many different places, and not only that single place which described by Stead. Yet it would surely be mistaken to say that the features that appear in the poem are therefore generic – the singularity of the place surely extends to the singularity of what appears within the place. In saying this, however, it seems as if we cannot take that singularity as deriving merely from the features themselves, but already resides in the place or, perhaps, in the very placedness of those features.

Such considerations may be thought to cast doubt on whether an account of place such as that which Stead gives us in 'After the Wedding' can help us in resolving the question of the singularity of place. Inasmuch as Stead's account does indeed re-present the singularity of place, so it also re-presents the question of that singularity. The questions that have already arisen concerning the nature of the singularity that belongs to place, and the manner in which that singularity is given to us, apply as much to any specific presentation of place, poetic or otherwise, as they do to the idea of the sense of place or to place as such. This does not mean, however, that Stead's poem has nothing to offer in trying to unravel the issues that are at stake here. Indeed, part of what is intriguing about the poem, especially when read in its entirety, is that it can indeed be read as a certain sort of exploration of the singularity of place as it occurs in relation to a specific place and places, and of the singularity of the place as it stands in relation to the singularity of a life.

7. The place and places that are the focus of Stead's account in 'After the Wedding' are not obviously extraordinary. Their character is closer to that of the ordinary and familiar places that are part of our everyday experience (even though they can also be seen to take on an extraordinary character), and that most often become salient *as places* when we are removed or apart from them. In the case of the place and places

in Stead's poem, this removal is a function both of the fact that our own encounter with those places is mediated by Stead's own experience of them (as further mediated by his poetic engagement with them) and that those places belong to the past (Stead's own relation to those places is thus one that itself involves removal).

As is true of any engagement with place that occurs at a remove from that place, Stead's account in 'After the Wedding' is given in recollection (and explicitly so: referring to the summer the poem evokes, Stead comments that "in recollection summer is forever/renewing itself even in the thickest leafmould shade" – capturing something of the character of certain forms of childhood memory in particular<sup>21</sup>). Perhaps all explicit and genuine attentiveness to place has this recollective character – especially given the character of place as itself a repository of memory (places hold memories), and memory as a repository of place (memories also hold places),<sup>22</sup> all the more so given our ordinary inattentiveness to place.

To remember is always to find oneself returned somewhere, to be brought back to a place, even if only dimly grasped. The place and the memory are thus bound together, and the remembering is a recollecting of the place through a recollecting of oneself in that place. Even the immediate experience of place as given in the extraordinary might be seen as recollective just inasmuch as such an experience forces us to attend to the fact of our being already and always in place – it fails to be recollective, fails to be attentive to the place, when that experience remains *only* an experience of extraordinariness, rather than being an experience *of the place*, and so *of our own placedness*, on the basis of which the extraordinary appears. It is the place, and our placing in it, that comes prior to any experience of what is given in or through that place and placing, whether of the extraordinary or the ordinary.

To recollect and to remember is to be turned back to a place, and back to oneself as present in that place, and so all memory – all *genuine* memory that is – can be said to be *both placed and of place*, and also to be essentially related *to the self*.<sup>23</sup> The character of recollection as a turning back to place, and to place as given in one's own being in that place, is itself indicative of the way in which place and self are

themselves entangled – of the 'topological' character of the self. The turning back to place and to self, especially as given in recollection, typically has the character of a turn *inwards* – and the inwardness or interiority that appears here can be said to belong to both place and to the self. Place is that which contains, and in containing so it allows space in which what is given within the place can appear – but that appearing, whatever else it might be, is an appearing *within*. Indeed, as the self – one's own life – is always given in and through place, so the self, and the life, also has the character of a being *within*.

The very idea of a life may be said to depend on the idea of a certain interiority that belongs to it – an interiority that can itself be understood as derived from the placed character of a life, from the placed character of the self, from the very character of a life and a self as essentially embodied – where embodiment is itself a mode of placing. The interiority of the self is not, however, identical with the interiority of place – the interiority of the self is given within, and is founded upon, the interiority of place, but the interiority of place is no more reducible to the interiority of any one life than it is reducible to the interiority that is given in the many places that any one place contains and that it opens into.

