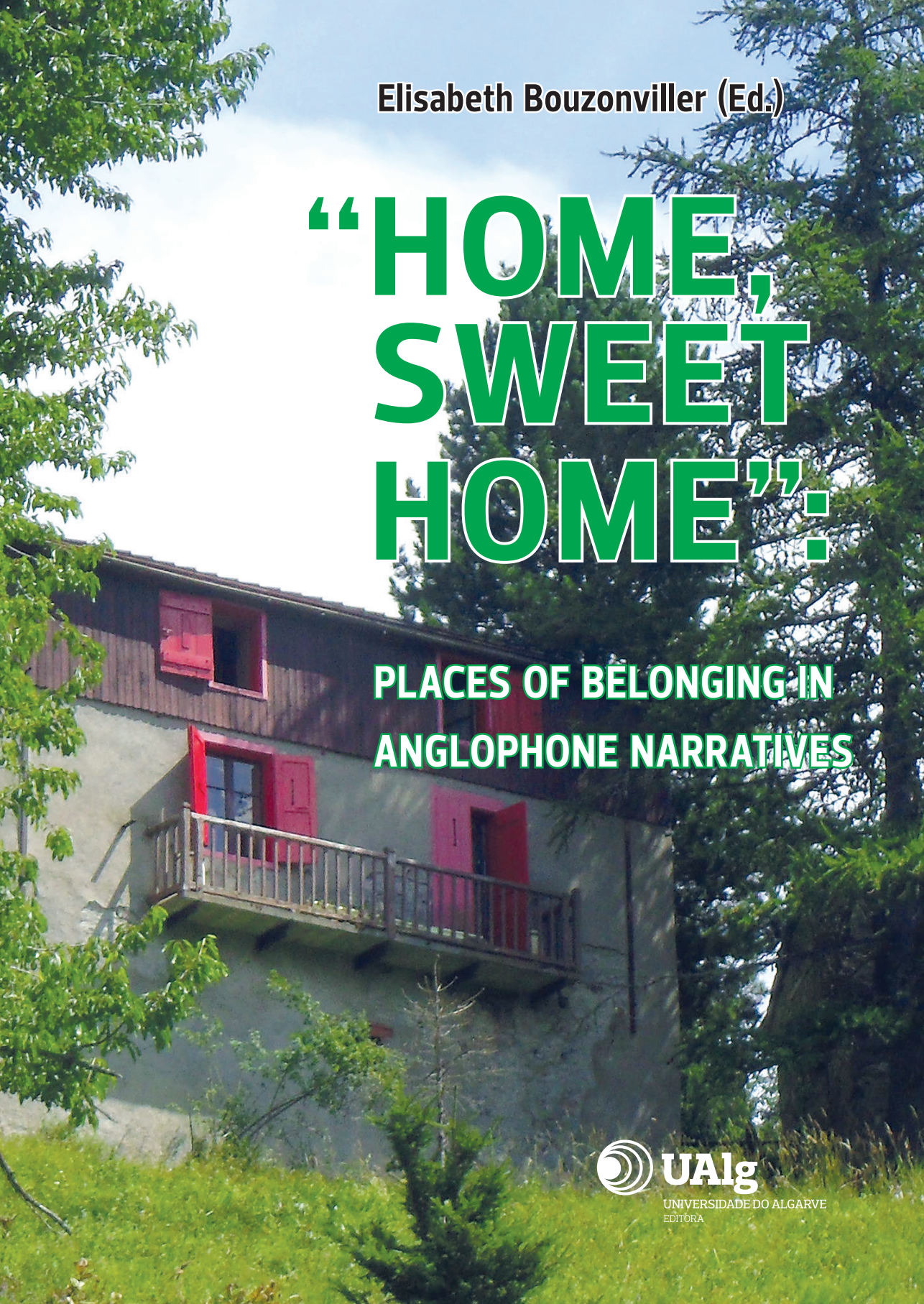

Elisabeth Bouzonviller (Ed.)

"HOME, SWEET HOME":

PLACES OF BELONGING IN ANGLOPHONE NARRATIVES

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EDITORA

“HOME, SWEET HOME”:

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"'Home is not a little thing.'"
(Toni Morrison *Paradise* 213)

"Home is something that is carried with us everywhere, like the shell of a turtle. Home is at the centre of our lives. It is about people, land, culture, and what we dream."
(Sandra Laronde III)

"My own favorite [word] since childhood is just 'Home.' I love the way its stately gate of an 'H' swings open onto the shielded domesticity of roundnesses, the way Home's little 'e' stands, back-looking, bye-saying, like the household's child sent out to wave company safe into the night."
(Allan Gurganus 221)

In memory of my home in Aix-Les-Bains
where I grew up among family and friends and
unconsciously developed a strong sense of
Alpine belonging, rediscovered only when away
from my childhood mountains.

Once again to Charlotte…

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Introduction

READING HOMES ON THE MAP AND BEYOND

Elisabeth Bouzonviller

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in," says Warren in Robert Frost's poem "The Death of the Hired Man" (38). It is the place where one can always try to work his/her way back, along the prodigal son pattern; it may also be the place one clings to, or rediscovers, after he/she has, willingly or not, been deprived of it. Whether it be a house, a town, a piece of land, a region or a whole country, home is a random or chosen place of enrooting and "a showcase of human experience" (Zhang 15).

After months of repetitive lockdowns worldwide due to the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, pondering the issue of houses and home seems almost a zeitgeist approach as people throughout the globe have been repeatedly confronted to a life limited to this familiar restricted spatial framework. While the present situation may have highlighted—sometimes strained—the relationship we have with our homes, it has, above all, forcibly emphasized its major importance in human experience and therefore in the cultural productions aiming at representing it.

Each year in late December, North American viewers can watch endless successions of Christmas TV movies which are all based on a similar pattern. A young urban professional goes back home for Christmas and, despite initial prejudice, reestablishes fruitful links with the place and community, thus proving the value of roots, whether they be personal or geographical. Love is of course always part of the bargain and found in the provincial location that, in the end, manages to anchor back the one who had strayed away and almost lost his/her soul in the big city. Despite their lack of originality, those repetitive melodramatic scenarios clearly

suggest that the notion of home refers to a spatial, social and emotional issue. Echoing this unavoidable geographical and intimate attachment, this volume focuses on narratives in English in which homes may be houses, but also land and other concrete or abstract places of belonging.

Besides, the notion of home is not only the combination of the geographical and emotional, which entails the transformation of space into place, it is also subjugated to the time issue. John Thieme notices, indeed, that "[r]eturning to the scene of our childhood, we visit another place because of its metamorphosis through time" (1). Time impacts place as "the identities of places are inextricably linked with the moments in which they are perceived" [...] (Thieme 215); thus, one's "home, sweet home" is much more elusive than a simple spatial reference and if it can be a matter of geography and architecture, it is also linked to such time-related topics as memory and identity.

While "[e]verything is in flux and the identity of places is constantly in motion" (Thieme 1), home is the result of a spatial transformation through occupation and perception. Space is, indeed, transformed through habitation and representation—the latter including literature, which is the medium at stake in this volume. Bill Ashcroft posits that "[h]abitation describes a way of being in place, a way of being which defines and transforms place" (15). Thus, home, a place close to one's heart, is space transformed through a peculiar, intimate experience since "[...] undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value [...]" (Tuan 6). In the first essay offered in this volume, Emmanuelle Peraldo focuses on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and explores how a desert island may become home to the stranded traveler through his capacity of adaptation, whereas he felt a complete lack of homeliness in his original place of residence despite its being familiar. His sense of home is thus closely linked with appropriation and transformation, which conjure up colonial and ecological concerns.

While ancient Greek society already divided human space between the public and private spheres through contrasted references to the home and the city with the terms *oikos* and *polis*, Western societies particularly emphasized this dichotomy during the 19th century. This was the time when the expression "Home, sweet home" became popular in English-speaking

countries and meant to celebrate the happiness of a return home and the fond feelings for this cherished place often synonymous with family life away from the turmoil of urban and public life. The phrase, with its specific and now forgotten punctuation, was initially part of the lyrics of a song written by American actor John Howard Payne (1791–1852).[1] Payne made a career on stage in London and sold some plays in 1823 to the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, Charles Kemble. After some alterations, including the addition of the song which had originally been a youthful four-stanza poem (Sylvester 224), one of these plays became the operetta *Clari, or the Maid of Milan* and was first performed at Kemble's theater that same year. In 1852, musician Henry Bishop, who had composed the melody for Payne's lyrics, circulated the song again, which became very popular, in particular in the United States. About a decade later, during the Civil War, the successful song is even rumored to have been banned from Union Army camps for being too reminiscent of home and family, which might have induced desertion.

The importance of homes and houses in North American life has always been in keeping with the founding myths at the root of the nation. President Jefferson himself dreamed of a nation of farmers sheltered from the vices bred by crowded urban and industrial centers.[2] His ideal echoed J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's idyllic family and rural way of life as presented in his *Letters from an American Farmer*. "I never return home without feeling some pleasing emotion [...]," wrote the emigrated gentleman farmer (Crèvecoeur paragraph 4). Beforehand, through

[1] Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there
Which seek thro' the world, is ne'er met elsewhere
Home! Home!
Sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home
There's no place like home!
An exile from home splendor dazzles in vain
Oh give me my lowly thatched cottage again
The birds singing gaily that came at my call
And gave me the peace of mind dearer than all
Home, home, sweet, sweet home
There's no place like home, there's no place like home! (Payne)

[2] "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God [...]," "The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body" (Jefferson 175).

centuries, as Crèvecoeur recalls,[3] the dream of owning a house—even a modest one—and leading a pastoral life of independence had indeed been hopeless for Europeans, for whom property had been associated with a certain social rank, and even unattainable titles of nobility, which the young American republic paid attention to forbid in its Constitution.[4] The possibility to acquire a home in the New World, even a simple log cabin on a piece of land conquered at the expense of what was perceived as empty wilderness, was one of the prospects and motivations that fed the western movement of the Frontier. David Latour considers one of America's most famous basic homes, although not one on the Frontier, when studying Henry David Thoreau's canonical self-narrative. Settled in a cabin by Walden Pond, the transcendentalist writer reflected on his relation to the world from an original, intimate enrooting of his own choosing, a home stripped down to the bare minimum to favor a simplified lifestyle. Latour demonstrates that, far from being a Diogenes, Thoreau remained in touch with the world on his own terms from his surprising porous home enabling communication with his natural and social environment, even with the entire cosmos. According to Latour, reading about this temporary home encourages everyone to build "a cabin of one's own" favoring one's knowledge and imagination.

During the 19th century, the ideal of owning a home of one's own gave birth to scores of literary works of varied literary value. Horatio Alger popularized the "rags to riches" pattern,[5] which contributed to a national discourse based on conquest and the hope to have access to property through self-reliance and hard work within the prosperous young nation, although it entailed dispossession and displacement for many African Americans and Native Americans.

In Europe, Queen Victoria ruled from 1837 until her death in 1901, and her reign, which witnessed major social changes induced by the industrial revolution, corresponded to a period during which domesticity,

[3] "[...] no wonder that so many Europeans who have never been able to say that such portion of land was theirs, cross the Atlantic to realise that happiness" (Crèvecoeur paragraph 4).

[4] Article I, section 9.8.

[5] Horatio Alger (1832–1899) published juvenile novels and became successful thanks, in particular, to his 1868 *Ragged Dick*. In the long run, a trip to California led him to adopt the West as a new environment for his stories of success closely linked with the American Dream.

as celebrated in the aforementioned song, was considered as the sphere of women. In the wake of industrialization, work locations shifted, leaving many women at home while men went away to find employment and wages, although many working-class women had to look for employment outside of home too. From a Marxist point of view, the rise of capitalism has been perceived as responsible for this separate spheres pattern while it made of the home a private place devoid of the means of production, which had been "natural" so far and were then replaced by those "created by civilization" (Marx and Engels 93). For many, home became a shelter from the turbulent, merciless world of industry, commerce, finance and politics, a "home, sweet home." In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers*[6] the father of the family exclaims: "'Cold! [...] what do ye stay-at-homes know about cold [...]?'," thus clearly pointing out the sole realm of influence his wife and daughter are entitled to (108).

As the new nuclear middle-class family required the careful attention of mothers meant to protect their loved ones through their devoted care, women lost ground in the public sphere and focused on the comforts of home and private matters such as religion, morality, marriage, maternity, care and fashion, as well as domestic skills such as sewing, cooking, cleaning or decorating, whether directly or through domestic servants. Books on housekeeping abounded and tried to teach upper and middle class wives how to be "angels in the house,"[7] like Isabella Beeton's successful *Book of Household Management*[8] dating from 1861, which described "The Mistress['s]" "necessary" "home qualities and virtues" (1-2), or Shirley Forster Murphy's *Our Homes, and How to Make them Healthy* from 1883. Thus, Coventry Patmore's long poem[9] reflected the

[6] Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865).

[7] Coventry Patmore's "The Angel in the House," initially published in 1854, was expanded into four installments till 1862. It detailed his courtship of, and marriage with, a woman he considered to be an ideal, a paragon of innocence and morality devoted to her home and family.

[8] The first edition of Beeton's work opens on an illustration by H. N. Woods showing a rural family scene above a quotation from Felicia Hemans's poem "The Homes of England," which reads: "The Free, fair Homes of England!" It is followed by the title page which bears a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "Nothing lovelier can be found in Woman, than to study household good" (I). In her first chapter, Beeton launches her theory about home: "AS WITH THE COMMANDER OF AN ARMY, or the leader of any enterprise, so is it with the mistress of a house" (1). Positing that "a mistress must [...] be perfectly conversant with all the other arts of making and keeping a comfortable home" (III), Beeton tackles various topics ranging from servants' management, to cooking, cleaning, nursing, household accounting, children and even legal issues.

[9] See footnote 7.

Victorian, moral expectations for idealized wives subdued to the modern ideology of separate spheres.

Studying women's magazines published between 1820 and 1860, Barbara Welter demonstrated that American women, like their British counterparts, were expected to embody the attributes of piety, purity, submission and domesticity (152), hence her conclusion: ''Woman, in the cult of True Womanhood [...], was the hostage in the home'' (151). Celebrated by Beeton as the household ''commander'' (1), the wife was nevertheless homebound in charge of domestic issues and deprived of power in the public sphere. '''Who can find a Valiant Woman?' was asked frequently from the pulpit and the editorial pages. There was only one place to look for her—at home,'' exclaims Welter (174). In his 1869 essay entitled *The Subjection of Women,* John Stuart Mill[10] observed that woman was destined to be either ''an odalisque, or [...] a domestic servant'' (52), both being homebound fates. According to him, marriage implied a life at home for women: ''Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choice of the management of a household, and the bringing up of a family [...]'' (89). Consequently, the married status involved withdrawal from the affairs of society: ''The actual exercise [..] of outdoor occupations, or such as cannot be carried on at home, would [...] be practically interdicted to the greater number of married women'' (Mill 89). Moreover, while mothers ruled at home when children were still young, their power was negated as the latter grew up and entered the public sphere, thus strengthening the gendered binarity of the bourgeois society.

From a literary point of view, Horace Walpole[11] had launched the gothic tradition with his *Castle of Otranto* in 1764 and many novels followed suit in which places of residence, often medieval castles, ancient mansions or abbeys, meant an entrapment that betrayed social and psychological vulnerabilities but also sexual fears. A useful tool to explore taboos, this literary tradition was successfully exported to a New World devoid of medieval background, but that remained marked by the darkness and

[10] John Stuart Mill (1806–1873).

[11] Horace Walpole (1717–1797).

constraints of its Puritan origins. Charles Brockden Brown[12] was the first to tackle the genre and adapt it to his American environment by relying on the tradition of the Sublime but avoiding what strained his rational sense (Amfreville 37–60). Darkness and entrapment would equally be the cornerstones of the following generations of American fiction writers. In Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"[13] or in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*,[14] there lurk age-old maledictions and incestuous overtones which deny the sweetness home is supposed to provide. This heavily-loaded atmosphere emphasizes the fears homebound women may have experienced as regards the outside world. Gothic homes conjure up both entrapment and psychological frailty, but also the scary presence of a looming unknown within the familiar, which Freud would later acknowledge as "the uncanny."[15] In these gothic narratives, anthropomorphic architecture suggests deep-set human torments. A façade crack echoes a mental one and offers an appropriate metaphor for a family degeneration, the effects of which being that women are not only kept prisoners at home but also rushed toward death before their time, like Madeline Usher, buried alive into the smallest of homes, a coffin sealed by her own twin brother Roderick (Poe 230–237).

The gothic *House of the Seven* Gables is at stake in William Blazek's essay which, indeed, details the tortuous links between two families claiming ownership rights over the eponymous house; but his study, focused on "rented accommodation," spans the 19th and 20th centuries, as he also addresses this issue in Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*,[16] F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*[17] and Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*.[18] Relying on the rented home pattern, he contends that these four texts question American national identity, but ponder

[12] Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810).

