Such Building Only Takes Care:  
A Study of Dwelling in the Work of Heidegger, Ingold, Malinowski, and Thoreau

THESIS

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Abstract

The guiding questions of this essay are: What is meant by dwelling? And, how is it that people dwell? In the process of approaching these questions, several key terms are employed. These terms are: dwelling; making; technique; modern technology; and the Gestell of modern technology. Gestell, a term borrowed from the later philosophy of Martin Heidegger, describes an orientation to the physical world unique to the apparatus of modern technology and anathema to dwelling. Dwelling is understood through notions of gathering and relationality: how practices of dwelling weave together a multiplicity of things and experiences. Making, here, refers to that aspect of dwelling which constructs regions and transforms space into made place. Yet, the essay is also attuned to how dwelling takes care, that is, how it makes meaning and thus makes sense. Modern technology represents the process whereby the centrality of technique is made peripheral to production, externalized. It suggests the erosion of meaningful technique in modernity and how this erosion effects the characteristically modern experience of alienation. Four textual sites frame the investigation: First, are selections from the later writings of Heidegger on technology and the plight of dwelling. Second, is an engagement with the writing of anthropologist Tim Ingold. In Ingold, both the dwelling perspective and technique are given a more complex ethnological and environmental elaboration. The other two sites provide the actual sociographic settings in which these terms are enacted and tested: Bronislaw Malinowski’s classic, early twentieth-century ethnographic account of Melanesian garden making, Coral Gardens and Their Magic: Soil-tilling and Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands; with particular attention to the process
of new garden construction. And Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, an experiment in
construction and cultivation made in explicit tension with, if not resistance to, the categories
and expectations of industrial capitalist political economy.
This work is dedicated to all those who dwell,
to the places they have made, and to the places that have made us.
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Introduction

Out. In. Out. In. What is is the weaving. We with our breathing are working here, carding and spinning the air.

- Robert Bringhurst, *Pieces of Map, Pieces of Music*

What is meant by dwelling? This question guides the essay that follows. However, we seek not merely a philosophical definition of dwelling. I perceive dwelling to be more active and processual than that. To ask then, What is meant by dwelling? is also, in the terms of this essay, to ask, How is it that people dwell?

In the process of approaching these guiding questions, several key terms will be employed. These terms are: dwelling; making; technique; modern technology; and the *Gestell* of modern technology. This *Gestell*, a term borrowed from the later philosophy of Martin Heidegger, describes an orientation to the physical world unique to the apparatus of modern technology and anathema to dwelling. As for dwelling, we will come to see how it is nearly synonymous with notions of gathering and relationality, and how it is practices of dwelling that weave together a multiplicity of things and experiences; perhaps how it is that dwelling unifies a world. Making, here, refers to that aspect of dwelling which constructs regions and transforms space into made place. Yet, we will also be attuned to how dwelling takes care, that is, how it makes meaning and thus makes sense. Modern technology represents the process whereby the centrality of technique is made peripheral to production, externalized. It
suggests the erosion of meaningful technique in modernity and how this erosion effects that characteristically modern experience of alienation.

Four textual sites will frame our investigation. The first two will inflect how it is we come to, at least initially, understand our guiding terms and apply them. First, are selections from the later writing of Heidegger on technology and the plight of dwelling. Second, we will engage the writing of anthropologist Tim Ingold, whose body of work partially emerges from those aspects of Heidegger’s oeuvre just mentioned. In Ingold, both a dwelling perspective and technique are given a more complex ethnological and environmental elaboration. The second two sites will provide the actual sociographic settings in which to enact and test these terms. It is in these two places that we will encounter actual practices of living otherwise, actual ways of making a living. We will consider Bronislaw Malinowski’s classic, early twentieth-century ethnographic account of Melanesian garden making, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic: Soil-tilling and Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, with a particular attention to the process of new garden construction. Finally, we will read the celebrated account of one man’s experiment in living conducted outside of Concord, Massachusetts, over the course of two years, in the mid-nineteenth century. Namely, Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, an experiment made in explicit tension with, if not resistance to, the categories and expectations of industrial capitalist political economy.

Part I introduces the reader to our key terms as they operate in Heidegger’s lecture on “Building Dwelling Thinking” and his essay on “The Question Concerning Technology.” We then turn to the phenomenological anthropology of Ingold to expand our understanding of not just dwelling and technology, but also of technique. Additionally, Part I situates
Heidegger and Ingold within a broader critical tendency of modernism, one characterized by a sensitivity to the increasing externalizations and objectifications of modern modes of production. In Part II we turn to Malinowski and the Trobriand Islands to explore the relationalities created by techniques of garden making, relationalities we will be keen to explore as those of dwelling itself. In Part III, we read Thoreau’s account of making a living and ask what it means, for the writer of Walden, to dwell at Walden. On the way to the dwelling of Walden we also consider Thoreauvian cultivational technique, his “garden making,” that is, his work in Walden’s bean-field. In the conclusion, I return to the question of dwelling in modernity and alongside this question I hold up the insights we will have gleaned from the study of making in Trobriand gardens and Concord fields, asking what we can make of all this, together.

But why these practices of cultivation – tillage – as a window onto the plight of dwelling? Because Trobriand gardens and Thoreau’s Walden provide lived examples of being otherwise. They are accounts of gathering together and world-making beyond the horizon of “life” as ordered by the endless yet empty productivism of Western metaphysics. They come to us, then, as imaginative horizons against which to rethink the orientation of the modern technological apparatus. Their authority lies, and profoundly so, in their actual example. In other words, to have a different thought, it is perhaps necessary to venture somewhere different; we can articulate a thought that is otherwise only when we have glimpsed something of that otherwise. A something we are, presently, not.
I. The Experience of Modernity: Dwelling, Technology, and Technique

_The Gestell_

“Where do we find ourselves?,” Emerson asks us in the opening line of “Experience,” published in his _Essays: Second Series_, 1844. This question resonates – across nearly a century – with another, one posed by the Martin Heidegger in the summer of 1951. Closing his lecture to the Darmstadt Symposium on “Man and Space,” delivered to an audience comprised mostly of architects, Heidegger asked: “What is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?” (363). In modern times, the philosopher proclaims, we are surrounded by buildings – apartment complexes, skyscrapers, stadiums, commercial stores of all kinds, power plants, airplane hangars – but the proper sense of dwelling has fallen into oblivion.

Back at Harvard this sentiment was shared by Sigfried Giedion in his Norton Lectures of 1938. Later published as _Space, Time, and Architecture_, Giedion laments a modern architecture which has, since “around 1900,” drawn inspiration from buildings which have “lacked all connection with human residence. They were factories, stock exchanges, warehouses and the like… far removed from the range of intimate personal feelings” (25). But where do we find ourselves? The question betrays the feeling of dislocation so often used to characterize the fate of dwelling in the modern West.

This question, “Where do we find ourselves?,” leads us to the very question of human dwelling and its possibility or impossibility in modernity. It leads us to the heart of
the matter. Two steps will then be necessary in our initial approach of this question; this question of where it is we find ourselves, of our location, that modern question of dwelling itself. First, we must at least outline a sense of this “dwelling” and what is meant by it in our context. Following Heidegger, an understanding of dwelling will involve the conception of a way of life that is not measured, or determined, by the ontological framework of “modern technology”; an understanding that will be taken up again, and reconsidered, in Part II’s ethnological examination of garden making in the Trobriand Islands. Thus, secondly, we must, on the way to thinking dwelling, understand the essence of modern technology insofar as modern technology, for Heidegger, signals a crucial transformation of the human relationship to its environment, indeed the world. In order to fully understand the work of dwelling, and its critical potential, it must be couched alongside, in fact within, the analysis of modern technology’s dominion over the things of this world. Moreover, it will be necessary to make these steps in reverse order. For, as I have just suggested, to conceive of the experience of dwelling as a way of life we must first outline another way of life that seemingly disables dwelling, one anathema to the experience of dwelling. Accordingly, we first turn to a brief consideration of Heidegger’s analysis of modernity in terms of modern technology.

“It is a question raised on all sides and always with a sense of urgency. On it hinges nothing less than the survival of the species man and the planet earth” (Krell 308). “The question concerning technology” remains an imperative and urgent question, and alongside the question of dwelling – where do we find ourselves? – it is a question at the heart of this essay. We can locate a historical definition of “modern technology” in nineteenth-century England, where the extraction of large coal deposits fueled the power machinery of textile and other mills. We could also chart it in relation to the transformational developments of
the Scientific Revolution, land enclosure and the concentration of proletarian labor in burgeoning urban centers, Protestantism, the mechanization of agriculture, and so on (see Krell 308-9). But this is not our task. And for Heidegger the essence of modern technology very likely precedes these distinctly modern tendencies. What is at stake here is an effort to come to terms with Heidegger’s theorization of the “challenge” modern technology—propelled beyond new limits by the rise of modern science—poses to both nature and man: a setting-upon, or ordering of, beings that predicates itself upon a total and exclusive mastery.

Technology, Heidegger tells us, is not to be thought solely as a means. It is also a disclosure; in this way the essence of technology is not simply a technological, or a technical, matter. But what, we must ask, is the nature of this distinctly modern form of disclosing? Heidegger responds in “The Question Concerning Technology” as follows. That the disclosing, or unconcealing, of modern technology “does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of poiesis.” Rather it is “a challenging [Herausforden], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such” (320). This concatenation of material extraction, transformation, storing as surplus, distribution and conversion, etc., may have seemed “benign” and neutral to some at mid-century. Yet one decade into the twenty-first century, faced with the realities of neverending resource wars, the universal precarity produced by global climate change, the serious hazards of technological pollution, and the ongoing destruction of remaining wild places, we have by now surely fallen from the Edenic fantasy of a benign and ostensibly limitless process of resource extraction. But these historical realities, as grave as they are, are only the effects of
the essential relati

the way in which modern technology sets upon and frames the world. Heidegger continues,

What kind of concealment is it, then, that is peculiar to that which results from this setting-upon that challenges? Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [Bestand]. The word expresses here something more, and something more essential, than mere “stock.” The word “standing-reserve” assumes the rank of an inclusive rubric…Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object (“QCT” 322).

What is intended by this description of modern technology is its particular orientation, or mode of “grasping” and setting in order the earth. “It sets upon in the sense of challenging it. Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium… uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy,” and so on these interlocking processes continue without end (320). The setting-upon that challenges is inherent to what we know as modern Progress.

The orientation and modus operandi of modern technology is thus one that makes, or sets, a challenging claim upon man and nature. Its totalizing view orders that which it reveals as merely standing-reserve, that which can be used, stored and further ordered. Heidegger’s name for this ordering, this claim, particular to modernity, is the Gestell, commonly translated as “enframing.” In other words, the Gestell – as the essence of modern technology – reveals only through reduction and does so by enclosing all beings in a particular claim, one of utter availability and sheer, yet infinite, manipulability. The hydroelectric plant – “set into the current of the Rhine” – has become Heidegger’s famous example of the modern technological process of transformation, the Gestell, wherein all things become standing reserve. The Rhine River appears to be solely something that is set at our command, indeed
it is “set upon” by the plant through a kind of productionist model wherein the river and its current become only that which set turbines in motion and produce electricity for mass distribution and consumption: an expediting always directed “from the beginning toward furthering something else, i.e., toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense” (QCT 321). Heidegger writes,

The hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River as was the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather, the river is damned up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water-power supplier, derives from the essence of the power station… [L]et us ponder for a moment the contrast that is spoken by the two titles: ‘The Rhine,’ as dammed up into the power works, and “The Rhine,” as uttered by the artwork, in Hölderlin’s hymn by that name (QCT 321).

Recall that “standing reserve” is a forestry term, one that signifies the arboreal landscape of a forest not as a unique ecological mosaic but as a calculable quantity of timber available for resource extraction, or, “harvest.” But the standing reserve should not be confined to the “unconcealment” of modern resource extraction alone, for the Gestell is ultimately an ontological argument. According to Heidegger we cannot object that the river is still available to be revealed otherwise, as, say, a flowing river in a landscape, for even upstream of the dam the River is only to be met by a tour group “as an object on call for inspection…ordered there by the vacation industry” (ibid). The Gestell, of course, extends to and contains human beings as well. The forester, the power plant worker, and the tourist all become, to varying degrees, standing-reserve, raw material (“human resources”), in their own right – manipulable, exchangeable, expendable, and subordinate to an ordering apparatus of production. Kate Rigby offers a useful summary, “It is in its demand that natural entities be totally present, perpetually available as objects of knowledge and power,
that modern technology is said by Heidegger to complete the project of Western 
metaphysics” (429).

_Dwelling_

By now we should begin to understand how it is that modern technology is a way of 
unconcealing that also conceals. Namely, if modern technology, as it sets upon and enframes 
nature and human beings, represents a productivism that is able to only produce things as 
standing-reserve, then it must – in its setting forth – also conceal other types of relationality 
to and among beings. In other words, the critique of the _Gestell_, and its effects, both 
presupposes and desires another human relationality with the world, another way of being-
together. What might this be? One answer, for Heidegger, is dwelling. Yet today, “dwelling is 
not experienced as man’s Being; dwelling is never thought of as the basic character of human 
being” (Heidegger _BDT_ 350). If dwelling names a nearness, or an intimacy, if it names a 
relationship between the human and space, then we turn now to Heidegger’s “Building 
Dwelling Thinking” to, firstly, sense how dwelling unfolds against, and in distinction from, 
the _Gestell_. Where the _Gestell_ names a world-representation that is merely a hunting down of 
the world, a bringing it to bay and trapping it, dwelling describes an orientation that opens a 
world and opens us to this world; in this way it opposes the enclosure of the _Gestell_. 
Secondly, we will articulate an understanding of dwelling in more general terms, terms which 
may function beyond the particularity of the Heideggerean lexicon, and in so doing prepare
to stake out how dwelling – as an anthropological orientation\(^1\) – serve to ground the investigations of this essay.

At the core of the lecture on “Building Dwelling Thinking” is the desire to perceive how far dwelling reaches, and the probing is twofold: both etymological and existential. While we will focus on the existential claims for dwelling, we will have to also acknowledge the etymological insights of Heidegger’s thought. Indeed, the logic of his thought is partially reliant on the very deconstruction of ordinary language to wrest from solidified (and thus habitually unexamined) concepts radical connotations and lead them forth onto alternative trajectories of meanings – meanings which have receded from ordinary use.

The German, *bauen*, to build, is here essential, both for Heidegger’s project and for our broader purposes, insofar as his etymological excavation will give both depth and breadth to our sense of the possibilities of a theory and practice of dwelling. Threading back through the Old High German *buan* [to dwell], Heidegger suggests that building in fact already belongs to dwelling; that “to build is really to dwell.” The idea is to rethink the activity of dwelling not as removed from other activities, such as work or travel, but that all activities – at their root – are pervaded by and belong to dwelling. But the essence of dwelling reaches even farther, into *sein* itself. “The old word *bauen,* to which *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin, du bist* mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling” (Heidegger BDT 349). Thus

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\(^1\) What is meant by “dwelling” as an “anthropological orientation”? My usage of this phrase suggests how I approach dwelling as a practice of human beings that generates, amongst other things, a particular orientation to a particular environment. It is a practice that makes a world. Accordingly, it pervades both social life and broader human relations, the various tasks of livelihood, and human understanding, namely, knowledge of this world.
in the lecture’s title we find no punctuation marks separating the three terms, for these three concepts – indeed experiences – are not linked causally for Heidegger. They belong to one another, existing among themselves as a unity. Still there is more to learn from Heidegger about the meaning and reach of dwelling, as both an activity and a mode of being on the earth. Which is to say, there is more to excavate from bauen. Bauen – “which says that man is insofar as he dwells …, however, also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine” (ibid; emphasis mine).

Building as dwelling now pervades at least two kinds of building. One is a form of cultivating: “Such building only takes care,” it tends the growth that ripens of its own accord; it is a preserving or keeping, and a caring, a nurturing, that does not necessarily “make” anything. The other mode of building is that of constructing.

Let us try to perceive another aspect of dwelling, and this requires taking up that second aspect of building, namely construction. The example is once again a bridge. What I want to highlight here is how, for Heidegger, the built site gathers. “The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighborhood” (Heidegger BDT 354). The site of construction – a building – gathers a multiplicity into a neighborhood; it put things in relation and reveals them as dwelling near, or alongside, one another. It makes a kind of unity. Before building – that is, dwelling – the place is not there. Dwelling makes a place for itself:

The place is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a place, and does so because of the bridge. Thus the bridge does not first
come to a place to stand in it; rather, a place comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge (355-56).²

I am inclined to call this instance of built “construction” a site. It is both a site of construction and accordingly a site of dwelling. The site, with its building, opens and establishes a distinctive place. It is a joining or gathering of space in a way that makes place. In the making of a place, space is cleared and bounded. Similarly, Karsten Harries comments,

Such clearing and bounding are presupposed by our experience of things, which are inevitably placed in one way or another: the fork on the table, the car on the road, Venus in the evening sky. Inseparable from our encounter with things is the experience of different places and therefore spaces: table, road, evening sky (156).

