

Symposium

“When are we ever at home?”: Nostalgia for the future, for Europe and elsewhere

Barbara Cassin’s question, “When are we ever at home?”, is likely to seem pertinent, first of all, to those who are away from home, for personal, political, or other reasons. But it speaks not only to people in such positions: it can also say something to those who have never left home. Cassin’s insight is powerful and alarming for us, especially at a time of large-scale migrations, often arousing extreme political emotions, both for migrants and for those who are apparently at home. It is a time when the question of whether there is any ground for us to claim for ourselves arises in a new way. What is it that can be claimed as “our” history and collective and individual identity? These matters pose questions of educational import, in formal and informal ways,

*How has this question arisen for Cassin? In *Nostalgia: when are we ever at home?* (2013/2016), she considers the three different homes of Odysseus, Aeneas, and Arendt, in order to explore aspects of the human condition: “I thus choose to understand, as the lesson of an odyssey, that we cannot stay ‘there,’ that is to say, that we ‘are’ never ‘there,’ never at home. Rather than cultivating roots, I would cultivate the elsewhere, a world that does not close itself off, full of the ‘likes’ of us, all different – like us, not like us (Cassin, 2013/2016, p. 63).”*

This symposium brings these thoughts to bear on educational questions concerning identity, inclusion-exclusion or integration, history, and language, all of which relate to the sense of home. In their readings of Cassin, the four presenters bring concrete examples of home into question in the light of experiences of exile, immigrancy, language difference, and museums.

Brief notes on each paper:

1. While Barbara Cassin in her book provides three different ideas of home, later in her book, she explores a related contrast in the experience and thinking of Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. This paper attempts to examine Heidegger’s longing for home – that is, in part his sense of a kind of essence of home - particularly through exploring his attitude toward other languages. In so doing, the discussion moves from language to languages, and then to translation. Translation is shown to be of special importance in terms of the conceptualisation of a responsible response to the other. This is in the end to demonstrate the limits in Heidegger’s capacity to recognise and acknowledge the complete otherness of the other.
2. Nostalgia and homelessness seems to be a widespread feeling in Europe. Recent events in the West, such as Brexit and the return to nationalisms, have revealed a nostalgia for the old devalued values. Migrants when moving to another place may also experience nostalgia. This mutual feeling of nostalgia, shared by Europeans and migrants, could become a starting point for a conversation of different cultures. Thus, educative practices may emerge and support the move from the nostalgia for the past to a nostalgia to the future, through the creation of new values that are mutually inclusive.
3. The collection of short stories entitled “Exile and the Kingdom” by *pie-noir* Albert Camus embrace the themes of exile and return as illuminating an underlying anxiety of inclusion and exclusion. Written during the time of the French-Algerian war, these stories may be said to

exemplify those who, in Cassin's terms, "are' never there, never at home." Through considering such stories, this paper discusses the connection between a 'belonging-to-something' and one's identity, and what it means, then, to be simultaneously included and excluded. Such ideas are important for education, not only in recognising identities of those who 'belong-in-exile', but in creating educational spaces where such identities can be more fully accounted for.

4. This paper examines the educational role of the museum in relation to matters of national, collective, and individual identity in relation to the problem of nostalgia. It discusses the fragile nature of identity in the museum setting in the light of issues of temporality, which are commonly expressed in the construction of the museum building and the (re)presentation of its objects. It brings the ideas of 'nostalgia for the past' and 'nostalgia for the future' together in notions of history and of collective and individual identity. The museum becomes a reminder of the nature of the human condition, in oscillation between fixity and "the not-yet" through which the sense of home and identity is reviewed.

At home, we experience large or small-scale movements of immigrancy. The reasons for such movement can vary from political instability affecting large groups of people to individual desires of various kinds. This causes insiders to a society to fear new-comers or otherwise a naïve political correctness to the effect that all are welcome to our home. In the light of this, how are children to be taught a sense of home, of their history, and their identity? The symposium calls for new ways of thinking about the sense of collective and individual identity. To do so, we discuss how to understand the sense of nostalgia and home in relation to questions of identity, inclusion-exclusion or integration, history, and language. We refer mostly to historical cases from Europe, but Europe is not only the case. The symposium attempts to bring to the discussion on nostalgia, the sense of home, that is everywhere, or elsewhere.

