



Remembering Places: A Phenomenological Study of the Relationship between Memory and Place (Toposophia: Sustainability, Dwelling, Design)

By Janet Donohoe

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This book is a phenomenological investigation of the interrelations of tradition, memory, place and the body. Drawing upon philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, Janet Donohoe uses the idea of a palimpsest to argue that layers of the past are carried along as traditions, through places and bodies, such that we can speak of memory as being written upon place and place as being written upon memory. In dialogue with theorists such as Jeff Malpas and Ed Casey, Donohoe focuses on analysis of monuments and memorials to investigate how such deliberate places of collective memory can be ideological, or can open us to the past and different traditions. The insights in this book will be of particular value to place theorists and phenomenologists in disciplines such as philosophy, geography, memory studies, public history, and environmental studies.

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Editorial Review

Review

Phenomenology is distinctive in that it attends not only to the everyday, ordinary, and mundane dimensions of existence, but also specifically considers such dimensions as they are experienced. Donohoe argues that the complicated relationship between memory, tradition, and place is fundamentally important to all lived experience. Place is what allows for collective memory, and such memory is what constitutes the traditions by which one finds oneself attached to specific places. Working in light of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and in conversation with the phenomenological accounts of place and memory offered by Ed Casey and Gaston Bachelard, Donohoe offers a compelling account of place as a palimpsest—a form of writing that allows what has been erased to remain visible. Suggesting that memory works in the same way, Donohoe opens productive ways to think about lived experience by considering how such experience always occurs somewhere. By focusing on location and then reflecting on the meaning generated by it, Donohoe enables phenomenology to be even more careful concerning the task of philosophizing. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-level undergraduates through researchers/faculty. (CHOICE)

The book offers a couple of original insights to the field. . . . [and] succeeds in shedding light on a number of important questions that still remain unresolved in the field. (*Nature and Human Life*)

True to its title, Janet Donohoe's *Remembering Places*, is an eloquent and evocative recollection of the intimate connection of place with memory and of memory with place. Beginning with the phenomenon of home, and moving on to explore questions concerning tradition, mourning, forgetting, memorial and monument, and even contemporary virtuality, Donohoe deftly combines phenomenological and hermeneutic analysis with personal experience and reflection. Perhaps the most intriguing element in the work is the implicit suggestion that time is itself only to be found in place and in our engagement with place. This is a book that will reward careful and thoughtful reading. It makes a significant contribution to contemporary philosophical topography at the same time as it also enacts the very task that it enjoins us towards. (Jeff Malpas, Distinguished Professor, University of Tasmania)

Janet Donohoe's reflections on collective memory and tradition bring an important new dimension to discussions of the phenomenology of place. Thoughtful and readable, the work reminds us that places are more than static containers but themselves are the material embodiment and conditions of the possibility of experience. (Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, University of Toronto)

Focusing largely on the lived dimensions of monuments and memorials, Janet Donohoe draws on phenomenological and hermeneutic perspectives to explore the complex relationship between place, memory, and history. The study includes a helpful overview of phenomenological research on place; particularly valuable is Donohoe's perceptive clarification of phenomenologist Edmund Husserl's co-constituted concepts of homeworld and alienworld. She examines how places provide not only settings for human life but also help shape memory, tradition, and a lived sense of history. Lastly, Donohoe offers a thoughtful philosophical discussion of the personal and collective value of monuments and memorials as they evoke existential and historical meanings through an intensified ambience of place. Donohoe's book is an important phenomenological contribution to the growing interdisciplinary literature on place studies. (David Seamon, Kansas State University)

This study provides a unique insight into common experiences and desires to return to important places of our past and to establish places of memory. Drawing upon philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, Janet Donohoe uses the idea of a palimpsest to argue that layers of the past are carried along as traditions through places and bodies such that we can speak of memory as being written upon place and place as being written upon memory.

About the Author

Janet Donohoe is professor of philosophy at the University of West Georgia.

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