If building can transform space into place, as we have seen, it is an activity that also constructs boundaries. Of this made place, Heidegger writes, it is “some thing that has been freed, namely, within a boundary…A boundary is not that at which something stops but, …the boundary is that from which something begins its essential unfolding” (ibid). Thus, we have moved through a discussion of construction and cultivation as aspects of building which belong to dwelling. We now come to see that dwelling is itself an activity that makes boundaries and thus regions; the significance of the region is critical. As Harries understands, “Regions assign to persons and things their proper places; were it not for this, we would be disoriented, could not consider certain things out of place” (Ethical Function 156). At the outset I qualified dwelling as an intimacy, an intimacy that describes the nearness of dwelling. But the creation of proximity – a relation – implies the establishing of contexts, this is what

² Here, I follow Karsten Harries’s modification of the Hofstadter translation: namely, the substitution of “place” for “locale” or “location” as a translation of Ort, and subsequently “sky” for “heaven” as a translation of Himmel.
we mean by the orientation of dwelling. Insofar as dwelling makes places it, by necessity, also makes contexts: contexts in which things have their place. Harries carries the thought further, illuminating the semantic importance of dwelling’s regionality. He writes, “We live in heterogeneous space. Furthermore, that heterogeneity is inevitably charged with meaning” (157). In other words, if dwelling expresses the relationship between human beings and the spaces they inhabit, then this relation, and the difference that a relationality makes, is “always already charged with meaning” (ibid). Space, Raum, is that for which room has been made; when made through proper gathering it makes a place. But making room in this way – dwelling – implies the making of contexts and relationalities. Therefore, as the making of dwelling makes a contextual setting it also, inevitably, makes a semantic field. Said differently, the inherent contextualization brought about by the region makes – generates – meaningful places. And I want to maintain an awareness of the active descriptions Heidegger devotes to this making: where space is “granted,” “joined,” and by virtue of the building/being of places, “gathered.”3 As Harries understands, “It is above all in terms of the activities we are engaged in that we understand proximity and distance” (157). And so, if proximity and distance are ways of apprehending the making of meaning assembled in the making of regions, through dwelling, then we have concluded where we began: with activity. Activity seems to render the meaning of inhabitation itself. Construction and cultivation are the modes of building that belong to dwelling; modes which open, erect, preserve, connect, tend, keep, and care.

3 Indeed, the bridge, in its unifying function, is the appropriate example.
In this essay, Heidegger appears as a way to present the critique of modern technology and the mood of modern homelessness from whence a preoccupation with dwelling emerges. And Heidegger’s writing on building and dwelling, on a building that emerges from dwelling, marks an imaginative horizon against which to critique the dangerous poverty of the apparatus described as modern technology. These two poles of his thought – the *Gestell* and dwelling – have set the essay in motion, and they will continue to serve as primary points of reference.

We now take into account the anthropology of Tim Ingold, whose theoretical writing emerges from the two key concepts I have foregrounded in the thought of Heidegger. I therefore want to briefly outline Ingold’s commitments to the concept of dwelling as an anthropological and phenomenological ground, and to explore the manner in which he too writes against, in his own way, the “essence of technology.” Once we have a sense of these two guiding features of Ingold’s anthropology we will be well-prepared to turn to and take up a consideration of our primary texts.

A notion of practice, one that positively expands the sense of an operative mobility of the habitus – that “feel for the game” – and the potential creativity of it, guided by the insights of Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking” is one way to frame what Ingold creates for anthropology as the “dwelling perspective.” By the “dwelling perspective” Ingold intends:

A perspective that treats the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence. From this perspective, the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take
on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity

Ingold’s commitment is to an understanding of cultural knowledge that is not “imported”
into the setting of practical activity, rather knowledge is constituted not just by practice but
in and through practical activity itself. In the same way that building does not perforce make
dwelling, as a means to an ends, but rather building and dwelling belong to each other,
knowledge – at once practical, social, and cosmological – is not entirely constructed before
and external to one’s lived engagement with the world. Heidegger writes, “We do not dwell
because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are
dwellers…To build is in itself already to dwell…Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we
build” (Heidegger “BDT” 350, 348, 361). What Ingold makes of this “is that the forms
people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their
involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their
surroundings” (PE 186). Ingold too writes against a kind of building that effects dwelling, or
a displaced building that happens apart or absent entirely from the relationality of dwelling.

Ingold embodies dwelling, practically orienting it in a lived, experiential human
world. This lived world of dwelling is what he calls a landscape. For Ingold, the implication
of a dwelling perspective for the understanding of landscape is in how the landscape is not
“space” abstractly conceived. In other words, if the everyday activities of dwelling in the
world constitute a relational movement through this world, then we are to distinguish this
from the specialized project of cartography whose objective it is to statically represent the
world. That is, a representational picture of the landscape “independent of any point of
observation” is, ostensibly, a view to be apprehended by a “consciousness capable of being
everywhere at once and nowhere in particular” (191). This exemplary monothetic picture of a landscape – the Western map – is therefore anathema to dwelling, for dwelling gathers places into thick, relational constellations. The map acts upon, indeed sets upon, the landscape in abstraction. Dwelling moves within and through the landscape, acting along with it. Actual embodied movements are thus made through dwelt-in landscapes, and these are to be dissociated from the plotting of potential journeys on the grid of abstract space. Meaning is *gathered* from within the landscape, not attached onto it. Ingold writes,

> A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there – to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute it specific ambience. And these in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance (*PE* 192).

Expanding a meditation on the nature of the boundary, Ingold adds, “Finally, it is important to note that no feature of the landscape is, of itself, a boundary. It can only become a boundary, or the indicator of a boundary, in relation to the activities of the people…for whom it is recognized or experienced as such” (193). The phenomenological anthropology of Ingold elaborates and thickens the original Heideggerian shift in orientation – that *bauen* is circumscribed by dwelling and not vice-versa. Adopting a “dwelling perspective” enables Ingold to write against what he has described as “reality of” models – where the spatial world is populated by neutral objects made apparent to a detached, uninvolved observer – in favor of a “reality for” understanding in which the world is constituted “in relation to the organism or person whose environment it is” (Ingold “Culture”). In Ingold's dwelling perspective, the world truly does appear, in Merleau-Ponty’s phrase, as the “homeland” of our thoughts.
If Ingold is committed to restoring dwelling to its proper place then he is equally concerned with what he has characterized as “the triumph of technology over cosmology” (*PE* 155). Like Heidegger, Ingold wants to understand the way in which modern technology is supremely different from earlier technical modes. Ingold will even argue that “technology” is essentially a modern discursive invention, and thus “modern technology” – as a conceptual orientation – should in no way be taken to represent the culmination of some universal trajectory of technical evolution, namely, the “natural” outgrowth of simple “primitive” technique. To the contrary, technology, for Ingold, signifies a reorientation and relocation of the forces of production; it is that transformation by which the process of production comes to be characterized by its objectification and externalization. In contradistinction to the meaning immanent to the practical knowledge of dwelling, modern technology forces a division between knowledge and practice. But what does this mean? One way of conceiving this rift, or tear, is to envision the productive subject, the producer, as dislodged and withdrawn from the core of the productive process and relegated to its periphery. Here, the shift is from the personal to the impersonal – indeed, from the personal to the reified; the effect not of complexification but of externalization. Modern technology, therefore, appears to erase an *ideal*, pre-modern subjectivity, one characterized by skilled, agential practice. Said differently, technology erases, or eradicates, technique, rather than nurturing and supporting it (see Ingold PE 316). Just as building is to be rethought through dwelling, then technology must, in Ingold’s formulation, be rethought through its proper tension with technique.

What then is meant by technique? Ingold’s early work involved an ethnographic study of the traditional Skolt reindeer economy and more general research on hunting and
gathering societies. From this background emerged a sustained meditation on the scope and place of human action, with a particular interest in the contours and dynamics of skilled practice. Again paralleling the strategic retrievals of Heidegger’s thought, Ingold founds his positive critique on a classical sense of technique, the Greek techne. For our purposes we need only gloss this techne, for the time being, as a type of skilled practice, the kind of art or skill we have come to associate with a notion of “craftsmanship”; perhaps even a confluence wherein art and craft have not yet been separated out from one another. As a kind of skilled practice what technique comprises is a particular relation between the intentional, productive human subject and his or her activity. A brief consideration of mechanical devices, tools, may help to further illuminate this particular definition of technique. Ingold insists that to conceive of technique means to encounter a subject central to the process of making. A tool is taken up alongside and in assistance with the artisan’s engagement with his or her material; mechanical devices are, in this worldview, in the service of technique, and technique is in the service of activating the socially-embedded subject. Here, the technical and the social are not yet sundered.

We will follow Ingold insofar as technique implies an ideal mode of production characterized by subject-centered, agential skilled practice, signifying a potentially less alienated orientation to the world, in which “acting in the world is the skilled practitioner’s way of knowing it” (316). If, in the very process of becoming the bearers of technique, humans develop specific aptitudes, personal and social knowledges and responsibilities, and sensitivities to the regional environment where they live and work (that is, dwell), then we

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4 When Ingold insists on technique as skilled practice we should also be attuned to the Aristotelian inflection in this: where techne also means “a general ability to make things intelligently” (Bruzina 167).
can think technique – and therefore technicians (practitioners of technique) – as embedded in social relations and enacting meaningful roles in the processual unfolding of ongoing exchange. Ingold’s technique is therefore akin to the Maussian gift insofar as it loses its meaning, its significance, when disembedded from its thick, durative meshwork of sociality, that is, when and if dislodged from the reciprocal and continuous movement of social experience. You can’t have one without the other. There is no technique or gift without the social matrix wherein it situates and founds itself. Technique is used to think negatively and positively against the grain of technological modes of production, in the same way that gift exchange was once read against liberal, laissez-faire capitalism. It is only because technique finds itself within, and perhaps even founds, a social matrix that Ingold’s technician can be, notably, both “an agent and…a repository of experience” (ibid).

We should here at least acknowledge the central, though highly nuanced, role of technique in the later thought of Heidegger. In doing so we remind ourselves that both Heidegger and Ingold take up technique in the effort to redefine conventional Western meanings of the nature of working and producing, that is, in working toward the deconstruction of the productionist metaphysic internal to modern technology. In fact, it is this wager, that productive activity which takes place outside of the sway of a productionist framework is inherently different than productive activity occurring within it, which will guide us toward Melanesian ethnography and Thoreauvian sociography. This contrast was also what impelled Heidegger to reconceptualize techne through a generative reading of pre-Socratic thinkers, German poetry, and post-Impressionist painting in the search of an ontologically appropriate alternatives.
In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger writes,

The Greek for 'to bring forth or to produce' is *tikto*. The word *techne*, technique, belongs to verb’s root, *tec*. To the Greeks *techne* means neither art nor handicraft but, rather, to make something appear, within what is present, as this or that, in that way or that way. The Greeks conceive of *techne*, producing, in terms of letting appear (361).

And earlier, in “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger writes concerning *techne* that “[w]e must observe two things with respect to the meaning of the this word. One is that *techne* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Techne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; it is something poetic” (318). This “technique” allows entities to emerge, enabling something to come into presence in a manner analogous to the self-emergence and appearing of a living thing. This sense of disclosing, freeing, and emergence, we can recall, still resonates with the English “produce,” where the Latin *producere* meant to lead or bring forth, to extend. If Heidegger’s concept of *techne* signifies an authentic disclosing or producing then this mode is understood in tension with, as Michael Zimmerman would have it, a productionist “making in terms of ‘actualizing’ or ‘effecting’ a thing, the sense of ‘causing’ it to be present” (223). Deeply influential for Heidegger was his interpretation of the early Greek experience of nature, *physis*, “the arising of something from out of itself...[f]or what presences by means of *physis* has the irruption belonging to bringing forth” (“QCT” 317). What is operative here is again the notion of self-emergence, as in, for example, the pear blossom bursting forth from its compact bud. Let us simply note the twofold connotation of *physis* as that of self-emergence and appearing. Such a presencing as *techne* brings forth, or creates, a clearing, an open site of and for emergence (see Zimmerman 224-25; Harries *Art Matters* 152).
Importantly, *techne* was also, for Heidegger – in an insight that Ingold takes up – a mode or way of knowing. The knowledge of the technician is a knowing of how to do something; the technician is thus guided by a kind of understanding. What’s more is that when we encounter something made in the world, this object will give us at least some sense or understanding of the world to which it belongs. Producing then appears related to both *techne* and *episteme*. Heidegger writes, “Episteme is knowing and being familiar with some definite area of inquiry. *Techne* is knowing that is associated with what is produced, by craft or in some other way” (qtd. in Harries *Art Matters* 140). And in “The Origin of the Work of Art” he writes, “The word *techne* denotes…a mode of knowing” (57). *Techne*, in both its allowing to come into presence and its bringing together reminds us of the environmental – that is, relational – knowledge immanent to Ingold’s technique. Thus in Harries we encounter this statement, further intimating the bridge from technique to dwelling: “Every *techne* is inseparable from a particular way of standing in the clearing of beings, suggests a certain way of being at home in some region of the world” (*Art Matters* 141).

An anthropological “dwelling perspective” is presented in aversion to the severe splitting-off of the *Gestell*, where humanity is pitted against and sets upon nature, perceiving it only as a movable, manipulable world picture. Ingold combats the productionist divisions of the *Gestell* with a phenomenology of technique, an embodied technical engagement with reality. People constitute their environments with and through the deployment of technique, but crucially this constitution is a reciprocal constitution, a co-constitution, and thus not an “enframing.” Ingold thus theorizes techniques of engagement and participation which are not absolutely instrumental, but are both founded upon and find themselves enacting a mutual interrelating “between persons and environments where there is no absolute
dichotomy between human and non-human components” (Ingold PE 321). This is a world wherein connectivity remains a “vital constituting force,” and where technique participates in this life-making relational constitution (see Weiner Tree Leaf 99). Against the Gestell, in which not simply production but the world itself has become completely external to the human⁵, we draw our attention to a formulation of technique that is not only skilled, but intimate and relational; techniques intended not to control but to reveal.

*Modernity’s Externalizations*

At this point the social critique inherent to Ingold and Heidegger’s analyses can be situated within a broader tendency of modernism and its responses to the troubled history of Western economic progress and reification. In the late nineteenth century Friedrich Nietzsche decided that modern society was not a “society” nor a “body” but “a sick conglomerate of components” (qtd. in Frisby 30). Georg Simmel, writing at the dawn of the twentieth century, understood such a diagnosis as the result of “the increased externalization of life” that came about from the rise of technology over and above “its inner side…its personal values” (93). In Simmel’s dialectics of modernity, the Enlightenment aspiration for a liberal perfection of humanity became the nineteenth century’s perfection of industry and external, material life at the expense of human spiritual cultivation. In this narrative industrial capitalism reifies technique, or productive form, and in so doing forgets the twofold essence of technique; that is, that technique is not solely an ends to be objectified and eventually abstracted, but is also a subjective means, the very means of knowledge and experience for

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⁵ Indeed it would seem that not just the world but the body itself has become external to the modern human subject. Kate Rigby argues, in the spirit of Gernot Böhme, “[That] the experience of the body as something external to the self, and the objectification and instrumentalization that this facilitates, has become a more-or-less habitual state of being for most moderns” (EP 142).
Ingold. Industrial capitalism thus marginalizes its productive subject in correlation to its obsession with the objective perfection of efficiency in production. The externalization of life – in Simmel’s modernity – is a process not of perfecting subjective values, but of the perfection of things, commodities, lifted from their innate social relations: “[t]he very perfection of the object has displayed the imperfection of the subject” (Simmel 97). Insofar as Simmel holds out that it is, still, within art that technique can emerge as a meaningfully charged activity “whereby definitive, subjective values might be attained,” his vision rhymes with Ingold’s idea of technical activity and anticipates Heidegger’s own turn to the techne of the artwork (ibid).

Of course, the externalization of productive life proceeds from an actual economic fact. Namely, the sphere of modern capitalist political economy where labor’s “realization is its objectification” (Marx). What Ingold decries as the objectification and externalization of modern technology aligns with Marx’s famous analysis of the commodity form. Namely, how the exchangeable commodity form distracts us from recognizing the inherently social nature of labor itself. Another kind of forgetting whence human productive experience is objectified and made peripheral, withdrawn, as the commodity itself emerges as the basis of value in society. That is to say, the commodity is fetishized to the full degree that the social embeddedness of productive activity is made peripheral, concealed and thus alienated. As Marx explains, “The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristic of men’s own labor as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things” (Capital 164). Through this process, “Men are henceforth related to each other in their social process of production in a purely atomistic way; they become alienated
because their own relations of production assume a material shape which is independent of their control and their conscious individual action” (*Capital* 187). It then follows that the “realization of labor appears as *loss of reality* for the workers; objectification as *loss of object* and *object-bondage*; appropriation as *estrangement, as alienation*” (“Economic Manuscripts” 71-2).

Walter Benjamin, too, famously analyzed the situation of the modern productive subject *qua* worker, and his “Some Motifs in Baudelaire” is partially a reflection on the conditions of the Fordist assembly line. Benjamin’s historical materialism affectively enlarges Marxist alienation to reveal a modern worker profoundly cut off from experience, the experience of technique formerly embedded in a relational, pre-modern world. Significantly, for Benjamin, immanent to the experience of relational technical activity is the meaningful exchange, or communicability, of this experience. In Benjamin we encounter a modern subject whose experience of work has been violently hollowed-out; embodied knowledge (the “old coordination of the soul, the eye, and the hand”) and its counterpart, skilled technique, is lost, along with the memory of (or the ability to remember) such shared knowledge and conviviality. Appropriately, Simmel too wrote of the “the dismemberment of society,” and his sense of “the externalization of existence” can be readily applied to Benjamin’s thought. The gestural confluences of craft and of the artisanal milieu are replaced by the hell of the drilled factory worker, whose serial, no longer technical but mechanical, applications appear arbitrary (its gestures empty if not lost altogether) and are condemned to be repeated over and over again as the dull and ever-same. Recall for Ingold how the mechanical existed as a support, in the service of technique. The transformations of industrial capitalism, according to analyses of the German critical tradition, subvert any such classical hierarchy of the technical and the mechanical, for in industrial modernity technical
activity appears to serve only the machine. “Human work,” writes Michael Zimmerman, “becomes conceived in terms of abstract mechanical forces and activities. Industrial production processes call for repetitive work actions which intentionally undermine...all-around skill” (213). Pushed even further, the technical appears actually reduced to the mechanical, stripped of its vital social and experiential significance.