[13] Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849).

[14] Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864).

[15] Starting from the assumption that "[t]he German word '*unheimlich*' is obviously the opposite of '*heimlich*' ['homely'], *heimisch* ['native']—the opposite of what is familiar [...]," Freud eventually concludes on the ambiguous nature of the term: "[...] the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix '*un*' ['un-'] is the token of repression" ("The Uncanny" 220, 245).

[16] Henry James (1843–1916).

[17] F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940).

[18] Nathanael West (1903–1940).

critical philosophical issues as well. In the end, they conjure up contrasting concerns: whereas intrusion and deceit dominate in the two 19th century narratives, "disease and dislocation" rule in the 20th century ones.

While the gothic trend developed and thrived in the US during the 19th century and what is known as the American Renaissance, British novelists progressively chose less frightful homes devoid of such gloomy and ghostly terrors, or even satirized them, like Jane Austen[19] with her posthumous *Northanger Abbey*, completed in 1803 but only published in 1817, which offers a critique of gothic fiction through her impressionable character, Catherine Morland, an avid and naïve reader of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.[20] Homes and houses remained at the heart of many British novels, and Austen's in particular, as many of these narratives focused on the marriage market, where women prepared, at their parents' homes, for the ideal suitor, and then remained confined to their husbands', as wives and mothers. After Austen's refined psychological study of middle- and upper-class marriage schemes, George Eliot's[21] fiction turned to provincial England and once again dealt with domestic female lives intertwined with marriage issues and homebound fates. As far as the gothic element is concerned, Elizabeth Gaskell and her contemporary Charles Dickens[22] still relied on some specificities of the genre, but they also stressed social inequalities through their uses of the house imagery. From dilapidated houses that are the only available homes for orphans or poor workers and farmers—or even the complete lack of home, the streets becoming the only possible shelter for the most destitute—to gothic, frightening mansions, where the rich are fossilized within their belongings, the range of homes at stake offers continual metaphors in these novelists' fiction. During the 1850s, both of them also collaborated on *Household Words*, a weekly magazine edited by Dickens himself which aimed at entering the "innumerable homes"[23] of the

[19] Jane Austen (1775–1817).

[20] Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823).

[21] George Eliot (1819–1880).

[22] Charles Dickens (1812–1870).

[23] "We aspire to live in the **Household** affections, and to be numbered among the **Household** thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look. We seek to bring to **innumerable homes**, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in ourselves, less faithful in the progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time" (Dickens. My emphasis).

middle class while revealing, through fiction and nonfiction, social issues affecting the poor and destitute of the times.

During this same Victorian era, while never completely forgetting the social scene and its class disparities, the Brontë sisters[24] focused on houses as places of entrapment for women by relying on the gothic and romantic traditions. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) both stage women caught within houses that never prove to be secure homes, although Jane Eyre may mistake Thornfield Hall for one at the end of the eponymous novel. Thus, the condition of Mr. Rochester's Creole first wife, Bertha (*Jane Eyre*)—whose discourse would later be liberated from her attic confinement through Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*[25]—suggested the title for Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal study, *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, which focuses on Victorian female writing. Their feminist analysis emphasizes women's estrangement and confinement as evidenced by Bertha's fate, while focusing on narratives which rely on homebound female archetypes ranging from monsters to angels, but it also points out concealed feminist subtexts that were deemed improper for the age.

American poet Emily Dickinson,[26] "the recluse" as she is often described due to her diagnosed nervous prostration, is one of the writers dealt with in their study. The exact explanation of her isolation remains uncertain, but she definitely proved the creative power that could nevertheless emerge from, or perhaps be induced by, confinement. Isolated from the world from 1858 to 1865, she wrote hundreds of poems which were discovered on her death and had never been published by the one who had buried herself alive at home for years. Whether this voluntary Madeline (Poe) was unable to leave the safety of her bedroom or was dissuaded from it because of health, or emotional and social constraints, has remained a mystery so far. Although she had confined herself to her own home, her poem "I Years Had Been from Home" (299-300)

[24] Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) and Emily Brontë (1818-1848).

[25] Jean Rhys (1890-1979).

[26] Emily Dickinson (1830-1886).

paradoxically conjures up an impossible return home after absence, the resurfacing of the past and the duality of the self, leading to escape in the last stanza:

> I moved my Fingers off
> As cautiously as Glass,
> And held my ears, and like a Thief
> Fled gasping from the House – (300)

During that same period, although she managed to earn her living through writing, Louisa May Alcott[27] offered her own picture of female domesticity, with her *Little Women*, as it focuses on the American Civil War through the perspective of a mother and her four daughters' life at home, the latter having been inspired by Orchard House, Alcott's family house in Concord, Massachusetts. The novelist modeled Jo on herself and suggested her own rebellious nature as her protagonist clings to the desire to become a writer and continually challenges gender norms. Biographer John Matteson underlines Alcott's "extraordinary natural energy" as "she succeeded in doing a massive amount of writing from home while also cooking, cleaning, and caring for her parents [...]. However, she also wore herself out." He contends that "chronic overwork contributed to her early death at 55." Coining a phrase, he concludes that "she was able to carry both the burdens of an author and a house-daughter [...] but she also paid a heavy price for her achievements" (Matteson's interview).[28] Interestingly, more than a century later, a sequel to the novel, *March*, which was published by Australian-born Geraldine Brooks in 2005 and won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, imagines the father's life away from home during the war, thus retrospectively emphasizing the separate spheres of the 19th century once again.

[27] Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888). Some of her writings were published anonymously or under the pen name A. M. Barnard.

[28] Matteson reports the following amusing anecdote: Alcott "had too much nervous energy for her to write in just one room. She sometimes moved into the parlor, where, unfortunately, there was much more risk of her being disturbed. So she made use of a cylindrical pillow, which operated somewhat like a tollgate. If it was on its end, people were free to interrupt her. But if it was lying flat, that meant that she was deep in thought and positively no one should disturb her. So, even in her 'comfortable' home, she needed to delineate spaces and set boundaries" (Matteson's interview).

Home has not always been the most favorable place to be creative, as women have often been supposed to be involved in household tasks rather than artistic achievements. In Kate Chopin's[29] *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier's freedom and self-fulfillment precisely imply moving away to an independent "little four-room house" (79), nicknamed her "pigeon house" (85). There only will she feel at ease to practice her painting, whereas she determinedly rejects her luxurious marital home in New Orleans: "'I'm tired looking after that big house. It never seemed like mine, anyway—like home'" (79). Independence at home is thus claimed as the necessary condition for female intellectual and artistic activity. If Edna Pontellier's liberation eventually goes beyond the "pigeon house" and entails her fatal swimming away at Grand Isle, and, therefore, her choosing a boundless space of her own resembling an amniotic condition, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper"[30] stages the growing mental entombment of its anonymous autodiegetic narrator. Following her post-partum depression, the female protagonist is not only confined to her home for a rest cure, but eventually feels she merges with the gruesome wallpaper of her bedroom, thus reaching utter psychological disorder and collapse. Gilman's reflection on the topic of women and home is further developed in her socialist-inspired essay *The Home*, which offers an original analysis of home economics:

> The home is a human institution. All human institutions are open to improvement. This specially dear and ancient one, however, we have successfully kept shut, and so it has not improved as have some others. The home is too important a factor in human life to be thus left behind in the march of events; its influence is too wide, too deep, too general, for us to ignore. (3)

Basing her approach on Darwinian principles, Gilman criticizes the lack of evolution of home organization and offers revolutionary solutions —including the outsourcing of meal preparation, child care and education—

[29] Kate Chopin (1850-1904).

[30] Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935).

to better women's living conditions and society at large as she insists that "[…] the home need be neither a prison, a workhouse, nor a consuming fire" (13). Time was nevertheless still needed for mindsets and habits to evolve and homes, the stage of sexual politics, to experience change.

After centuries of female homebound life, the First World War was a watershed as it offered women the opportunity to be involved in the nations' fighting efforts when they replaced men gone to the front in all sectors and positions. After such involvement, a return to an exclusively homebound life would not be accepted. Women's contribution during the conflict and long political campaigns were eventually rewarded with the right to vote—granted in Germany in 1918, in the UK in two steps in 1918 and 1928, in the US in 1920 through Amendment XIX, and, after another world conflict, in France in 1944. However, in 1929, Virginia Woolf still had to insist, in her eponymous essay, on the importance of "a room of one's own" for women to be able to be creative, as if little had changed since Edna Pontellier's desperate attempt at emancipation (Chopin).

In her essay devoted to Woolf, Floriane Reviron-Piégay starts from the writer's childhood homes and the impact they had on her ambiguous relationship with space and home in her fiction. Her analysis of *A Room of One's Own* then aims at showing how it informs our reading of the novels. She contends that if the female characters' rooms are constantly under assault, echoing the writer's own experience, they also helped the latter articulate her modernist ethics and aesthetics. She then offers an insightful reading of *Orlando* as a recreation of the Sackville-Wests' home and as Vita's mock biography.

Woolf's essays and fiction reflected a time of change and contributed to it. Women's growing political and professional involvement in the public sphere during and after the First World War gained them some results and eventually led the second wave of feminists to campaign still further in the 1970s. Their famous slogan "The personal is political" was inspired by Carol Hanisch's essay "Some Thoughts in Response to Dottie [Zellner]'s Thoughts on a Women's Liberation Movement" for which the editors of *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* eventually chose the well-known phrase as a title. Being confined to a life at home devoted to maternity and household tasks was now perceived as a state which required

change and this became a political field for protests and claims. Home life and its ensuing tasks and worries were no longer to be exclusively female topics, but needed to be debated collectively within a political vision of society. Homes suddenly opened their doors and, as literature had already inferred for centuries, they ceased to be private, hidden places of lesser importance and mere resting places after involvement outside. While they were denounced as a restricted space for women, they had, concomitantly, provided literature with privileged settings and tropes.

Indeed, houses and homes have always been at the heart of fiction and poetry writing. English romantic poet John Keats compared "human life to a large Mansion of Many apartments" whose "dark passages" were to be explored through writing (107–108). In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard claims that the house is a "'tool to analyze' the human soul" (19). While Freud notices the analogy in dreams between the human figure and a house (*Introductory Lectures* 196), Philippe Hamon[31] and Marilyn Chandler (2) insist on the link between the literary activity and architecture. William Faulkner[32] himself often compared writing skills and carpentry, as when he gave the following advice: "Read, read, read. Read everything—trash, classics, good and bad; see how they do it. When a carpenter learns his trade, he does so by observing. Read! You'll absorb it. Write!" (Inge 68). Within the narrative process itself, the house is not only a metaphor for the self, as is subtly expressed, for example, in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," but it also alludes to literary construction. Chandler claims that "[t]he way we build and inhabit our houses has a good deal to do with the way we tell our stories" (6). In his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, Henry James explains how its creation went from a "large building" relying on the "single small cornerstone" of Isabel Archer "affronting her destiny" to "a square and spacious house" (X–XI). While he first recalls how Ivan Tourgenieff preferred to have "too little architecture than too much" (VII), he develops his own idea of "[t]he house of fiction" which offers, through its "apertures," a multiple view "over the human scene," which will depend on the viewers (IX). This

[31] See "Texte et architecture" and *Expositions, littérature et architecture au XIXe siècle*.

[32] William Faulkner (1897–1962).

interest in architecture and literature was echoed by his contemporary, Edith Wharton,[33] who tackled the same transatlantic and architectural topics. She was particularly keen on interior design and published *The Decoration of Houses* with architect Ogden Codman in 1897. She even relied on her taste in reaction to overstuffed Victorian homes for the creation of the Mount, in Lenox, Massachusetts, the country house where she lived with her husband from 1902 to 1911. Equally concerned about the links between interior decoration and writing, Willa Cather[34] advocated "The Novel Démeublé," *i.e.* a literary restraint that echoed uncluttered interiors. As in James's novels, Cather's and Wharton's fictional houses provide metaphoric tools which are not only meaningful as regards the characters and plots, but also the metafictional discourse of their narratives. Dilapidated houses and ruins echo crumbling bodies and morals, stifling decoration is on a par with muffled lives while social ascent or collapse are reflected in the characters' accommodation. Moreover, referentiality and the use of language are questioned, thus heralding what would be fully at stake with the following generations of writers. A few decades later, indeed, F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1933 short story "More Than Just a House"[35] encapsulates these architectural and literary issues which had been feeding fictional and metafictional pondering.

Like British literature with its castles, mansions, urban and rural homes, American literature displays a wide range of houses reflecting the multiplicity and hybridity of the country's population. It is replete with Frontier log cabins and Indigenous types of lodging like wigwams, tepees or cliff-dwellings, but also with wealthy villas, skyscraper apartments, and a variety of accommodations in farms, downtown tenements, privileged or abandoned suburbs. Chandler declares:

> Our literature reiterates with remarkable consistency the centrality of the house in American cultural life and imagination. In many of our major novels, a house stands at stage center as a unifying symbolic

[33] Edith Wharton (1862–1937).

[34] Willa Cather (1873–1947).

[35] See Pascale Antolin, "From Romance to Modernist Writing: 'More Than Just a House.'"

> structure that represents and defines the relationships of the central characters to one another, to themselves, and to the world. (1)

Indeed, American literature includes all kinds of home which in turn proclaim Indigenous rooting, diasporic ambitions and proofs of success in a land of immigration, but also limits to the dream. In 1940, the title of Thomas Wolfe's novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*,[36] seemed to sum up the previous decades of voluntary expatriation from the US to Europe by those critical of their homeland. Indeed, in their narratives, travelers like Ernest Hemingway[37] or F. Scott Fitzgerald[38] seem to regret a reassuring home and, above all, to grieve over the painful loss of a primeval America. A nomad generation whose writings relied on wanderings and crack-ups, these writers staged a ceaseless mobility, which was theirs, and which ignored rooting whether in terms of land or real estate. On the other hand, far from this whirlwind of transatlantic crossings pointing out the disappointing failure of the home nation that had aroused so many hopes in its early days, William Faulkner proved to be the exception, deeply rooted as he was in his southern homeland, focusing endlessly on his fictional "Yoknapatawpha county," "a little postage stamp of native soil" where dilapidated family homes and estates mourn the collapse of the post-Civil War South. For this "Lost Generation," whether they were expatriates or deeply anchored dwellers, home remained a place one longed for nostalgically at a time when America seemed to have lost its original mission as an "asylum for mankind" (Paine 107) and was divided on how to face maturity as a nation.

In his essay, Rédouane Abouddahab scrutinizes the way Hemingway's fiction harbors numerous houses but is devoid of homes, even to the point of "*home-phobia*." Beyond the usual historical, social and personal reasons provided by the post-war context, he considers that, in most of the writer's fiction, this lack of home echoes with the missing mother figure, whose potency is nevertheless unescapable. What he calls "the

[36] Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938).

[37] Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961).

[38] F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940).

maternal sovereign'' refers to a domination tendency on the part of the mother, who also embodies community and homeland. Recalling the novelist's ''iceberg theory'' (*Death* 153–54), which favors deliberate omissions, Abouddahab offers a psychoanalytical analysis where mother and home are intimately related and signal their unavoidable influence despite their very absence in the text.

Focusing on the same paradoxical period of excitement and uncertainty between the two World Wars, Elisabeth Bouzonviller studies F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald's self-narratives. Actually, the couple was among the American expatriates Hemingway met in France during the 1920s and it is from France that Fitzgerald recommended Hemingway, his junior, to his own editor, Maxwell Perkins, at Scribner's in New York. She demonstrates that while a permanent actual home eluded the Fitzgeralds, they found it in their artistic practice—whether it be literature or painting, as far as Zelda is concerned—thus echoing critic and Fitzgerald scholar, Alfred Kazin, who contends that ''[o]ne writes to make a home for oneself, on paper'' (43).

During the Roaring Twenties, the United States saw the thriving impact of what became its fifth largest industry thanks to the relentless production and distribution activities of its Californian dream factory. Ever since those beginnings, Hollywood has relied on real or imaginative homes and contributed to a national representation linking architecture, geography and politics: from the ''little house on the Prairie''[39] to Gatsby's ''impeccable imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy'' (Fitzgerald 11), forcefully rendered in the novel's film adaptations, from Norman Bates's gothic home in *Psycho* (Hitchcock) to the Great Plains tepees, the southern plantations and slaves' cabins, but also from chic city apartments boasting of the latest style in decoration to poor accommodation in gang ridden suburbs.

On the eve of the Second World War, despite the disenchantment of the ''Lost Generation,'' Payne's song was nevertheless played in MGM's very successful *Wizard of Oz*. In the final scene when heroine Dorothy, played by Judy Garland, joins her family again after her adventures along

[39] Originally a series of novels by Laura Ingalls, it was turned into a very popular American Western historical drama television series (Claxton).