In Stead's poem the 'interiority' or 'inwardness' that belongs to place can be seen to be expressed in the description of the pool that takes up a central part of the poem and on which the lines quoted above are largely concentrated. It is surely no coincidence that it is in the pool, at the very heart of the place, that Stead catches the "sinuous spirit" – the eel that lives in the deepness of the rock cleft – that seems itself to be an invocation, if not quite of the *genius loci* (though a sense of this is surely not entirely absent), then of the secret interiority, the mystery, that belongs to the place in its inwardness. As Stead's pool is hidden – along the track, overhung by trees, its depths lost in darkness and the accumulation of silt – so too is the interiority of place hidden, is itself a form of hiddenness, obscured by our own tendency to look outwards to what appears before us rather than to ourselves or to that in which both we and what appears are held together, by our tendency to focus on the generic and

the instrumental. Similarly, our own interiority, our own life and our own self, is never completely transparent to us – what and who we are is something that always remains in question, always remains open to determination – as well as being itself easily forgotten in the face of the multiple distractions that surround us.

An important implication of this is that although place does indeed draw us inward, that inward turning is misunderstood if it is taken as a turning into some otherwise hidden ground in which our identity, and the identity of the place (or the memory that belongs with both), is permanently fixed.<sup>24</sup> Even the turning inward of place is a turning into what is open – is itself an opening. The all-too common invocation of place, or some variant on 'place', as the basis for forms of exclusion and intolerance, and correlatively, as that in which can be found some form of 'authenticity', some purified identity, that over-rides all else, is itself a misconstrual of the nature of place and of our own being in relation to place. We find ourselves in place, and only there, and yet in finding ourselves we discover that we are given only as a singularity, in the singularity of place, and as such a singularity, are possessed of an identity that is always to be worked out, never completed, always, indeed in question. If it is in the interiority of place that the identity and singularity of place is to be found, then so too is our own identity to be found there – but that means that it is not found in any feature or list of features, nor in any enumeration of such features, but rather in the opening that is our own placedness.

Unlike space, which has no interiority, no 'inwardness', place can be said to be itself determined as place by the interiority that belongs to it. That interiority is also a form of openness and opening – as every interior is such – and it is thus that the interiority of place can be said to be what enables the appearing of things within it. The singularity of place can be said, to a large extent, to be given in such interiority. What is singular about the place – the character that belongs to the place and to that place alone – is the character of its openness and its opening. It is, moreover, through the interiority that belongs to it, and so through the way that interiority is itself an opening and an openness, that the Kawaika farm in Stead's poem can open up in

such a way as to allow us access to the place and to the other places – as well as to the things, events, and persons – that belong to the place.

One cannot grasp the interiority of the place, however, without one's own interiority also being at issue. To grasp the interiority of the place is to find one's interiority, one's own self, as given, even if only partially, within that place – which means being able to relate oneself to the place and the place to oneself. The fact that the access to place always depends on the relating of the place to oneself does not imply that the grasp of place is therefore merely 'personal' or 'subjective'. It is personal, but inasmuch as it is indeed a grasp of the place, so it is also more than personal; it may be said to be 'subjective', but inasmuch as it extends beyond the subject, so it involves more than the subject alone. The language of Stead's poem is itself highly personal, one might even say that is highly 'subjective', but that is as it should be: the poem is about a recollecting of place, and so about a certain returning to place, a situating or re-situating of the self.

8. If the singularity of a place is given through the interiority that belongs to it, then to grasp that singularity, to apprehend or know it, is indeed to find oneself within it – we exteriorize ourselves in the interiority of the place at the same time as the interiority of the place is interiorized in us. To be within a place is to find oneself affected by that place, to be oriented to its currents and directions; in the fullest sense, it is to be capable of acting within it and moving through it; it is to gain a feeling for the patterns and rhythms of the place, of its own movements, of the density of the spaces within it, of the possibilities that it enables and the demands that it imposes.

In the immediate engagement with place all of these elements come into play, and yet because that engagement is so immediate, those elements typically remain implicit, part of the very structure of our interiorization in that place, and so also part of our own interiority, but nonetheless remaining, for the most part, peripheral to our awareness. It is only in recollection that we are sufficiently distanced from the

immediacy of place (distanced, that is, from the immediacy of the place in which our recollective reflection is itself placed) that the place, its interiority, and so also its singularity, can come to the fore, and so only then are we able to attend to that interiority, to our own interiority as given within the place, and so to the singularity of both place and self.

Such recollection can occur in any reflective moment, but it occurs in poetry and art, and in certain other forms of contemplative thinking and making, in ways that also allow such recollection to have more than just a momentary significance or a merely personal relevance or accessibility – in ways that allow it to be both elucidated and communicated. Although this does not mean that it always occurs as poetry, but it does mean that it is always in some sense 'poetic' – always a form of bringing to appearance what is otherwise hidden – and it always occurs in a relation to language (which is why it is mistaken to say of it that it is 'non-conceptual' or 'non-linguistic'). Attending to the singularity of place is something achieved through the reflective attention that language makes possible even when the medium used to articulate or communicate such attentiveness, and that to which it is directed, may not involve words in their immediacy – when what is immediately presented is, instead, a set of movements, a piece of music or a collage of sound, a set of figures or images, a complex of shapes, colours, and lines.