The Imaginative Horizon of Dwelling and Technique

“Dwelling” and “technique” now lie before us as possible orientations to (again) realize and inhabit. As possible orientations they are also imaginative horizons beyond, or between, which to reexamine our sense of what it means to be human, particularly in light of how modern technology has radically challenged and altered both our experience of being human – individually and socially, and in terms of our productive capacities – and our relational experience of the actual world we inhabit. They are orientations that are good to think with, and, moreover, as I have shown they have traditionally been thought contra modernity. “What, then,” we ask with Kate Rigby, “might it mean to withdraw from the *Gestell* in rediscovering the art of dwelling?” (430). Where dwelling means the creation, curation, and maintenance of place; a making, or a way of orienting this making, that reveals the relationality of a region. Or, in Heidegger’s formulation, a modality of engagement that reveals the region’s weaving, the “gathering” together of earth, sky, spirits, and humans. Such a gathering asks for an open attunement to the environment, an attunement comparable to the quality of technique’s practical yet virtuosic relationality; in which the vitality and unity of the act of making and bringing forth is not dispersed, and thus emptied, through a process of reductive externalization, but itself gathers humans, their environment, and the contours of their skilled, attentive activity. Heuristically, technology is set up in
opposition to society, whereas an emphasis on technique reembeds human making with the generative social matrix. Technique itself, as defined by Heidegger and Ingold, is incompatible, is anathema, to technology. In correlation to this aversion is the orientation and attunement of dwelling which opposes a utilitarian productionist metaphysic, the orientation of the Gestell, a standing before the world as mere picture of standing-reserve. But for there ever to be the achievement of dwelling, technique cannot be withdrawn and dislodged from the social, and the person cannot be withdrawn from production, in the same way that making cannot be separate from dwelling. It is the relationality of both technique and dwelling, and, furthermore, the way in which they are intertwined and belong to one another, that seems to resist the Gestell.

My contention is that only in techniques embedded in the bringing-together, the gathering, of relationalities will we encounter techniques that belong to dwelling, that is, embodied technical activities which make dwelling-places. If dwelling has withdrawn from building, and technology signifies the withdrawal of human experience from production, and technical relations are themselves enframed, their connection to social relations concealed, then what would the inversion of this prevailing order look like? What would it mean? A practice of technique that belongs to social relations and environmental relatedness generally; a productive belonging that belongs to dwelling – where activities of production are consubstantial with both social and regional relations – is necessary if human making is ever to recover its vocation of care. In Heideggerean parlance, this is a construction and cultivation that in its gathering frees, reveals, things in their “own presencing” (see Heidegger BDT 353).
The means-ends schema, Heidegger admonishes, blocks “our view of the essential relations” between building and dwelling. Against this schema we take up Heidegger’s guiding question: How far does the cultivation of dwelling reach? It can, he explains, find itself, that is, make itself, in all activities that “save [retten] the earth.” Since the technical is one aspect of the social, then it must also – if humans are to make their dwelling – be an aspect of dwelling itself. Said differently, for there to be dwelling there must be techniques of dwelling. We turn then to an ethnography of garden work in Melanesia to investigate this thesis.
II. Malinowski’s *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* – An Ethnography of Cultivation and Construction in Melanesia

At the conclusion of Part I, we asked, how far does the cultivation of dwelling reach? In Part II we rephrase this question, asking, where do we encounter the cultivation of dwelling, especially in a manner that seems to ground the very activities of building which it circumscribes? If the conditions for dwelling appear mainly unavailable to the largely urban and alienated milieu of modernism, then we might look elsewhere for the cultivation of different dwelling practices. One such place is the possibilities of building and being made available through Bronislaw Malinowski’s classic ethnographic account of garden making in Melanesia, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic: Soil-tilling and Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*. As an example of living otherwise through practices of meaningful cultivation and construction occurring outside of the sway of a Western productionist metaphysic, Malinowski’s account of agricultural life in Omarakana unfolds in a relation complementary to the critical modernist texts touched on in Part I. Moreover, as an ethnography of living otherwise – providing examples of actual dwelling practices – it offers something that all of Heidegger’s philosophical method and all of the critical insight into the problems of industrial alienation simply cannot offer us. Furthermore, Malinowski’s account of Trobriand cultivation finds itself at the beginning of a long tradition of Melanesian ethnology; a tradition that has come to be known for its aversive thought – an aversion again complementary to the critical modernist canon – and represented by such figures as Marcel
Mauss, Maurice Leenhardt, and on to such New Melanesianists as Annette Weiner, Marilyn Strathern, Roy Wagner, and James Weiner.

*The Seasonality of Trobriand Technique*

In setting about to describe agricultural life in the village community of Omarakana, located in the northern district of Kirivinia on the Trobriand Island of Boyowa, Malinowski reminds his reader of the paramount importance of seasonal gardening activities to the life and livelihood of all Trobrianders. Concerning the seasonal rhythms of gardening, Malinowski writes, “First of all, it is necessary to realize that the cycle of a year is not defined or determined for the natives by the position of the sun or of the stars or by a given number of moons…What really determines the cycle of the year to the Trobriander is, above all, the economic round of gardening” (“Calendar” 209). While garden work is of course influenced by the shifting weather patterns, seasonal life is defined by the cyclic organization of agricultural activities, and various phases of tribal life depend on gardening and the changing rhythms of gardening. “Thus the real framework of native divisions, as well as their picture of the year, is represented by a succession of activities in garden work” (211). Indeed, the staple crop of Omarakana is a small species of yam known as *taytu*, which also signifies “year.” And though the “testimony of…etymology is usually of little value,” Malinowski confesses that this semantic confluence “represents the real native point of view…[for a]s a matter of fact all other tribal activities are subordinated to this one” (210). In this way, the prior year is described as “the time of the past *taytu*”, or simply the “past *taytu*” (*CG* 52). Generally, it appears at the outset that seasonal productive activity, namely gardening, is a making that gathers social and economic life insofar as time-reckoning hinges upon specific – that is, timely – garden techniques. If “[g]ardening seasons thus constitute the real measure
of time,” we can infer that the technical activities which come to define the nature and quality of those seasons are themselves constituent of a kind of measuring, or reckoning, which is none other than a form of knowing. In short, the seasons are practiced, they are themselves a practice, and their primary practical form is garden activity, the making and tending of yam gardens, an orientation Malinowski calls a “mode of thought.” He further unpacks the epistemo-organizational quality of production as follows: “[A Trobriander] who wishes to define a period or to place an event will always co-ordinate it with the most important, the most rigidly maintained, and the most characteristic index of that period; that is, with the concurrent gardening activity” (CG 53). And in his “Lunar and Seasonal Calendar in the Trobriands” he elaborates upon this point:

The [Trobriander] in defining a period or placing an event will always say: it was done at such and such a period of garden activity – o takaywa, during the clearing of the scrub (lit. in cutting); wa gabu, in burning (i.e. during the period that the cut and dried scrub is being burnt); wa sopu, in planting time; o kavatam, when the vine supports are placed in position; o pwakova, during weeding; wa basi, during the removal of the surplus tubers; o kopo ’i, during the trimming of the vine; watum, during the first taking out of yams; o tayoywa, during the harvest proper (210).

Already Malinowski has moved us beyond the narrow confines of utilitarianism, one where gardening practices would be interpreted only through a most rigid functionalism predicated upon their material effects, that of “garden produce,” food. Of course garden making will eventually yield yams, and crucially so, as a drought year in the Trobriands is nothing less than devastating. (Wild plant foraging and the yields of fishing are simply not adequate to offset the emergency of drought year scarcity.) But we have just seen how garden

6 Malinowski writes, “[N]either collecting nor fishing nor domestic animals are sufficient when gardens fail. A drought or a destructive blight on the crops inevitably mean hunger (molu) for the
techniques do more than just alleviate hunger and provide necessary sustenance. Technique 
generates more than just food, for the Trobriander, by also generating the contours and 
rhythms of seasonality. And surely seasonality is a vital component in the gathering together 
of any type of meaningful region. Thus, already we encounter intimations of how techniques 
of making make regions; I reiterate this insight to gloss, importantly, how the sense of the 
region is more capacious then what is meant solely by a definitive cartographic or 
physiographic area. The round of gardening activity – clearing, burning, planting, and so 
forth – also cultivates a region of thought (insofar as thought is understood here as an 
ordering). It cultivates a temporal sense of the anticipatory contours of one’s present life, its 
horizons both laborious and festive, economic and social. The round of gardening aids also 
as a way to recollect past experiences and “memorable” occasions (a feast, a death, a 
particular kula expedition, etc.). Hence the garden plot “does not merely establish human 
action ‘in’ time, it also establishes it in memory” (Ricoeur “Narrative Time” 183). If dwelling 
orient us to regions, assembling places, then the generation of rhythmic, seasonal calendrics, 
of periodicity, is an essential component in this process of orientation.

Recall that our use of technique implies also a knowledge, or a knowing, that it does 
not solely imply the productive attributes of construction and cultivation. And in the case of 
the Trobriands more can said about the specificity of the regional knowledge intrinsic to 
techniques of garden making. This elaboration serves two goals: It grounds, vis-à-vis the 
lifeways and characteristics inherent to a particular place, the somewhat abstract 
epistemological nature of Heideggerian techne. It also demonstrates Ingold’s insight that

whole tribe; and this, the most dreaded of calamities, though it happens but rarely, is remembered for 
centuries. A year of good harvest on the other hand means prosperity (malia)...” (CG 52).
technique, properly understood, provides something of a training in the perception of the shifting environmental qualities of a specific ecology through its direct participation within and alongside this ecology. We can thus come to see how the generation of relationality so central to Ingold’s “technique” is, in this instance, something like an ongoing ecological relating to a particular region.

While we have noted the way in which agricultural activity in the Trobriand Islands comes to determine the cycle of the year, there is more to be said about the particular quality and characteristics of each season. The dry season, approximately corresponding to the European months of May to November, is characterized by a regular, south-easterly trade wind. Rarely absent, it begins late in the morning and reaches its “full force” in the afternoon, eventually dying out at the dead of night. At this time one exercises significant caution in sailing for marine travel is most unfavorable against the dry season wind. There are also, of course, the calendrics of vegetable growth, and the dry season is when fruits and plants ripen in good years. Preparatory activities, such as clearing and burning, come at the end of the dry season, “while planting is simultaneous with the first rains.” The time of gardening proper – planting and weeding – corresponds with the wet season, that time when the new growth of vegetation marks the renewal of life. In this season, approximately from December to April, there are often days of calm and still weather, or perhaps of “light north and westerly” breezes; skies are usually clouded, and there is, obviously, a significant increase in rainfall. This is the season when vegetation develops, within and without of the garden. When winds rise drastically from the north-west a rain storm becomes a monsoon and “sets in with sudden force.” But on “calm clear days the full warmth of the tropical summer is experienced,” notes Malinowski. However, the hottest days of this region actually occur in
the period between the two seasons, that is, “April and May, and again November and December.” The growth of cultivated plants occurs “at the beginning of the general revival of nature,” and the harvest takes place at the outset of the dry season. Lastly, we note that it is only with the full monsoon wind and then with the “calm interval” between the two winds that two other significant activities in Trobriand life unfold: namely, sailing and fishing, respectively (see Malinowski “Calendar” 207-08). Thus garden making implies an ever-changing atmospheric and environmental attunement. Garden work appears as a type of reciprocal relation with the region; something like an ongoing feedback loop of technique, movement, growth and succession, and the changing atmosphere. An essential specificity is lost if we say no more than, for example, garden techniques of clearing and burning define the sense of the dry season. While this is true it fails to connote the subtle, attentive environmental awareness which imbues the anticipation of and preparation for varying tasks, and their successive, actual performance. Burning takes place, for example, in the middle of the dry season, that time of the south-east trade wind, when fine weather is, by-and-large, expected to last. It will be carefully timed, whenever possible, to occur over the course of three or four exemplary days, further demonstrating how a sophisticated meteorological attunement imbues technique. Planting, on the other hand, must be timed, crucially so, to occur at the first rains, a time also when wind velocity is changing. The district must be, ideally, well prepared to plant, in anticipation of when the conditions will be just right. If the planting is early, the young yams will shrivel under the too-hot sun, too late and the crops will rot in the over-saturated garden soil.

Technical knowledge is revealed to be, in these examples, an atmospheric and meteorological attention coupled with a corresponding ecological sensibility as part of a
practical activity. What it is that techniques of the garden know, its knowledges, are then
gathered and woven together to form a narrative of seasonality and change. The detailed,
particular story of seasonality and seasonal change, here woven together through the nature
of distinctive techniques and the round of productive activity, is one that orients a people to
the changing aspects of a region and guides socio-economic life. But these strands of
productive activity also engender “the moods of time and season,” as Wordsworth would
have it, and at once also create, that is produce, “the affections and the spirit of the place;”
while maintaining that attunement to the process of changing environmental constitutions
bound up with these affections, influencing how they are experienced and articulated
(Wordsworth “The Prelude”). Said differently, “[s]ensual perception means participating in
the articulate presence” of the changing seasons, the wind and rain, the sky and the earth, the
growth and maturation of plants, and the anticipation of hard, or light, labor and the
transitional, gendered divisions of that labor; also, there are the corollary anticipations of
marine expeditions, inter-island trade, harvest rites upon completion of such labor, and so
forth (Gernot Böhme, qtd. in Ribgy “Atmosphere” 145).

Malinowski demonstrates how seasonality itself emerges from Trobriand techniques
of cultivation, rather than vice versa. Garden making seems to also make time, seasons,
seasonal atmospheres and affects. A markedly different relationship than that experienced,
or not experienced, through the alienated labor of the modern wage worker whose
productive activity, rather than making or gathering temporalities, is governed by and
subordinated to an externalized, arbitrary clock time. This externalized temporal regulation is
further guided by a social authority external to the environment, or region, of labor, unlike
the interweaving of “regional” garden production characteristic of the Trobriand Islands,
and is apparently conducted in with little or no attunement to the cyclic process of atmospheric and environmental change, namely the seasons. (Not to mention the distance between what is produced and what is earned.) If, as Evans-Pritchard wrote of Nuer calendrics, “The calendar is a relation between a cycle of activities and a conceptual cycle and the two cannot fall apart, since the conceptual cycle is dependent on the cycle of activities from which it derives its meaning and function,” what happens, as in modernity, when the two fall apart? (100). Comparatively, it is difficult to see how modern labor can be an experience that gathers.

The idea is that the attentive engagement with reality I have outlined in terms of seasonal orientation is entailed in the very process of dwelling itself. In other words, the technical round of garden making, insofar as it articulates the very world it inhabits and thus makes, is part of the process of dwelling. I want to see what other aspects of gardening can be understood to imply something like a modality of dwelling, a mode where human beings are part of the world they inhabit, gathering it together.

Movement and the Gathering of Places

Let us turn to the grand inaugural rite of gardening in Omarakana yowota, which begins the gardening cycle. As the new gardens plots have already been distributed for the current agricultural year, it is now time to inaugurate the season’s work as a whole. First, we will consider the annual ceremonial offering conducted in propitious recognition of the ancestral spirits. Then, the two proceeding rites of inauguration. Significantly, the opening of the cycle of garden activity – that making central to life in Omarakana – both begins with travel external to the village and, subsequently, generates further movement, internal to the
region of the village. We might say that the latter describes moving within a place, whereas the former is an experience of embodied movement between places, where movement is no longer “circumscribed by the restrictions of…one place; …it ranges among a number of places” (Casey 23).

In advance of the ceremony an exchange has been arranged with coastal villagers, and two parties of men will set off for a day-long expedition to trade vegetable produce for fish. Meanwhile, the garden magician and his assistants move in the opposite direction. “They [travel] to the eastern shore and to the adjoining coral ridge, the rayboag, to collect the magical herbs and other ingredients of the complicated mixture” required for the ceremony. They take with them baskets and collect over a dozen requisite elements including “bunches of leaves, clumps of soil taken from the nest of the bush-hen, chunks of hornets’ nest, and bits scraped off squat coral boulders” (CG 94). The magician and his group return to the village first, and complete the preparation needed for the sacrificial oblation to the spirits. Toward the end of the day the young men announce their return to the village with a series of shrill calls and soon arrive with a surfeit of fish. At this time the women gather around the house of the garden magician and distribute the fish so the entire community can share in the ceremonial supper. After the meal, another circuit of movement is initiated, albeit on a much smaller scale. All of the men go to their homes, retrieve their axes, and deliver them to the home of the magician where they are carefully laid on a woven mat spread over the floor. At this time the first magical act occurs: the charming of the axes. Spirit oblations are offered up by the magician to the ancestors of Omarakana in the form of small pieces of fish. After this incantatory offering, the blessing of the ancestral spirits thus invoked and their presence established, the axes are charmed through a combination of verbal spell and application of
the magical mixture prepared earlier in the day. Then, early the next morning the last installments of this inaugural ritual process are carried out. Once again, the ritual tasks are marked by a significant movement through the village landscape. First, the men assemble, yet again, before the hut of the garden magician. In semi-festive attire they then proceed in a slow, dignified fashion, following the magician in single-file, to the site of the principal garden plot. Here, a series of ritual tasks are performed: using the medicated axe, two sticks are cut from the new, uncultivated garden plot; one is thrown out of the standard plot, across the cut boundary belt, and into the uncut bush; the other small piece of scrub is firmly planted in the garden soil. The former action involves a negative spell, made against any garden pestilence or harm, the latter is positive, made to promote the fertility of the garden throughout the whole productive cycle. Two additional rites are then enacted: the striking of the soil, and that of rubbing the soil with weeds pulled out of the ground. Finally, and importantly, upon the completion of this ritual cycle by the magician within the principal plot, all of the men who have been carefully observing the ceremony will disperse and run to their own garden plot where they will replicate this process “in miniature” (see Malinowski CG 93 – 102).