"the yellow brick road," she borrows Payne's words and confesses that "there's no place like home" (Fleming). Jean Viviès contends that all travel narratives can be apprehended not so much as tales about visited places, but about the traveller's capacity to return home since they question the self and one's identity, which is what had been at stake for the "Lost Generation" expatriates and was now at the heart of Fleming's movie.

Celebrating the nation's settlement and Manifest Destiny through the home pattern, Hollywood has also fed on the national myth of mobility and staged numerous horseback riding, covered wagon or train adventures. Eventually, mechanical progress gave birth to the successful road movie genre, which combines home and movement by offering an intimate space within a moving vehicle. In her study for this volume, Catherine Morgan-Proux considers how a car can be transformed into an unexpected home for writers Barbara Kingsolver and Louise Erdrich, thus baffling the usual gendered notion of unavoidable female rooting at home. Focusing on the microcosm of the vehicle which recreates a domestic space within mobility, she asserts that these road trip narratives are a way to challenge the pattern established by former stories of male escape from home and to reconfigure women's place by combining homeliness and movement.

If the narratives from the 1920s and 1930s conjure up and regret the loss of an ideal "home, sweet home," the existence of which might sometimes have been only nostalgic wishful thinking, the longing for the original homeland is a specific feature of post-colonial and diasporic literatures. Within this context, it is not so much traveling as displacement and encroachment which is at stake, but, as in travel narratives (Viviès), the central concern remains home, its sometimes difficult localization adding an extra pitfall. Indigenous populations which have been the victims of displacement and dispossession, immigrants who have turned their backs—willingly or not—on their homeland, all express the desire to reach back to or evoke what has often become a home rooted in the past, sometimes "an imaginary homeland," as clear-sighted Salman Rushdie emphasizes. Thieme even refers to "imaginative geography" which "opposes scientific accuracy by asserting a personal right to

map the world" (27) and therefore the desire to reconquer a lost home, if not spatially at least mentally—which, for novelists, means through the medium of literature. Ashcroft stresses the fact that "colonization disrupts a people's *sense* of place" (125). This applies both to the colonized and colonizers because of the shifting of populations from one place to another, be it willingly or not. Within the colonial context, the process of remapping and renaming places also makes it harder to locate one's home for uprooted populations.

The American autobiographical genres of the captivity and slave narratives rely on characters/narrators/authors torn away from home: by Native tribes in the case of kidnapped colonists and settlers of European ancestry, and by slave traders in the case of African populations. Although the former had various attitudes toward their home loss,[40] most of the latter wished to escape from forced labor in quest of a home of freedom, away from the slave societies of the southern American states or the Caribbean. Inspired by these self-narratives, American fiction has fed on this pattern of home deprivation. Harriet Beecher Stowe's landmark melodramatic *Uncle Tom's Cabin*[41] conjures up the idea of a lost home and the desire to flee to a safe one. The surviving runaways, Eliza, George and Harry, escape first to Canada, then France and eventually settle in Liberia (H. Stowe 406–413). The Middle Passage launched, indeed, one of the fiercest stories of home deprivation, which then engendered entrapments, displacements and migrations and the ceaseless quest for a safe home through escape, rebellion, civil war and activism. Contemporary literature bears witness to these forced displacements, lost homes and attempts at reconquering places of one's own through writers and characters of African descent.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*,[42] for years, protagonists Baby Suggs and Sethe looked after a house which was not theirs since they were slaves on a plantation—ironically called "Sweet Home." After escaping

[40] Whereas Mary Rowlandson was eventually bought back and celebrated her return home in her 1682 narrative, John Tanner, who had been kidnapped as a child and sold to an Ojibwe clan, never managed to readapt to White ways as an adult. Louise Erdrich, who contributed a preface for a Penguin edition of his narrative, *The Falcon, a Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years Residence among Indians in the Interior of North America,* describes him as a "white Indian" and his text as "the first narrative of native life from an Ojibwe point of view" (*Books and Islands* 46).

[41] Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896). Her son claimed that Lincoln had declared, "So this is the little lady who started this great war," when he met her in 1862, which has not been proved (C. Stowe 203).

[42] Toni Morrison (1931–2019).

enslavement, they must learn to inhabit 124 Bluestone Road,[43] a home of their own in Cincinnati. During Paul D's first visit, Sethe's daughter wonders about these former slaves' recurring recollections of Sweet Home, which was nothing like a home:

> "How come everybody run off from Sweet Home can't stop talking about it? Look like if it was so sweet you would have stayed."
> "Girl, who you talking to?"
> Paul D laughed. "True, true. She's right, Sethe. It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home." He shook his head.
> "But it's where we were," said Sethe. "All together. Comes back whether we want it to or not." (13–14)

Despite the hardships, the place has bred a community. Now, as Sethe's ghost daughter haunts 124, the former victims of enslavement and dispossession are the owners of a home possessed by a supernatural presence. After Baby Suggs' death, Sethe and her living daughter Denver must establish their ownership over the place to fully integrate society and get rid of their haunting past as deprived and possessed members of the antebellum South.

Similar issues related to home loss and its reclaiming are at stake in Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes* or Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*.[44] These novels offer a circular structure, from abduction on the African West Coast to return to the ancestors' continent, years, or even centuries, later. Such post-modern novelists manage to sketch "historiographic metafictions" which voice the forgotten "histories of the losers" (Hutcheon 66). These narratives of return intertwine roots and routes while emphasizing the quest for home, which is also a major concern for diasporic groups. In her essay entitled "Home," Morrison broadens her reflection beyond the slavery period and mentions "the constant

[43] Claudine Raynaud notices that the address is an "interrupted sequence of numbers." When one reads it, number 3 sounds missing, but this figure also corresponds to the three generations of women living there: Baby Suggs, Sethe and Denver. We can also suggest that, although it is supposed to be a refuge for these former slaves, the place embodies a kind of lack, alluded to through the missing figure, thus pointing out the after-effects of the slavery trauma.

[44] Anne Damour, the translator for the French version of the novel, has chosen the title *No Home*, thus emphasizing the issue at stake and the lack of a French concise equivalent for the term "home."

flow of people'' who are uprooted for various political reasons, reaching the following conclusion:

> The relocation of peoples has ignited and disrupted the idea of home and expanded the focus of identity beyond definitions of citizenship to clarifications of foreignness. Who is the foreigner? is a question that leads us to the perception of an implicit and heightened threat within ''difference.'' (*The Source* 19)

As noticed by Thieme, post-colonial writing offers ''a particular challenge to discourses that see place as a stable entity'' (2); thus, ''home has become an increasingly problematic concept in the contemporary world, where routes versions of cultural becoming are supplanting originary roots notions of identity'' (27). If Ghanaian-American Gyasi intertwines generations and locations in a novel that attempts to tell the story of forced wrenching from home, but also of ensuing re-enrooting away from home, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie focuses on the tension bred by chosen emigration in *Americanah*, the very title[45] of which plays on the diasporic dilemma as regards the sense of belonging. However, as defended by Stuart Hall, ''identity has many imagined 'homes' and therefore no one single homeland; it has many different ways of 'being at home'" (207). Thus, the home of diasporic people may not be spatial but rather social and cultural, as perfectly demonstrated in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, which intertwines generations of Black women from African and Caribbean descent who have emigrated to Great Britain, or were born there, and keep wondering about their rootedness through their homes, professions and sexuality. When settlement away from the original home is definitive, then home may be found in shared culture, ethnicity and even a common sense of nostalgia for what has been lost. Sometimes even placelessness and the experience of displacement can become a home—or at least writing about such issues—as expressed by Canadian poet Dennis Lee, who asserts that ''perhaps

[45] When Ifemelu, a successful student who has emigrated to the US and, progressively, been Americanized, returns to Nigeria, she is perceived as an ''Americanah'' by those who have remained at home, and is thus a metaphor for the in-between position of diasporic cultures.

our job was not to fake a space of our own and write it up, but rather to find words for our space-lessness. Perhaps that *was* home'' (163). Home can also be a series of homes, even a migrating route, as developed by Nicolas Bourriaud with his ''radicant'' theory, which focuses on ''exodus organizing'' and ''moving from cultural sedentariness to a nomadic universe.''[46]

In her essay for this volume, Alice Michel offers an insight into Ada Cambridge's early works and the way diasporic people search for some kind of anchorage within new environments while never managing to determine and express where their true home lies, which was the case for this English-born Australian writer. Salhia Ben-Messahel tackles the Australian context too as she examines how flexible the concept of ''home'' is in some Australian fiction from the 1990s and 2000s. She contends that post-colonial housing never simply means residence since it involves the complexity of borders. She observes that the European settlers tried to transplant their home-model on an alien territory at the expense of the Indigenous people, and claims that it is through a transformation involving both habitation and representation that Australia evolved from a colonial space to a post-colonial life place. Her analysis once again emphasizes the intricate links between the concept of home and politics, in particular through references to the issues of land's rights, cultural appropriation and immigration. The idea that one can have of ''home'' is therefore strongly challenged as the latter becomes a fluid concept within the multicultural framework of Australia.

Focusing on colonized peoples, Homi Bhabha declares: ''If, as they say, the past is a foreign country, then what does it mean to encounter a past that is your own country reterritorialized, even terrorized by another?'' (283-284). Within the colonial context, geographical and cultural disruptions have entailed home deprivation; linguistic loss thus appears as particularly problematic for those who try to reconquer a sense of home through representation. Post-colonial writers who have lost their ancestors' original languages or cannot, anyway, rely on them

[46] My translation from the original French ''l'organisation d'un exode'' (88) and ''passer de la sédentarité culturelle à un univers nomade '' (Bourriaud 216).

for obvious commercial and editorial reasons, have been forced to adopt the languages and literary genres of the colonialists; thus, Ashcroft asks:

> Where is one's 'place'? What happens to the concept of 'home' when home is colonized, when the very ways of conceiving home, of talking about it, writing about it, remembering it, begin to occur through the medium of the colonizer's way of seeing the world? (15)

However, through the process of "transformation" celebrated by Ashcroft himself or by Deleuze, who contends that "a minority literature is not defined by a local language which would be specific to it but by the modification it forces on the major language,"[47] even the colonizer's language and literary practices—like the novel genre—can become tools to fight loss and erasure by re-inscribing a home narrative within postcolonial geography and culture. Thus, for example, Simon J. Ortiz, who is a poet of Acoma Pueblo descent, explains that "[…] the Indigenous peoples of the Americas have taken the languages of the colonialists and used them for their own purposes. […] And this response has been one of resistance" (42–43).

Focusing on Native American literature, William Bevis demonstrates that it is centripetal as its protagonists try to go back home, which is a place of identity and belonging, whereas canonical American literature is centrifugal, with its adventurous protagonists moving away from home to acquire experience through solitary discoveries within new environments (103–135).[48] Hence, within the bildungsroman genre, works will either follow a pattern of "leaving" and "wandering" (Bevis 104, 115) or a "homing" one (Bevis 126, 134, Lincoln 209), depending on the writer's origins and home experience.

Since Native American literature tends to favor the return home motif, it celebrates the specific activities of the place, which are often women's domain. Novelist Louise Erdrich asserts that "[t]he women in [her] books are lighting out for home" (Pearlman 153). Thus, whereas feminist

[47] Translated from the original French: "Une littérature de minorité ne se définit pas par une langue locale qui lui serait propre, mais par un traitement qu'elle fait subir à la langue majeure" (73).

[48] See for example *Moby Dick* (Melville), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain), *Sister Carrie* (Dreiser), *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Hemingway) or *On the Road* (Kerouac).

studies had initially perceived home solely as a place of entrapment for the victims of "the cult of domesticity" (Keister and Southgate 228), in Native American narratives, it turns out to be a place of sharing and power where women can welcome those who have strayed away from family and identity, a nurturing place which provides new enrooting. Food-making there is no longer a burden to be taken care of by those who are forbidden the right to occupy public space, but a skill, which is shared among connoisseurs who know about transmission and care. It can also be a gathering sign of identity when home can no longer be equated with a territory or if the latter has been reduced to meager portions of former boundless space.[49] Within the kitchen setting, ancestral knowledge is shared in a transgenerational way among women who do not claim freedom and independence in another sphere of influence. Critical of the patriarchal system and the subjugation of women, Engels had broached this type of topic by relying on Lewis H. Morgan's anthropological data about Native American matrilineal societies—the Iroquois in particular—and celebrated such female communities. However, it seems that today, decades after the claims of second wave feminism, home as an unexpected place of cooperation and power for women is no longer restricted to the Native world, as proved, for example, by the numerous autobiographies focused on food and cooking—"gastro-graphies," says Rosalia Baena—which gather women and generations around a place and an activity at the heart of the home and family. Relying on this new trend of narratives, Corinne Bigot offers an insightful study of Louise DeSalvo's, Diane Abu-Jaber's, Linda Furiya's, Bich Minh Nguyen's, Laura Schenone's and Joyce Zonana's culinary memoirs. Focusing on these self-narratives from the 2000s about food and kitchen-life, she demonstrates that what used to be a place of female entrapment and a subaltern activity can also be a medium of memory and enrooting for diasporans. In these memoirs, the poetics of home entails time and space issues as the term may recall a childhood place and/or an ancestral homeland. Food can conjure up childhood memories, but also launch a re-discovering of the

[49] In Ojibwemowin, the native language of the Ojibwe tribe, the culinary and territorial link is clearly emphasized as the term for "reservation" is "ishkonigan," which also means "leftover" (Erdrich, *Four Souls* 210).

home of older generations. Eventually, this essay points out that, more than a geographic landmark, home is a discourse involving the intricate links of space and emotions and, as in many other narratives studied in this volume, the text becomes the ultimate home created by the writer.

Since the strongly critical approach to home developed by historians like Barbara Welter,[50] more nuanced views have been developing which tend to value homebound activities and emphasize the existence of female involvement and work outside of home, even during the constraining 19th century. Laura F. Edwards explains, for example, that "[b]ecause women were so closely associated with the home, they were relegated to the historical margins as well," whereas, in fact, "the domestic sphere took multiple forms" (228). Thus, historians must reassess the perception of women's influence and involvement in society even during such home-bound times. Cathy Ross, for example, focuses on female philanthropic and charitable endeavors in 19th century Britain, and emphasizes the ambiguity of the ideology of the separate spheres, calling for a subtler perception of home and women's confinement there. She explains that "[w]hile this ideal of domesticity was at one level deeply conservative, at another, it held within it the seeds of its own subversion. Within the home women could exercise a certain amount of power" (230). She contends that sometimes "'the angel in the house' becomes 'the angel out of the house'" (230) and that "the spheres are perhaps more porous than strict adherence to the ideology allows" (230). Women's moral influence could thus extend from home toward the local, national and even international. Moreover, through shared domesticity, home could—and still can—be a place of sorority and solidarity, and ultimately of empowerment.

Jonathan Coe's *Number 11* seems to encapsulate most of the home issues that we have mentioned above, ranging from public and political ones to more private and emotional ones. While its title conjures up a landmark home in London,[51] its cover for the 2016 Penguin edition shows

[50] See *supra*.

[51] 11 Downing Street (sometimes referred to as Number 11) is the official home of Great Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Head of her Majesty's Treasury. It stands next to 10 Downing Street, which is the Prime Minister's official residence.

an elegant, bright, three-floor house which conceals an unsuspected, extensive mauve-colored basement, a dream house embodying financial success but also more subterranean inner workings. The narrative displays the city's mindless environmental transformation of wealthy neighborhoods, like South Kensington, but its fantastic ending, involving a giant spider emerging from the house basement, points out much more intimate and unconscious issues. Ashcroft claims that "[t]o inhabit place is, in a variety of ways, to inhabit power. To transform one's place is to engage the 'boundaries' of power" (172), which is definitely what happens at Number 11. There is no denying that home issues have always included the feminist ones, but they intermingle the political and personal intricately in much wider ways.

As Native American women make of their homes places of meaningful gathering or as diasporic peoples manage to adapt to their new lands of settlement for the latter to become theirs, home stops being a mere spatial reference, it is a way of inhabiting, transforming and appropriating a place, and consequently of acquiring some new form of power. In V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, for example, the protagonist struggles to acquire a house of his own as a means of asserting his identity and independence, which, of course, echoes postcolonial issues, even if this new home is of poor quality and at the expense of debt and worries till death.[52] As home pertains to identity, it involves intimate and national issues. Being able to locate, experience, or write home is a powerful way of belonging which goes beyond the map and has been calling for diversified representation, as the following essays tackling a wide range of places and experiences over several centuries demonstrate. From a simple cabin to a mansion, from an acknowledged nation to a lost land, writing homes and homelands is a way of writing the self and a metafictional tool enabling the exploration of the literary territory.