In the explicitly poetic recollection that is exemplified by Stead's 'After the Wedding', it is indeed words that function as the primary means employed, and by means of which a place is made present to us. Through the careful description of the interiority of the place as given through the inter-relatedness of the elements within it, and as they might be related to our own interiority, we are brought to the place and the place brought is brought to us. One might say that this is achieved through a set of 'images' to which the place is not *reduced* (they do not function in the fashion of mere 'postcards'), but which, taken together, enable the place to be re-composed and re-encountered. Moreover, these images are not directly given, but arise out of our encounter with the language of Stead's poem. Evoked in poetry, those images (given

life by our own imaginative interiority) function as points of entry *into* the place, and they do so precisely in virtue of their sensuous quality – through the manner in which they situate us by the evocation of something tangible, heard, felt, or seen (here the 'image' is understood as just the presentation of something grasped *imaginatively*, rather than as something merely 'visualised'), and so also through the way in which they allow the place into our own interiority. Stead's poem works through such 'images', and those images allow us into the place, open the place to us; give us entry to the openness of the place itself.<sup>25</sup>

The language of Stead's poem is a language that takes us into the place through the concreteness of the imagery it invokes; through the felt character of the place as that is infused into our own feeling, our own imagining, our own remembering; through the sense of movement and encounter that the poem communicates. As Stead situates himself in the place of the poem, so he also situates us, moves us, orients us: on a verandah, in the sheltered heat of a garden, a track traced through bush, a pool where fish suspend themselves in light, feet sink into stream and silt, rock is cut by water, where an eel lived and was caught. In this way we become, as readers of the poem, also vicarious participants in the place, and as such we are drawn into its own interiority, and so into its own character as a place, into its singularity.

At this point, it might be thought that what implicitly re-emerges into the thinking of the singularity of place is the very idea that was earlier rejected as inadequate to providing an elucidation of such singularity, namely, the idea of a 'sense of place'. If we are now returned to that idea, however, it is not because the understanding of the interiority of place is already given in the idea of the sense of place, but because interiority itself provides a way of elucidating what is at issue in the idea of the 'sense of place', as well as in the idea of place and of the singularity of place. Just as the idea of the sense of place cannot provide an elucidation *of the singularity of place*, since, as was pointed out earlier, the singularity at issue belongs to sense as well as place, neither can the idea of a sense of place provide any

elucidation of *the interiority of place*, since the idea of a sense of place itself depends upon that very idea.

Significantly, the interiority that appears here – the 'sense of place' if one wishes to use that phrase – that is evoked in and through Stead's poem, is not an interiority that stands outside of language, but rather one that is articulated and evoked *by means of language*. Understanding the relation between place and language requires the recognition that just as the place is not understood or apprehended by becoming acquainted with all and every one of its features – to do so would not only be impossible, but would itself be disorienting and displacing<sup>26</sup> – so too the linguistic engagement with a place is not about somehow re-presenting the place in its entirety. This would be to misunderstand both language and place. In speaking, and especially in speaking of place, we engage in a sort of situating or orienting of things and of ourselves (speaking is an 'interiorizing' as well as an 'exteriorizing'). In this regard, given the fundamental role language plays here, one might even say that language is orientation, that it is situation, and that as such it is also a fundamental mode of *relating*.

The impenetrability that often seems to belong to place – its opacity, its density – is not a function of the separation of place from language, but in part derives from the character of place as already presupposed by language, and so by any attempt to speak or to listen. If language is a mode of orientation or placing, then it is also itself placed. No speaking can ever properly address that out of which it speaks, in the midst of which it is heard, into which such speaking is cast. In speaking we thus encounter the interiority of place, although most often without recognising it, as that which enables speaking. Moreover, since the inward turning that belongs to the interiority of place never resolves into any final completion – the interiority of place constantly opens before us, but into an openness characterized by opacity as much as transparency – so there is always more to say about any and every place.

This plurality of saying reflects the plurality that is found within the inward turn of place, and so the seeming density and impenetrability of place cannot be said to imply any lack or limit on the part of language. Rather than there being nothing that can be said about place, no means of capturing place in language, almost exactly the opposite is true. There is no need to forsake language, then, in order to understand the singularity of place. Place has a singularity that is distinct from language, but this means only that the singularity of place itself is not a matter merely of anything said about it, and it remains the case that only in and through the saying (and the many different modes of attentiveness that it makes possible) can that singularity be brought to recognition.