Without yet commenting on the relation of magical formulae to our consideration of technique and dwelling, these first acts of garden making offer much for our investigation. If the process of dwelling is a gathering together, a weaving of “the very threads from which the living world is woven” (Ingold PE 242), then I am keen to analyze these inaugural movements – part and parcel of garden making in Omarakana – as themselves integral to the process of collection and recollection. Before taking up the actual concatenation of events I have just outlined, let us recollect how our operative rubrics themselves fit together. The
garden, and the system of extant plots it is surrounded by, form the center of economic life in Omarakana. In this way we might conceive of the garden as a primary, and thus “central,” location of the region. Now, the process of dwelling both defines a region and makes it, by gathering all those various strands of the particular region together. Through the relational bounding of a region, the process of dwelling also makes places. Thus, properly speaking, within a region one moves from place to place, as I alluded to above. And this is just what occurs in the peripatetic movements incorporated into the inaugural rituals of garden making. If dwelling makes places, transforming space into place, and the garden is the central site of life in Omarakana, then here the process of dwelling makes the garden a primary place; the garden emerges from the cycle of making as the primary place it is known to be. It is no wonder, then, that in the inaugural round of activity the garden appears to be a place with both a centripetal and a centrifugal force. Men, themselves garden technicians, travel to the coast to collect food for a ceremonial feast, and do so in an intense expenditure of energy – running all the way back on the return journey. The garden magician and his acolytes travel in the opposite direction, gathering special ingredients along the way. Thus garden making not only embeds itself within the social matrix of Omarakana – as is seen in these various expeditions, their ceremonial solidarities, the redistributions of the feast, the synchronization of the standard garden plots, *leywota*, to the common individual plots, etc. – but also within the physical regional environment itself. In fact, such intentional and attuned movement makes the region and lends itself to a kind of “ambulatory knowing,” or “knowledgeable ambulating” (Ingold *PE* 230).

Dwelling’s intentionalities, in other words, can be seen to effect regional integration, a weaving of “intentional threads that bind body and place in a common complex of
relations.” This is something we might explore as the “operative intentionality” of a place (Casey 22). The knowledge of the technician, for technique is also a knowing, is also a regional knowledge, and early activities of garden making appear as part of a process of relational dwelling; it is a knowledge “cultivated by moving along paths that lead around towards or away from places, from or to places elsewhere” (Ingold PE 229). In other words, the activities of gardening do not somehow set upon the world, intervening from without. They appear to happen within the world, but also through the world as they open up multiple paths of making along which the people of Omarakana move, coming and going and carrying out their work, in the practical conduct of life. This consideration of the inaugural rites of gardening reveals lived bodies, reminding us of Edward S. Casey’s insistence that “the living-moving body is essential to the process of emplacement [or, dwelling]: *lived bodies belong to places* and help to constitute them.” Casey has learned well from both Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu, yet he also turns this thought in another direction: “By the same token, however, *places belong to lived bodies* and depend on them” (24). And this is the important lesson of movement inherent to these inaugural events of garden making. The wayfinding from place to place, and back to a primary place, should also suggest that meaning is generated from the relational context of the gardeners involvement with the world. In Casey’s words, “Being in a place,” as in a process of dwelling, “is being in a configurative complex of things” (25). However, it also, insofar as the durative taskscape of garden making is lived, processual, and motile, configures places in the same way that seasonality is a kind of configuration. Thus are the configurations of dwelling, and what they configure, to repeat, is a region.
The knowing of garden making is therefore not restricted to the specialized knowledge of garden construction and cultivation; it also cultivates and constructs both the region that houses the place of the garden and the knowledge of this region. Gardeners move along and through the regional channels, or pathways, of Omarakana: both making and enacting contexts and weavings around which the region finds, and integrates, itself. Thus the places that dwelling gathers together and connects do not just exist, they “happen.” The inaugural rites performed after the festive supper, in the gardens, demonstrate this happening, they reflect the qualities of the very region wherein they find themselves, wherein the making itself is located and locatable. Since places are constituted, the making of gardens appears to reflect and express these constitutions. (Dwelling, we might say, is a lived constitution.) When places are formally expressed as an occurrence, such as by cutting the first scrub with the medicated axe smeared with herbs from the distant coral ridge, the happening of a place is recognized in a ritual event. But regardless of its expression, what is apprehended is the undercurrent of a continuous gathering together that is always present in garden making. As we shall see, it is a bringing together that makes being-together.

The Inaugural Techniques of Garden Making

The inaugural ceremonies are proceeded by the clearing of scrub growth – “cutting down the small trees, uprooting bigger weeds, and trimming such of the saplings and larger...”

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7 “It is because they happen,” Casey understands, “that they lend themselves so well to narration, whether as history or story” (27). And Malinowski, writing on cultural value of the seasonal calendrics that emerge from the round of garden technique, tells us that apart from the practical value of the calendar, “it is used in order to supply the framework of a narrative account of the year” (LYC 213). And when Trobrianders were asked to give some type of narrative recollection, Malinowski invariably received a “story of the moons”; that is, the narrative correlation made between events and successive seasons.
trees as can be used later on for vine supports” – and the compound, ritual burning of the
gardens. The joint process of clearing and burning the refuse is then followed by a final
clearing, the *koumwala*, intended to remove both small stones and any remaining plant debris.
The practical necessity of the *koumwala* is such to prevent weeds or small saplings from again
taking root, and also because it would be challenging to plant, and coordinate planting, in
soil still littered with debris (Malinowski *CG* 120).

Yet according to Malinowski, the gardeners of Omarakana, especially in the
preparation of the standard plots, the *leywota*, attend to the clearing of the garden surface
with “an almost pedantic perfection.” What the ethnographer calls “aesthetic motives,” the
aesthetic dimension of Omarakana gardens and gardening, also extend to the making of the
*tula*, a grid-like structure constructed from an array of straight and sturdy stems set aside and
preserved at the time of clearing and burning. After the *koumwala* is complete, the garden
plot is subdivided into contiguous small squares using the sticks that have been preserved.
The *tula* is the name “given to the boundaries of the small squares,” whereas the square itself
is named *gubwatala*. Malinowski describes the process in this way:

Like everything else, the boundary poles (*tula*) and squares (*gubwatala*) are done with
extra care and neatness on the standard plots. The best straight sticks are selected, the
squares carefully laid out and made specially small and neat. A well cleaned *baleko*
[garden plot], showing the dark soil meticulously free from stones and rubbish and
with the *tula* elegantly laid out, is to the [Trobiander] a very pleasant sight…There is
no doubt that the *tula* add to the elegance of the garden plot (121).

As elsewhere in the monograph, Malinowski seems unable to fully dwell in the possibilities
of Trobriand “aesthetic motives,” how they could contribute to the ordering of reality in
Omarakana, and is impatient to grasp how they influence, functionally, the “economic or
technical side of gardening” (ibid). Of course these techniques have a certain technical
efficacy for the economics of gardening, but we need not be so quick to dislodge technique from its own aesthetic motives, its own aesthetics, especially when our objective is to investigate the relations between making and dwelling. Before adding to Malinowski’s analysis, in an effort to extend our dwelling perspective, it is worth attending to what he was able to glean from the practice of *tula* construction. In other words, Malinowski’s considerations will likely remain complementary to our own.

I am particularly interested in Malinowski’s attention to “measure,” he writes, “The divisions play an important part in planting, by enabling the gardener to calculate his distances, and measure his time more easily.” One informant offers: “We lay down the boundary sticks so that the garden work might go quickly. We plant one garden square till it is finished. We change to another square – we plant, we plant, and already it is finished” (*CG* 122). I suggest that the construction of the *tula* boundary grids, as the means of measurement and a making of measurement, can be seen to mirror the instances of relational constitution inherent to gardening we have thus far considered, such as, the changing horizon of garden tasks and the making of seasonality, and the relationality of the region understood through movement within it; all moments which punctuate and measure both time and life in Omarakana in ways that unify as so many threads gathered together in a process of weaving. This is a unification concordant with dwelling. Moreover, this making sense of where we are – and where we have been and where we will be going – is a regional sense making, or, a world making, to use Nelson Goodman’s phrase. It is, again, the kind of sensibility that dwelling makes.
Recall how the separation of the *Gestell* posits a human perceiver over and against the world; where the world is “out there.” Writing against the *Gestell*, Ingold theorizes the landscape as that within which life is lived amidst, and in this way Ingold’s landscape seems to fit in to our working lexicon as a textural unfolding of the region wherever one finds oneself in it, in a process of moving through it. The landscape, as “the familiar domain of our dwelling,” is “with us, not against us, [and] it is no less real for that” (191). Through living with a landscape, Ingold suggests, it becomes a part of us, “just as we are a part of it.”

Construed through the *Gestell*, the world is “conceived and grasped as picture” in a metaphysics of confrontation, and one effects the world through an external contact (MH QCT 129). But in dwelling, “each component [of a landscape] enfolds within its essence the totality of its relations with each and every other.” The order of dwelling appears as implicate, an implication, and participatory; in this way it emerges increasingly in correlation with notions of narrative and story. For telling a story, as Ingold observes, “is not like unfurling a tapestry to *cover up* the world, it is rather a way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers *into* it (Ingold PE 190-91). And this language of implication, weaving, and participatory attunement or attention guides us, too, in better understanding the tension introduced earlier between technology and cosmology. If modern technology is understood to have eroded and replaced cosmology, then it is this attention to one’s relations – paying attention to how one is implicated in the world – that are precisely what one attends to in cosmology. We thus also link dwelling with cosmology.

But let us return to the *tula* themselves. Malinowski observes, “[T]he subdivision of the plots into the small squares enables [the Trobriander] to portion out his task.” In constructing the *tula*, the gardener lives with the *tula*, in relation to them. The *tula* both guide
and collect the gardener’s productive activity; the gardener does not so much act upon the
garden, but interact with it. “It allows him to measure and systematically divide his work into
what he has done and what he still has to do. He has not got a big indiscriminate stretch of
labor before him but a series of appointed tasks of which he can see the end at the
beginning” (Malinowski CG 122). Once again we encounter technique making not just sense,
but time itself. Furthermore, the tula, and, for that matter, the ordered, ritual succession of
garden tasks as a whole, do not guide the individual gardener in measuring solely the
progress of work in his own garden. Garden making is not isolated and autonomous in this
way, as the example of the collective synchronization of the inaugural rites made clear.
Gardening happens in an ongoing, socially meaningful context in the same way that it
happens in a relational and processual region; the two networks seem to mirror one another
and as a unity they perhaps express the human ecology of Omarakana itself. An individual
gardener’s task is approximately timed with that of the leywota, the standard plots managed by
an expert gardener in conjunction with the village leadership, and linked to the progress of
work within the community as a whole. The gardener’s task is also implicated in the
gendered division of labor, for women will assume the sole responsibilities of weeding once
the gardens have been established and planted; and while the women are weeding, parties of
men will leave on kula expeditions. Thus, the measures inherent to gardening offer us
another way to understand how technique, in Omarakana, is always already embedded in the
socio-ecological matrix itself. What I have tried to illuminate, by way of the tula, is how the
continually responsive, relational, and socially situated framework of the garden is
qualitatively different than the enframing of modern technology, and that it is the kind of
measure co-constituted in the process of Trobriand gardening, and the way in which taking measure makes meaning, that makes available the possibility of being at home in the world.

James Leach, describing the work of taro-garden making on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea, identifies a similar process of plot subdivision as seen in Omarakana. Reite people also lay out their gardens in gridded squares, called *bokung*. In Reite, the central *bokung* of the garden holds a special importance for it is here one plants the principal shoot of the garden, or “the eye of the garden,” the *wating*. The *wating* of the central *bokung* is called “the ‘child’ of the central *bokung* itself”; the central division being the “mother” of this child and of the entire garden. Marilyn Strathern, writing about the Mount Hagen region of New Guinea, describes a word, *mbo*, used for the activity of garden planting that can be extended across semantic contexts as a “point of growth” (see Strathern 1980:192). Ingold glosses this Hagener sense of *mbo* as any “point of growth within the general field of human relations” (PE 83). The *tula*, of Omarakana, bound the *gubwatala*, and these marked squares also define particular areas of growth and development. But, as Ingold understands, they are not isolated fields of production, but micro-regions of eventual garden growth embedded and enfolded within a much broader region of human and human-environmental relations.

*The Aesthetics of Garden Making in Omarakana*

The *koumwala* [surface clearing] and the *tula* help us to understand how in Omarakana the garden plot is not merely constructed, but is also cultivated; it is a field of nurture, a field that must be properly opened and held in relation to a particular, known

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8 While the first volume of *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* is ostensibly without any type of metaphorical analysis, such as offered by Leach’s Reite informants, we do find in the second volume find a resonant note: “My informants, as a matter of fact, commented on it in this sense… ‘*taytu* is the child of the garden’” (262-3).
lifeworld; a relational context of Trobriand engagement with this world. With this thought we turn to the aesthetics of garden making.

What the aesthetic dimension of gardening discloses is an active and attentive engagement with the garden and with what the environment affords (see Gibson 1979). But also, as seen in the perfectionist orientation of both the surface clearing and the *tula* arrangement, and as we will see later with the *kamkokola*, the aesthetics of garden work also draw attention to themselves. Following Alfred Gell in his reflections on Trobriand canoe-board carving, we don’t want to lose sight of one of the “most essential” characteristics of garden making, namely, that it appears – it makes itself – “in a particular way.” For Gell, the aesthetics of Trobriand canoe-boards are not to be understood through their ostensibly dazzling, ethologically effective optics. Rather, Gell is more interested in how these carvings fascinate by the fact that they show themselves to “[lie] within the artist’s power to make things which produce [such] striking effects” (56). Although Gell’s concern is with how the technical virtuosity of canoe-board carving corresponds to the source of its social efficacy in successful *kula* expeditions, we can think with Gell, and I suggest that the technical virtuosity of gardening – for example, the careful and precise construction of the *tula* – is analogous to the broader ethos of successful gardening, namely, diligence, attention and care. (An ethos we will encounter again when we arrive at Thoreau’s Walden.) The aesthetics of gardening, then, does not just draw attention to itself, but to, when performed appropriately, the proper way of gardening. As one of Malinowski’s informants explains: “How could we do the planting properly if there were no *tula*?” (*CG* 122). Human-made gardens brought into being through order and precision, and maintained by cultivation, “retain a signature of the human agency to which they owe their existence” (Harrison *Gardens* 7). Continually drawing
attention to the garden’s signature of itself, we can call this mark the mark of care. The attunements and relational engagements integral to gardening in Omarakana are at once also the activation of care. If I am correct in embedding the aesthetics of Trobriand gardens within care – a care that is bound up with a certain propriety and order – and then locating these garden aesthetics within the regionality of the garden itself, meaning the way in which it gathers together a place of habitation, then we have, inadvertently, looped back to a strong resonance with Heidegger’s notion of dwelling. That is, to a cultivation that belongs to dwelling as a caring.

But the “aesthetic motives” of Omarakana gardeners need not be collapsed entirely into their apparent functional efficacies, as appears to be the case in Malinowski’s ethnography. In other words, to say, like Mauss, that the extraordinary curatorial attention of tula construction is simply a variation on the principle of causality⁹ – one too easily reduced to a version of deterministic science – misses some of its “expanded meanings and refractions” (Tambiah MPW 202). This is not, however, to imply that the empirical knowledge of cause and effect is not present in Omarakana gardens, for of course it is. It is only to draw attention to how any consideration of the techniques of garden making must also confront the creativity of thought. To wit, the operation of a creativity of thought that not only orders and reorders the physical world through practical activity, but orders and reorders, we could even say makes and remakes, both an orientation to that reality and the

⁹ I use “causality” as an ideal type, that of a typological mode of ordering the world. And as a type I intend it to be useful to both think with and against, and, moreover, that the causal mode bears direct relation to an understanding of “modern technology” and its mode of enframing (Gestell). I follow Stanley Tambiah insofar as, here, causality is “quintessentially represented by the categories, rules, and methodological positive science and discursive mathematico-logical reason. The scientific focus involves a particular kind of distancing, affective neutrality, and abstraction to events in the world” (Tambiah MSR 105).
mode of engaging – indeed, knowing – that reality. What we discover in Omarakana gardens is an orientation and relationality with implications vaster than the specific causal act itself, whether it be, for example, the particular task of clearing the plot or of constructing an organizational planting grid.

In all fairness, this other ordering of reality is not lost on Malinowski, though we may differ in our conclusions regarding its logic and its implications. We need only recall the title of the monograph under analysis. At the heart of his study is a grappling with the relation between ritual and practical technique, and thus *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* is a most convenient site to have situated ourselves as our meditation on technique begins to exceed the practical, and somewhat mute, that is inexpressive, textures of it as defined in the work of Ingold. At the same time, and this is important, we should not forget that Ingold’s “technique” is a response to what he describes as technology’s triumph over cosmology, and that his preoccupation with contextual co-constitutions refers back to this interest in cosmology and with what we might call relational ontologies. Said differently, as we now shift to take on techniques whose claims and efficacies seem to befuddle a conventionally Western sense of technical efficacy, namely causality, we should come to learn something more about cosmology; about how Omarakana technique situates itself in its world and how it then makes human relations with that world. In so doing we will add a new attribute and a new density to our exploration of dwelling. Alongside *koumüala* and *tula*, then, it will be valuable to consider one last, though crucial, element of garden making in Omarakana: the construction of the *kamkokola*, “the corner stones of the magical wall.”
Magical and Practical Techniques of Garden Making

Before turning to the building of the kamkokola it is necessary to acknowledge how Malinowski himself understood the correlation of ritual, or magical, technique and practical technique. In Omarakana, Malinowski tells us, there are two ways, “the way of magic and the way of garden work” – megwa la keda and bagula la keda. Moreover, they are “inseparable,” though they are never confused (CG 76). Elsewhere he says, “Garden magic and garden work run in one intertwined series of consecutive effort, form one continuous story, and must be the subject-matter of one narrative.” These two ways, those of ceremonial and practical work, have different “aims” yet nonetheless make up one totality, are “directed towards one end, and progress in a consecutive series of performances which depend one upon the other” (CG 447). The complementarity expressed here also seems to resonate with some of the other operative complementarities refracted throughout this analysis. Let us simply note these adjacent complementarities, alongside this newly uncovered one: the inseparability of art from craft in technique; a conception of technique that does not disembed technical from social relations; a building that belongs already to dwelling, and vice-versa; and, finally, instances of production where product is not separated from process.

