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The Challenge and Gift of Being-in-the-World: The Hermeneutics of Dwelling and (Be)longing

"The Greeks had a very interesting word that one can find in Plutarch and that exists in the form of a noun, a verb, and an adjective. It is the word *ēthopoiein*, which means making *ēthos*, producing *ēthos*, transforming one's way of being, one's mode of existence."

(Schmidt 43)

We might say it all comes back to dwelling, save for the fact that nothing ever breaks free from the tether of dwelling in the first place. That we must dwell is granted us with our being-in-the-world yet how we dwell and indeed how well or poorly we dwell and what enhances, prohibits, or makes dwelling a struggle belong to those circumstances that are at once historical, fated, and the consequences of our freedom to engage them. Each in its own way, the essays collected here interrogate these ideas by showing how our thrownness into this rather than another place to undertake the inescapable task of dwelling has consequences that, when taken together, we might call life itself. Thus, when read as a collection of essays, we encounter in this volume dwelling's universality and its situated particularity—an always tension-filled negotiation with what it might mean to belong—that is to say, what it means to already always belong to both the particular and the universal sense of dwelling. Furthermore, it is out of the universal character of dwelling that many factors, both welcoming and inviting (for some and not for others) or exiling and prohibiting (again, for some and not others) determine our ability and desire to belong. Whether this interrogation of dwelling and belonging is undertaken in the manner of critical empiricism or in the reading and

interpretation of various forms of art—from photographs and paintings to novels and poems—these works provide a multifaceted articulation of the consequences of our being-with-one-another-in-the-world.

Although not taken up in these pages *per se*, a rich reading awaits anyone who might begin an interpretation against the backdrop of one of the fragments of Heraclitus so dear to Martin Heidegger *viz.*, *ethos anthrōpoi daimōn*. Following hints from Heidegger's famous interpretation of this phrase in his "Letter on Humanism," we suggest that this phrase announces and provides the occasion for our thinking about the fundamental nature of dwelling (*ethos*) and our historically-situated fatedness (*daimōn*). As fated and free, we depart from this dwelling and initial historical belonging to fashion a life, which, although "ours," is never anything less than a series of determinative relations to others and to the world(s) around us. To focus on dwelling and belonging—of which we might say are both the out-of-which and the for-the-sake-of-which that we exercise our freedom—is to be open to thought every aspect of the human condition. In other words, what might initially appear to be a disparate collection of texts, offers, on the contrary, a rich variety of thinking the "same" (i.e. dwelling and belonging) across a host of perspectives and situations handed down to us by tradition (e.g., geographical, environmental, and aesthetic).

We have grouped the essays that follow sometimes by a more overt connection and at other times by a more felt affinity of tone. Nonetheless, each essay in this volume stands in a hermeneutic relation to the others, each an experiment or foray into thinking dwelling and belonging, each attempting to say something significant concerning our ever-changing historical situatedness. As dwelling and belonging cover the entire scope of human concerns, we have in this volume, unsurprisingly, a vast array of studies addressing a wide range of topics and positions. Consequently, we have grouped the essays under subheadings, thus allowing for them to appear near those that they are related to in a more specific manner, in addition to the relation they have to the issue's overall theme.

The essays in our first grouping, titled "The Human Self and the Philosophy of Dwelling," take a broad philosophical approach, and each contributes to our general understanding of dwelling and belonging. In "Dwelling and Departure: Beginning Disputes between Arendt and Heidegger," Adi Burton and Barbara Weber open the volume, providing a thoughtful set of reflections on dwelling by considering the similarities and a key difference between two thinkers whose work understands being as dwelling *viz.*, Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. Although Weber and Burton note the similarities between these two thinkers, they ask us to focus our attention on the differences that arise when Heidegger's thought makes homecoming a central concept while Arendt thinks dwelling from the standpoint of

natality and departure. All scholars whose work takes dwelling seriously will find much to consider in this tension between homecoming and departure and the authors' suggestion that we find dwelling (and thinking) more social in Arendt's thought.