9. In the manner in which it draws us inward, in the character of its singularity as itself tied to its interiority, place can sometimes appear as thereby bringing with it such a sense of enclosedness, even of introversion, as to appear stifling and oppressive, as giving rise to a problematic narrowing of mind and of action. Place is thus taken to imply 'provincialism', 'parochialism', 'insularity' – or else as underlying forms of nationalist bigotry and political conservatism.

There is no doubt that the inward turning character of place, which is itself tied to the inward-turned character of our mode of placed being in the world, has a role to play in the development of such attitudes and dispositions. Moreover, in some places, those attitudes and dispositions may be more strongly manifest than in others, and that seems likely to be, in part, a function of the character of those places. Thus island cultures, to take a particularly salient example (at least in my own case) often have a stronger sense of self-identity than 'mainland' cultures, and that can bring with it a fierce sense of independence which often gives rise to extremes of attitude and disposition – both to political radicalism and to political conservatism, to an openness to the world as well a closing off from it – as well as a sort of brooding, obsessive introversion. The tortured histories of many islands is itself a function of the way they seem to intensify the forces at work within them - such

histories serving to reinforce as well as to express a sense of self-identity (sometimes of self-contestation) and so also, perhaps, the sense of interiority, and singularity, that already belongs to those islands *as places*.

It is precisely this heightened experience of place, and the heightened sense of singularity as a place, that is so strikingly evident in Tasmania, and that is not merely a function of the extremity of the places found within it, or of the landscapes it presents. As an island, Tasmania does indeed appear as self-evidently a place, and is experienced as such, in a way that other parts of Australia (the 'mainland') do not.<sup>27</sup> Not only those places that are islands in the geographical sense, however, but any place that is physically or culturally separated from other places will tend to exhibit a heightened sense of its character as a place, of its interiority, of its singularity. Indeed, this seems to be the case with the Kawaika farm described by Stead, and especially of the interiorized place, the pool, that is situated within it and that is so important in Stead's poem. Here the interiority of the place is heightened by the character of the place as separated from other places by its rural setting and also by the way the place seems to belong, at least in Stead's presentation of it, to summer – and to summers past – thereby being set off by a season and time as much as by anything purely geographic.

In a world that is routinely described as increasingly 'connected' and in which every place seems drawn into a global network of places, it might seem as if the experience of place in its interiority – and so, perhaps, in its singularity – is also increasingly less evident and less powerfully felt or recognised. Yet the fact that we may be even less attentive to where as well as who we are in a world so full of distractions – so much given over to immersion in the generic – does not mean that the real character of place has itself altered. Just as the McDonald's restaurant in Delhi retains its own character as a place, in spite of the genericisation that it seems to embody, and so retains its own singularity, its own interiority, so the phenomenon of globalisation does not erase the interiority or singularity of place. Indeed, the very phenomenon of 'connectedness' can perhaps itself be understood

only on the basis of an understanding of place in its interiority and singularity, since it is indeed through such interiority and singularity that connection is made possible – it is only through being in *some* place that I have access to *any* place.

What this shows, moreover, is that the interiority of place does not exist as a pure interiority apart from any exteriority. The idea of interiority brings with it the idea of bound (here understood as distinct from mere limit or curtailment) – interiority arises only within bounds – and so interiority arises only through the differentiation *between* places and the differentiation *within* each place, such differentiation itself coming to appearance in and through interiority. Boundedness is what underpins both forms of differentiation that appear here – the differentiation that opens up into *interiority* and the differentiation that also opens up into *exteriority*.<sup>28</sup> Although the investigation into the singularity of place tends towards a focus on interiority, such interiority necessarily brings exteriority with it, even if sometimes only implicitly, since both interiority and exteriority depend upon and implicate the other inasmuch as each is grounded in the same boundedness by which place is constituted.

On the one hand, place draws us inwards, into its own singularity and interiority, on the other, it projects us outwards to the other places with which it is necessarily entangled, and so towards a plurality that itself belongs to singularity. This means that the sense of enclosedness that is associated with place – and that derives from its very interiority – can never be absolute, but is always an enclosedness, a *sheltering*, that opens up those other places that are also given both within the place as within which the place itself is given. The experience of place is always of this interiority and exteriority, singularity and plurality, familiarity and strangeness, as they arise together. Every place is thus a place of shelter and of setting out, a place of enclosure and of openness, a home and also a foreign land.