[52] In the prologue, although the narrator mentions that on "[t]he very day the house was bought they began to see flaws in it" (Naipaul 12), its importance is insisted upon as it means self-assertion: "But bigger than them all was the house, his house. How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it [...] to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated" (13-14).

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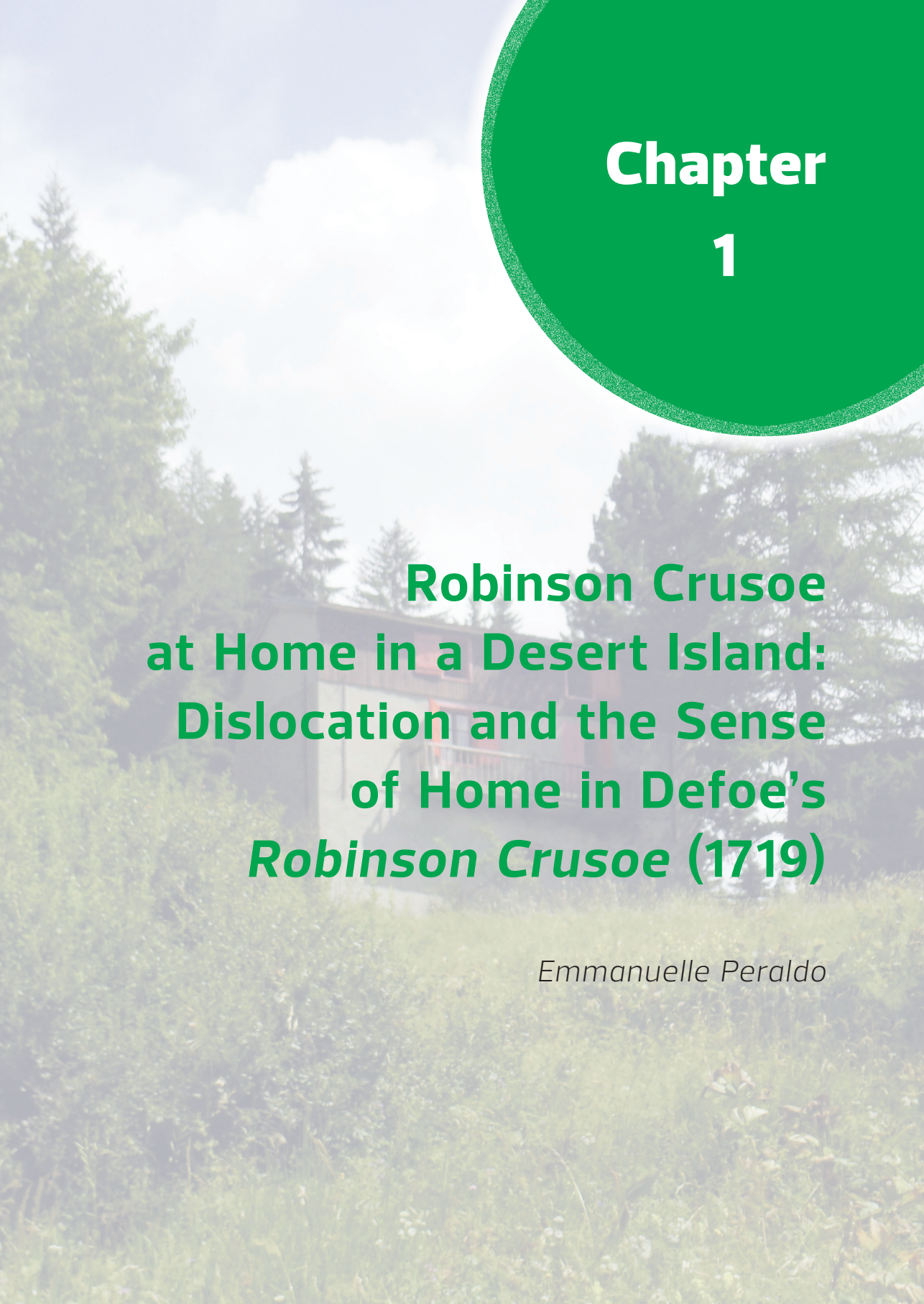

Chapter 1

Robinson Crusoe at Home in a Desert Island: Dislocation and the Sense of Home in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Emmanuelle Peraldo

Chapter
1

"I had got home to my little Tent, where I lay, with all my Wealth about me, very secure" (*Robinson* 47). This quotation from Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe* occurs only thirteen days after he was shipwrecked on the desert island and just after he has found a lot of money on what remains of the ship after the storm. It means that he is alone on a forlorn island in the Atlantic Ocean, away from home and from everything he has built so far (since he was a successful tradesman and plantation owner before the shipwreck), but he calls the small tent he has just built his "home," a place where he feels secure. Being stranded on a desert island south-east of Trinidad, thousands of miles from one's native country and family, is not exactly what one would naturally call home—a concept that is traditionally associated to someone's familiar and congenial environment, place of origin or residence. However, the word is used about eighty times in *Robinson Crusoe*, and more than fifty times to refer to his experience on the desert island, where he finds himself deprived of all the comfort and facilities of his previous life in Great Britain. Talking about Crusoe's in-betweenness, or "bi-résidentialité," Jean-Didier Urbain (71) has analysed how, at the end of the narrative, Crusoe is torn between the desires to stay or to leave, which shows that the island is far more than just a prison for him and Michel Baridon, by focusing on how Crusoe became a real gardener on the island, has helped understand the problematic relationship that unites the desert island and its supposed "prisoner," Crusoe.

Starting from the paradox that Crusoe never feels more at home than when he is estranged from home and trapped alone on a desert island, this article aims to explore what it means to feel at home on a desert island—especially in a period marked by imperialism and colonialism—and what it means to be at home in a prison—as Crusoe calls the island so himself ("the Island was certainly a Prison to me, and that in the worst Sense in the World," 77). To make sense of Defoe's use of the concept of "home," an interesting perspective would be to study *Robinson Crusoe* in the context of seventeenth and eighteenth-century overseas commerce and colonial expansion. With the intensification of trade due to remarkable improvements in maritime technology, cartography developed and fostered more discoveries and maritime expansion. These innovations enabled Europeans to expand overseas and set up colonies.

The first part will tackle the unhomeliness of Crusoe's home in England that accounts for his urge to explore the seas and, perhaps, his feeling at home on the desert island very shortly after the shipwreck. The second part will focus on what one could call "colonial Crusoe," even though he is alone for most of the island episode, and how his appropriation of the land turns the rudimentary tent of his first days on the island into a house, a fortress, a castle and even a kingdom: home seems to be a construct in both senses of the word, a physical as well as an imaginary construction. In his way of building his house and barricades, Crusoe uses natural material, which will lead us to explore the etymological link between home and ecology, eco meaning home, household, from the Greek *oikos*. Isn't it in the continuity between man and nature that Crusoe really feels at home on a desert island?

1. Crusoe's "Wandring Inclination" (*Robinson* 5) or His Lack of Sense of Home

1.1 Fragmentation, hybridity and unhomeliness

Home refers to a social unit formed by a family living together in a particular place, but from the incipit onwards, the reader realizes that Crusoe has no such place, as can be seen in the fragmentation of space with three cities mentioned and not one (York, Bremen, Hull), with the

fact that Crusoe and his family were considered as foreigners, "not of that country," and that their name has been altered from Kreutznaer to Crusoe:

> I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good Family, though not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my Mother, whose Relations were named Robinson, a very good Family in that Country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but, by the usual Corruption of Words in England, we are now called—nay we call ourselves and write our Name—Crusoe; and so my Companions always called me. (*Robinson* 5)

The passive form ("we are now called") and the fact that Crusoe is the direct object of some sentences ("my companions always called me") suggest an absence of control on his identity and origins. These three elements (fragmented space, change of name and lack of agency) make of Crusoe, from the very start, a hybrid. He is not anchored in a place and a family: the next paragraph mentions his two brothers, one of whom is dead while the other is missing. The only figure that stands out in the incipit is the father who is old and sick and who, in a long and tedious didactic monologue, tries to convince Crusoe to "stay home," *i.e.* to stay in the "middle state" of life, which is not something particularly appealing to young Crusoe whose head is filled with "rambling Thoughts" and who has a "wandring Inclination" (*Robinson* 5). The first occurrence of the word "home" in the novel denotes that static life advocated for by Crusoe's father in the form of blackmail: "he would do very kind things for me if I would stay and settle at home as he directed" (7); the alliterative anaphora ("stay and settle") emphasizes this idea of stasis that Crusoe rejects. This notion of staying at home to be safe is reiterated by Crusoe's father in nearly exactly the same terms a few pages later: "That boy might be happy if he would stay at home; but if he goes abroad, he will be the most miserable wretch that ever was born: I can give no consent to it" (8).

1.2 Crusoe's father and home as a haven to which he might return

Considering the many dangers that travelling at sea entailed in the eighteenth century, Crusoe may have trusted his father's judgement, but leaving that "unhomely home" seems an irrepressible urge for him ("I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea," 5), and then, once he is at sea, he mentions "home" again in moments of anguish and trouble, as can be seen during the first storm he goes through:

> I expected every Wave would have swallowed us up, and that every time the Ship fell down, as I thought it did, in the trough or hollow of the Sea, we should never rise more; in this Agony of Mind, I made many Vows and Resolutions that if it would please God to spare my Life in this one Voyage, if ever I got once my Foot upon dry land again**,** I would go directly home to my Father, and never set it into a Ship again while I lived; that I would take his Advice, and never run myself into such Miseries as these any more. Now I saw plainly the Goodness of his Observations about the middle Station of Life, how easy, how comfortably he had lived all his Days, and never had been exposed to Tempests at Sea or Troubles on shore; and I resolved that I would, like a true repenting prodigal, go home to my Father. (9)

Here, the idea of "home" is clearly associated with his father, as is shown in the repetition of the expression "go home to my Father," and thus it works as a metonymy for Great Britain and his father, whenever he feels frightened. Crusoe even uses blackmail rhetoric previously used by his father to make a pact with God if the latter spares him. The idea of home brings him a form of *ataraxia*: it stands for a psychological place of security, the reassuring "middle station" in life that his father talks about in the incipit. However, these moments when he remembers his father's advice alternate with passages stressing the power of fate and the irresistible drive to go to sea ("my ill Fate pushed me on now with an Obstinacy that nothing could resist; and though I had several Times loud Calls from my Reason and my more composed Judgment to go home, yet I had no Power to do it," 13–14) or even Robinson Crusoe's utter rejection of home ("an irresistible Reluctance continued to going home," 15).

After undergoing several storms, Crusoe ends up stranded on a desert island, *i.e.* in a completely unfamiliar place that he initially calls "the Island of Despair" (56), but thanks to his hard work, his construction of a tent, a cave that is made to look like a store and his development of agriculture, the island becomes "a happy Desert," and even his "beloved Island" (110): the island changes as his experience on it unfolds, and the unfamiliar place turns into his home, into a "colony" peopled with animals at first (Poll the parrot, his dog and the cats) before the arrival of Friday, his father and the Spaniard ("My Man Friday was a Protestant, his Father was a Pagan and a Cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist," 188), which is the reiteration of what Manuel Schonhorn calls "Crusoe's triadic pattern [that] may allude to the authority of the first kings, Adam and Noah, and the absolute authority they exercised over their three sons" (148).

2. Home in the Colonial Context: Robinson at Home in His Castle on the Desert Island

2.1 Private property and the sense of home

Within the context of imperialism and colonialism, the desert island at the core of *Robinson Crusoe* can be understood as a Lockean blank slate (Locke Ch. I, 2) upon which Crusoe could write a new colonial story: the island is a place to appropriate and colonize. A desert island is never just a desert island, according to Defoe who believed that the state of nature was "theoretical and always implied a level of civilization" (Novak 37). Indeed, when Crusoe arrives on his island, he decides to spend his first night in a tree, which he turns into his "Lodging" ("I took up my Lodging," 40), and the morning after, he says: "I came down from my Apartment in the Tree" (40). The possessive adjective "my" and the words "Lodging" and "Apartment," which belong to his cultural sphere in England and not to the nature of that desert island, underline the fact that, surprisingly, he feels at home in this unfamiliar desert island in the middle of nowhere, alone and severed from his family and from society. The anthropization of the desert island is connected to the concept of private property and Crusoe's feeling at home in the middle of nowhere is made possible because he can bring back many objects from the shipwreck

that represent his past life—razors, knives, forks, Bibles, bottles of rum, coins, to mention a few of them (47). To feel secure, Crusoe regularly makes lists and inventories of the objects that he owns, as if private property was something that brought that sense of home. This gesture may be reminiscent of the imposition of culture and traditions that is at the core of the colonial gesture.

2.2 The motif of the circle: home as matrix, enclosure and security

Crusoe, who, in the incipit, said that he "had not been bred to any trade" (5) turns out to be in turn an architect, a carpenter, a builder, a farmer, and there is a rapid gradation from the tent he builds at the beginning to bigger and bigger "houses." Crusoe is restless on the island and spends his time building various constructions, or, should we say, replicating his former life in a Great Britain characterized by the phenomenon of enclosure, and he does so using a geometrical vocabulary that suggests his mastery and control: "Before I set up my Tent, I drew a half-Circle before the hollow Place, which took in about ten Yards in its semi-Diameter from the Rock and twenty Yards in Diameter, from its Beginning and Ending" (48). The motif of the circle is recurrent in Crusoe's attempt to domesticate the desert island, as when he says that he "mark'd out a semi-Circle for [his] Encampment" (57). A psychoanalytical reading of this motif might reveal that the circle is a reassuring figure that may bring Crusoe the security of some form of unity and wholeness that he never had, because of the hybridity in which he grew up. The circle can also symbolize the matrix, and by extension home. Crusoe keeps drawing circles or digging holes, such as his cave, which also symbolizes the matrix and the concept of home. Interestingly enough, the cave is a natural hollow place but here Crusoe digs one that is then described as a store of goods in which he accumulates as much as he can, so much actually that he needs to make it bigger and bigger, until it looks like "a general Magazine of all necessary Things" (56). He also erects a barricade to circumscribe an area and create a closed place for himself: "as well as I could, I barricaded myself round with the Chests and Boards that I had brought on Shore, and made a kind of Hut for that Night's Lodging" (44). He uses furniture that he took on the wreck to recreate a sense

of home, as these chests and boards are metonymies of his previous life and of Great Britain and civilization. This idea of circumscribing an area in an open space and of drawing circles to delimit different areas that Crusoe then owns is a duplication of the phenomenon of enclosure that developed in England in the eighteenth century, which consisted in restricting the land to its owner, in appropriating space in order to make it fruitful and productive economically speaking. Robert P. Marzec defines an enclosure as

> the turning of open, communal land into private property. It involves the surrounding of that land with barriers designed to close off the free passage of people and animals. [...] To agricultural theorists, political scholars, and novelists such as Arthur Young, Jeremy Bentham, Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, enclosures were seen as a great advancement in farm and land management. They enabled farmers to increase the productivity of their laborers. The movement was hailed by the entrepreneurial class as one of the greatest advances in land development. ("Enclosures" 8)

As Julia Prewitt Brown says, "in building his enclosure, Crusoe replicates the spaces he has known in the past" (35), which (re-)creates a sense of home. He gets the impression that he has not left his island of Great Britain. And he talks a lot about his home and in great detail, which is a way for him to express the anxiety of his loss and of his "homelessness," as Ann-Marie Fallon suggests: "When Defoe writes about the tremendous anxiety of house building in *Robinson Crusoe*, he is also commenting on the anxiety of locating home in a colonial context" (51).