By now the gardens have been cleared and the network of tula laid. Next comes the task of erecting a structure known as the kamkokola, a process requiring a great deal of physical effort, and one considered a principal ceremony of garden making. A kamkokola (magical prism) will be constructed in each of the four corners of the garden, and has a
“special aesthetic value” for the Kiriwinian.\textsuperscript{10} The ceremony I will describe here is that made by the garden magician, for it is his responsibility to set the inaugural \textit{kamkokola} into the “magical corner” of each \textit{baleko} (garden plot) in Omarakana. The remaining three prisms will be erected by the individual gardeners themselves. According to Malinowski, the construction of the \textit{kamkokola} is correlated to the planting of the staple crop, and “undoubtedly connected with the putting up of the stout yam supports” – those trellises that will support the vines of the maturing \textit{taytu}. The planting of \textit{taytu}, which corresponds to the appearance of the \textit{kamkokola}, is, being the principal crop, a special planting, one marked by the exercise of communal labor and traditional songs and yells typically forbidden during other periods of garden work. The garden magician again directs the gardeners outward, away from the village, this time to harvest long straight poles (to be used for construction) from the \textit{rayboog} (the jungle-like coral ridge) and the \textit{momola} (seashore). At this time a slender stick is inserted into each garden plot signifying that a taboo is placed on all gardens and “that all energies must be devoted to one task and one task only, the bringing of the stout poles, the \textit{lapu}” (125). Using a digging stick, a deep post hole is dug, up to one meter in depth. Then the vertical \textit{lapu} is rubbed with a magical mixture, charmed the previous night, and inserted into the hole. Tamped sturdily into place, once erected the \textit{lapu} is now called \textit{kamkokola}. Two smaller, though not shorter, poles will rest in a fork at the top of \textit{kamkokola} and extend – slantwise – to the ground. Once in place each of the lighter poles will constitute the hypotenuse of a triangle whose other sides are made up by the vertical \textit{kamkokola} and the flat, horizontal ground. All told, two triangles now extend from the

\textsuperscript{10} Of the \textit{kamkokola} Malinowski observes, “Its sight rejoices the heart of the Kiriwinian even as it would that of a modern Cubist” (\textit{CG} 124).
kamkokola (the main vertical pole of this “magical prism”) at right angles to each other:

“From whatever side you look at the kamkokola, you always see one or two triangles; the whole outline of the structure is that of a prism overtopped by the end of the main pole” (128). In addition to building the other three kamkokola, each garden owner will also construct a karivisi, a “decorative triangle” attached to the fence running alongside the garden plot; while this structure “does not play any part in magic, [it] fulfills an aesthetic function and acts as a yam support” (ibid; emphasis added). The slanting poles that emerge from both the karivisi and the kamkokola quite often, according to Malinowski, join up with one of the boundary tula situated on the surface of the garden plot. “Such a tula is in turn connected with the kaybaba [slanting stick] of a neighboring karivisi, and so on.” Thus we discover that, apparently, the entire garden system of tula, karivisi, and kamkokola are interconnected: “[T]hey divide the baleko into smaller portions and surround it with a complete magical structure. Everyone of the uprights of this system serves as a support to a vine; the upright of the kamkokola itself supporting the tuber which was ceremonially planted during the bisikola ceremony” (ibid).

This is an abbreviated and rather technical account of the kamkokola preparation and construction. But what of the social and affective events which surround it? Malinowski comments how kamkokola abruptly and conspicuously alters the dimensions of garden making, adding a new, vertical dimension to the garden. In fact, it appears to be the first vertical pole introduced to the place of garden making. In all likelihood the kamkokola is somehow inaugurative for the erection of the individual vine supports, itself being, practically, such a support. It is also clearly correlated to the timing of the principal planting, that of the taytu, for, as I alluded to earlier, it is only after the kamkokola that communal
planting begins. But let us not lose sight of the aesthetics of this garden making behind its practical activity. Malinowski writes,

What a few days previously gave an impression of a flat bare piece of ground, is now incased in a glittering framework of strength and loftiness – for almost invariably the [poles] are stripped of their bark. The aesthetic appeal of this to the [gardeners of Omarakana] is shown in the zeal of their work, their pride in achievement and in the comments of the towosi [garden magician]. I felt, as though they themselves were feeling it, that they had buttressed the garden about with a magical wall of which the kamkokola were the corner-stones (128).

The kamkokola appears to mark the conclusion of what Malinowski understands as the “surface work” of the garden; “it artistically completes the tula system” (131). The compound system of tula-kamkokola seemingly makes up, if not an experiential topology itself, then a scaffolding or structure that supports and defines the experiential topology of the garden-place. Perhaps the tula system remakes this experiential topology, adding to, articulating, and reaffirming, the garden’s intensity; an intensity both productive and interpretative. Like the correspondence of Omarakana technique to seasonal calendrics, we are not dealing with a world that is already constructed, or constituted, external to the technicians themselves, of which humans are not a part. To the contrary we once more encounter garden making as an active configuration of a lived-in world. If we say that it is in dwelling that experiences are born, this is encountered in Malinowski’s ethnography only insofar as dwelling, as the process of garden making, appears more and more like an experiential fabric woven of unique events, made rather than subsumed under, or within, an already established category such as “space,” or “tradition.” Both tula and kamkokola clearly contribute to the making of a coherent region of thought; they are situations which situate. What’s more is they seem also to make a common world. After all, as we are reminded by
architect Peter Zumthor, “Construction is the art of making a meaningful whole out of many parts” (11).

“The big kamkokola will make the taytu grow high and be strong. Without kamkokola we cannot plant taytu.” Malinowski relates this statement to that of another informant, writing, “Again I was told that when the kamkokola is bad, the whole garden will be bad” (CG 131). We find a similar logic regarding tula: “How could we do the planting properly if there were no tula?” And, “The work in the gardens where there are no tula is bad, in gardens which are divided into gubwatala work is good” (122). While one can certainly extrapolate a practical functionality of the tula, namely its capacity to parse work and thus time, we are harder pressed to understand the kamkokola if we are restricted to indentifying only its empirical validities. Indeed, with Stanley Tambiah, we can say of kamkokola that its “positive and creative meaning is missed and persuasive validity is misjudged if [it is] subjected to that kind of empirical verification associated with scientific activity” (CTSA 60).

It is in confronting this ostensible disjunction that I propose taking up, after J.L. Austin, an “illocutionary” understanding of kamkokola, and even tula and ritual burning; an illocutionary understanding in tension with a framework of production defined solely by the utilitarian operation of a purely instrumental and causal efficacy. To apply this performative understanding to rites of garden making, for our purposes, we need only bear in mind a basic distinction between what Austin understood as the locutionary and the illocutionary. A locutionary act consists of an utterance made with a certain sense and reference, that can be verified through an empirical, “true or false” referential claim. On the other hand, what I want to adopt from the meaning of an illocutionary act is how – as a performative which does something – it is not reducible to, or analyzable through, the conventional Western
referential sense of true/false nor in terms of “whether the act has effected a result in terms of the logic of ‘causation’ as this is understood in science.” Rather, in a way applicable to techniques of garden making in Omarakana, the illocutionary force is subject to evaluation on the grounds of that which is valid/invalid, correct/defective, felicitous/infelicitous, and so forth (see Tambiah, CTSA 77-84). This criterion should resonate with our attention to the propriety of *tula* and proper execution of *gubwatala* [square grids] construction, and also with the general sense surrounding Omarakana magical techniques that if the rite proves somehow inefficacious this is not to suggest that the system of magic itself is ineffective, but that the particular ritual technique was improperly carried out. This attention to, say, the felicity, or propriety, or correct, or incorrect, fulfillment of the procedure for *kamkokola*-making will draw us, fruitfully, toward a consideration of intention and the place of intentionality in Omarakana technique. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it provides us with another way to comprehend the broader rhetoric of propriety through which is lived the ethos of cosmology; a cosmological propriety essential to the care of dwelling.

An example from the ethnographic work of Roy Wagner, on the Daribi people of Chimbu District of Papua New Guinea, may be helpful. Wagner writes,

If a Daribi gardener controlled his labors solely with the necessity of relating to his wife and her chores, there would be nothing to prevent him from doing sloppy, unproductive work. His effectiveness as a producer of food depends upon the creation of other, external meanings for his productive efforts…Thus he will often have recourse to magic “spells” designed (and believed) to make his work more effective. In the course of clearing and piling up brushwood in a newly cut garden, he may recite a spell that identifies his hands with the claws of a bushfowl, a bird that characteristically rakes forest debris into huge mounds to provide heat for the incubation of its eggs. The spell “works” ostensibly in the way that the bushfowl works, causing the user to be like the bushfowl in his ability to rake up brushwood (63).
Here, the intentionality of “being like the bushfowl” expands the meanings and directions of the particular process of production, namely Daribi garden making. An ideal of bushfowl-like efficiency now guides the task of clearing garden scrub and charges it with a different and unique intensity. For our broader comparison with the modern mode of technological production, Wagner’s ethnographic insight brings into relief the modern experience of productive activity as one in which meaningful intentionalities appear to be rarely available to the maker; or to turn the phrase slightly, where the process of making has been emptied of its available meanings. In Wagner’s Daribi example, and as I will show for Omarakana techniques, meaning is not isolated to the particular task-at-hand of garden making. Rather, meaning is actively amplified as it is made indexical to the broader relationalities encompassed by dwelling. Through intentionality the gardener also makes his own productiveness and effort (see Wagner 62-3). The inability, or disability, of the modern productive subject to create his or her own meaning, due to both the producer’s separation from that which is produced, and the impossibility of their contributing to a meaning behind the process of production, is, simply put, how modernity has come to effect its own dislocations and futilities, in a word, its alienation.

The intentionality of kamkokola construction will be better appreciated if we also consider the magical spell chanted by the garden magician over the “leaves of covering” – the medicated mixture of herbs – and inserted into the ground alongside the base of the vertical pole of the kamkokola:

I. Anchoring, anchoring my garden
   Taking deep root, taking deep root in my garden,
   Anchoring in the name of Tudava,
   Taking deep root in the name of Malita,
   Tudava will climb up, he will seat himself on the high platform.
What shall I strike?
I shall strike the firmly moored bottom of my taytu
It shall be anchored.

II. It shall be anchored, it shall be anchored!
My soil is anchored,
My kamkokola, my magical prism, shall be anchored.
My kavatam, my strong yam pole, shall be anchored,
My kayalu, my branching pole, shall be anchored,
[…]
My kaybudi, my training-stick that leans against the great yam pole, shall be anchored,
[…]
My tula, my partition-stick, shall be anchored,
My ye ye’i, my small slender support, shall be anchored,
My iku kulumwala, my boundary line, shall be anchored,
My karivisi, my boundary triangle, shall be anchored,
My tam kwalum, my light yam pole, shall be anchored,
My kaylunalova, my tabooing-stick, shall be anchored,
My kaylulova, my great yam pole, shall be anchored.

III. It is anchored, my garden is anchored
Like an immovable stone is my garden.
Like the bed-rock is my garden.
Like a deep-rooted stone is my garden.
My garden is anchored, it is anchored for good and all.
Tudududu….
The magical portent of my garden rumbles over the north east.

We have already seen how Omarakana technique, because it is not a mere mechanical handling and because it is a technique that locates itself in and between places, implies an attentive engagement with its surroundings. These qualities of attentive attunement would seem to imply an intrinsic intentionality of their own. Yet the aesthetics of gardening, the statements of gardeners themselves, and now the spell of the kamkokola ceremony, appear to suggest an expansion of meaning, one that flows over and exceeds the isolated technical activity, or even the intrinsic intentionality of the particular task. This insight might be better posed as a question. Namely, how do we understand the apparent semantic density of the tula and the kamkokola?
Recall the statements of Omarakana gardeners themselves. “The big kamkokola will make the taytu grow high and be strong.” And, “Without kamkokola we cannot plant taytu.” Furthermore, the magical formula accompanying the solidifying of the kamkokola reveals it to be a structure that not only supports the vine of the principal yam planted at its base, but supports the entire garden system and anchors the productive effort of the gardeners. The kamkokola are connected to the tula network via the slanted poles extended from its crown, and in turn the tula also tie-in with the karivisi, boundary triangles, mounted onto the perimeter fence. It would indeed appear that kamkokola completes and anchors the entire tula system, that gridded system of measurement and an epistemological reference, for planting, weeding, and harvesting. As we know, the garden is the center of life in Omarakana, and garden making sustains this life. If gardening weaves through all of life in Omarakana and is a measure of spatio-temporality itself, and the tula express this practical and ceremonial meshwork of production, then surely there must be a need to root, to connect and stabilize, to anchor in assurance such essential and vital activity, not to mention the necessity that the tubers themselves are firmly rooted and robust, and their vines supported. The kamkokola are themselves these anchors.

Through kamkokola we can see how magical technique, non-verbal and verbal, regulates and guides garden work through the measuring and organizing of intention. In this manner Malinowski’s correlation of magic to the “context of situation” is quite useful, and more so for us, broadly, insofar as we are concerned with how techniques are at once grounded in their situational context and also make this very context of their situation. Surely, this is what is meant by techniques of dwelling. But to stop at a pragmatic sense of the “context of situation,” as Malinowski apparently does, is to stop short, and is miss out on
the expanded meaning made available by the magical technique. It is to forego “an imaginative, prospective, and creative understanding of the very [technical] operations and social activities” which constitute Trobriand making (Tambiah “MPW” 200).

Another way to approach what is magical in technique is pay attention to what is augural in the various steps of garden making, including kamkokola. Thus, alongside the formula associated with kamkokola, the consideration of a portion of an another spell, one used in the grand inaugural rite of gardening (during both the charming of the axes and the rubbing of the soil) will improve our understanding of the prospective logic, the intentionality, and the augury of Trobriand garden magic. This magical incantation both marks, and in conjunction with other magical formulae, opens the new round of gardening:

The belly of my garden lifts,
The belly of my garden rises,
The belly of my garden reclines,
The belly of my garden grows to the size of a bush-hen’s nest,
The belly of my garden grows like an ant-hill,
The belly of my garden rises and is bowed down,
The belly of my garden rises like the iron-wood palm,
The belly of my garden lies down,
The belly my garden swells,
The belly of my garden swells as with child (see CG 98; 101).

Tambiah describes this aspect of Trobriand magic by taking up its logic of anticipatory effect, celebrating its “creativity of thought.” The augury of inaugural technique can thus be discerned in how Trobriand magic articulates a blue-print of itself: “a blue-print and a self-

11 While it is unclear, according to Malinowski, that kamkokola is invariably “inaugural” it does, by-and-large, correspond to the main planting of taytu and does seem to be inaugural to the construction of vine supports. He adds, “[I]t would be best to consider the kamkokola ceremony as marking the turning-point in the making of the gardens, the point where most of the preparatory activities are finished...[T]he real planting has been inaugurated and we be rapidly finished, and with this the growth of the gardens can begin” (CG 132).
fulfilling prophecy [that] embodies for the Trobriander an understanding of the technical, aesthetic, and evaluative properties of his activities, in a manner denied to us in our segmented civilization” (Tambiah “MPW” 200). In the same way that the gardeners’ movements across the landscape and their activities within the garden gathered together a place and a region, what is magical in technique allows us to see how the aspirational intentionalities of garden making project themselves into the future – in this way they are prospective – only to be gathered, or recollected, back into themselves as they produce what they predict. That garden production is not extraordinary but for the most part ordinary and thus ordinarily anticipated – that the rains do come and gardens produce ample taytu – does not make this prospective logic a tautology but a window through which we can glimpse how the meaning making of garden making happens, and how it happens to be so intensely gathered. In other words, inaugural magic suggests how the garden plot becomes more than just a materially productive area but also a semantically generative field.

* * *

“The hold is held,” Heidegger tells us in What Is Called Thinking? And in Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations we find:

An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question (1953: 108).

Just as the garden plot more generally makes a place for itself, the kamkokola [magical prism] holds together a particular configuration of dwelling. It embeds itself within, and anchors,
the measure of gardening itself as a system. The intentionality of the *kamkokola* is that it be an anchor to the garden system – immovable, adamantine, deep-rooted – in the same way that its yams must be firmly rooted, and in which agriculture is the anchor and experiential center of Trobriand lifeways. The *kamkokola* anchors the complex configuration that is gardening in Omarakana. Holding this garden matrix together – anchoring “each corner” of the system – the magical corner stones are, in turn, held together by prospective garden magic. The construction of *kamkokola* and the spells associated with it is also an event; it is a happening that lends itself to narration, the magical formulae illustrate this. But again, it is not an event that is subsumed by the logic of Western causality even as it lends itself to a prediction of what is “already known.” To borrow a phrase from Edward Casey, it is an “imaginative constitution of terms respecting its idiolocality” (26). The intentionality of both spells – that of *kamkokola* and of the grand opening rite – are only understandable within their milieu, this was Wittgenstein’s point, but at the same time – and this is the turn, or trope, of magical prospective logic – they make this milieu, they augur it “in terms that are in accordance with reality” (Tambiah MP 200). The *kamkokola* creates the world – and orders and reorders the experience of it – in a sense different than the productionist logic of modern science and technology, and in this sense it is part of a cosmology. But what is critical is how it creates and re-creates a world where the human presence is not reified and relegated to the periphery, but is actively constituted at the center of the world, “placing the human being at the hub of a dwelt-in world, a center of embodied awareness that reaches out…into its surroundings” (Ingold *PE* 218).

