

# **Archi-texture**

## **Meditations on the Mediations of Dwelling**

By Wendy Seaná Blake, BA (Hons. 1<sup>st</sup>)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University, 2004.

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains, as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.....

Wendy S Blake

## **Abstract**

This thesis is an inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural exploration of home as understood as the place in which we usually live. Empirical research in an Australian suburb and an Indian town provide the fabric from which cultural studies engages with phenomenology to produce a design used to cut and style this exploration. Motivated by an interest in what threads contribute to the weave of contemporary household dwelling, this thesis revisits the two questions used by Heidegger to frame his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking': "What is it to dwell?" and "How does building belong to dwelling?" It is an inquiry committed to its respondents as bearers and representatives of 'structures of feeling' circulating within the socio-cultural milieu or *habitus* in which they live and engage with the idea of 'home.' This inquiry offers an exploration of the chief constituent mediums of home which I call its 'archi-texture'. As such, it looks at location, physical and material attributes, domestic technology and household membership as framed by the presence or absence of a family. This thesis is almost certainly the only example of an empirically grounded examination of Heidegger's ontological exposition of dwelling. Hence I position it as a meditation on the mediations of dwelling rather than a judgmental critique, although in no sense do I believe it to be either a dispassionate position nor an impartial digest of the research material.

## Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter 1   Archi-texture</b>	
1.1    “Home Involves so Much”	8
1.2    The Significance of Place	12
1.3    “What is it to Dwell?” and “How does Building Belong to Dwelling?”	15
1.4    Domesticity: Dominance of Sedentary Dwelling	19
1.5    Archi-texture: Threads in the Fabric of the Homespun	24
1.6    On Space Place House, Home Review of the Literature	30
<b>Chapter 2   Method and Field</b>	
2.1    Writing Culture: Self-Conscious Ethnography and Perspectivism	49
2.2    Fields and Fieldwork	52
2.3    The Dwelling Place, the Dwelling Time: Potted Guides to Coolbellup and Diu	55
2.4    Environmental Sense and Sensualities: The Garden Suburb versus The Walled Town	61
2.5    The Fields: Issues of Representation and Reflexivity: Motivations, Methods, Achievements, Compromises and Failures	66
<b>Chapter 3   At Home in the World</b>	
3.1    ‘At Home in the World’: An Exposition on the Significance of Home	82
3.2    At Home in the World: Surveying the Situational Significance of Diu	90

3.2.1	“Nice and clean and a bit like paradise”: Aesthetic Perceptions	91
3.2.2	“The roads were not broad, the tourists were less and the hotels only four in number ”: Perceptions on the Changes Wrought by Development	93
3.2.3	“Diu life is peaceful and there is no tension of any kind”: Positive Social Perceptions	98
3.2.4	“I hate the gossip of other people’: Negative Social Perceptions	101
3.3	Home in the World: Surveying the Situational Significance of Coolbellup	104
3.3.1	“Couldn’t knock Cooby”: Positive Perceptions	104
3.3.2	“Why did you move to this place?”: Frictions and Change	107
3.3.3	“The image of an area is directly related to self-esteem”: Negative Perceptions	110
3.4	At Home in the World: Comparing the Structure of Feeling in Coolbellup and Diu	116

#### **Chapter 4 Matters of House and Home**

4.1	House and Home: Different Dwellings at the Same Address	127
4.1.2	House and Home: Different Dwellings at the Same Address in Coolbellup?	131
4.1.3	House and Home: Different Dwellings at the Same Address in Diu?	133
4.2	House Form and Platial Order	134
4.2.1	House Form : Platial Orders of House and Home in Diu	135
4.2.2	House Form : Platial Orders of House and Home in Coolbellup	141
4.3	A Room of One’s Own: Platial Polyvalency and Privacy	142
4.3.1	Housing Style, Size, Suitability and Desirability in Diu	143
4.3.2	Housing Style, Size, Suitability and Desirability in Coolbellup	151
4.4	Matters of House and Home	160

## **Chapter 5 Dwelling with Technology**

5.1	Technology as a Frame and Lens of Dwelling Experience	174
5.2	Domestic Technologies as a Frame and Lens of Dwelling Experience	178
5.3	Domestic Technics	182
5.3.1	House-held Technologies: Sonatas	182
5.3.2	Domestic Gestalts: House-held Concertos	189
5.4	The Complex Textures of Dwelling with Technology in Coolbellup	191
5.4.1	Houses and other Domestic Technologies as Relations of Embodiment	192
5.4.2	Simplicity versus Anxiety	197
5.4.3	Relations of Technological Alterity	200
5.4.4	Novelty and Luxury	203
5.5	The Complex Textures of Dwelling with Technology in Diu	205
5.5.1	Relativities of Technological Relations and the Developmental Pull of Modernity	206
5.5.2	Technological Relations as Articulations of Desire	209
5.6	Dwelling and Technological Texture	213

## **Chapter 6 The Familiar Zone**

6.1	Househeld Dwelling: The Family in Australia and India	227
6.2	“A home is made of hearts”: Emotional Reasons, Resonant Emotions in Diu	235
6.2.1	“The meaning of the home is the family”: Essential Family Values	235
6.2.2	“What will happen to me? ”: Cultural Ideals versus Actual Traditions of Feminine Disadvantage ‘At Home’ in the Family	238
6.2.3	“We obey their sayings”: The Wisdom of the Elders and Respect, Loyalty and Obedience in the Family	241
6.2.4	Bachelor Ways	243