Within the phenomenal structure of place – that is, within the broad framework that can be found in any place as it appears to us – this interplay of interiority and exteriority, of familiarity and strangeness, of a double movement

inwards and outwards, is perhaps most clearly evident in the interplay of earth, that on which we stand, and sky, that which arches above us. To the extent that the lines taken from Stead's poem carry a strong sense of interiority so it might also be said to tend closer to the earth – to trees, swamp, stream, rock, perhaps we might also add, to life and death, and the finitude of human life – and earth is explicitly invoked by Stead in the poem's final stanza, 'We marry to be nearer the earth', he writes. Yet inasmuch as every place arises in the between of earth and sky, so every place has, as part of its very phenomenality, a sense of both the interior and the exterior, the closed and the open, the finite and the infinite. This is as true of the places evoked in Stead's poem as of any other – and if earth is almost tangibly present in the poem, the sky is certainly not absent either.<sup>29</sup>

The interplay of earth and sky, their joining in place, takes on an especially powerful form, however, in the experience of the sea – and perhaps this is partly, too, why the island experience, which is an experience of land and of sea, can be so important as an experience of place. Belonging wholly to neither earth nor sky, the sea connects to sky at the horizon, and in the own susceptibility of its surface to the to the impositions of wind and rain; it connects to earth at its edges and its depths, at coastline and sea-floor, in the tidal flow that brings land and sea together, and in the way in which its own body and surface allows bodies and vessels to be supported in and upon it. In its bringing to salience of the horizon, as well as of the liminality that belongs to the interface of land and sea, so the sea stands as a clear marker of the boundedness of place, thereby also turning us back to the *interiority* of place. Yet although it is indeed bounding and enclosing, the sea, because it is tied to boundedness – and in virtue of the character of the bound as never *merely* curtailing, but as itself *connecting* – so the sea stands as a marker also of the opening of place to other places, of place in its *exteriority*.

The West Australian writer, Tim Winton, writing from the western coast of the continent where the connection to the sea has always been prominent,<sup>30</sup> writes of

his own place in a way that evokes just this sense of openness and exteriority even as it exists alongside and in relation to interiority:

My week is shaped by weather and tide. In shops and on verandahs the state of the sea will give me conversations where they mightn't otherwise exist. I live the split shift life I learned at the mouth of the Greenough River: outside in the mornings, inside when the breeze comes in. I work indoors and am mostly fiddling away at interior things, but several times each day I catch myself looking outward, squinting for something on the horizon. From my fibro house I see the dunes that I seem never to have been without. I fish and dive and the sea is still rich as my memory of it. I am small and I know it and am grateful to have it spelled out to me week after week by the shifting sea and the endless land at my back. Gifts and signs wash ashore on the hard white beach, and I stoop with my kids, some days, and pick them up and hold them to the light.<sup>31</sup>

Singularity: "the state, fact, quality, or condition of being singular", but also "a point at which a function takes an infinite value". One might say that both of these senses apply to the singularity of place: any and every place is singular, and so alone of its kind, but any and every place is also a singularity, and so that which unfolds into an infinity, into a world. Place, in its singularity, is that in which the world begins.

10. Although almost at the end of these inquiries, there still one possible difficulty or complication that needs briefly to be considered. It might well be objected that the very attempt to provide an elucidation of the singularity of place in the way it is undertaken here is mistaken – a confusion, a mere phantom of thought, brought on by a set of false or misleading assumptions. It may even be said that the question concerning the nature of singularity is an instance of what Gilbert Ryle famously called a 'category mistake'<sup>32</sup> – like asking, in this case, still to see the wood after having already seen the trees – and that this is the reason for its apparent

strangeness and its difficulty. Either there really is nothing that can or ought to be said to elucidate singularity, or, if there is, it really is nothing more than a matter of pointing to a feature or collection of features in which such singularity surely does consist.

If there is a 'category mistake' here, however, it is not in the denial that place is to be identified with any feature or list of features, but in the supposition that place could be so identified from the very beginning. In this respect, the problem that place and its singularity presents is not like the problem of the relation between an entity and its constituent parts – between the wood, for instance, and the trees that make it up. The features of a place are thus not 'parts' of a place, nor is the singularity of a place, the character that belongs to the place alone, to be found in any set of such 'parts' (the same point can be made in relation to things: places are not made up of such things as their parts even though every place gives place to things and only in place does any thing appear).<sup>33</sup>

Much of this simply follows from the nature of singularity, and so also of the singularity of place. That which is singular is never fully encompassed by any feature or features, since any such features will be part of what is *particular* about the place (as any individual feature may itself be particular in this way), but not of what constitutes the *singularity* of the place, and so will never properly address the place *in its singularity*.<sup>34</sup> The singularity that belongs to place thus does not reside in any particular feature or property of place, nor in any feature or property *in its particularity*; it is not something to be construed as constituted out of the non-singular, and neither is it decomposable into, or capable of being composed out of, other singularities. The place Stead presents to us is not simply identical with some set of features nor does his evocation of the place operate simply by providing any list of such features.