The foundation of *kamkokola* is not Western causality, and therefore its claims are not to be measured by the logic of the causal act itself, though garden making in no way
excludes “empirical knowledge of cause and effect,” as Evans-Pritchard understood of Zande witchcraft. But magical techniques of garden making do permit Omarakana people to intervene in the process of gardening in ways that are felicitous or infelicitous. Because this intervention occurs outside of the terms of Western causality, garden magic can make claims vaster, and semantically richer, than those of causality alone. What is to be apprehended about Trobriand prospective magic in relation to dwelling is in how it conceives of itself within the world, and in relation to this world. It affirms the ongoing relational context – that broader cultivational ethos embedded, necessarily, in its agricultural situation – in terms of how Trobrianders “involve themselves in establishing [and continuing] the conditions for growth” (Ingold PE 86). As Tambiah realizes, “The Trobrianders practice prospective magic because they have engaged in systematically conceived activities in the past and because they intend to engage in them in the future” (MPW 200). The key to prospective garden magic is in how its terms are made “in accord ance with reality.” This is key, because its prospective nature operates within and affirms a known world, and in this way we can describe garden magic as definitive. That is to say, it operates from the central human place of cosmological orientation, namely, at the center of what we might term the cosmological interior. Implying the gardeners’ active place within a cosmology, the Trobriander apprehends the world from within; from within a centralized place, or position, within that world. Hence the central human position of cosmology further informs the efficacy of prospective magic.¹² Magic

¹² This human position, or orientation, of cosmology can be understood as an “anthropocentric” position. However, it is anthropocentric only in the sense that the human intentionally chooses to stand at the cosmologically defined center, and in so doing to bear the responsibilities of such a self-positioning. It is not an anthropocentrism from which the human orders the world around it “into place,” so to speak, as standing reserve. To the contrary, the anthropocentrism of cosmology is an intentional assuming of one’s place within the world as a way of knowing it and knowing the
flows out into the known world, it moves out from a center and returns to that center; this is the gathering it performs, a gathering-with, within the regional sphere of ethos. This gathering-with in accordance with reality, adds an important dimension to Ingold’s practical sense of how design is not external to construction in dwelling, it is not imposed on the world but immanently generated within, or alongside, it through activity. In other words, the gathering enacted by prospective magical techniques in Omarakana is a particular mode of apprehension. Garden magic apprehends the world “as it is,” yet this doesn’t make its logic any less complex. As Michael Zimmerman puts it in another context, “To apprehend means to receive, to let come to oneself that which presents itself and appears” (229). We might also think of a line from Parmenides: “There is a reciprocal relation between apprehending and being.” For dwelling, apprehending too is a kind of gathering, a relational assembly.

Prospective magic is a measuring that stays open and articulates a sense of the world’s own measure, the measure internal to things themselves; this kind of measuring also describes the measure of cosmology. It is in this way we can say that prospective garden magic iterates at the same time it records, a quality interestingly reminiscent of Gertrude Stein’s sense of “being most intensely alive, that is being one who is at the same time talking and listening.”

Unlike the Gestell, garden magic, because it takes the world’s measure, is not an imposition of measure onto the world. The crucial difference from that of modern technology is in how

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14 The comparison with prospective garden magic further illuminates how the very meaning of the Gestell can imply nothing but the imposition of its own measure; a measure that supports the grasping and seizing characteristic of its domination. A measure that believes it own lie – namely, that it can take the absolute, final measure of things; the ubiquitous measure of the commodity form, and its “perfectly” exchangeable value, is an example of this. All this in contradistinction to gardening, which is made up of ongoing, provisional, and reciprocal measures.
the velocities of magic, its forces, are those of revelation and relation, not of control and manipulation. It is perhaps comparable to the difference between, in Kenneth Burke’s terms, the poetic realism of art and the austere reductionism of scientific realism. The kamkokola, and the system of tula it completes, orient and anchor an “intimate immensity” (Bachelard’s phrase) that is the garden plot within which a world is gathered in dwelling. Omarakana dwelling comes then to make a relational context wherein gardeners are a part, partaking of its essence and the rhythms of its environment. If the kamkokola are the magical corner stones of the garden, then their magic, in part, is to make and remake the garden as an experiential center wherein the attention and attunement of garden work is “drawn even deeper into the world” (Ingold PE 216). If it is correct to say that garden making intensely gathers this is, in part, because it gathers intensities (and intentionalities). Garden technique also helps to create a vision of the world, it is a particular modality of engagement with reality, one that both amplifies and refines the perception of this reality.

The Poetics of Magical Technique

With respect to the tripartite relationship between language, magic, and technique, it is necessary to at least indentify the poetic dimension of garden magic. This is especially so because of the central place of “relationality” in our analysis. If the Gestell is that modern totality in which all things are reductively caught up, used, and expended, then language too – as also caught, ineluctably so, in this apparatus – becomes merely instrumental. Garden magic, while it may be efficacious and prospective, is not reducible to the utilitarian reductionism operative in the Gestell. The magical formulae that accompany garden technique are also a cultivating, for they cultivate language, make it meaningful and powerful. “[A]nd therefore [they] brings back to language all its capacity of meaningfulness” (Ricoeur
“Poetry” 449). Garden magic is a kind of poetry, and by identifying its poetic function, we acknowledge its capacity to express relationality: the relation between the Trobrianders and to their world, the gardener to himself, and to his broader social relations. Just as garden magic is not entirely implicated in the logic of causality and can therefore make claims more encompassing than causal logic, the poetry of Trobriand magical formulae enlarges and augments language’s capacity to mean. The metaphorical aspects of garden magic involve the making of semantic proximities. The garden maker is also the maker of metaphor and this making is yet another gathering, as what was perhaps distant or disparate – the bush-hen’s nest, the ant-hill, the iron-wood palm, the pregnant woman – are made to be proximate, intimate, near, as “the belly of my garden,” the fecund mound of taytu. How “‘[r]emoteness’ is preserved within ‘proximity’” in metaphor mirrors the temporal blending of prospective magic itself, namely, how the in-augural rite makes the far – the anticipated and eventually plentiful harvest – near – that is, potential, if not already present within the conditions of the garden itself. “Things or ideas which were remote appear now as close” (Riceour TMP 148). As Ricoeur understands, “To see the like is to see the same in spite of, and through, the different” (ibid). The operative tension at work in metaphor, generally, and particularly in the metaphorical spells of garden magic, is that between sameness and difference, and also the tension in which the former perspective remains present in the new vision, the new insight, suggested by the metaphorical reference. Both aspects of metaphor suggest a similar tension that occupies the space between practical technique and magical technique in Omarakana – where both visions are preserved and co-exist together, relationally if not dialectically.
The metaphorical nature of garden magic, the interrelations it makes by making similarities (semantic proximities), is a bring-together that, again, reflects the broader process of bringing-together and being-together that is garden making. Garden magic’s transfer of meaning is a gathering, a weaving together from there to here. The truth claims of poetic language are a meaningful gathering – a semantically generative one – impossible under the rubric of causality. Gathering is a rapprochement. The metaphorical, or poetic, rapprochement is a gathering. Both unify the apparently heterogeneous. All of this underscores the imagination, the productive imagination, at work in garden making and production. Semantic innovation and semantic densities are made, just as kamkokola are made. It is my contention that, in Omarakana at least, these verbal formulae are a construction and cultivation that too belong to dwelling; a form of language, to borrow a phrase from Steve McCaffery, that forms and performs our membership in the world (472). It is the making of the imagination that “generates rapprochement,” and to imagine is to display relations in a mode that is both descriptive and engaging. Ricoeur writes, “Imaging or imagining, thus, is the concrete milieu in which and through which we see similarities” (TMP 150). Perhaps, then, what is missing in the embeddness of Ingold’s technique is the imagination that forms and expresses the relationalities of technique – those relationalities which make its very embeddness. This may amount to a recognition of how the productive imagination – if indeed it is the imagination which supports a symbolic system – reorganizes, to borrow a phrase from another context, “the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world” (Goodman Languages of Art 241). In arguing that garden magic, and garden making, operates beyond, or alongside, causality, the recognition of how poetic language
makes and remakes the world is an essential site form which to comprehend how garden making orders reality in a manner vastly different than the perceptual modalities of modern technology.

Garden magic is prospective insofar as it recognizes, names, affirms, and aspires toward the possible. We can even say that garden magic makes and remakes the possibilities of life in Omarakana. Applied to the worlding of garden making, it is in prospective magic that “we discover reality itself in the process of being created” (Ricoeur “Poetry and Possibility” 462). By drawing our attention to the poetics of garden magic, alongside the general understanding of how prospective magic articulates a necessary possibility, we see in a new light “the capacity of language to create and re-create” (ibid). If garden making is reality in the making, then the poetry of garden magic primes us to witness this process insofar as it, itself, is relationality in the making. More broadly, the poetics of garden making reinforce what we have truly, already come to see, that the making of the garden plot is surely more than clearing and planting a surface of earthen ground, it is also founds the plot of an ongoing cultural narrative, “a creation of productive imagination which projects a world of its own” (452).
III. Economy and Dwelling in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*

Economy. The law of the
The house is the form of its
transmission, but if the house
is broken, if in my dreams I
no longer know where I live,
how do we proceed, from what
do we gather the signs from
which we’re made down here to
knit our fucking hearts?

- David Brazil, *The Ordinary*

We now leave behind the shores of Boyowa Island, and find ourselves on the shores
of Walden Pond. From Malinowski’s ethnographic experiment to that great experiment
known as America. From the Pacific Ocean sailed by those famed Trobriand Argonauts to
the place of Henry David Thoreau’s “private sea,” that “Pacific Ocean of one’s being alone”
(*Walden* 214). While the irruption of the Great War exiled Malinowski to Eastern New
Guinea in the early twentieth century, Henry Thoreau embarked upon his Concord,
Massachusetts-based experiment in living earlier, in July of 1845; around the time,
incidentally, that Lewis Henry Morgan began his studies of the Seneca. *Walden* itself is not
published for another decade. The context of both Walden and *Walden* is a New England in
the midst of the Industrial Revolution in America.
The Dwelling of Thoreau

Thoreau’s *Walden* is not only a foundational text of American literature and philosophy. Before this, it is a careful record of one person’s attempt to live and labor otherwise on a particular plot of earth and beneath a particular sky. *Walden* records and expresses the work of dwelling at Walden, that site of deliberate being and building: namely, the construction of a sturdy and skillful English-style cottage of ten by fifteen feet, built adjacent to what would become two and a half cultivated acres of primarily beans, but sown also with peas, potatoes, corn, and some turnips.

For Thoreau, like Heidegger and Ingold, both the plight of dwelling and the plight of industrial capitalism’s modes of production are joined. Interestingly, the two plights find themselves brought together under the rubric of *Walden*’s first chapter: that of “Economy.” And in the context of this essay it is noteworthy how it is that in the next chapter, “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” (an appropriate dwelling statement), these ills are met with a rethinking and remaking of economy itself, namely Thoreau’s “present experiment” in solving “some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically” (*Walden* 9). But how can Thoreau’s present experiment be conceived of as an experiment in dwelling? And how, then, does it relate to Thoreau’s reconception of economy?

In other words, how can dwelling be understood as something Thoreau makes at Walden, records, and later expounds upon in his book? Robert Pogue Harrison suggests, in a chapter itself entitled “Dwelling,” that “Thoreau goes into the forest…as one who would put to the test the meaning of being on the earth” (*Forests* 221). If Thoreau is to ever express this meaning of being on earth, his expression, he confides, must “be extra-vagant enough,” it
must “wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of [our] daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which [he has] been convinced” (216). If the meaning of being on earth – which for Heidegger was “dwelling” – is to be conceived it must be wrest back from its erosion in everyday life and its exhaustion in ordinary language. If “dwelling” is to actually mean again, this is a meaning we must give it. That words, here “dwelling,” must be brought back “into a context in which they are alive” was also the strategy of Heidegger’s deconstruction, and perhaps also the technique of magical incantations uttered in Omarakana gardens. For Thoreau, both the text and the experiment in living begin with construction, the preparation for and making of a dwelling on earth. It begins too with instruction, for us, the reader, “…if one designs to construct a dwelling house…,” and what follows is an outline of what makes a proper dwelling, and of what kind of building fails to attain dwelling (Walden 19). Nonetheless, it might be better to approach dwelling in Walden obliquely, for while “to dwell” is a verb used throughout the text, the usage of “dwelling” is not conspicuous. To say something about dwelling in Walden, then, we should proceed through a term central to the project of Walden, a term so revered by Thoreau: “economy.”

At the center of the eponymous first chapter, he writes, “Economy is a subject which admits of being treated with levity, but it cannot so be disposed of” (19). And several pages later, “Most men appear never to have considered what a house it” (24). We should recall – what that which already know yet are forever told – that economy, oikonomia, means the law of the household, or, household management; from oikos, house, and nemein, to manage or arrange. If for Heidegger we cannot build until we regather the meaning of dwelling, Thoreau admonishes, “Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and
beautiful living be laid for a foundation” (26). In Thoreau’s formulation, before we can build we must understand housekeeping, that is, economy. “I speak within bounds,” Thoreau writes in “Economy” (20). And because he speaks to us “within bounds” Thoreau speaks to us as a dweller, an “in-dweller,” one who has made a place for himself and around him defined a region. Because Thoreau dwells he can proclaim, “Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly. What is a house but a sedes, a seat?”15 (55). I argued, with respect to Trobriand gardeners, that because the garden reveals itself as an experiential and cosmological center (the two are of course interrelated) for the people of Omarakana, because it gathers relations together and in so doing radiates a region around it, it can be comprehended through the rubric of dwelling. The same is true of Thoreau’s construction at Walden Pond, it makes an experiential center. It thus founds and houses his experiment in living – one of economy – and demonstrates the qualities of dwelling. Thoreauvian economy and dwelling seem therefore to be related.

The question of dwelling is a question of how humans make their world, how they make it in a manner that keeps the world (together), which is another kind of “house” keeping. In his chapter on those wild, animal neighbors who accompany him at Walden, “Brute Neighbors,” Thoreau asks, “Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world?” (150). This is a question of dwelling, asked by a dweller. It is also a question of economy, where the world is that broader oikos – that “homeland of our thoughts” – and the housekeeper, or, for that matter, the cosmological gardener, inquires into its internal

15 Cf. Merleau-Ponty’s insight, in The Phenomenology of Perception, into how “the ‘human world’ ceases to be a metaphor and becomes once more what it really is, the seat and as it were the homeland of our thoughts” (24).
management, into how it can be arranged.\textsuperscript{16} When the figurative housekeeper asks the question of how the broader \textit{oikos} of a place, or a region, can be brought together, this is a question of dwelling. So it is here the two convene, this housekeeper, an “economist,” is also a dweller. But Thoreau’s question is also a question of proximity. To suggest that this is also a question of proximity – “Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world?” – explains the placement of this question in a chapter devoted to the writer’s neighbors, his meditation on neighborliness. In fact, the words “near,” “nearer,” “nearest,” “neighbor” occur regularly throughout \textit{Walden}. Though this should not surprise us, for as a dweller Thoreau – in his intentional acts of construction, cultivation, and the careful study of his \textit{milieu} – has made a place for himself at Walden. The world radiates from and returns to this experiential center, this is the gathering that dwelling performs, and “[e]verything that enters this radius, by definition, belongs to a proximate world,” a neighborly world – a neighborhood (Peck 118). A world where “the turtle-doves sat over the spring, or fluttered from bough to bough of the soft white-pines over my head; or the red squirrel, coursing down the \textit{nearest} bough, was particularly familiar” (Thoreau \textit{Walden} 153; emphasis mine).

Upon completing the opening chapter’s discourse on what economy is not, Thoreau turns, finally, to what economy is: the building of his own home, his experiment in habitation. Marking this transition to where he lived and what he lived for he writes, “The

\textsuperscript{16}In fact, the vocabulary of “economy” unfolded within \textit{Walden} is readily applicable to the scene of garden making in the Trobriands, and to do so at greater length would be both fruitful and highly instructive. For example, whether it be technique’s relation to seasonal calendrics or technique’s poetics of prospective thought, or dwelling’s routes of wayfinding within the constitutional, lived-in region, all of these aspects of Trobriand practice can be brought together as qualities of a specific “internal management.” Where what is being managed from within is the world itself. (And as we have seen, cosmology is just this type of internal management.) To hold with our images of weaving, the warp and weft themselves are movements of internal management and assembly: the textile’s economy.
present was my next experiment of this kind” (57; emphasis mine). The experiment is one of economy, of gathering what is needed to make a home. It is also shown here to be an experiment in proximity, a project of gathering and regathering the relations of the oikos.

Later Thoreau writes,

>The place where [any prospect…of coming to life] may occur is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses. For the most part we allow only outlying and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They are, in fact, the cause of our distraction. Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being. Next to us the grandest laws are continually being executed. Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are (90; original emphasis).

The experiment in building and living “deliberately” – economy – is also an exercise in nearness, proximity, relationality, in making the world again familiar – thus, dwelling. “I went to the woods because I wished to lived deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life” (*Walden* 61). The experience of economy, and the reclamation of its unity, is also to gauge one’s relations to the things of this world. To “stand right and fronting face to face to a fact” (*Walden* 66); how else could one proceed to measure one’s relation to the things of this world, weaving them into place? As Stanley Cavell understands, “What is next to us is what we neighbor” – again, that word which retains a trace of its dwelling (SW 105). “The Nachbar,” we will recall, “is the Nachgeburt, the Nachgebauer; the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby” (Heidegger “BDT” 349). Cavell understands the neighboring of *Walden* as Thoreau’s interest in his world. He writes, “Interestedness is already a state – perhaps the basic state – of relatedness to something beyond the self, the capacity for concern, for implication” (117).