The opening section concludes with an essay by Szczepan Urbaniak, "Belonging and Longing: The Question of the Subject in Renaud Barbaras and Jean-Luc Marion," thus addressing the second of the issue's two major themes. Urbaniak undertakes this task by engaging the work of Renaud Barbaras and Jean-Luc Marion. In this hermeneutic phenomenological engagement with these two thinkers, Urbaniak investigates the concept of desire (here "longing") by examining it via the decentralized subject. In the process of this study, the author argues that, if thought in this manner, longing and belonging go in tandem and, so understood, are central aspects of human situatedness; thus, they do not—as is often thought in popular discourse—find themselves in hopeless antagonism. We believe that the essays in this first section, along with our words above, provide a fitting opening to the volume as a whole.

Exploring intersections of belonging and memory, homecoming and grieving, Małgorzata Rutkowska's "Back in the Old Country: Homecoming and Belonging in Leonard Kniffel's *A Polish Son in the Motherland: An American's Journey Home* and Kapka Kassabova's *To the Lake: A Balkan Journey of War and Peace*" reveals the interpenetrating power of the past and the present in creating a sense of belongingness. Rutkowska avers that Leonard Kniffel and Kapka Kassabova—the authors she studies—escape the facile oscillation between nostalgia and unbelonging in their rendition of the complex issue of *homecoming*. In the two homecoming narratives that Rutkowska explores, the midlife return to one's ancestral country is portrayed as a crucial turning point in a life path and one that is pregnant with the symbolic meaning of completion and rejuvenation.

The redefinition and rearticulation of notions of identity, home, and belonging in the context of bereavement is the focus of Katarzyna Małecka's article, "'*This house is so lonely!*': Home, Belonging, and Identity in Memoirs of Loss and Grief." Małecka ponders the seminal and often dramatic changes that loss can entail, such as relocation, uprootedness, change in domestic routines, and the acute feeling of being a stranger in once familiar places. The next essay, Agnieszka Łowczanin's "Cathartic Paths of the Gothic in *Ciemno, prawie noc* by Joanna Bator," draws our attention to the narrative possibilities that arise from employing the Gothic for cathartic purposes. Interrogating the question of belonging and non-belonging, this paper shows how the Gothic in Bator's novel helps to (re)articulate the past. Breaking through imposed silence grants a chance for traumas of expulsion, dispossession, and resettlement to heal.

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The question of how we can retrieve memories and redefine personal identity is also the subject of the last essay in this section, Simge Yılmaz's "Filling the Gaps in Broken Memory while Renewing the Cityscape: Navigating Belonging in Orhan Pamuk's *The Red-Haired Woman*." Yilmaz addresses belonging through the lens of a father-son conflict, arguing that the emotional situation of the protagonist in Orhan Pamuk's novel offers an opportunity to investigate the connection between memory and urban space. The article reveals that a deliberate alteration of physical surroundings can serve to fill in the fissures in communicative and cultural memory. The contributions in this section honor our human capabilities of resilience, connection, and restoration.

The relationship between cityscape and belonging provides a bridge to the next section entitled "The Anthropocene, Urban Habitations, and the Digital Landscape." This part of the volume opens with Satarupa Sinha Roy's paper "Dwelling in the Urban Liminal: A Phenomenological Consideration of Saul Leiter's Street Photography." Sinha examines the viability of living in the urban liminal by juxtaposing Leiter's reinterpretation of liminality with Heidegger's notion of *wohnen* expounded in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." Interrogating street photography by Leiter, this essay delves deeply into the ways the visual depiction of liminality contributes to and opens new vistas in our understanding of states of transition.