Singularity is not without some sort of elucidation. But that elucidation essentially consists in showing how singularity and place are themselves inextricably tied together. This not only means that the singularity of place is elucidated only, as

in Stead's poem, or in Winton's prose, through a certain sort of bringing us into place, and so into the interiority of the place (which itself opens up to the exteriority of other places and of the world), but that singularity itself turns out to be a form of placing. To be singular is to be placed, and the singularity of anything is bound to its own placedness, in which one might say its very existence is grounded – and to be singular is also, one might add, to include and to belong to a plurality.

Properly understood, then, the singularity of place does not belong either to the extraordinary or the ordinary taken alone, or to place merely as remembered or experienced, but instead belongs to place as such. To repeat: *every* place is singular, having a character that is proper to it alone. As the singularity at issue belongs to the very character of place, so one might say that place 'is' singularity and singularity 'is' place. It is not that places are singular *because* of certain specific features or properties that they possess – because they are especially beautiful, wondrous, or shocking, or because they carry a specific sense of familiarity or personal connection – and nor is it the case that they could thus lose their singularity through the loss of those features or properties. Only *in place* does singularity ever arise, and only *as singular* do places themselves appear.

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<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Dictionaries*, online,

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/singularity> – accessed 2/2/2015.

<sup>2</sup> In a frequently quoted remark, Twain wrote of Hobart, Tasmania's capital, that "it was ... a sort of bringing together of heaven and hell together", from *Following the Equator* (1897), as reprinted, in edited form, in *The Wayward Tourist: Mark Twain's*

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*Adventures in Australia*, ed. Don Watson (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), p.178.

- <sup>3</sup> Henry Reynolds writes of a distinctive "island patriotism" in Tasmania that goes back to the nineteenth century – see Reynolds, *A History of Tasmania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- <sup>4</sup> Although Tasmania does indeed offer many examples of place as extraordinary, it also offers a more nuanced understanding of place that is evident in Illona Schneider's work, for instance, as well as in the work of a range of other Tasmanian artists, writers, and thinkers – see, for instance, Pete Hay, *Vandemonian Essays* (Hobart: Walleah Press, 2002). In Tasmania, place turns out to be more complicated than the common touristic presentation might suggest.
- <sup>5</sup> See Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854).
- <sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Elaine Scarry's discussion in *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton, 2001).
- <sup>7</sup> Alberto Perez-Gomez has argued explicitly against the tendency to reduce the place to its image. Beginning with the idea of the *genius loci* as it appears in the work of Christian Norberg-Schulz, Perez-Gomez writes of how the spirit of place at issue in Norberg-Schulz's work "is transmitted to the reader through black and white (and only later colour) photography, carefully framed and edited", and then goes on to ask (in a way that touches on some of the issues also at stake here), "how is this 'spirit of place' given? Is it the embodiment of a tradition hermetic to the alien? Is it objective, like a picture? Do we have to transform our self-understanding, and our understanding of perception in order to 'get it'? Or is it merely obvious, transparent in its representation, like the photographs in *Genius Loci* seem to suggest?" – see Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'The Place is not a postcard: the problem with Genius Loci', in Gro Lauvlandet, Karl Otto Ellefsen, Mari

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Hvattum (eds), *An Eye for Place: Christian Norberg-Schulz: Architect, Historian and Editor* (Oslo: Akademisk Publiserings, 2009), pp.26-34, and especially p.27.

<sup>8</sup> There is much more that can be said about the relation between place and picture, and about the nature of the image. That the idea of place *as picture* is problematic (as Pérez-Gómez argues) does not mean, for instance, that the picture cannot also be a powerful means of gaining access to place or of re-presenting place. For more on the issues that are at stake here, see my 'Place and the Problem of Landscape', in Jeff Malpas (ed.), *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), pp.3-26; on the more specific question of the image, 'Heidegger in Benjamin's City' in Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2012), pp.225-236, and also 'Heidegger, Language, Place', in Günter Figal et al (eds), *Pathways to Heidegger's Later Thinking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> On the intimate relation between places and the lives lived in those places, see my *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Often this is so, but not always – architecture and planning are not unanimously understood as professions oriented to place, what it might mean to be so oriented is contentious, and the language of place can also easily degenerate (often does degenerate) into little than a set of empty slogans or bland platitudes.

