RECOVERING PARADISE LOST: HOME AS SPACES OF BECOMING

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Abstract
The concept of “dwelling” in phenomenology posits that home is an existential state, a feeling or experience of being comfortable in the place where one lives. A sense of belonging is produced through the complex interaction between the self and the realities of home, which are both abstract and tangible. In The Garden of Evening Mists, the notion of dwelling and belonging are interrogated through the interaction between the self and the shifting landscapes of Cameron Highlands. Author of the book, Tan Twan Eng, constructs home in the image of an Edenic Garden, with a surreal surrounding that seems to reflect the uncertainties and fallibilities of memory. However, how does one return to an Eden that has fallen? This is the dilemma of the postcolonial subject who faces the trauma of displacement and dislocation from their places of birth. The space of home is key in shaping one’s identity and defining a sense of sameness and otherness in a community. The Garden of Evening Mists acknowledges that the space of home is problematized because it is a place the characters can no longer return to, after it has been destroyed by the war. Nevertheless, they can revisit home in their minds through dreams and memories. This article argues that the recovery of the lost space of home is not a return but an expansion and transgression of boundaries separating the self and other. To put it differently, it is a becoming journey.

Keywords: Tan Twan Eng, The Garden of Evening Mists, dwelling, home, space, memory

Introduction
The notion of dwelling highlights the contrast between house and home. First, it does not assume that the physical housing defines the experience of home. It connotes a more active and mobile relationship of individuals to the physical, social and psychological spaces around them.

(Saegert, p. 287)

The concept of “dwelling” in phenomenology posits that home is an existential state, a feeling or experience of being comfortable in the place where one lives. A sense of belonging is produced through the complex interaction between the self and the realities of home, which are both abstract and tangible. In investigating what it means to have a sense of belonging, Leon notes in Movement and Belonging that “a place defines the individual. It has its own lore, associations and myths that emerge from it that sets patterns for ways of seeing and feeling life” (p.3) and, thus, when places are threatened, individuals lose their sense of identity. Amidst the threat of displacement, however,