The three subsequent essays address intersections between dwelling and identity by focusing on an exploration of problems related to urban and environmentally endangered areas. Examining Jemisin's novel series *The Great Cities*, Małgorzata Sugiera's paper, "Cities and Their People: Dwelling in the Anthropic Time of N. K. Jemisin's New York," demonstrates that urban subjectivity both absorbs and elaborates on non-human features. Sugiera argues that urban subjects share sociality with animal, geological, and technological forces. Mateusz Borowski's paper, "How to Dwell in Garbage Patches? Waste Communities in the Aftermath of Ancestral Catastrophe in Chen Qiufan's *The Waste Tide* (2013) and Wu Ming-yi's *The Man with the Compound Eyes* (2011)," seeks to locate models of collective memory and living that transcend the anthropocentric concept of memory as a product of the individuated self. While doing so, Borowski examines the issue of living in regions impacted by environmental problems through the prism of the narratives of the studied novels.

Mateusz Chaberski's article, "Building Liveable Futures: Dwelling as Collaborative Survival After Climate Change," examines three examples of modern speculative projects: the installation *Refuge for Resurgence* (2021), the multimedia project *Pending Xenophora* (2020–22), and *The Anthropocene Museum* (2020–ongoing) at the nexus of architecture, design, and performative arts that picture various strategies of building for more-

than-humans as well as with more-than-humans. To do so, the author uses the findings of environmental (post)humanities and more-than-human geography.

With the backdrop of our human belonging to language, the world, and the body, the final paper in this part of the volume, Katarzyna Ostalska's "*Nine Billion Branches*: A Digital Poem by Jason Nelson—the Home of Objects," takes the issue of dwelling to the digital milieu. The essay investigates the idea of digital objects in Nelson's poem, demonstrating how reading and interpretation are impacted by the internet environment. Ostalska ascertains that readers can experience the ever-changing digital paths in the poem as a never-ending web of interactions between the digital objects and themselves.

Insofar as dwelling takes place everywhere we are, we take dwelling with us, as it were, when we travel, move around, and/or find ourselves in new and sometimes (for a while at least) unfamiliar places. In addition, and as concerns this special issue's themes, although belonging is universal with respect to the human condition, it can, however, be tension-filled when we appear in different places e.g., cities, countries, continents, and indeed even future times as sci-fi time travels allows. The essays in the next section, "The Phantasmagoric and the Real Home: Between Utopia and Materiality," provide various explorations of the issues arising when we find ourselves either elsewhere or embracing by design where we have been and remain.

In "Breaking the Promise of Perfection: Imperfect Utopias in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*," Elise Poll addresses how technology and what Heidegger calls calculative thinking play a decisive role in our sense of dwelling and belonging, and how such relations to technology can be set into relief by utopian thinking, which she defends against its varied opponents, many of whom quite mistakenly equate perfection and utopia. One way to encourage and make space for utopian thinking is provided by the time-traveling afforded in the genre of science fiction. Poll deftly shows how Marge Piercy's sci-fi novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* uses time travel to disclose how our imaginations, that faculty so essential to hermeneutical thinking, are nourished and set free to think critically and creatively about our present state-of-affairs. Poll also demonstrates how the novel helps us make sense of how we might experience technological advancement without it having a frenzied hold on us and thereby bringing our dwelling to ruin.

The imagination also plays a role in "Radiant Futures: Utopian Art as a Phenomenology of Home-Seeking," in which Jordan Huston furthers our understanding of this faculty by thinking with Paul Ricœur and our understanding of homecoming by engaging Heidegger. He does this in

order to provide a hermeneutic reading of Susan Sontag's novel *In America*. Against the backdrop of the essay's hermeneutic and philosophical opening, Huston names the Sontag novel "utopian art," which he suggests does more than simply imagine a preferable and possible future. To wit, such art—and this novel in particular in Huston's account—discloses the power of the imagination (exemplified here by the experiences associated with work in the theater) to shape consciousness, and by doing so allows us to find those dreams for which it is worth living.