Our relation to the world, better yet, our cultivation of these relations and the implications of them, is that of neighboring. Thoreau’s experiment in economy is therefore also one of neighboring, of both figuring out and configuring Walden’s neighborhood. Thoreau subjects
economy to both a proximity and the beholding of its relationalities, and meanwhile studies the severance of relations in the world around him. The household, too, is held, and the subject of economy – gathering the oikos – belongs also to that of dwelling – gathering together a world. The two belong together. Of these subjects treated with such levity we are reminded of “how much it is necessary that we be…, at least, careful” (Thoreau Walden 7).

Technique at Walden

Much has now been said about the economy of dwelling. It is necessary therefore to make some brief remarks concerning what our “in-dweller” calls his “mode of life.” In other words, let us consider the techniques of Walden, asking by what means does Thoreau make his living, and how this relates to his dwelling. As technique in Walden is reconceived within an experimental (and experiential) economy and is thus outside of the conventional boundaries of labor as determined by capital, Thoreau’s productive activity – like that of Omarakana gardeners – makes meanings atypical to Western political economy. Thoreau challenges his reader, and it may very well be the challenge of technique against technology: “Take your time, and set about some free labor” (Walden 53). Which is to say, somehow take back the sense of temporality, allowing technique to “free” us from the time of industry. A phenomenon familiar to us emerges from this inversion. Describing the making of his bean field, Thoreau writes, “Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean stems, and encouraging [that] which I had sown, making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves and blossoms…making the earth say beans instead of grass, – this was my daily work” (105; emphasis mine). A description he complements with its negative: “My days were not days of the week…, nor were they minced into hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock” (76). Attuned to task and its broader situatedness, the taskscape of Walden begins to
generate its own rhythms, and in so doing expresses its own unique temporalities. The
making of Walden also generates a detailed seasonal attunement (and thus seasonality) to an
actual place. It is not insignificant that the book of Walden dedicates several chapters to the
themes of its own seasons, especially winter and spring; as Cavell reminds us, “We are
creating the world” (Senses of Walden [SW] 112). In the bean field Thoreau does not
necessarily produce a product, though twelve bushels of beans are cultivated and harvested.
Rather, as he tells us in “What I Lived For,” he is often in the field “making a day of it” –
and whence “[i]t was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans” (107). Like
Omarakana gardening, making a bean-field, and growing beans, is also an activity that makes
appropriate measure. If it yields an “immeasurable crop,” this is only because making and
growing at Walden lie outside of a productionist logic (ibid). 17 Technique at Walden is not
just a means, it is also an end in and of itself.

Thoreau’s cultivating also appears as what we have come to understand as technique
insofar as it is also a cultivation of knowledge, a “kindredship,” made through an “intimate
and curious acquaintance” (107–8). “It was a singular experience,” Thoreau writes, “that long
acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting,
and threshing, and picking over…I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to
know beans” (108). Technique, once again, is not just how one makes, but rather how
making comes to include learning and knowing. Learning and knowing are seen to be other

17 Perhaps Thoreau’s bean-field is, apparently, immune from a fully productionist logic because it is
not a fully “civilized field.” He writes, “Mine was, as it were, the connecting link between wild and
cultivated fields; as some states are civilized, and other half-civilized, and others savage or barbarous,
so my field was, though not in a bad sense, a half-cultivated field” (106). We should be grateful for
the nature of this field; from it emerges his unique and celebrated wisdom, what he calls in the essay
“Walking” a “wild and dusky knowledge, Gramatica pardâ” – a tawny grammar; from it emerges la
pensée savage of Walden.
kinds of proximities, approachings, or, rapprochements, where the nearness to the field – that “intimate acquaintance” – both permits an understanding of what it produces and produces understanding itself. Technique’s measure, then, at Walden, is one not just of propriety but also proximity. He writes, “My head is hands and feet” (67). Thoreau tells us in “Reading” that outside of the pressing construction and ongoing cultivation “more” study was impossible. Cavell reads this as the possibility of “more study” in addition to that of the codex of Homer left open on the desk and glanced at occasionally. But what about the study of his labors, his “incessant labor” which is already intrinsically studious, that is, deliberate? “I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans” (Walden 75). It is not just the bean-field, and the image of the field, that are central to Walden, but also the knower of the field. Nay, the knower in the field. Characteristic of technique, the two – the made field and the knower of it – are inseparable and intertwined. At Walden “the way of knowledge and the way of work,” as Cavell understands, “are one and the same” (SW 118). It is as if Thoreau’s mode of living at Walden cannot be distinguished from his mode of working at Walden, both fused through a mode of deliberate knowing.

If Thoreauvian dwelling is articulated, in part, by its intimate approximations – its interedstedness, its nearness and neighboring – then what we have considered of technique at Walden reveals modes of making just this kind of interested proximity. Actual techniques, as Thoreau would have it, of getting one’s living together; of carefully bringing a life together. As Cavell has written, “Nextness is a task then, a poise or stance of existence, as of assistance [where “assistance” etymologically contains the idea of standing beside, hence

\[^{18}\text{An important insight Cavell seemed to temporarily neglect when pondering the nature of Thoreau’s various studies. See above.}\]
helping]...it is the sign that you are at home in the world” (“N&D” 119-20). But in the lexicon of *Walden* these are also techniques of “morning work.” Morning work is that work which performs the “sloughing off” necessary of any “moulting season” (recall that the “moulting season” of *Walden* is the very transformation of economy and society the book outlines and its writer enacts). If the guiding question of Thoreau’s experiment was how are we to make a living, that is to say, how are we to remake a life for ourselves adequate to some perceived original promise (be it America, or what Thoreau calls “human culture”), then technique at Walden promises to show us how. Thoreau writes, “Every morning was a cheerful invitation to my life,” and, “The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour” (60). In a way, *Walden* is written under the sign of Aurora, as its quest to remake economy is founded upon the clearing of renewal, that is, a dawn.

Thoreau was fond of quoting Confucius’s *The Great Learning*, “Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again” (ibid). To make it new, through techniques of morning work, is to restore the meaning of economy, and in the process to remake economic meaning, which is, as we have seen, also the work of dwelling, of gathering. Yet these techniques also aim to remake and remember society itself. In other words, to re-embed the morning worker within the social. To not only “get our living together,” but make our dwelling-together. All of this is very much the vision of renewal and recovery promoted by Ingold’s writing on technique. As Cavell has suggested, “*Walden’s* underlying notion...is one of integrity conceived as an activity” (*SW* 109). The text’s vision of wholeness includes this unity of technique, and it too emerges, “out of a present sense of incoherence or division or incompleteness” (Cavell *SW* 103). *Walden* is a social text as much as it is an environmental one.
Like gardening in Omarakana, it is not with his hands alone that Thoreau makes and remakes his world. Thoreau too is a cultivator of language. For some must “work in the fields” for the “sake of tropes and expressions, to serve a parable maker one day” (*Walden* 109). As a dweller Thoreau desires to speak within bounds, but as one who desires to win back our ordinary language from its expropriation by the political economy of industrial capitalism he must speak outside of bounds. He must swerve, around the reductive enclosure of language to recover and renew a sense of those words which so interest him. Only because the distortion of the ordinary is nearly impossible to perceive must he make language do extra-ordinary things. His chief fear in the writing of *Walden* is that his expressions: “may not be extra-vagant enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of…daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced” (216). If we are to read about morning work, Thoreau instructs his readers, we must be willing to “laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than common use permits” (68). If magical language in Omarakana serves to articulate the necessary possibilities of an ongoing life, the tropisms of *Walden* express the actual – and no less necessary – possibilities of a truer economy within the “desperate enterprise” and “degenerate times” of what Thoreau called “this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century” (220). Indeed, “necessity” itself is a central term, for Thoreau, to be troped away from its distorted state and toward its “true expression.” He writes, “I desire to speak somewhere without bounds; like a man in a waking moment to men in their waking moments; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression” (216). Thoreau’s experiment in living founds itself on a notion of a truer
sense of economy, a recovery of the *oikos*. But what of the house of language? Trope, “as grammar unbound,” as Jed Rasula posits it, is therefore the necessary medium through which to stage an expression, an articulation, of this experimental economy (Rasula 73). If an economy of dwelling is the “reality,” the “point d’appui,” as Thoreau would have it\(^\text{19}\), upon which a new ethos will be based at Walden, then trope is the language which undergirds and makes possible the subversively articulated project of *Walden*. Earlier I commented upon the measure of metaphorical language as that which covers distance, bringing the far near; how metaphor makes both new semantic proximities while at the same time preserving tensional semantic differences. Economy, cost and gain, necessity, work, labor, time, improvement, interest, settling: this terminological field that Thoreau intervenes in, and cultivates, with the passionate intention of making and remaking their economic meaning is something of a world in and of itself that exists alongside the actual world, the place, of Walden. We might just refer to the former as the tropic sphere of *Walden*. The tropic configurations of *Walden* parallel the reworkings of metaphorical magic as they too create new semantic proximities; this is Thoreau’s recovery and remaking of economic terms. At the same time, those incongruences of meaning, for example, the “labor” or “interest” of Walden versus “labor” and “interest” in Concord, Boston, or beyond, are preserved in tension. If Thoreau is successful the transfer of meaning occurs and some other innovative connotation emerges, one aligned with his vision of economy and dwelling. Yet the efficacy of this tropic restructuring is only made available by the simultaneous continuation of heterogeneity,

\(^{19}\) Thoreau writes, “Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance…till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a point d’appui, below freshet and frost and fire…” (*Walden* 66). Cf. Wittgenstein, in the *Philosophical Investigations*: “If I have exhausted my grounds I have reached hard rock, and my spade is turned” (§217).
namely, the reader’s awareness, also, of the terms’ conventional implications. We will remember Ricouer’s sense of how “[r]emoteness’ is preserved within ‘proximity.’” The intentionality of the trope is stated at *Walden*’s outset, in its epigraph: its pitch is that of the chantecler and its function is “to wake my neighbors up” (1). In fact the efficacy of this tropic awakening is only possible because of how the trope preserves an aversive difference with the old, while new meanings are created; this is the prospective logic, indeed force, of Thoreau’s tropic magic. The trope situates itself in the world of *langue* at the same time it seeks to resituate and remake that world. (As Vincent Crapanzano has noted, “[T]he beyond always turns on our take on it” [14].) The operation of the trope throughout *Walden* resembles the operation of Trobriand garden magic, for tropic language reanimates everyday language, it pulls, stretches, and gathers semantic relations together, in a manner that reminds us of the magical formulae of Omarakana. It is extraordinary language that would not make sense in ordinary circumstances. Yet our present circumstances, as Thoreau has cautioned us at length, are anything but ordinary. I have argued that Thoreau’s is an attempt to re-collect social, perhaps even cosmological, existence, and in his book language both forms and performs this renewed membership within the world. Like prospective magical language, his is also a language that retraces connections, and measures and affirms vital relations, at times it is even at odds with the logic of modern scientific thought.

Because the proper sense of economy, dwelling, has fallen into oblivion, Thoreau tropes relentlessly in an effort to turn our minds around. The trope, like magic, knows no compromise (as seriously aspirational – a prospectus – it can only know no compromise). Moreover, in order for the tropic processes of *Walden* to take – in a fashion similar to how we are meant to “take back” our time – the creative imagination of the reader must be
activated and engaged. Of Walden, Thoreau writes it was “not confined in the least. There was pasture enough for [the] imagination” (59). In other words, for the trope to take the reader must take an interest in how a word is used imaginatively within the context of a sentence. Like the cultivator of Walden, the reader too must care, she must attend deliberately to the text. (Perhaps she too must become a cultivator, dwelling in the logos of *Walden*.) But this kind of interestedness, or attention, quickly exceeds the limits of the sentence, for the sentence is understood only within the context of a language. And a language only has meaning against a form of life. A form of life has meaning only against the context of a world (see Cavell *SW* 112). This is how the tropic innovations of *Walden*, its magic, lead the reader back into the world, a possible world, and a world in the process of recreation by the practical and semantic innovations of Thoreau himself. However, we should not read this statement as the innovations of Thoreauvian agency alone. Or at least this agency should be qualified. Remember that Thoreauvian agency – like the agency of Trobriand gardeners – is imbued with, and qualified by, care; that Thoreauvian interestedness is also a form of intimacy, cultivating relationships by bringing us next to one another and nearer to the world. Therefore the trope, like (or as a) technique, leads us back into the thick relational contexts of a word and of a world. How the trope, as it gathers and regathers, belongs also to dwelling. The maker of tropes is the maker of the household. He who cultivates language is he who cultivates the field, for the trope is a tool just like the hoe: both are for “disturbing…delicate organizations so ruthlessly, and making such invidious distinctions…, leveling whole ranks of one species, and sedulously cultivating another” (108); both are taken up in the service of a critical project, and both support the technician *qua* dweller. And yes, it is here that Thoreau begins to appear, himself, almost as a magician,
for what is a magician other than a technician who can operate, simultaneously, in more than one field?

Once again we convene at an aversion to the adequations of productionist logic and language. In other words, the tropisms of *Walden* reveals the ordinary language of nineteenth century industry to be inadequate, at every turn, for expressing the experience of morning work let alone the Thoreauvian “point d'appui” whereupon that experience is grounded and upon which a new ethos is based. As an aversive language the trope re-envisions and thus recreates that world. Like Thoreau’s cultivation of beans – where “there was no little iteration in the labor...making such invidious distinctions with his hoe” – the trope remakes the world, that is, makes it new, again and again and again.

The “Plight of Dwelling” in *Walden*

Thoreau’s time at Walden, as documented by *Walden*, is not only the time of dwelling and technique. If *Walden* is a record of humble inhabitation and morning work, it is equally a litany of the wrongs, decrying the progress of industrial capitalism and its modes of production – making the text, generically, a classic modernist text to be read alongside Marx and Engels, and one that resonates distinctly with later twentieth century critiques of Western modernity, including those of Tim Ingold. As an attempt to redefine dwelling in the midst of modernity, and in so doing to reexamine what it could mean to truly make a living, we should not be surprised to discover throughout *Walden* an internal critique of “building” and “technology” deeply sympathetic to those of Heidegger and Ingold, and resonant with the critique of modern liberal political economy generally.
Thoreau tells us in “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” that he began this “experiment” in living, quite “by accident,” on “Independence Day, or the fourth of July, 1845” (57). We are made to ask what is accidental about this coincidence? Yet perhaps it is no coincidence at all, but rather “Independence Day” only happens accidentally, incidentally, for, as Thoreau will never cease reminding us, we are in no way free. Not then Independence Day; merely the fourth day of July. Stanley Cavell understands this point well, because America’s revolution never happened. The colonist’s fought a war against England all right, and they won it. But it was not a war of independence that was won, because we are not free; nor was even secession the outcome, because we have not departed from the conditions England lives under, either in our literature or in our political and economic lives (7).

Just as a century later, Martin Heidegger will announce that building no longer belongs to dwelling and that we no longer know how to dwell, in Walden freedom does not belong to Independence, nor, we can say, does a proper sense of economy belong to modern economic progress. In fact, Thoreau’s own interrogation of building is uncannily close to that of Heidegger. He asks, “What does architecture amount to in the experience of the mass of men?” And answers that he has rarely encountered an architecture that holds “a core of truth.” Like Heidegger, and Gidieon before him, Thoreau denounces an architecture that has lost its sense of the proper meaning of dwelling, claiming that our modern “dwellings” are not adequate and our architecture is deaf to our actual needs. We must “build still more deliberately,” Thoreau tells us, and what he himself has learned of architecture has emerged only from the practice of dwelling, namely, “out of the necessities and character of the indweller, who is the only builder.” As we know, true building emerges first from dwelling and our houses will only “be lined with beauty, where they come into contact with our
lives…and not overlaid with it” (Thoreau *Walden* 27). To ask into and to recover the meaning of dwelling is ineluctably to confront the “meanness” – another of Thoreau’s keywords – of our architecture and thus our lives.

Yet these “opening visions of captivity and despair” are not limited to the plight of dwelling, even though it may be the plight, that plight which houses all modern man’s other plights. Thoreau inquires,

But why do men degenerate ever?  
Who made them serfs of the soil?  
What is the nature of luxury that enervates and destroys nations?  
Are we sure there is none of it in our own lives? (see *Walden* 9)

Alongside Heidegger and Ingold’s critique of “the triumph of technology,” we can set Thoreau’s critique of modern technology as the general loss of experience, the mechanization of production, and the now-familiar spatiotemporal effects of rail technology. Of the Fitchburg Railroad Thoreau understands that while the trip is fast one loses all sense of the landscape – “as seeing the country and getting experience of that kind” – in Ingold’s sense (Thoreau *Walden* 36). In Trobriand gardens we came to understand how the succession of particular tasks and the phases of garden making activated and inflected the experience of time and seasonality, and I suggested this as part of dwelling itself. Because one way of understanding Thoreau’s experiment in living is aligned with just this, namely the taskscape’s making and remaking of temporalities, it is not surprising that Thoreau was deeply attuned to how modern technology inverts this order, the inversion commonly understood as that effected by the “clocktime” of industry. In “Sounds,” Thoreau observes,

The startings and arrivals of the cars are now the epochs of the village day. They go and come with such regularity and precision, and their whistles can be heard so far,
that the farmers set their clocks by them, and thus one well conducted institution regulates a whole country. Have men not improved somewhat in punctuality since the railroad was invented? Do they not talk and think faster in the depot than they did in the stage-offices? There is something electrifying in the atmosphere of the former place (79-80).

