

# Notes on Memory & Place

Peak Head

April 2022

Remembrance is a process solidified from things and spatial encounters (Tilley, 1994). As you look at these photos from March 2021, they take on a more profound character in the present than they did in the past. You remember leaving in the afternoon, feeling slightly sad about the past and unsure about the future. You had been drinking cheap wine the night before.

It was characteristically humid – normal for the time of the year – but the weight of the air still surprised you given that the trail was exposed to the ocean winds. There was a gravel car park and a clear legibility to the trail: an out-and-back hike to a rounded cliff overlooking the Southern Ocean. You walked along a track stabilised by rope netting and then descended down a series of sandy steps before winding through the coastal heath. It was the day before your 36th birthday, and this experience was your birthday present to yourself. At the time, the significance of this hike was only related to your age, your past and your future. Through the process of remembrance, you find this place takes on a new meaning, but at the same time becomes a marker of loss.



*“Movement in the world always involves a loss of place, but the gaining of a fragment of time. It sets up a series of expectations for the paths of the future.”*

– Tilley, 1994. pp. 27.

When you walk a trail for the first time, you both discover and lose place simultaneously. Through the performance of a hike, you acquire memory or knowledge of a place, yet it can never be exactly the same place twice. When you return, whether through memory or in-body, you find yourself a slightly different person, and thus the landscape itself is constituted in a different light, tone and sense of familiarity or comparison.

While hiking to the bluff, you drew upon the accumulated sensations and perceptual lenses from all other hikes you had completed before, bringing them into the present context.

And in all future hikes, you will draw on the legibility of the Peak Head Track to inform your sense of place and position in relation to your final destination (whether consciously or unconsciously). In other posts, you have observed a sense of dislocation or in other words, illegibility, on some hikes due to an obfuscation of beginning and end points, whether due to the topography or layout of a trail, or due to weather conditions. Your experience of the Peak Head Track therefore stands as a personal reference for the perception of destinations.





The quote above appears to refer to our expectations of the spatial arrangement of paths and trails we may encounter in the future, but there is another meaning that seems to resonate more deeply in accordance with the twists and turns of the courses of our lives.

The materialities of the trail that constituted our experience at the time – grey clouds, tiny pink blooms, the texture and colour of granite and lichens – and the positioning of our body as it moved through the landscape seemed so strangely divorced from our normal routines and habits.

Hiking in this place was an escape from the monotony of the everyday and therefore seemed appropriate as a marker of a demarcation with the past. It was an affirmation of freedom and the possibilities that can defy our expectations of what will come to be.

As you made your way up the granite, you came upon a massive nest-shaped cairn, and then at the summit of the bluff, the nothingness of the expanse of the ocean and sky, stretching onwards into seemingly infinite space.



You lost something big there, but gained a fragment of time. Shortly after occupying this space, on the edge of the south-western coast of Australia, you learned that you were going to be a father.



\* sulphur \*