Indeed, everything that animated Defoe's imagination was related to money and economic development: the titles of some of his works—*An Essay on the South-Sea Trade* (1711), *A General History of Trade* (1713), *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726) or *A Plan of the English Commerce* (1728)—give us an idea of how central to his thought trade was. His representation of space is therefore highly influenced by his economic perspective. Defoe was the author of at least part of the *Atlas Maritimus and Commercialis* (1728), whose title, by coordinating a

geographical term (''Maritimus'') and an economic one (''Commercialis'') shows how, in Defoe's mind, geography and trade were inseparable. In that colonial context which is characterized by constant displacement for the colonizers and by dispossession or dislocation for the colonized populations, it becomes difficult to talk about ''home'' as a stable entity. This probably accounts for the fact that Crusoe designates what he calls ''home'' with a variety of synonyms or quasi-synonyms. A case in point is the famous extract when he discovers a footprint. The passage opens with the enumeration of habits that Crusoe has now that he has been living on the island for quite a while:

> This was also about half Way between my other Habitation and the Place where I had laid up my Boat, I generally stayed and lay here in my Way thither, for I used frequently to visit my Boat; and I kept all Things about or Belonging to her in very good Order. Sometimes I went out in her to divert myself. (120–121)

Crusoe has acquired a routine, as can be seen in the three frequency adverbs (''generally,'' ''frequently,'' ''sometimes'') and, like many English bourgeois of the time, he has got his main home and his second home (Baridon 71–75), as is epitomized in his mention of his ''other Habitation,'' that he calls elsewhere his ''Country-House'' (81)—as a complement to his ''Sea-Coast-House'' (81)—or his ''Bower'' (81). Interestingly enough, it is once he has found his country-house that Crusoe calls his sea-coast-house ''home,'' thus signalling that home is the place where you can go back to whenever you want: ''it was the first Night I had lain from Home. [....] I came Home; so I must now call my Tent and my Cave'' (80). It also suggests that Crusoe's aggrandisement of his ''estate'' on the island gives him an enhanced sense of home. One can also notice the abundance of possessive adjectives that confirms his wish to own everything on the island. But as the passage unfolds and as he discovers the presence of one single footprint in the sand, he gets more and more afraid, and as a response to his tremendous fear (of the Devil, of savage animals, of cannibals), the lexis used to talk about his habitation evolves and becomes more and more protectionist and imperialistic. In the next paragraph he

says: "I came Home to my Fortification," and he starts the second next paragraph by saying "when I came to my Castle," thus showing that "home" is a construction in his mind. The gradation from a habitation to a fortification to a castle corresponds to the crescendo of his emotions: the more anxious he is, the more he feels the need to designate his home as something that is solid and that can protect him, which leads us back to Ann Marie Fallon's argument that Crusoe is obsessed with the idea of home precisely because of "the anxiety of locating home in a colonial context" (Fallon 51). Elsewhere in the novel, Crusoe calls the island his "Kingdom" and it is once again associated with the figure of the reassuring circle: "I was eager to view the Circumference of my little Kingdom" (108). Again, this bond created between the island and a kingdom signals the replication of Great Britain on the pristine space of the desert island.

2.3 Home as family

Along with the designation of his construction with imperial or royal vocabulary to fight against his anxiety, Crusoe also (re-)creates a family in his home, by turning animals into his "subjects" and calling himself "King," "Prince" or "Lord" in a way that is reminiscent of Sir Robert Filmer's conception of power in *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings* (1680): "I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession" (*Robinson* 80). Later on, he adds: "It would have made a Stoick Smile to have seen me and my little Family sit down to Dinner. There was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command" (116). Considering the fact that his family was not presented as united and whole in the incipit, Crusoe seems to project his desires for a family respectful of his person onto the animals of the island. The power differential he creates between himself as "Prince and Lord" and the animals as his "Subjects" gives him the validation he did not get from his father. This time, he becomes the father figure, and this will become even more present when Friday comes into the story and Crusoe acts as a protective father toward him. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday is a complex one that cannot be studied thoroughly in this essay but suffice it to say that Friday has an ambiguous status because he stands for Crusoe's son and servant at the same time, and this

is epitomised in the fact that Friday lives with Crusoe but sleeps outside of Crusoe's cave, as a servant would do. Again, in Crusoe's relationship with Friday (and with Friday's father and the Spaniard), one can feel the anxiety and ambiguity of the colonizer trying to keep control of the native population by imposing his own system of value, his language, his culture, lest he should lose what he has built so far. It is a small colony made of a colonizer and three colonized people, but as Schonhorn put it, the triadic nature of this colony (or family) is a way for him to claim absolute and quasi divine power (Schonhorn 147–148, Filmer 5).

Crusoe's whole attitude is imbued with this anxiety and a protectionist response to it, and after he sees the footprint, he creates a double wall to protect himself even more and he even erects a third wall of stakes: these walls are as many concentric circles to recreate a safe space for himself. He uses the word "fence" to talk about his construction: "so I was completely fenced in, and fortified, as I thought, from all the world" (49), but what brings him even more security is that his protected and fortified place is made to look like nature, as in a fusion between man and nature, between the human dwelling and the environment, as in the following passage: "When this Wall was finished, and the Out-side double-fenced with a Turf-Wall raised up close to it, I perswaded myself that if any People were to come on Shore there, they would not perceive anything like a Habitation" (61). Here, the wall is made of grass, which constitutes the perfect camouflage for Crusoe in his half-natural half-constructed home.

3. Between Protectionism and Ecology: Continuity between Crusoe and Nature

3.1 At home on the desert island: nature as Nurturer

Indeed, in addition to the objects he managed to bring back from the shipwreck, Crusoe uses natural elements that he can find on the island in order to make his constructions, as for example, trees:

> This made me resolve to cut some more stakes, and make me a hedge like this in a semicircle round my wall (I mean that of *my* first dwelling), which I did; and placing the trees or stakes in a double row, at about

> eight yards' distance from my first fence, they grew presently, and were at first a fine cover to my habitation, and afterwards served for a defence also. (84)

In this passage, the repetition of the possessive adjective "my" shows the necessity for Crusoe to appropriate the desert island space by domesticating it, by making it his home, and this is done by including nature, since trees serve to build that house, as the epanorthosis "trees or stakes" highlights. This shows a very strong connection between man and nature, even if man transforms nature by structuring its space. Crusoe, who is first desperate because of that contact with a hostile nature when, at the beginning, he calls it "the Island of Despair" (56), becomes profoundly place-connected. Topophobia turns into topophilia and the island is no longer a threat but a nurturer. Nature, initially associated to a hostile force epitomized in the storm that led him to this island, becomes a source of possibilities that he discovers as he restructures and mentally maps that natural space to make it his home. Nature is not favorable at first ("not one Grain of that I sowed this Time came to anything," *Robinson* 83) but then it gets fruitful and provides him with about everything he needs. Crusoe's particular handling of the land shows that man does not only leave a print on nature, but he actually influences it and even transforms it, and the desert island then looks like "a planted garden" (*Robinson* 80).

3.2 Home, *oikos*, ecology: the ontological identification between Crusoe and the island

This appropriation and transformation of the island by Crusoe is more than a propaganda for colonization. Defoe may have been in favor of colonization[53] and he may have been a promoter of overseas trade and British expansion. However, Robinson Crusoe also contains apotropaic messages and warnings against the excesses of colonization, mercantilism and capitalism.[54] The consequences of man's transformation of the land

[53] "No Man can object against the Advantages of a Collony provided the Place be well chosen," letter 170 to Robert Harley, 20 July 1711 (Defoe, *The Letters* 344).

[54] See Peraldo 2019.

are very present, either in the form of agricultural and economic success, or in the form of ecological disasters that stand for divine retribution, as is underlined by Richard Kerridge: "ecological disaster is a punishment for human transgression, the necessary consequence of going too far, tampering with nature, usurping the place of divine providence" (3). This conception of nature as *Nemesis* can be seen in *Robinson Crusoe*, where the storm that leads the character to the island is interpreted as a punishment for disobeying his father who condemned Robinson's rambling thoughts. Then, the character builds his fortifications on the island, enclosing space, and just after that action, an earthquake occurs and scares him to death, and just after that, as if the first two warnings were not enough, a hurricane occurs. With these episodes, Defoe wants to say that if man acts on the environment, man acts on man himself, and so improvements, changes and reorganizations must be done with particular care and attention paid to nature and the environment. This brings us back to the etymology of the word "ecology," *i.e.* home. Here is the definition of ecology in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

> The word *ecology* was coined by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, who applied the term *oekologie* to the "relation of the animal both to its organic as well as its inorganic environment." The word comes from the Greek *oikos*, meaning "household," "home," or "place to live." Thus, ecology deals with the organism and its environment. The concept of environment includes both other organisms and physical surroundings. It involves relationships between individuals within a population and between individuals of different populations. These interactions between individuals, between populations, and between organisms and their environment form ecological systems, or ecosystems. (Smith and Pimm)

Ecology and home are related by etymology and by the connections between the human or animal and the environment in which they live. Thus, it is really in the "interaction" between Crusoe and the island that his sense of home emerges. In *Living in the Landscape: Towards an Aesthetics of Environment,* Arnold Berleant states that man is an

"actor" in nature, thus insisting on the inter-relationship between the human and the non-human, and he stresses the notion of "continuity" between man and nature: "connections rather than differences, continuity rather than separation, and the embeddedness of the human presence as knower and actor in the natural world" (7). More than a phenomenon of colonial appropriation, the relationship between Crusoe and the island becomes one of ontological identification, so much so that when we talk about Robinson Crusoe, we think about the protagonist on his island, as Michael Seidel points out: "As Crusoe remakes himself in a space that he inscribes, that space becomes him. To think of the man is to think in terms of the whole phrase 'Crusoe on his island'" (10). The story of *Robinson Crusoe* is that of a desolate traveler who becomes a land-owner, a "landed gentleman" (Marzec, *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study* 14), and edifies a fortune on it. Marzec's expression is interesting in so far as the concept of "land" becomes an adjective that defines the identity of the character. Identity and territory are intermingled: Crusoe's hybrid identity is related to the dislocation the island represents; his ascension is directly related to the land and its transformation by himself, which anchors him back into British identity that was defined at the time by colonial appropriation and expansion (Colley, Said).

At the term of this exploration into Crusoe's sense of home whereas he is imprisoned on a desert island for twenty-eight years, it becomes obvious that home is not a given but a construct, and that this construct can be physical, as when Crusoe, as a typical mercantilist and protectionist colonizer, builds walls, houses and barricades; psychological, as when Crusoe thinks about the security of his cave as home; or ecological, when Crusoe realises that his best ally is nature and that he can only feel at home if he protects the environment in which he lives.

If at the beginning of his stay on the island, he feels at home whenever he manages to accumulate objects from his past or money or when he appropriates space, as the novel unfolds, Crusoe changes and adapts his behavior. He no longer makes the mistakes of the beginning, as when he took too many grapes that ended up "bruis'd" (80) or when he wasted timber by cutting too big a trunk to create his canoe. He

realises in a quasi-epiphanic moment that he must adjust his use of natural elements to his needs:

> But all I could make Use of was all that was valuable: I had enough to eat and supply my Wants, and what was all the Rest to me? If I killed more Flesh than I could eat, the Dog must eat it, or Vermin; if I sowed more corn than I could eat, it must be spoiled; the Trees that I cut down were lying to rot on the Ground; I could make no more Use of them but for Fuel, and that I had no Occasion for but to dress my Food. (101–102)

The interaction between Crusoe and the desert island makes readers think about what it means "to be at home in the world" (Fallon 4). As Richard Phillips says, *Robinson Crusoe* illustrates "the dialectical geography of home and away" (27) and Crusoe redefines these two polarities, as the island (that stands for "away") becomes Crusoe's new "home" in the geographical context of colonialism, a home that he should not merely appropriate but that he should preserve and protect.

Many robinsonades have been published between the eighteenth-century colonial context of *Robinson Crusoe* and the twenty-first century: revisionary writers have been meditating for three centuries on this idea of being severed from one's country, one's family, one's home and trying to find them again, often in vain. In her book interestingly entitled *Global Crusoe*, Ann Marie Fallon writes that these authors of robinsonades "create, or even reinforce the relationship between the dislocation the island represents and the dislocation of postcolonial and postmodern experiences in a transnational context" (27). It would no doubt be very compelling to study what remains of Crusoe's sense of home after three hundred years of robinsonades[55] and in post-Brexit Great Britain.

[55] See Peraldo 2020.

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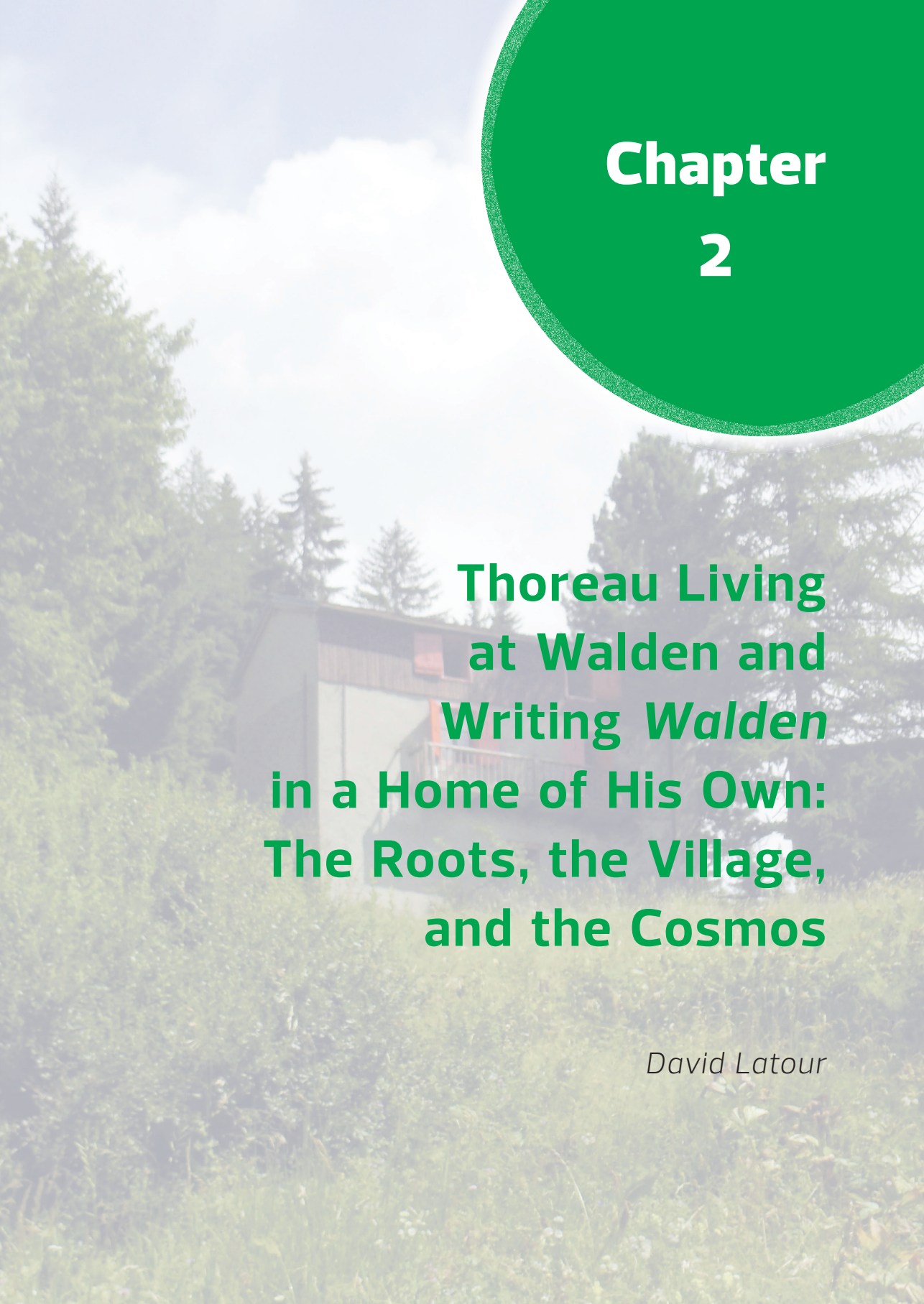

Chapter 2

Thoreau Living at Walden and Writing *Walden* in a Home of His Own: The Roots, the Village, and the Cosmos

David Latour

Chapter
2

In *Walden* (1854), Henry David Thoreau recounts how and why he went to live in a cabin by a pond in the woods. This work is at once an account of Thoreau's own experience living a simple life in this modest cabin by Walden Pond, and a social commentary of his time. From the outset of the book, he describes his own ambition to live self-sufficiently and without unnecessary possessions. In the first chapter, "Economy," he criticizes his contemporaries' materialistic appetite and senseless agitation:

> 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. (353)

Thoreau uses this metaphor of the stripping of one's self and of one's home to warn against the useless luxuries of his time. *Webster's Dictionary* defines "home" as "one's place of residence" that is, to put it differently, the place where one lives permanently, one's accommodation, a roof over one's head. House-keeping is primarily an art of being and of living in one's home; it is the economy of one's home. In fact, the term "economy" was formed from the Greek syntagm *oikos* which means "home" or "dwelling." Economy considers the organization and administration of the household, as this term is also constructed from the Greek syntagm *nemein* which means "to administer." Thoreau describes the economy of his new household—including details about the organization, management

(or "administration"), building, and localization of his cabin—demonstrating his own stripping down process and simplified lifestyle. This work has widespread literary and philosophical implications as, through the describing of his own personal experiences of simple living, he invites readers to reflect on their own lifestyle and relationship with the outside world. Walden cabin offers Thoreau a specific perspective on the world; it is a point of view he writes from and about. In this paper, I will explore how living at Walden cabin shaped Thoreau's own philosophy and viewpoint. To create, he needs "a room of his own" to rephrase the title of Virginia Woolf's famous essay, a small space that belongs to him exclusively, in which he has sufficient time and space to be an independent thinker and nature writer. I will begin by discussing the origins and "roots" of the cabin. Then, I will explore how Thoreau related to the outside world (specifically the village of Concord) while living at Walden. Finally, I will tackle the idea of immobility and movement throughout the book, a dynamic within the home that creates tension between inner and outer spaces in relation to the cosmos and eternity.