The passage of the railroad now measures time, and moderns accordingly regulate the schedule of their work with an alien rigidity. This is in contrast to the contouring of experience guided by the passage of task – itself often guided by an appropriate inauguration – from whence emerges one’s sense of the polythetic temporal rhythms of life, a temporality that is typically social.\(^{20}\) Thus, Thoreau inquires into the “means” of our living – how it is that we come to make our life – how our “modes of living” come to form an account, make a narrative, and how it is we do, or do not, account for the time of this living. From the shores of Walden Pond, studying the movements of the Fitchburg Rail, technology appears to order not rhythmic but homogenous time. Anticipating Heidegger’s admonition that the *Gestell* begins an ostensibly inexorable cycle wherein all beings are entrapped, Thoreau writes, “We have constructed a fate, an *Atropos*, that never turns aside. (Let that be the name of your engine.)” (80). And in an often cited line, Thoreau warns, “But lo! men have become the tools of their tools” (25). He has admonished us to take our time, “and set about some free labor.” Namely, a labor – the labor of dwelling – that might free you from the time of technology (53). It thereby follows, “We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn...To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour” (61).

\(^{20}\) We can note, in passing, that garden techniques, themselves, are intrinsically rhythmic.
Yet it is not the plight of dwelling alone that concerns Thoreau; it is also the plight of work, of livelihood, and the meaning of livelihood, or, the meaninglessness of one’s work. (This is, of course, not to imply that the two plights are not intimately related.) Against the latter – that of the “crisis” of work – Thoreau holds up his conception of “morning work,” a notion to be thought alongside Ingold’s “technique.” Both morning work and technique are opposed to industrial capitalism, and are ways to interpret, and perhaps – prospectively – fill, the precarious absence, or lacuna, created by modernity as the handles of meaningful experience disintegrate and labor is disembedded from social relations, and therefore social meaning, in “the triumph of technology.” It is to this “crisis in our [modern] lives” that Thoreau’s experiment was intended to enact a “moult ing season,” a time of discrimination and transformative evaluation (again we encounter a correlation between technique, making, and seasonality). But what is to be shed? To be sure, it is the misapprehensions of a false economy; the false consciousness of political economy. Thoreau writes, “[M]en labor under a mistake” (3). Whether that mistake be our tolerance of the expropriation of surplus value, exchange value or the commodity form generally, abstract labor, or the clock itself, need not concern us here; it is likely all of these and more. What is necessary to acknowledge is that this “mistake” documented in Walden is ultimately the same displacement described by Tim Ingold as the objectification and externalization of a relationality embedded at the center of socio-economic life: the displacement of technique. Thoreau’s attunement to labor is also reminiscent of our analysis of technique insofar as his ruminations are not limited to the concept of labor, but of how we labor, and how we know what we know through this productive activity. Or conversely, how our productive activity relates to our ignorance and despair. “We do not know that it is necessary for things to be as bad as they are; because we
do not know why we labor as we do,” is how Cavell expresses this correlation. What I want to emphasize here is how Thoreau’s recognition of the relation between mystification, false consciousness, and industrial production is proportionate, inversely, to Ingold’s emphasis on the embedded epistemology, the intimate knowledges, of technique; Thoreau asks, “Where is the division of labor to end? and what object does it finally serve?” (31). Yet two sentences earlier he has stated, matter-of-factly, “We belong to the community.” Obviously the social itself, our relatedness, has been forgotten, concealed by the advanced division of labor and the commodity form. The mystifications of modern political economy should be compared to the mystification of Walden Pond itself, that pond believed by many to have no bottom; “that Walden reached quite through to the other side of the globe,” at least until Thoreau took the trouble to sound it in the Winter of 1846. As Marx understood, a social relation of production, under capitalism, is something able, quite realistically, to appear as something else, existing apart from individual human beings, so it was that the people of Concord believed Walden Pond to exist apart from its bottom. Truly, “[i]t is remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it” (190). So easy it is to fathom what is deceivingly “unfathomable.” Again, Cavell:

The mysteries *Walden* goes into about buying and selling all the farms in his neighborhood, and about annually carrying off the landscape, suggest that nobody really knows how it happens that anyone owns anything at all, or why it is that, as Locke puts it, though the earth was given to us in common, it is now so uncommonly divided and held (SW 91).

\*Walden*’s “nightmare maze” of terms about work, productive activity, and political economy stretch as long as the seven miles of beans – the lengths of his furrows added together – and under readerly scrutiny Thoreau’s terminological accounting begins to unravel and circle
around and around itself in a dizzying demonstration of disdain and acerbic critique; together his tropes, themselves, open onto a “Bottomless Pond.” Improvement, commerce, capital, change, interest, means, prospects, spend, waste, possess, employment, expense, trade, work, fortune, gain, earn, afford, are just a sampling of the lexical indexing and tropology performed by Thoreau, and sufficient I believe, when coupled with the mood of Walden, to align Thoreau with the critical allegiances of those moderns writing against the productionist model of industry. Thoreau cites the dramatist George Chapman, on this “false society,” and he too decries it as “lustily as [the] chanticleer in morning” of Walden’s epigraph.
Conclusion

In the course of this study, I suggested that Trobriand garden magic be taken seriously as an ordering of reality different from that of the Gestell; in other words, as a mode of articulation unavailable to the measure of the Gestell. Similarly, we can understand Thoreauvian technique – both practical and tropic – for its comes to us, if apprehended, as from another gardener seeking the “possible sources of articulation outside of those already established” (Siegel 153). The passionate participation of Omarakana technique, both magical and practical, exhibits a personal, cosmological relation to the world, and while it may narrowly be conceived as instrumental, its intellectual and emotive content is anathema to the instrumental and productionist modalities implied by modern technology.

Thoreauvian technique as an implicate interestedness and a nearness is also anathema to the Gestell. And to the extent that Thoreau desires to rebuild and rehabit the experiential center of the oikos, and his experiment is a study of the internal management of an ecology of relations, his dwelling also makes a cosmology. Techniques of construction and cultivation at Walden and Omarakana are engagements producing and acknowledging relations while also producing yams, sweet potatoes, beans, and peas. Both sites are suffused with an orientation, a style, an ethos, and a guiding intentionality. To be sure the purportedly disinterested, detached, and “objectively neutral” position of the ideal Western scientific observer, a
Cartesian observer, is a different type than the Trobriander technician.\textsuperscript{21} And while in both accounts, prospective thought does intervene in the world, its intervention is from within. Additionally, its intervention is social, and is made in a manner reminiscent of Heideggerean “saving” [retten] insofar as its saving is an affirmative keeping, a saving of something from its being forgotten (where forgetting is its withdrawal into meaninglessness); a freeing of something – a cornerstone, a word – “into its own presencing.”

On the contrary, the \textit{Gestell} intervenes in physical law from without. A referential notion of proper conduct – those “guiding principles for human action \textit{within} the world” – is precluded because of its foundation upon a metaphysics of mastery, of “over-standing.” If dwelling and its techniques reveal the worlding of a world, the domination of the \textit{Gestell} controls by seizing and driving an endless and empty productivity founded upon the constant availability and sheer usability of resources (to be met with an endless consumption). By this token, it is unclear if the totality produced by modern technology is even a world at all (see Dreyfus 32). It is for these reasons that Ingold claims as “cosmology gives way to technology, the relation between people and world is turned inside out, so that what was a cosmos or lifeworld becomes a world…externally presented to life…It is a movement from revelation to control, and from partial knowledge to the calculated risk” (Ingold \textit{PE} 216). Which brings to mind a passage from a later essay of Thoreau’s, entitled “Walking.” He writes,

\textsuperscript{21} The “ideal,” Western scientific observer appears here only as a type – one who employs categories and methodologies of distancing and neutrality in the formation of positive scientific knowledge. However, since at least Heisenberg’s principle of “indeterminism” and Bohr’s “complementarity” the Western scientific observer herself appears to be more of a participant-observer, influencing measurement and outcome, and increasingly acknowledging her role in the construction of a particular ordering of reality.
In their relation to Nature men appear to me for the most part, notwithstanding their arts, lower than the animals. It is not often a beautiful relation...How little appreciation of the beauty of the landscape there is among us! We have to be told that the Greeks called the world Κόσμος, Beauty, or Order, but we do not see clearly why they did so, and we esteem it at best only a curious philological fact (173).

The making and remaking of possibility intrinsic to the operative nature of garden magic and economic trope – what we might call the imaginative horizon of these orientations – is subverted in the Gestell of modern technology. The dweller, in her vocation of care, makes a world in the face of possible worlds: “Il faut cultiver notre jardin.” This is done through a process of gathering wherein the practitioner – a cultivator – recognizes, affirms, and encourages, possibility through the assembly, or better, the weaving together of relations.²² This is what is meant by the making and remaking of the possible itself, and it is in fact how relations are actualized and activated within a world. Thus, in dwelling, one dwells in possibility. But technology, as Gestell, does not – cannot – take the appropriate measure, the measure internal to things (more so, this is the very measure of propriety necessary for the creation of any relationality or nearness). Hence what is dangerous and destructive about the technological era is its ceaseless appropriation and penetration, its drive to make everything wholly visible and wholly present, to eliminate the enigmatic (that poetic sense of the indissolubility or irreducibility of the world’s beauty and order), and “ends by pushing entities beyond their appropriate limits” (Zimmerman 226). For Heidegger, “Technology drives the earth beyond the developed sphere of its possibility into such things which are no longer a possibility and are thus impossible” (“Overcoming Metaphysics” 108). It is the claim of cosmology that living things have their own “intrinsic limit and measure.”

²² As it were, the prospective poetry of Thoreauvian and Trobriand cultivation and construction is but one example of this; not to be forgotten is that central lesson of Malinowski’s Coral Gardens: that magical and practical technique are intertwined and inseparable.
The mode of technological disclosure denies this intrinsic limit once utility in production becomes the sole measure and dominant essence of beings. And once this is the sole measure and essence of beings, they are no longer beings – they are merely objects, resources, commodities, pictures of themselves, pornography – and the world is no longer a world; it is certainly not a cosmos. It is this limitless excavation of limits projected by the *Gestell* – with no ability to register a propriety (a poetry) in relation to the world – that is not just inappropriate but “impossible.” For those bound by the *Gestell*, there is nothing to care for because everything is always already available or always already disposable, or both. Thus for Heidegger the modern technological world becomes an un-world. The awareness of connectivity, relationality, intrinsic measure, and limit, as vital constituting forces of human existence *qua* dwelling is lost (see Zimmerman 225-9). The *Gestell* can never be a mode of cultivation, of understanding, because it cannot get near the world. Consequently, the proximities of dwelling cannot exist, and with no way to locate itself the modern human cannot know the world as cosmos. If the plight of dwelling in modernity is an expression of our modern lives, “alienated and turned from home, needing return,” then it is also the expression of meaning’s absence in modernity (Cavell “Night and Day” 125). A world, exhausted of its possibilities, and the loss of interest in this world – this is what Heidegger discussed as the nihilism definitive of modern technology.
Epilogue

From the beginning, dwelling has appeared to us as something lost to us. This was what Heidegger named the plight of dwelling in modernity; that the “proper sense of bauen, namely dwelling, falls into oblivion.” It is somehow appropriate, then, that in the opening pages of *Walden*, Thoreau included these obscure lines:

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them...I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves (11).

Walden was a temporary dwelling-place, and the book of the place became a set of instructions for how to dwell. Or, it was at least the record of one man’s temporary inhabitation, of his economy. But *Walden*, as the above passage attests to, is also a book of losses. The work of morning is also a mourning. “The issue is one of inhabitation, placing yourself,” writes Cavell. “But placing a lost self in a land that is gone is an exercise of mourning” (“Reply to John Hollander” 590). Thus the morning work this study records should not be confined only to Thoreau’s *Walden*. And the philosopher’s essay on dwelling, where all of this began, is itself also an elegy for dwelling. And if not elegy, then it is a catalogue of the great challenges that lie before each one of us if dwelling is to be reactivated in our modern lives. This would seem to be the paradox of dwelling in modernity. A paradox that is, incidentally, hinted at in the very first lines of Thoreau’s *Walden*, as the writer informs us:
When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone…in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts… I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again (1).

This is, partially, what Cavell has in mind when he closes *The Senses of Walden* by stating, “Walden was always gone, from the beginning of the words of *Walden*” (119).

While these places may be lost to us – the Black Forest farmhouse, with its corner altar and community table; the magical coral gardens of the Trobrianders; a quiet cabin on the shore of Walden Pond – we still have the books of these places. In this way it is the books themselves which remain, and, remain placeable. What I mean is that while Walden, or Omarakana, may have been gone, for us, from the beginning, what remains are the records of how their world-making agencies took care, the care that was their dwelling. “Such building only takes care,” says Heidegger, and the advantages of focusing on cultivation in this study have been in how it activates a process of knowing the world equivalent to the ongoing process of caring for it. It is this process that we have come to define as dwelling. In fact, it is the *ethos* of dwelling.

If dwelling appears lost to us in modernity, then what I have brought into relief is a feature of dwelling that, hopefully, seems a little more in reach, a little more practicable. This is dwelling’s cultivation of care; a care that, over time, makes meanings and makes life matter, that is, makes it meaningful. (And “humans are fully human only when things matter,” as Robert P. Harrison has noted [*Gardens 9*].) Part of the nihilism wrought by the *Gestell* is in how its presentation of “possibility” prepares human being for little more than sheer, passive receptivity (a technological “receptivity” not to be confused with actual perception and perceptivity). The human who is merely a consumer, or a producer for that
matter, is no human at all and therefore finds real human fulfillment to be unattainable. The human trapped by the apparatus of modern technology is not and cannot be a cultivator, nor the giver of care.

What Malinowski’s Trobriand ethnography and Thoreau’s autobiographical account give us are actual practices, some real possibilities, of how care has been activated in the past, and how these durative engagements once made cosmological meanings, that is, the meaning of dwelling. If what these anthropologies give us are accounts of past making, of making “Beauty and Order” as Thoreau would have it, then the very tense of their genre is also their prospective gift, the imaginative horizon inherent to them as studies (writings) of the human. Said differently, these actual examples of living otherwise stand not only in harmonious relation to the critical modernist tradition we have considered. Perhaps more importantly, they offer accounts that may somehow instruct or inspire us in our own attempts to remake our living together, to live otherwise; to recover the meanings of dwelling, building, and being and in so doing reimagine our social existence. For it is only through the “encounter with the other,” as Crapanzano suggests, that “one comes to an acknowledgement, a recuperation, in a somewhat different register, of oneself and one’s world” (12).23 The accounts these texts offer us are, amongst other things, accounts of care. And by the end of

23 Interestingly, the alternative registration of “oneself and one’s world,” made available by the ethnography to the reader, as suggested by Vincent Crapanzano, seems to resonate with the alternative registration of human self and world made available by the orientation of cosmology. What the two “registrations” may have in common is, once again, measure. But crucially it is a measurement made between oneself and a world made relational, made proximate and “known.” A relationality to otherness that opens onto an imaginative horizon of possibility is seemingly unavailable to a human observer who chooses to stands completely detached from the world, and therefore cannot take the measure of his relation to, or within, it.
our own accounting, dwelling has come fully under the sign of curation. That is, dwelling is subsumed by the practice of caring for it.

But what of “loss,” whence we began? Harrison suggests, “One way or another longing is the loss of life, and loss the life of longing...To live loss as a matter of fact means to live poetically” (Forests 231). But what does this mean? In the coral garden and the bean field we saw that to live and work poetically was to neighbor the world, gathering it nearer and making within it meaningful proximities. It was poetically that these gardeners dwelled. Perhaps, then, to live loss poetically in modernity means to gather together the traces of our losses and in so doing “retrace” them. Such a gathering could result in the weaving together of new forms of relation and relatedness. It would be a story, remade, of social existence; it would become, in time, itself a social fabric. In Walden’s chapter on “The Village,” Thoreau says, “[N]ot till we are completely lost, or turned around...in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations” (115). The plight of dwelling will not be recognized until we moderns first realize that we are indeed truly lost, for it can be said that we do not even fully realize the fact that we do not know where it is we actually are. To do so, to locate ourselves and thus place ourselves, would be to realize the full extent of our relations. This may be what another poet had in mind when writing that “communion is the very basis of human living, of living humanly” (Levertov 49). To fully acknowledge our ignorance, and as a result, to rediscover ourselves within a relational matrix – and at the same time found a poetic narrative of this reciprocal matrix – would be to begin again the process of dwelling. (Perhaps relation itself is the abode of this dwelling.) Moreover, to realize and affirm our
embeddedness – our relatedness – within the meshwork of the world would be to activate human care.

Cavell asks, “Why do we put things together as we do? Why do we put ourselves together with just these things to make a world? What choices have we said farewell to?” “To put things together differently,” he continues, “would demand their recollecting” (Philosophy 280). This recollecting is, finally, a caretaking. It is a taking care. A recollection of how we may become more fully human. “The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling.” Yet we moderns, as distracted as we are, fail to recollect this basic fact of dwelling because, as Thoreau says in his next sentence, “we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly” (Walden 3). Lacking an ethos of care, we fail to treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly; we who forget: “Only that day dawns to which we are awake,” that “there is more day to dawn,” and the “sun is but a morning star” (Walden 223). And it is these closing thoughts from our Concord in-dweller that I hear echoed across a long century, not just in the words of the German philosopher, but in the lines of another American poet, a Concord neighbor no less. Where, in a collection aptly titled Memory Gardens, he writes,

But this world now with its want, its pain, its tyrannic confusions and hopelessness, sees no star far shining, no wonder as light in the night. Only us then remember, discover,
still can care for the human.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{24} See Robert Creeley’s “Memory,” in \textit{Memory Gardens} (New York: New Directions, 1982), p. 86.
Bibliography