<sup>11</sup> It is here that the experience of nostalgia or 'homesickness' (for this is what nostalgia originally and properly is) originates: in an experience of the difference between the place in which one now finds oneself and the place of one's familiar life; in what is as much a disjunction of the self as it is also a disjunction of places. Since the displacement that is operative here is not merely spatial, but also always temporal, so nostalgia and homesickness themselves manifest in terms of an estrangement that is similarly spatial and temporal together. For more on the

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relation between nostalgia and place see my 'Philosophy's Nostalgia', in *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, pp.161-176.

<sup>12</sup> Many of these are the very sorts of places Marc Augé has designated as 'non-places' – see Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995). Augé's position need not be seen as in conflict with that set out here – the non-places to which Augé refers are those specific kinds of places that are typical of a certain extreme mode of contemporary modernity.

<sup>13</sup> Not only are such places contained within the place, so that they are, as it were, 'parts' of the larger place, but the place also 'contains' other places in a different sense, namely, through containing references and connections to those places. In an age of electronic mediation and communication, those references are connections are both explicit and multiple. Significantly, however, the way another place is brought *here* via, for instance, a television or computer screen is not such that the character of *this* place is thereby lost or effaced. Instead, the inter-referentiality and inter-connection of places itself becomes an element that is absorbed into the character of those places (since the identity of places is always indeterminate, however, whether the mediated connection of one place to other places changes the character of the place is not a question to which there is a single answer).

<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that sense and meaning cannot be deployed in such broad fashion, but only that such usage does not itself shed light on what sense and meaning might be such that they can indeed be deployed so broadly.

<sup>15</sup> That this might be so seems to me to follow both from the analysis of language and meaning to be found in Donald Davidson's work and also from hermeneutic considerations that can be drawn from Heidegger and Gadamer.

<sup>16</sup> See my 'Heidegger, Language, Place', and 'The Beckoning of Language: Heidegger's Hermeneutic Transformation of Thinking', in Ingo Farin and Michael

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Bowler (eds.), *Hermeneutic Heidegger* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> See *Place and Experience*, esp. pp.29-43.

<sup>18</sup> Kaiwaka is a small farming town in Northland, New Zealand, located almost one hundred kilometres from Auckland.

<sup>19</sup> C. K. Stead, 'After the Wedding' in C. K. Stead, *Between* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), pp.9-10. The place described here is one to which Stead returns elsewhere in his work – see, for instance, 'The Kin of Place', also in *Between*, pp.62-63, and *The End of the Century at the End of the World* (London: Harvill Press, 1992), pp.115-116.

<sup>20</sup> Readings of the poem may also be offered that treat the poem in terms that seem not to emphasise the topological and topographic – one can easily envisage, for instance, a reading that is psychoanalytic in character or that stresses the poem's sexual overtones (the latter clearly invoked by the poem itself, and all the more so given its title). Yet the availability of such readings would not demonstrate that place was not at issue here. A topological reading is not invalidated simply by the availability of other readings, but, additionally (and more importantly), even psychoanalytic readings or readings that look to uncover sexualised imagery and ideas, whether of Stead's poem or of any other work, cannot be assumed to be independent of the topological. Indeed, I would argue that psychoanalytic ideas and analyses, for instance, are themselves topological, and are expressive of, as well as based in, in quite specific *topologies* – *topologies of the body*, as well as of the mind (which does not stand apart from the body here), and so in the experience of the body's own interiorities and exteriorities, their intersection and their affectivities. The same is more generally true, I would argue, for many ideas and images of sexuality.

<sup>21</sup> Ernst Bloch famously connects the idea of the utopic, understood as itself an expression of hope, to the remembrance of childhood – "Once [we have]

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established [our] own domain in real democracy, without depersonalization and alienation, something arises in the world which all men have glimpsed in childhood: a place and a state in which no one has yet been. And the name of this something is home [*Heimat*]" – Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1986), v.3, p.1376. The idea that in recollection "summer is forever' may be seen to capture something similar – a sense in which recollection is itself tied to the invocation of hope, of home, and of a youthful past (Stead himself refers to 'Eden' later in the poem – "Eden won't ask you back/you must make your way in dreams ..." perhaps reinforcing a sense of a lost utopia and past hope). Both Bloch and Stead, however, seem well aware of the complexities that attach to this aspect of recollection – to the "summer" it brings with it. If nostalgia is present here, then it is by no means a simple desire for return, but involves a more complex sense of both hope and loss – see, once again, my discussion of nostalgia itself in 'Philosophy's Nostalgia'.

<sup>22</sup>On the relation between place and memory, see my discussion in 'The Remembrance of Place', in Azucena Cruz-Pierre and Don Landes (eds), *The Voice of Place: Essays and Interviews Exploring the Work of Edward S. Casey* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 63-72; see also my 'Building Memory', *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 13 (2012), pp.11-21.