1. Building and Siting the Cabin

1.1 Personal and geographic roots

Thoreau had a personal relationship to the Walden woods and their pond. His connection to the place dates back to early childhood memories of family camping trips to the area. In *Walden*, he recollects one of the first scenes etched in his memories:

> When I was four years old [...] I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. [...] Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture, and even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my infant dreams, and one of the results of my presence and influence is seen in these bean leaves, corn blades, and potato vines. (446)

This episode, although belonging to the past, still echoes in his adult life. In *Walden Pond: a History*, William Barksdale Maynard points out that "[t]hese childhood memories of what seemed primeval forest left an indelible impression on Thoreau" (16). This memory set the foundation for his strong connection to the place so that the choice seemed almost preordained. This personal mythology is commented upon by William Ellery Channing. Upon receiving a letter from Thoreau informing him of his intention to live in a cabin by Walden Pond, Channing wrote back on March 5, 1845:

> I see nothing for you in this earth but that field [...]; go out upon that, build yourself a hut, & there begin the grand process of devouring yourself up; you will eat nobody else, nor anything else. (*The Correspondence* 268)

Channing encourages his friend to follow his destiny and his conviction. It is as if this project was meant to be, and Channing recognizes and anticipates Thoreau's settlement as a founding moment in his personal history. The Walden cabin is as much rooted in the author's biography as it is in the soils of New England.

Thoreau felt a sense of belonging in Walden. A lasting misconception about his life and work is that they paralleled the life and work of Diogenes the Cynic. Many people criticized Thoreau for this reason, including Charles Frederick Briggs, who, in October 1854, published a review of *Walden* entitled "A Yankee Diogenes." He argues that if the author can be misunderstood, it is because "[t]he New England character is essentially anti-Diogenic" (Briggs 391). Later, on November 21, 1857, yet another contemporary of Thoreau published a review in which he calls him "An American Diogenes" and equates him with

> [t]he transatlantic Diogenes [...] [who] when he observed the foolish, aimless bustle made by the modern Corinthians of the world, in pursuit of the sacred dollar and its glittering accessories, instead of rolling about in his tub, quietly sat down in it, and wrote an interesting book. (Myerson 409)

However, making Thoreau an heir to Diogenes the Cynic is a gross misapprehension of his literary and philosophical approach. Not only does he not live in a tub (or actually a "*pithos*" or storage jar) that he would roll up and down hills for no apparent reason other than to show his neighbors how pointless their incessant everyday agitation is as Diogenes did, but he feels in close connection to his Walden home.

Thoreau's Walden cabin is deeply anchored in his native Concord, Massachusetts and its surroundings, where he wanted to feel included. Frederick Garber's Heideggerian perspective of "at-homeness" in *Thoreau's Fable of Inscribing* emphasizes the author's effort to create a home for himself both in his work and in this world or "to be at home in the world" (6). The cabin and its rooting in the soil of Concord is the *sine qua non* reason and identity of his writing. The land the cabin is on offers it its unique identity. His home is a very earthy dwelling and the very foundation of his book. Robert P. Harrison argues in *Forest: The Shadow of Civilization* that Thoreau wants to live "in a house built on the foundation of reality, on the earth" (232). Both the cabin and the book come from the soil of Walden. Thoreau established his viewpoint from both his lived experience in Walden and in writing *Walden*. Though he had considered many different houses before Walden, he decided on the latter: "wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly. What is a house but a *sedes*, a seat?" (*Walden* 387) Walden became an external representation of his ideas of home, relationship with the natural world and his surroundings. Before settling down both in body and mind in his cabin, the author wrote in his journal on April 5, 1841: "I only ask a clean seat. I will build my lodge on the southern slope of some hill, and take there the life the gods send me" (*Journal* I, I, 244). Any place would have been as good as Walden because it is the owner of the house that gives it its full potential, and in the case of Thoreau, makes it a place to think and write.

1.2 Home-building and authorship

The architecture of Thoreau's home parallels that of his writing. The actual construction of the cabin was also of paramount importance because in building it, Thoreau also elaborated his ideas, perspective and book. Building his Walden home is an act of co-creation, both of the place

he intends to live in and of the activity he intends to perform in it. As Christian Doumet indicates in *Trois huttes*: "Building the huts, [is] writing the book" (22). The building of his Walden home is of paramount importance as a landmark both in his life and work. The cabin determines the very nature of his living and writing by the pond. In Gilles A. Tiberghien's words in his *Notes sur la nature, la cabane et quelques autres choses*, "what the author exposes to us is an experience of thought of which the hut is an indispensable moment: not an illustration, not an adventure that we could have done without, but a constitutive moment" (22). The writer at Walden cabin and the character in the cabin described in *Walden* are impossible to tell apart. In "Thoreau's Unreal Estate," Maura D'Amore stresses that "[o]ver the course of *Walden*, Thoreau crafts a domestic environment from words and phrases. His pond house is, to be sure, material, but his cabin in the woods is a product of his mind as much as of his hands" (73). In a powerful romantic surge, the author declares his home-cabin the center of his creative world. Thoreau's intention was to build a sturdy and reliable home that would be a representation of his inner world and allow him to feel rooted in the soil of Walden. In *Henry David Thoreau. A Life*, Laura Dassow Walls observes:

> Others have called the shelter on Walden's shores a cabin, hut, or shanty, but Thoreau almost always called it a house, insisting on the solidity and dignity he worked so hard to attain [...] Thoreau wanted a house to embody a new self, so that building that house meant building that self, literally from the ground up. (190)

The foundations of his Walden home are deeply rooted in the soil of Walden in which he dips his pen, and in himself as well. In this respect, one of his closest friends and first biographer, William Ellery Channing, reflects about his cabin in *Thoreau: The Poet-Naturalist*: "Here, in this wooden inkstand, he wrote a good part of his famous *Walden*" (218). Therefore, his cabin is not a simple hut or shack, it is an actual home.

Building one's home is a source of individual empowerment. Thoreau proudly speaks of himself as "the home-staying, laborious native of the soil" (*Walden* 447). Along the same lines, Antoine Marcel states in *Traité*

de la cabane solitaire that "[t]he cabin builder had better be a dreamer of the realistic type" (142) for the physical activity it involves requires us to rub shoulders with an often harsh reality. The builder and the owner of a house should be the same person. We should not rely on specialists such as architects to build our own houses. We should be the specialists of our own lives and never delegate such responsibilities to anyone. Seemingly elaborating on Emerson's concept of "Over Soul," Thoreau asks:

> Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, [...] the poetic faculty would be universally developed [...]? [...] Shall we forever resign the pleasure of construction to the carpenter? [...] No doubt another *may* also think for me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself. (*Walden* 358)

According to Thoreau, human beings are whole beings and one's home should be the reflection of one's personality, including our spiritual and mental virtues. He expands upon this conception of architecture as having "gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller, who is the only builder" (*Walden* 360). In his view, our dwellings are our "shells" (*Walden* 360). As James Dougherty phrases it in "House-Building and House-Holding at Walden," "Thoreau's pages show that the Walden house, and his dwelling there, are the sturdy outward shapings of an inward state" (227). This inward state shows through in the architecture of our home which in its turn enables us to bring about our thoughts and actions. Still, however personal and intimate this project is, it is not that of a friendless man.

1.3 Foundations and relationships

The cabin is not the result of a solitary effort by which Thoreau struggled to create a home for himself out of nowhere. Instead, it is the result of a collective effort. The first paragraph of *Walden* states that he settled down "in a house which [he] had built *[him]self*" (325);[56]

[56] My emphasis.

nevertheless, this statement needs to be taken with caution. Thoreau did not accomplish this project completely alone as he got help from friends, such as Amos Bronson Alcott whose axe was used to cut down white pines. In *Walden*, he discusses how help from friends can make the project all the more meaningful: "It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise" (354-355). The idea of getting started with the help of a friendly companion who lends something meaningful makes his house-building project more precious since it shows trust and encouragement. Of course, the idea conveyed by this metaphor of lending and borrowing a tool is that an author always borrows from his or her predecessors when getting started on a literary project. His cabin is part of a larger human scheme.

Thoreau's home building is not only a group effort, but also economical. He reuses and recycles a shanty so as not to waste time, money and energy, and gives new meaning to it: it will be the house of a nature writer. By turns a lumberjack, a carpenter, and a joiner, he had previously purchased the shanty of James Collins for $4.25. It was considered to be in good shape but on closer inspection, Thoreau notices it has many flaws. While the shanty was not perfect, Thoreau and his friends reconstructed it to make it his own. The author recounts how he took the boards apart and used recycled materials to make a house that was unique to his tastes and could not be replicated. In *De la nécessité des cabanes*, Gilles A. Tiberghien analyses: "He won't do the same one again because each cabin is different, and if one builds one from the remains, and even if the second one looks like the first, the result will be different" (25). The collective construction of the cabin meant that the structure remained irreplaceable to him but also shared in the collective memory of the building process:

> [W]ith the help of some of my acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity, I set up the frame of my house. No man was ever more honored in the character of his raisers than I. (*Walden* 358)

His borrowing an axe from a friend, his reusing a neighbor's shanty, and his benefiting from friends who came and raised the cabin's frame show a form of heritage. In a way, he inherits the individual stories of his friends and neighbors so as to maintain a relationship with them.

Walden cabin is anchored in stories of friendship and philosophical filiation. Its location is all the more perfect as it is on Emerson's property without being in his own home. The cabin was built on Wyman Lot—the piece of land Emerson had acquired in September 1844. Thoreau had just spent two years living with the Emersons from April 1841 to May 1843. At the same time, this experience gave him more self-discipline in his writing as Dassow Walls puts it:

> Under Emerson's roof, Thoreau consolidated his sense of himself as above all a writer [...], a true and focused professional patterned after Emerson's own model, which Thoreau [...] witnessed daily. (122)

In a way, by building the cabin, living in it and writing in it, Thoreau fulfills both his dream and Emerson's. He both emancipates himself from his mentor and gives life and meaning to Emerson's piece of land by becoming a true "American scholar." Hence, *Walden* provides a purpose to the Emersonian ground. It is doubtlessly with a certain irony and taste for the symbolic that Thoreau writes that the day he settled down in Walden cabin "*by accident*, was on Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, 1845" (*Walden* 389).[57] Yet, it is no "accident" if Thoreau creates a bridge between the two declarations, as Stanley Cavell reveals in *Senses of Walden*. Thoreau's America is still not independent from England, which dominated it, "because we have not departed from the conditions England lives under, either in our literature or in our political and economic lives" (Cavell 7). By settling down at Walden, Thoreau breaks away from these old European influences and creates not just a work of art of his own but also contributes to fashioning a uniquely American cultural identity. Cavell depicts the convergence of his personal fate and America's national destiny as follows:

[57] My emphasis.

> Leaving *Walden*, like leaving Walden, is as hard, is perhaps the same, as entering it [...] the time of crisis depicted in this book is not alone a private one, and not wholly cosmic. It is simultaneously a crisis in the nation's life. And the nation too must die down to the root if it is to continue to recognize and neighbor itself. This is to be expected of a people whose groping for expression produced a literature by producing prophecy [...]. The hero of the book—as is typical of his procedures—enacts this fact as well as writes it, depicts it in his actions as well as in his sentences. Of course, the general action of building his house is the general prophecy. (116)

Emerson's transcendental project of "self-reliance" is materialized in the cabin by the pond. It becomes a place of emancipation for someone who had only lived at home, at college, or with the Emersons. By settling down on Emerson's piece of property, Thoreau is an heir to his transcendentalist mentor to whose philosophy and friendship he pays tribute. Walden cabin would not have been built without the collaboration of acquaintances and friends. Thoreau is not alone in building his small house but, be that as it may, is he really alone when living in it?

2. The Cabin and the Village

2.1 Society and solitude

The misconception that Thoreau led the life of a hermit still often prevails. According to *Webster's dictionary*, a hermit is "one that retires from society and lives in solitude especially for religious reasons." He came to be referred to as a hermit right from the moment he published *Walden*; in *Emerson and Thoreau: The Contemporary Reviews*, Joel Myerson lists over ten occurrences of the word "hermit" by different authors in reference to Thoreau (371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 384, 387, 391, 392), whereas only two critics insist that he is no hermit (393, 398). This is very likely to have influenced how Thoreau and *Walden* have come to be perceived and remembered.

Nonetheless, *Walden* is not a simple account of the two years, two months and two days Thoreau spent living in the woods and it should

not be taken at face value: "*Walden* is no straightforward autobiography of a *Life in the Woods*, but a text rife with secrets and artifice" reflects Barksdale Maynard (*Walden Pond* 91). Thoreau is perfectly aware that he is raising his neighbors' curiosity. He stages his own solitude to satisfy the reader's craving for original, mysterious and fascinating characters. Moreover, his contemporaries question his lifestyle in many ways, forcing him to justify himself. He clarifies: "I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life" (*Walden* 325). He needs to prove he is a social being and displays his want for society so as to appease the minds of his Concordian neighbors. The presence of society, be it through the pressure of his neighbors or potential readers, is always palpable.

Thoreau's reputation as a hermit is ill-suited from a more materialistic and geographical point of view as well. Although remote from the crowd, his home is not isolated in the wilderness; it was purposefully built close to Concord (a fifth of a mile to the main road), Thoreau's hometown. In a journal entry, Thoreau wrote on July 14, 1845: "I imagine it to be some advantage to live a primitive life and frontier life—though in the midst of an outward civilization" (*Journal* I, I, 367). He can hear the bells and gun fire of his village and other nearby towns. Barksdale Maynard reminds us in "Emerson's 'Wyman Lot'" that "his intention was not to inhabit a wilderness, but to find wildness in a suburban setting less than thirty minutes' walk from Concord village in a landscape heavily used for human purpose" (76). As a consequence, Thoreau's literary fabrication of his *locus* or "middle landscape," to quote Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden* (256), is neither wild nor urban. It is connected to urbanity thanks to the train; his home is less than half a mile to the railroad station from which he enjoys hearing the sounds of cars. Moreover, he frequently walks along the rail-roads to get into town: "I usually go to the village along [the Fitchburg Railroad], and am, as it were, *related to society by this link*" (*Walden* 414).[58] Though a staunch critic of the shortcomings of society, he did not intend to cut himself off from humanity. The connection to his village is always present.

[58] My emphasis.

With Concord being within walking distance from his cabin, he goes there frequently to visit family and friends. Walter Harding reports in *The Days of Henry Thoreau. A biography* that "[r]umor had it that every time Mrs. Emerson rang her dinner bell, Thoreau came bounding through the woods and over the fences to be first in line at the Emerson dinner table" (184). With Thoreau walking to Concord on a regular basis, his Walden cabin is no hermitage. As Harding remarks: "Hardly a day went by that Thoreau did not visit the village or was visited at the pond" (190).

Furthermore, living at Walden did not mean that Thoreau was left alone. Rather, he attracted people's gaze and attention and became "a spectacle" and "a sort of magnet" (Dassow Walls 192, 194). His belonging to a social network of neighbors and acquaintances shows that his solitude is far from complete. "Thoreau must be understood as a social creature with close personal and intellectual ties to the larger citizenry" as Barksdale Maynard remarks ("Emerson's 'Wyman Lot'" 77). His farthest neighbor lives only about a mile away and he has plenty of visitors of all sorts; he reminisces: "I had more visitors while I lived in the woods than at any other period in my life" (*Walden* 437). He tells how people are so curious that they make excuses to come and talk to him. Thus, he is not left alone by his neighbors and the travelers, and is never abandoned by his friends. Walden cabin becomes the home of friendship, if not a rallying point for his friends and fellow transcendentalists every now and then. Harding reminds us: "It became quite the fashion to hold picnics on his doorstep" (190). Although his new home did not make him a recluse, it nonetheless remained a place of solitude and reflection.

2.2 Solitude and society

Thoreau enjoys and sometimes craves for his own company. He was well accompanied, but he also longed for the complete solitude and privacy of his own home:

> [N]o house is visible from any place but the hill-tops within half a mile of my own. I have my horizon bounded by woods all to myself [...] for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. (*Walden* 426)

This apparent contradiction creates a full character entitled to his ambiguities and complexities. Thoreau's aloneness, as much as his society, is a literary fabrication. Thus, the first part of the inaugurating paragraph of *Walden*—"I lived *alone*, in the woods" (325)[59]—also needs to be questioned since his solitude is very relative. The solitude he depicts in *Walden* and performs at Walden is one of *individual choice*, it is "a free decision to live apart from others," in the phrase of Tiberghien (*Notes* 96). Through his persona, the author creates a fictional character who claims his right to desire solitude without ever feeling lonely or guilty:

> I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. (*Walden* 430)

His motivation being Emersonian "self-reliance," he never claims to reject society altogether and does not favor solitude *per se*; he means to keep it at arm's length to have a consented association to it or as Doumet phrases it: "Some distances are ways of proximity" (25). Our physical remoteness in space creates a spiritual and philosophical closeness able to form a community.