6.2.5	Gendered Emotions and Notions	244
6.3	More Muted, Less Expressive: The Familiar Zone in Coolbellup	245
6.3.1	“Home is family and kids”: Explicit Expressions of Belonging in the Nuclear Family	245
6.3.2	‘Home is where you eat and sleep’: Family as the Assumed Horizon of Home	247
6.3.3	“I feel relaxed there, but it’s not my place”: Expressions of Family vis a vis Autonomy	248
6.3.4	“We didn’t know anybody”: Traditions of the Extended Family	249
6.3.5	“Back to Basics”: The Loss of the Traditional and the Pressures of Modernity	251
6.3.6	Critiques of Modernity: The Loss of Tradition, Elders, and the Extended Family	252
6.4	The Familiar Zone as Structures and Contrasts of Feeling	254
	<b>The Conclusion      Sheltering Significance</b>	270
	Appendix I Interview Questions	285
	Appendix II Respondent Profiles	288
	Bibliography	291

## Table of Figures in the Picture Gallery

(situated between chapters three and four)

- Figure 1. Inside Coolbellup's small shopping mall.
- Figure 2. Diu's daily fruit and vegetable market.
- Figure 3. Part of the large car park outside Coolbellup's small shopping mall.
- Figure 4. After school sweets in Diu's main bazaar.
- Figure 5. Quiet morning, afternoon and evening, a Coolbellup streetscape
- Figure 6. The quiet of a mid-afternoon Diu streetscape.
- Figure 7. Coolbellup, a well-kept ex-Ministry of Housing house
- Figure 8. Diu, Portuguese colonial era Rococo house and site cleared for new building.
- Figure 9. Diu, feral pigs foraging around a construction site
- Figure 10. Coolbellup, rubbish collected in skips during redevelopment of Ministry of Housing house.
- Figure 11. Diu, total redevelopment in European rustic.
- Figure 12. Total redevelopment, brand new duplexes in Coolbellup
- Figure 13. Coolbellup's redeveloped centrally located parkland.
- Figure 14. Diu, left, Indian Modern, the open space of a main thoroughfare, and Lusitanian influenced haveli's.
- Figure 15. Coolbellup kitchen
- Figure 16. Diu, kitchen.
- Figure 17. Coolbellup bedroom.
- Figure 18. Diu, kitchen and bedroom.
- Figure 19. Coolbellup, living room.
- Figure 20. Diu sitting, hall and bedroom.
- Figure 21. Diu, well water supplied to house via pump, kitchen and bathing area.
- Figure 22. Coolbellup laundry and laundry equipment.





## Acknowledgements

The path to the completion of this thesis has been a long, uneven and eventful one and I owe my most profound thanks to my partner Michael, who deserves them for more reasons than can be said. Thanks, Michael for always being there in the background, lovingly staying the course with me. You gave me not only emotional and intellectual companionship, but were also the power behind the essential housekeeping tasks, making sure there was always good food and clean clothes and dishes. I dedicate this work to you. To my children, Emanuel and Elvira, thanks for being such interesting and unproblematic adolescents..

The thesis would never have developed beyond the stage of possibility without the financial support offered by the scholarship known as the Australian Postgraduate Award. When I and the work floundered in a slough of despond, it was due to the encouragement, guidance, intelligence erudition and experience of my supervisor Professor Horst Ruthrof that I regained hope and the will to work. Many grateful thanks, Horst for the firm and friendly quality of your supervision. As I took the first steps out of the slough, Julia Hobson also gave me generous portions of her time and some excellent feedback and advice, many thanks Julia. Thanks also to Professor Michael Pinches who provided the detailed criticism of the early stages of this thesis. I would also like to extend my thanks to Vicki Wilkinson and Kurt Russell who helped me out of all kinds of bother with computer technology. And to my colleagues in TP2 and 3, Felicity Newman, Kaye Campbell, Joe Naimo, Katie Ellis, Reg Bolton, Elaine Dowd, Carole Lacroix, Wendy Cater, Sharifa Ahjum, Christine Brewer, Loretta Ho, Carolyn Jakobsen and Nick McCarthy thanks for all your the congenial company and empathy, you are a lovely lot of folk.

The initial period of fieldwork in Diu would not have been possible without the generous assistance and advice of Agnello D' Mello, and his wife Marianne, who gave me the warmth and humour of her friendship. In so many respects my growing understanding and enjoyment of Diu was due to Paresh Kumar Thakkar, who became my research assistant during the latter part of my fieldwork. As my friend, guide, and another intellectually curious mind, Pareshbhai was priceless, and I thank him for his patience, kindness and inspiration. I would also like to recognise the understanding and assistance of Diu's Collector Om Prakash Mishra. Finally, my research is greatly indebted to my respondents, to whom I offer appreciative and grateful thanks for their time and the relaxed and candid attitude with which they answered the many questions I subjected you to.

**For Michael,**

**You're my cabin, you're my castle, you're my instant pleasure dome.  
I need you in my house 'cause you're my home.**

**('You're my Home' by Billy Joel)**