200 words

1. From Heidegger to translation and the address of the other

Is Heidegger's philosophy of language capable of receiving the other that is quite different? Of seeing or witnessing this? This paper attempts to demonstrate the limits of Heidegger in terms of the capacity to recognise and acknowledge the complete otherness of the other. In doing so, I examine some of Heidegger's remarks regarding being and language, particularly in relation to his attitude toward other languages. Through exploring this, I move from language to languages, and then to translation. I explore translation, beyond the technical understanding of it, as a site of diversity and plurality: I consider it as the place for a responsible response to the other. To this end, I acknowledge language already in its plurality, as sustained in and by that plurality rather than as being rooted and secured in its specificity. To understand language in this way is also to acknowledge the very condition of human being in its plurality, always already in relation to the other. In this sense, no matter how thought-provoking his account of language is, Heidegger's philosophy of language may not be enough to address current problems in society—that is, societies now, more evidently than ever before, that are based on human plurality.

2. Nostalgia and nihilism in the West: Revaluating the contribution of migrants

Nietzsche diagnosed that the European culture would experience the devaluation of its values, which he called nihilism, and that this event would manifest in different ways. Some symptoms of nihilism are the widespread feelings of nostalgia and homelessness in the West, translated in recent events such as Brexit and the return to nationalisms. Barbara Cassin (2013/2016) argues that nostalgia goes beyond the idea of homesickness; and homeland beyond the idea of territory. Hence, homeland as well as language is something that does not belong. Cassin questions whether nostalgia could be a feeling that defines Europe. In this paper I argue that we cannot discuss nihilism today without considering the impact and the contribution of the experiences, languages and ways of life of migrants. My claim is that there is a shared, mutual feeling of nostalgia and homelessness felt both by Europeans immersed on nihilism, and by migrants, who have moved to another home. This mutual feeling of homelessness and nostalgia could, however, be a starting point for educative practices and for a nostalgia to the future to emerge through the creation of new, and mutually inclusive, values.

3. Exile and Inclusion: The Concept of Belonging in Albert Camus' "Exile and the Kingdom"

In 1957, the French-Algerian writer Albert Camus wrote a collection of short stories entitled "Exile and the Kingdom", composed during the Algerian struggle for independence, which culminated in the displacement of around one-million pied-noirs and their "return" to France. In this paper, I will explore the themes of exile and return, and how these can lead to an underlying anxiety of inclusion and exclusion. Camus's writings are clearly influenced by his pied-noir status, and these short stories explore the identity of those who are, in Cassin's terms, "never there, never at home." Through considering two of these short stories, I will explore the themes of recognition and rootedness, which will lead to a further discussion around what belonging looks like, the connection between a 'belonging-to-something' and one's identity, and what it means, in that case, to be simultaneously included and excluded. These themes are important in understanding what role education may play in relation to this, not only in recognising the identities of displaced people as 'belonging-in-exile', but in creating educational spaces in which such identities can be more fully represented and encountered.

4. On Nostalgia: Standing at the National Museum of Korea

This paper examines the educational role of the museum in relation to matters of identity and the problem of nostalgia. Following Cassin, I try to show that nostalgia is in part oriented (paradoxically) towards the future. I begin with the idea of authenticity as this has become prominent in museum studies (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006), the search for which has become a reason for visiting museums and heritages. The paper

problematizes any sense of fixity in the dichotomy between authenticity and inauthenticity. It moves on to discuss the fragile nature of identity in the museum setting in the light of issues of temporality, commonly expressed in the construction of the museum building and the (re)presentation of its objects. It brings the idea of 'nostalgia for the past' and 'nostalgia for the future' together in the senses of history and of collective and individual identity. The process involves the reassertion of memory through the sustaining of pictures or other signs and symbols. These construct the collective memory of the past in the midst of an absence, which I relate to as nostalgia for the past. There is another sense of nostalgia, however, that is oriented towards the future: the sense of identity asserted in the museum fails to achieve what it claims for the present; it can only assert the sense of identity in terms of a future anterior, i.e. it will have been achieved. The assertion of national identity represented in the museum expresses the absence of what it at present claims, and this I refer to as nostalgia for the future. The museum becomes a reminder of the nature of the human condition, in oscillation between fixity (the display at present) and "the not-yet" (the absence of the essence to which the display lays claim).

Reference

- Barbara, C. (2016) *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?* Trans. Brault, P-A. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Reisinger, C., Steiner, J. (2006) Reconceptualizing object authenticity, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(1), pp. 65-86.