There is an apparent gap between the assertion of his love of solitude and his declaration of love for his contemporaries: "I think that I love society as much as most [...]. I am naturally no hermit" (*Walden* 434). This constant movement between moments of solitude and moments spent with others relies on the notion of choice. That is why his going to the village usually appears as an individual decision: "Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip [...] which, taken in homœopathic doses, was really [...] refreshing" (*Walden* 456). The relative remoteness of his home offers him enough space to be able to choose. Here again, he keeps journalistic opinions and popular rumors away so as to keep the agitation of his contemporaries at a distance and only

[59] My emphasis.

gleans some information when needed before being "let out through the rear avenues, and so escap[ing] to the woods again" (*Walden* 457). He goes back to his solitude in the woods once his thirst for knowledge and novelty is quenched.

Society, as much as solitude, can only be the result of choice on his part, but also on others'. Whoever wants to come and visit him has to be as strong-minded as Thoreau: "Who should come to my lodge this morning but a true Homeric or Paphlagonian man" (*Walden* 437). The author only wants to be available for quality and meaningful relationships:

> I met several [people] there [at Walden] under more favorable circumstances than I could anywhere else. But fewer came to see me on trivial business. In this respect, my company was winnowed by my mere distance from town. I had withdrawn so far within the great ocean of solitude, into which the rivers of society empty, that for the most part, so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest sediment was deposited around me. (*Walden* 437)

He prefers important discussions and does not care for mundane encounters. With Thoreau being "*extra-vagant*" (*Walden* 580),[60] his home attracts less trivial visits and preserves his relationships and friendships with those who are willing to walk to his home. Marilyn R. Chandler explains in *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction* that

> Thoreau is not situated so as to be dropped in on by the casual passerby but must be sought out by one explicitly desiring what simple goods he may find there. Like Thoreau's other exercises of virtue, hospitality is as stringently held to his own terms as it is magnanimous within those terms; the visitor must come two miles out of town, thereby meeting Thoreau more than halfway. (31)

[60] Thoreau's emphasis.

Thoreau's home is the reflection of this lifestyle; between society and solitude, he makes individual connections to others and expects them to be as demanding as he is in terms of the quality of human relations.

2.3 A humble, welcoming abode

Thoreau's living and writing at Walden nourish themselves also from the quality of his guests. Making Walden cabin his home, he creates new ways of life, new rules, new norms and rules or "*nomos*." The main rule in a home is that of hospitality. Enjoying the presence of others and good conversations, he keeps himself ready for any fresh and new encounter. He decides to keep an open mind, as his guests need to be able to make themselves at home but also remember the house rules of someone who lives alone. For example, an occasional guest can come and break bread with him and it would be easy for them to cook together as they talk. Yet, Thoreau insists that "if twenty came and sat in [his] house there was nothing said about dinner, [...] [they] naturally practised abstinence; and this was [...] the most proper and considerate course" (*Walden* 435). Provided these basic house-keeping rules are followed, the author feels free to get close to his visitors: "I could entertain thus a thousand as well as twenty" (*Walden* 435–436). These hospitality rules regulate both his sense of sympathy and his guests' sense of respect and abiding by his domestic rules. He concludes: "I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board" (*Walden* 585). He advocates a life of simplicity in home economics, and hospitality is the art of simplicity in creating warmth. Unfortunately, true hospitality is a virtue that has been lost on most people: "Nowadays the host does not admit you to *his* hearth, but has got the mason to build one for yourself somewhere in his alley, and hospitality is the art of *keeping* you at the greatest distance" (*Walden* 516–517).[61] However remote from his neighbors, his cabin remains a convivial abode. Welcoming someone into one's home implies both closeness and respect of boundaries. And, since the decision to stay by himself or to be with others is one of personal

[61] Thoreau's emphasis.

freedom and autonomous choice, the cabin's sole inhabitant needs to remain vigilant so as not to mistake charity or "*hospitalality*" (*Walden* 443),[62] for true hospitality. Although Thoreau welcomes visitors of all sorts, he is not willing to give up—not the mere ownership, but the true "authorship" of his home as a place to live, read and write but also as a fictionalized place. His home has to remain a safe space for his individuality according to his *nomos*.

Hospitality, friendship and solitude inextricably belong together at Walden and in *Walden*. In a most-often quoted passage of *Walden*, Thoreau describes: "I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society" (434). The image of the chairs fitting together like Russian dolls shows the extent of Thoreau's adaptability. Society is represented as containing friendship, which itself contains solitude. Channing's point of view on the matter is more practical as demonstrated by this comment in his biography of Thoreau: "It was just large enough for one [...]. Two was one too much in his house" (7). There is a fine line between conviviality and promiscuity. Being small (ten-by-fifteen foot), Thoreau's house is definitively a place for only one to live in. Indeed, when a visitor shows up, the small dimensions of his house become impossible to forget, thus influencing interactions:

> As the conversation began to assume a loftier and grander tone, we gradually shoved our chairs farther apart till they touched the wall in opposite corners, and then commonly there was not room enough. (*Walden* 434-435)

The dimensions of his small house—an abode for both society and solitude—are conditions of the blossoming of the author's social life as well as creative mind. Living in his Walden cabin, Thoreau sets up norms to accommodate both his needs for solitude and society. His living experience at Walden puts intimacy in tension with openness, thus generating a constant movement in his mind and home.

[62] Thoreauvian neologism created by combining the words "hospital" and "hospitality".

3. Immobility and Movement

3.1 The fluidity of home economics

The material organization of his cabin matters for it conditions the interior disposition of Thoreau's ethics as the author of *Walden*. As home-building equates self-construction, he needs a place that is not cluttered with so many objects and furniture that either they all become useless or they prevent him from being an active and creative writer. In order to have space, he wants to cut down to the bare minimum and get rid of the superfluous; so when a lady offers him a mat, he refuses it and reflects: "It is best to avoid the beginnings of evil" (*Walden* 375–376). A doormat would materialize the difference between the inside and the outside of his home. The objects that we surround ourselves with and the ethics we live by are connected. Chandler explains about the use of the word "evil" that it

> throws so simple a thing as a doormat into the realm of universal ethical principles. No possession is neutral because possession itself is a moral issue; similarly, no structure we build for ourselves is neutral because time and space are part of the economy of the universe. (39)

His ethics, domesticity and economy of life are inextricably intertwined in the sense that he refuses to let his interior become over-adorned, and resists any addition of unnecessary items that would make his living impractical. Simplicity is the keyword here. Thoreau describes his cabin as having "[a]ll the attractions of a house [...] concentrated in one room" (*Walden* 515). Sophistication does not suit him and this house is that of an honest and simple man. Chandler makes the following analysis:

> Such architectural ideals are borrowed directly from moral categories: the openness of a dwelling without partitions represents a kind of honesty; the absence of any unnecessary decoration, humility and simplicity; the enduring materials, moral toughness; and the relative inattention to comforts, asceticism. (30–31)

His home is a place of freedom of thought, will and action where anything is possible. His house has to remain functional for him to be able to live his Walden experience freely and produce his *Walden* narrative.

Thoreau's description of his Walden cabin matches almost every aspect of the picture he paints of his ideal home. A simple house can also be a family house or a house of friends provided each resident lives by the rule of simplicity. This co-habitation induces a form of promiscuity that amounts to agreeable social interactions, collective participation and harmonious living. Furthermore, for Thoreau, all one needs is visible and accessible so as to never prevent one from doing what he or she needs. This vision of a house reduced to the bare minimum can accommodate many people:

> I sometimes dream of a larger and more populous house, standing in a golden age, of enduring materials [...] which shall still consist of only one room, a vast, rude, substantial, primitive hall, without ceiling or plastering, with bare rafters and purlins supporting a sort of lower heaven over one's head. (*Walden* 516)

The occupants of the house would be sheltered by a robust and durable home that would also have its ceiling and roof open to the skies above. It is as safe as it lets its occupants be free. Objects and people coexist in a fluid environment. This safe haven built in the image of its owner communicates with the outside world too.

3.2 The porosity of home imagination

Thoreau's home is a porous space, both architecturally and symbolically. The walls of the cabin are thin enough for it to be permeable to the natural environment. Although it is a sturdier shelter than his tent or his boat have ever been, the cabin is not ready for the first winter and is therefore open to the natural winds. Materially, it remains precarious and does not fully withstand the natural elements. Symbolically, the threshold of the cabin is easily crossed as well. Harrison believes that since the cabin is "made of the forest's offerings" (226), it enables Thoreau to be in contact with people and nature. It is an interface that marks only approximately the frontier between the inside and the

outside. As Tiberghien puts it, "in cabins, the interior-exterior polarity, which is constitutive of the house, does not exist. The hut is all exterior: it extends into nature just as nature penetrates it from one side to the other" (*Notes* 38). From within the cabin, there is obvious communication and interaction with the outside world. The difference between the two poles is so tenuous that the inside can easily become the outside. For example, Thoreau would enjoy scrupulously setting all of his furniture outside in order to clean his cabin with water and sand:

> It was pleasant to see my whole household effects out on the grass [...]. They seemed glad to get out themselves [...]. It was worth the while to see the sun shine on these things, and hear the free wind blow on them. (*Walden* 412)

Being personified, his furniture seems to belong to the outside more than it does to the inside. Every piece of it has integrated back into the natural world, as if reclaiming their very nature "because they once stood in their midst" (*Walden* 412-413). The furniture of the cabin seems eager to merge with the outside natural world. Thus, the porosity of Thoreau's home creates a passage from the inside to the outside, to the point that the bean-field, the woods, the pond, the village, the train all become a part of his home: "My 'best' room, however, my withdrawing room, always ready for company, on whose carpet the sun rarely fell, was the pine wood behind my house" (*Walden* 435). The outside world is in the continuity of his cabin which stimulates his creative imagination.

As a consequence, his home is swept by the winds of imagination that carry with them impressions of faraway lands. Thoreau's dreams and thoughts are constantly stimulated by the winds that come to caress his home with their never-ending heavenly music:

> To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character [...] The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted. (*Walden* 390)

Living in the cabin is an invitation to travel, be it physically or mentally. From his Walden home protected in a natural setting, Thoreau travels safely in his mind and dreams of faraway lands. Following Marcel's definition in *Traité de la cabane solitaire*, "the cabin is *par excellence* the place where one can dream" (13). Thoreau's imagination wanders freely as he watches the horizon before him: "Though the view from my door was still more contracted, I did not feel crowded or confined in the least. There was pasture enough for my imagination" (*Walden* 392). His mind takes him so far that he even dialogues with the universe and travels in time:

> I dwelt nearer to those parts of the universe and to those eras in history which had most attracted me [...]. I discovered that my house actually had its site in such a withdrawn, but forever new and unprofaned, part of the universe. (*Walden* 392)

The Walden cabin also holds a central position in his conception of the cosmos. With his home symbolically standing at the center of his physical and imaginary world, the cosmos seems to make sense to the author. Doumet observes that the man who lives alone in a cabin creates a world "totally self-centered in the sense that all the objects placed at equal distance from the subject form around him a circle of which he is naturally entitled to think of himself as the center" (26). The interiority of Thoreau and his cabin's merge together with the exteriority of the outside natural world which becomes the object of his exploration and fantasy.

In building his Walden cabin and writing *Walden*, Thoreau found a way to connect to the cosmos. Home-building is a trope for his conception of the universe. The Emersonian "Over-soul" is always here, as a solid foundation both of his wood cabin and his cosmology explaining reality as we know it. When his contemporaries inquire about his feeling possibly lonely, he answers: "Why should I feel lonely? is not our planet in the Milky Way?" (*Walden* 428). Walden is an earthly dwelling that enables him to communicate with transcendence. As Doumet points out:

> This is undoubtedly the case for all the great living experiences that, by settling on a center, they build their own cosmos. […] So much so that this *Nature* so often invoked by Thoreau […] designates not so much the natural given as an edifice of thought always in the making, as a construction. (21)[63]

His individuality dissolves into the infinity of the universe and becomes one with it. In his conclusion, Thoreau muses: "Direct your eye inward, and you'll find / A thousand regions in your mind / Yet undiscovered. Travel them, and be / Expert in home-cosmography" (*Walden* 577). Living and writing in his cabin, Thoreau puts the cosmos in a nutshell.

3.3 An eternal home for the cosmos

Thoreau left Walden on September 6, 1847; once his experiment was over, Emerson rented Wyman Lot to his gardener Hugh Whelan who intended to "move the house to the beanfield, […] line the cellar, manure the field, build an addition twice as big as the original dwelling, and dig a well" (Barksdale, *Walden Pond* 92). Yet, Whelan barely got started and disappeared from Concord, leaving behind him a large new cellar hole in the ground. In his article, Barksdale Maynard informs us that

> eventually [Thoreau's Walden house] was moved to a farm where it served as a grain storehouse until being dismantled in 1868. No photograph was taken of it, nor is there a fully reliable sketch; Thoreau complained of slight inaccuracies in its depiction on the frontispiece of *Walden* […]. The remains of its foundations at the pond were discovered in the course of a 1945–46 archaeological investigation by Roland Wells Robbins […]. Several replicas of the house stand in the Concord area today […], and the actual site, on a gentle hillside in the wooded Walden Pond State Reservation, is marked by granite posts. ("Thoreau's House" 307)

[63] Doumet's emphasis.

Thoreau's Walden home has physically disappeared. Yet, its symbolic location is still perfectly vivid in the minds of nature writing lovers.

Walden cabin is a stepping stone in American nature writing. Although ephemeral, his cabin "would be honored as the foundation of a new generation of environmental thinking" (Dassow Walls 201). The cabin later became a site of pilgrimage and a prototype for imitation; Buell explains in "The Thoreauvian Pilgrimage: The Structure of an American Cult":

> we find a proliferation of homesteading experiments during the past century that claim Thoreau as inspiration, directly or obliquely. These begin about a generation after Thoreau's death. (186)

In fact, he is even considered "The Patron Saint of Tiny Houses" by April Anson who describes the tiny house movement as "a social and architectural trend that advocates living simply in small spaces" and who explains that "the term is generally reserved for the smaller transportable units approximately the size of Thoreau's cabin" (331). Yet, one must keep in mind Thoreau's warning against all kinds of imitation. We are all original individuals and, as such, should only try to assert our individuality and never mimic someone else's:

> I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account [...] but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. (*Walden* 378)

His home is thus an artistic creation in itself and as such, it is meant to be interpreted not copied. One must find food for thought and imagination in his stay and should by no means try to imitate him. Everyone should build a Walden cabin of his or her own and eventually use it as home in which to live and from which to write.

The cabin has both a spatial and a temporal dimension. Thoreau's Walden stay was only meant to be transient. According to Richardson's interpretation in *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind*: "He might be leading a primitive life, but it was being led in a backyard laboratory. The value of

the Walden stay is its experimental, representative or symbolic character'' (171). The cabin proper was as transitory as the length of his stay. Harrison comments: ''He enters the woods of Walden in order to learn how to be transitory there. [...] [H]e never presumed that his sojourn in the woods of Walden could serve as a permanent model for dwelling'' (230). This temporary experience is only transformative in so far as it is concentrated in time and space. Both solid and fragile, the cabin is a transitional space. Living at Walden was a personal experience that he continued to carry even after his stay was over. According to Dassow Walls:

> [I]n a sense, he never did leave. Walden stayed with him for the rest of his life, anchoring his reborn sense of self-independent, solitary even in the midst of crowds, grounded in the splash and spring of bedrock nature. (231)

In *Walden*, Thoreau does not mention what happens to his cabin afterwards. This oversight is very telling as it provides an open end to the book and to the experiment. One can more easily appropriate metaphorically the fictional cabin of *Walden* in order to eventually let oneself be inspired to build ''a cabin of one's own.''

Thoreau's Walden cabin is ''a room of his own'' which is both a geographical and intimate anchor point. It is a place of co-construction of the writing gesture and the theoretical elaboration. It is the home of life, creation, and imagination where *nomos*, *logos* and *locus* co-create each other. Thoreau belongs in Walden; his roots have been buried deep in the Walden soil since his childhood. Building Walden cabin and writing *Walden* are co-created gestures. The cabin is only made possible through the intervention of his friends from whom he inherits both materially and symbolically. Thoreau is also no hermit as he is connected to Concord and has regular visitors. He seeks society and solitude on his own individual terms and thus has a choice over his social interactions. His home often becomes a hospitable place for discussion and friendship. The cabin is both an anchorage point and a crossing point that stimulates creation as

it is a simple home with plenty of room to think. In this tension between immobility and movement, everyone should build a home of their own that is both robust and permeable enough to enable us to communicate with the outside world and the universe at large. Walden's cabin is both an ephemeral earthly workshop and an eternal home for the cosmos, leaving an eternal heritage for the future of nature writing.