In "The Regional Impersonal as a Mode of Dwelling: Structures of Embodiment in David Jones's *The Anathémata* and Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts*," Lucie Kotesovska turns our attention to poetry, in particular the lasting influence of the modernist poetry of T. S. Eliot as exemplified in his classic *The Waste Land*, to show how David Jones and Basil Bunting further this project in their major poetic achievements by embracing "poetic impersonality." Kotesovska argues that both poets address dwelling and belonging by exploring and accepting their belonging to specific cultural affiliations, and shows how this acceptance shapes the consciousness of each writer. This embodiment of consciousness, which displaces the too-egotistical poetic voice, invites into the space opened up by this displacement a variety of voices, as shown through their poetic works.

Moving from the fiction of novels and poetry, Sanghamitra Dalal addresses the power of the memoir, in this instance, *I Belong Here* by Anita Sethi, to further our understanding of longing, belonging, and home(coming). Dalal's essay "Longing to Belong in One's Own Homeland: Tracing the Topophilic Cartography in Anita Sethi's *I Belong Here: A Journey Along the Backbone Of Britain*" reveals how the memorialist's work also engages creatively with both hermeneutics and the imagination; indeed, in a manner akin to the fictional works addressed in the preceding texts. By employing Bachelard's concept of topophilia, Dalal's reading of Sethi's memoir demonstrates that, in responding to a "race hate crime" by walking the "backbone of Britain" (the memoir's subtitle), Sethi is able to overcome alienation by responding creatively to the beauties of the changing landscapes.

Although imagination plays an important role in the articulation of the manifold issues pertaining to dwelling and belonging in the essays grouped in the previous sections, the human capability of imagining appears to be the core of the papers in the last section, "Imaginary, Haunted, and Aesthetic Dwellings." This part of the volume begins with Kamila Drapało's paper, "Imagination and Dwelling in *The House that Jack Built*." Drapało aptly uses Lars von Trier's film to explore the issues of dwelling and imagination against the backdrop of the interweaving paths of ethics and aesthetics. She ascertains that imagination enhances our efficient interaction with

others and, thus, is intrinsically ethical. Dwelling is made possible by the fundamental human ability to be creatively imaginative.

Reflection on the human capacity for imagination—the leading thread of this section of the volume—spurs penetrating insights into the problem of dwelling, which cannot be reduced to the tangible physicality of human habitation. Interrogating the transitory nature of our being-in-the-world, Carlos Gutiérrez Cajaraville and Ana Calonge Conde's essay, "Silent Voices: Dwelling with our Specters through *Palimpsesto* (2017), by Doris Salcedo" illuminates the profound nature of human dwelling by embracing the issue of transitoriness. The authors delve deeply into the narrative of Salcedo's *Palimpsesto* to unravel the intricate character of human presence in absence. The spectral presence as a legitimate space of dwelling calls on us to imaginatively reconsider notions of dwelling and belonging.

Sensitizing us to the vacillating boundaries between the real and the ideal, Adam J. Goldsmith's essay, "'If I Could but See a Day of it': On the Aesthetic Potential for Belonging and Action," makes the case that a utopian sense of belonging that could aid in the material realization of this potential may be enhanced by the potential freedom revealed within aesthetic experiences of beauty. Based on his interpretation of Friedrich Schiller, Goldsmith claims that aesthetics allows us to imagine freedom but cannot grant it to us on its own. He then interrogates aesthetic freedom's utopian quality by drawing on the work of Herbert Marcuse to examine how longing can support the need to be-long, illustrating this through a close reading of Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future*.

Our journey through the ontological, aesthetic, ethical, and imaginative aspects of the manifold realities evoked by the notions of dwelling and belonging is rounded out with Małgorzata Hołda's essay, "'I have forgotten your love, yet I seem to glimpse you in every window': The Hermeneutical Aesthetics of (Be)longing." The paper explores the interweaving of belonging and love, in the context of three selected works of art, each of which features a female figure standing at a window. Following the precepts of H. G. Gadamer's phenomenology of art as play, Hołda considers the space of an artwork as one that elucidates the interplay of longing and (be)longing. This interaction is recognized as the foundation of our human condition, of our rootedness in love, which makes us both capable and vulnerable.