<sup>23</sup> Although the recollection of facts is often facilitated by the 'placing' of such facts (something indicated by the classical 'art of memory' and the 'method of loci' through which it operates – see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), the mere recall of facts in their generality is a rather different form of memory than the personal memory at issue here and may well be regarded as actually a derivative form of memory.

<sup>24</sup> Just as memory is held in place and place in memory, so both place and memory, share the same indeterminacy and opacity, and as the self is tied to both, so the

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self is equally indeterminate and opaque. On the indeterminacy of place and memory, see my discussion in 'The Remembrance of Place', in Azucena Cruz-Pierre and Don Landes (eds), *The Voice of Place: Essays and Interviews Exploring the Work of Edward S. Casey* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 63-72.

<sup>25</sup> Here a larger set of issues are opened up concerning the real character of the image (issues already gestured toward in note 8 above), as well as the sensuous or 'imagistic' character of the poetic and of artworks more generally – on this see also my 'The Working of Art', in *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*, pp.237-250.

<sup>26</sup> Being situated is a matter of having a sense of the ordering of a place, through its relation to one's own sense of ordering, not of 'knowing' the place in the entirety of its details – typically, in fact, the experience of being lost is an experience of being presented with too many of the details of a place all at once, of losing a sense of what is salient about the place – of seeming, perhaps, to see *too much* of it. The loss of a sense of its ordering may even lead to a sense of bodily disorientation – of something like a sort of topological vertigo.

<sup>27</sup> Although, if one looks to other island places within Australia (Norfolk Island, for instance, located nearly 1500 kilometres east of the Australian mainland and also historically connected with Tasmania), one also finds strong senses of self-identity, and so of place, that are often also quite distinctive.

<sup>28</sup> On the centrality of bound to place, see (among other works) 'Self, Other, Thing: Triangulation and Topography in Post-Kantian Philosophy', *Philosophy Today*, 59 (2015), pp.103–126; and 'Putting Space in Place: Relational Geography and Philosophical Topography', *Planning and Environment D: Space and Society*, 30 (2012), pp.226-242.

<sup>29</sup> Images of sky, and especially of the night sky – moon, stars, darkness, the morepork (a species of owl) – are more prominent as the poem progresses.

<sup>30</sup> Even though the state comprises one third of the Australian continent, the population of Western Australia is concentrated in a relatively small area in the

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South-West of the state (an area that includes the capital city of Perth). Since that area is bounded by deserts to the east and north, and by oceans to the west and south (with Perth itself being over two and a half thousand kilometres from any other large Australian city), it has something of the character of an island – thus Winton faces the sea with the "endless land" at his back – although with its own peculiarities.

<sup>31</sup> Tim Winton, *Land's Edge*, text by Tim Winton, photographs by Trish Ainslie and Roger Garwood (Sydney: Macmillan, 1993), p.48.

<sup>32</sup> See Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), p.16.

<sup>33</sup> One might even go so far as to say that places do not, as places, have 'parts' at all, or, at least, inasmuch as they do have parts, those parts are always and only other places. So a garden may be a single and singular place and yet also include other places within it – the overgrown orchard away from the house, the lawn on which games are played, the shady corner filled with ferns – and even a small garden can exhibit a similar character once one looks, in its corners and crannies, for places at a scale commensurate with its size. The same is also true for a neighbourhood or a street, a region or city, a building or the rooms within it – if these places have parts, those parts are themselves places. The singularity of the place is also not identical with the singularity that is to be found in all or any places it may contain. This is so even though each of those places, contained and containing, also implicates the other, and each may even contribute to the singularity of the other. The way they do so, however, is through the way they contribute *to the place*, since the identity of a place is tied to its relatedness to other places, rather than through their own singularity being a component in the singularity of the other. The singularity of any containing place cannot be decomposed into the singularity of the places it contains nor can the singularity of those contained places be derived from the singularity of any containing place.

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<sup>34</sup> What emerges here is actually the distinction between *singularity* and *particularity*.

To be particular is to be an instance of something more general – so we talk of *this* apple *in particular* rather than apples *in general*. Consequently a particular is precisely not that which has a character that is proper *to it alone*, but a character that is proper *to its kind*. Although the terms are properly distinct, it is nevertheless not uncommon for particularity to be used in a way that is ambiguous between genuine singularity and mere particularity. In *Place and Experience*, for instance, I frequently talk of the 'particularity' of place (although usually conjoining the idea of particularity with concreteness and immediacy) when it is singularity that is really at issue. The tendency for singularity and particularity often to be conflated is an understandable consequence of the fact that, for the most part, what is singular is particular, and what is particular is also singular.