The essays in this collection, which have responded to the challenge to undertake an exegesis of works of art and literature, cogently testify to Heidegger's conceptualization of poetic dwelling, which draws upon a line from Hölderlin's poem, "In Lovely Blue": "Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells on this earth" (qtd. in Heidegger, ". . . Poetically

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Man Dwells . . .” 224). Our human belonging conveys simultaneously our dwelling in a place we name *home* and our longing to be dwelling in *home*. The hermeneutic tension that pertains to our experience of belonging rests on the continuous interplay of certitude and uncertainty, familiarity and strangeness that arises from the profound and, perhaps often acute awareness that we are finite beings whose fate can be and is precarious. The essays that are more specifically focused on the conceptualization of human belongingness and rootedness, in both mental and physical, tangible and imagined reality, are intriguingly expressive of the paradoxical nature of (be)longing.

16   It is with the proper hermeneutic humility demanded by the finitude attendant to dwelling, that we express our gratitude for the opportunity to present these essays to the international and interdisciplinary readership of *Text Matters*. We are, of course, extremely thankful for the timely and thoughtful work of many reviewers, whose anonymous peer reviews offered evaluations and suggestions that enhanced each essay in the volume. Permit us a word or two more to conclude this introduction, and then we shall leave these essays to the readers of the journal to make their own interpretations of them.

Following Heidegger’s argument that “[p]oetry is what really lets us dwell” (215), explicated in his lecture beginning with the pivotal words “. . . poetically man dwells . . .” we understand that to “dwell poetically” cannot connote a mere addition of poetic splendor to lives that are otherwise considered harsh or even unspeakably dramatic, as if dwelling and poetry came after something more essential and not as the condition for its possibility. Heidegger’s notion of poetic dwelling makes use of the meaning evoked by the Greek word *poiesis*, which refers to an act of creation—bringing into life something that did not exist. In our epigraph it is this word that Schmidt, following Plutarch, links with *ethos*—reminding us that our dwelling is something we are responsible for creating out of our granted condition. The human being pays homage to the divine creation (our granted condition) and participates in self- and world-creation. Human poetic dwelling is not only something that happens in places that are conducive to poetic beauty, taste, and refinement. Rather, as the essays in this volume show, it occurs wherever a human being is. Drawing a demarcation line between inner human sacredness and the possible impurity of a place of dwelling is a fool’s errand and always to no avail. After Heidegger, we can disavow the cheap romanticized distinction between the beauty of the spiritual and poetic space and the mundane and often crude reality, evocatively exemplified by innumerable literary texts, even if instances of such disparity sensitize us to different modalities of our human condition.

As is fitting to the demands of hermeneutics, we yield here to the ever-openness of questioning and resist the desire, bred by calculative thinking, to provide a definitive conclusion. Instead, we refer to Heidegger's provocation from the end of his essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." In this essay, Heidegger avers:

> The real plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars and their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers. The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*. What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as *the* plight? Yet as soon as man *gives thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling. (161)

Thus, we are called on to think dwelling and belonging as the thought most essential to our precarious epoch. Such a summons is issued to us not because we ignore or deny how bad things are at present but precisely because we understand all too well how precarious things are today. This, then, is our closing word meant to open us to thinking, which must remain ongoing and to which these essays are a contribution and—we hope—a catalyst for a broad range of thought. This thinking about the same and the varied is necessary because poetic dwelling embraces the entirety of human existence as a meaningful site of the revelation of the divine (itself variously understood). In our need to belong and our incessant pursuit of an accomplished dwelling, we vacillate between the exigency of our desire for completion and our inherent sense of being always fated to our incompleteness.

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