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Chapter 3

Rented Accommodation: Houses in Novels by Hawthorne and James, Fitzgerald and West

William Blazek

Chapter
3

I have lived in three different houses that I can claim to have owned (or rather co-owned), but over the course of my life I have also resided in at least nineteen rented houses or apartments, and my example is not unusual for an American. The United States ranks only 35th of 49 economically developed countries in home ownership, at 65 percent of the population.[64] In a nation that mythologizes the home as the center of economic and social wellbeing, the fact that 35 percent of its housed population lives in rented accommodation suggests that residential mobility derives from a competing mythology of restless pursuit and the lure of the road, so renting property provides a solution in a vast country of temporary homes for a people familiar with spatial displacement who nevertheless yearn for a stable life in a settled place.

The novels that I want to explore all concern rented accommodation, and I apply the word *rented* in the sense of "to hire or lease on a temporary basis," as well as how we might think of something torn or split—or in the archaic sense of something lacerated or wrenched apart, as in "rent asunder," divided or pulled into pieces, whether physically or emotionally, as in a breach in a relationship or union. The word *accommodation* also has more than one denotation: from the Latin *accomodare*—to fit or adapt one thing to another, to put in order—in English it means an occupied living space, one's lodgings, as well as an arrangement,

[64] 2018–2020 statistics from https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/home-ownership-rate.

agreement, compromise, settlement, or understanding, as in "to reach an accommodation" with someone. The secondary, less common definitions in the phrase "rented accommodation" will be my main focus here, showing how "rented" as in cracked, split, torn, or broken can be applied to texts in which physical spaces such as rented rooms or houses symbolize divisions between characters and within characters—divisions formed by secrets, deceptions, and obsessions along with dissatisfaction and hopelessness. As a further implication, to a degree narrative structure and language itself are also rent apart in the texts. As for how the novels accommodate *accommodation*, meaning an effort to achieve harmonious solutions to plot dilemmas or to arrive at better understanding within or between characters, such placid conclusions are not the outcomes of my selected narratives. Instead, these textual rented accommodations more often yield ambiguities and open up questions, sometimes as severe as questions about human existence. In a world in which we have just a short lease of life, a temporary residence in the flesh, the texts leave us to ponder time and our mortality, to question the choices we make, the morality of our decisions, and whether our aim in life is to be happy or to be good.

I have joined together two pairs of texts for illustration of these ideas: firstly Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1851 novel *The House of the Seven Gables* and Henry James's 1888 novella *The Aspern Papers*, and secondly F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1922 novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, along with Nathanael West's last novel, published in 1939, *The Day of the Locust*.[65] Pairing the two nineteenth-century texts illustrates how an evolving United States civilization is troubled by its history of conquest and violence, and how it seeks to justify its progress towards nationhood by uncovering or manipulating a still visible past. Rooms in houses and attendant gardens feature in that process, structural symbols of moral rebuilding and regrowth in the aftermath of fallen Edens. In the two selected twentieth-century texts, a more fragmented and decayed sense of space features, with hints of lost connections to nature and natural

[65] Credit for most of this selection goes to my students in Liverpool for helping me think creatively about houses in American literature as we discussed these course texts in final-year seminars.

goodness. If their predecessors exhibit a desire for solidity of place and identity, the later novels accept American rootlessness and dislocation as the accepted order of the present and future.

1. Rented Rooms and Deceptive Purposes: *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Aspern Papers*

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, the character driving key moments of the plot is Holgrave, the daguerreotypist photographer and radical thinker who has rented rooms located in one of the house's seven gables. We learn in the course of the narrative that he is an ancestor of the Puritan settler Mathew Maule, who was cheated out of the landholding on which the house is built and was executed by Colonel Pyncheon, the ruling-class forefather of the current owners. Mathew Maule had been burned for witchcraft, and Holgrave has inherited both magical abilities as well as the potential to pursue revenge for the ancient crime. Mathew Maule's son, Thomas Maule, set the pattern for that pursuit, for he was the architect of the house, and the one who may have been responsible for the death of Colonel Pyncheon, and the one who fashioned, behind a portrait of the Colonel, a secret recessed compartment that holds title deeds to lands in Maine, deeds that the prominent but semi-impoverished Pyncheon family searches and longs for over generations but cannot find. The Maule family's retribution and the Pyncheon family's guilt are bound together in a complex historical and narrative blend—but for my purposes it is important to note the features of Holgrave's lodgings and their relationship to other spatial elements in the text.

When readers are first introduced to Holgrave (as a mark of his inscrutability and incompleteness, we never learn his full name), he has been a lodger for about three months past "in a remote gable—quite a house by itself, indeed—with locks, bolts, and oaken bars, on all the intervening doors [to the rest of the house]" (Hawthorne 30). It is an isolated and secure location, attached and yet detached from the Pyncheon family home that had been built on Mathew Maule's original plot of land, over "an unquiet grave," so that when it was new the house

> would thus afford the ghost [of Mathew Maule] a kind of privilege to its new apartments, and the chambers into which future bridegrooms were to lead their brides, and where children of the Pyncheon blood were to be born. (9)

Holgrave thereby becomes the contemporary embodiment of that ghostly presence, maintaining wizardly gifts in his occupation as a daguerrotypist, using his rented rooms to produce the photographs. This is where, he explains, "I misuse Heavens blessed sunshine by tracing out human features, through its agency" (46). Daguerreotypes are holograph-like or we might say ghost-like photographs created from shimmering polished copper plates, treated with the magical elements of alchemy, mercury and silver. Holgrave is thus both a scientist and a magician, mechanic and artist, and his ghostly presence contains further dualities. He is capable of benevolence as well as harm, as potentially another future bridegroom or as a harbinger of deadly vengeance if the passage to his chambers were to be reopened.

Holgrave's daguerreotypes must be held at just the right angle to be seen clearly in their almost three-dimensional quality. Alan Trachtenberg writes of

> what by 1851 had become a fairly common experience: that apparent trick of the mirrored metallic face of the daguerreotype image, seeming at once here and gone, a positive and a negative, substance and shadow. What one sees, shadow or image [...] depends on how one holds the palm-sized cased image, at what angle and in what light. (461-462)

In that way truthful representation is a matter of manipulation and interpretation. The daguerreotype itself is an enclosed space, one that can be used for good or ill because it was believed that it could reveal the true self of its subject—a truth, though, that has to be discovered, determined through the perspective of the viewer. Sean Kelly explains:

> In the ambiguous representation of the daguerreian portrait, both elusive due to its mirrored, unsteady surface and static in its mimetic, scientific objectivity, Hawthorne presents a complex view of the self as both ontologically emergent and bordering on ontological destitution—at once a "material ghost" and an animate corpse. (233)

Like his photographs and like his presence in the house, Holgrave withholds the truth about his family origins, not revealing to the young Phoebe Pyncheon until they have declared their love for one another near the end of the narrative that he is a Maule. In his rented room until that revelation he is an insidious invader, capable of enacting inherited retribution. However, by the end of the narrative, both Phoebe, with her country-bred practicality and natural optimism, and Holgrave, with his democratic spirit, break free from their entrapped family histories. The house, with its "exterior presentment of established rank and great possessions" (Hawthorne 25) is as inwardly decrepit as Poe's House of Usher; and it represents all of the debased authority of the political ruling elite, led by Judge Pyncheon, the devious, Janus-faced legatee of his family's fortune. Under the calming influence of the sunny, garden-loving Phoebe, Holgrave will temper his radical reformist beliefs, choose harmonious marriage over turbulent social change. This resolution is foreshadowed during the first meeting between Phoebe and Holgrave in a corner of the garden adjacent to the house, when he explains:

> I dig, and hoe, and weed, in this black old earth, for the sake of refreshing myself with what little nature and simplicity may be left in it, after men have sown and reaped here. I turn up the earth by way of pastime. (91)

The garden thereby shares the house's ambiguous qualities, a place where growth and burial coexist, where the burden of past time and the uplift of leisurely pastime mix together. As the soil is dug and broken up to nurture new life, the blockage between rented rooms and the main house also must be released.

The encrusted conflict between the two families is broken (rent) at the point when the barriers between Holgrave's lodgings in the far north gable and the rest of the house are removed—significantly, not by Holgrave himself but by the desperate old Hepzibah Pyncheon, Phoebe's cousin. Previously, Hepzibah was "apt to suspect him of studying the Black Art, up there in his lonesome chamber" and of practicing "animal magnetism" (mesmerism, hypnotism). But when she later seeks Holgrave's help, she unbolts "a door, cobwebbed and long disused" (244), thereby reopening the transit between his gable and the rest of the house. Thus the oldest relation of the Pyncheons becomes the agent to open a channel into the future, initially an uncertain future represented through Holgrave as both a figure of inventive modernity and a dark avenging spirit. However, if the past's curse is seen as the locks and bolts that prevent progress into a brighter future, then cracking open the door is a necessary act of destruction, one that delivers unknown but more positive possibilities.

From isolation to liberation, the house is steadily relieved of its ancient curse as further barriers are broken and new freedoms are released. Judge Pyncheon dies alone in a cold, dreary room upon a death chair that was the seat of family power. Through the omniscient narrator, readers are exposed to knowledge of "the inner heart of the seven gables, as well as its exterior face" (294). No longer a "stumbling block" (261) to human progress, the house explodes in a reverie of fresh ideas. Phoebe exclaims: "Let us throw open the doors, and call all the neighbourhood to see the truth!" (305). Inside, the ancient portrait of the ancestor Judge Pyncheon is found to have a secret hinge, now decayed and broken, exposing behind it a recess in the wall that holds the out-of-date Maine territory title-deeds that had burdened the Pyncheon family with false hopes of fortune and faulty foundations of undeserved grandeur.

The hidden compartment, like Holgrave's concealed work in his rented rooms, could be understood in relation to the hidden history of mid-nineteenth-century America, too, with the 1850 Compromise between the Northern and Southern states over slavery hovering as a ghost in the background, as ongoing political deadlock held back the nation's moral development, but not its territorial and materialist expansion. The narrator reflects:

> It seemed to Holgrave [...] that in this age, more than before, the moss-grown and rotten Past is to be torn down, and lifeless institutions to be thrust out of the way, and their dead corpses buried, and everything to begin anew. (179)

Nevertheless, the compromises (accommodations) that he makes in accepting Phoebe's prudence in the closing scenes also imply that he has learned not only tolerance but also to subdue the "terrible energy" (161) of modernity and radical change, when he gives up his temporary occupation (another word with a double meaning) as a daguerreotypist. Hawthorne, ever the compromiser himself in his ambiguous writing and his gradualist politics, gives us a fairy tale ending to *The House of the Seven Gables* that is as difficult to interpret as was the future of America for those living there in 1850. Whether understood from a psychoanalytical angle as Holgrave's release from a cycle of guilt and retribution, or in historical terms as the integration of his restless modernity with the industrious and stable domestic characteristics of Phoebe,[66] the ending, in which the key characters depart the House of the Seven Gables for a country estate, turns dark enclosed spaces into bright open space. However, narratologically, the transformation is less assured; for although no longer trapped by old ways of thinking and haunted by shadows of the past, they leap into a fairy-tale future governed by "unintelligible prophesies" (319).

Henry James's *The Aspern Papers* has several features in common with Hawthorne's novel: both have central characters who rent rooms in large houses, and who conceal or even lie about their true identities; gardens as sites of significant encounters and as symbolic sites of at least potential betrayal and lost innocence are important settings in both texts; and both involve key moral decisions on the part of the male protagonists. We have seen how Holgrave takes the noble course of action, refusing to act upon long-standing family hatred. The unnamed narrator of *The Aspern Papers*, however, when faced with his moral choice, acts in favor of his selfish desires at the cost of his moral integrity, and he suffers the debt of guilt and regret.

[66] For these examples among the varied interpretations of the novel's ending, see Diamond and Masterson.

Although James himself owed a debt to Hawthorne, as a pathfinder in American literature, and James wrote a slyly critical study of Hawthorne, in James's house of fiction the emphasis is on the psychology of behavior, the workings of the consciousness and conscience, rather than Hawthorne's focus on social change, the need for greater balance between the arts and sciences, and greater equality between men and women. The key difference between their two texts is that *The Aspern Papers* has a first-person narrator, an unnamed literary editor who may or may not reveal his true feelings in a confessional retrospective narrative record of his deliberate attempt to obtain some letters and other documents relevant to a critical biography that he wants to publish on the life and works of the late, great American poet Jeffrey Aspern. Inspired by James's discoveries about Lord Byron's lover Claire Claremont and letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley that she possessed, the narrative has the editor-narrator arrive in Venice with the intention of obtaining the Aspern papers that might or might not still exist, in the possession of Aspern's one-time lover, the now ninety-some-year-old Juliana Bordereau, who lives in an old palazzo in an out-of-the way corner of Venice with her introverted niece (or perhaps grand-niece [52] or possibly her daughter by Aspern[67]), Miss Tita Bordereau.

That family name is significant, meaning a financial or legal docket or slip. According to the website Investopedia, a "bordereau" is "a report provided by a reinsured company detailing the losses or premiums affected by reinsurance." The implication is that our narrator is entering a tricky situation which might result in a gain or a loss for him. That could mean simply gaining or losing the Aspern papers, using them to provide insights into the relationship between the late poet and his muse, the creative inspiration behind his poetry. Or it could mean the narrator gaining or losing his personal integrity and honour. In order to obtain the papers, he has decided that "[h]ypocrisy, duplicity are [his] only chance" (James, *Aspern Papers and Other Tales* 56). Therefore, he pretends to be a disinterested man of letters seeking temporary Venetian lodgings for

[67] For evidence of a daughter-mother relationship and analysis of its textual implications, see Diane G. Scholl, "Secret Paternity in *The Aspern Papers*: Whose Letters?"

a summer sojourn, but specifically with the fervent desire to find a place that has a garden. In that way, he manages to convince the upper-class but cash-strapped Bordereaus to rent him rooms in their "dilapidated old palace on an out-of-the-way canal" (50). The house "had an air not so much of decay as of quiet discouragement," the narrator tells us, "as if it had rather missed its career" (54). The setting isolates the action within the condensed space of the novella text, too: "It overlooked a clean, melancholy, unfrequented canal" (54), and Miss Tita says "the little canal is very *comme il faut*" (64), a description that the narrator counteracts by his own improper, deceptive behavior.

The palazzo is later described as

> stately and gloomy, but it owed its character almost entirely to its noble shape and to the fine architectural doors—as high as the doors of houses—which, leading into the various rooms, repeated themselves on either side at intervals. (59)

Those doors, symbolized as the form of Juliana Bordereau's resistance to snooping literary critics and to any invasion of her privacy, will prove impossible to break through, even after Juliana's death. In a delicious plot twist at the end of the narrative, Miss Tita claims that she has found her aunt's correspondence and other papers from Jeffrey Aspern, but Tita Bordereau then says that she has burned them, piece by piece. The reasons for her ostensible destruction of the valuable literary documents are unclear—whether because she wants to protect her aunt's reputation and honor her memory, or because she harbors resentment against her aunt for the closeted life that Tita has been forced to lead and thus burns the papers that meant so much to her aunt. Or Tita may be punishing the narrator, who accepts that he "had unwittingly but nonetheless deplorably trifled" (140) with Tita's affections, leading her to believe that he might marry her. He momentarily considers that step after Juliana's death because as husband to the old woman's heir he could obtain the papers, the "tormenting treasure" (126) that he desires at *almost* any cost, although that cost (a marriage union, another entrapment or closure) ultimately proves too much for him to pay.

Thus, the editor narrator is foiled in his underhanded mission, and his rented accommodation in the palazzo is associated with his *rented* (that is divided and temporary) identity and with his failure to *accommodate* his desire for the papers with the deceptive means for achieving his goal or with a potential resolution through marriage. He presents himself to the Bordereaus under a false name, and he finally confesses his true identity and his duplicity to Miss Tita only at a crisis point when the papers are within his reach. (Importantly, though, he does not reveal his name to readers, perhaps as a way to cover his shame by maintaining his anonymity.)

His leased rooms overlook a dishevelled garden space, and he hires workers to clear the area and plant flowers: "I would smother the house in flowers," he exclaims; "—I would succeed by big nosegays. I would batter the old woman with lilies—I would bombard their citadel with roses." However, caught up in his plans, thrilled as much by the pursuit of his goal as by the chance to possess the papers, he misdirects himself from the more grounded and lasting meanings to be found in uncultivated nature, or a world in which the unretrieved papers exist only in imagination, and better for that as an unfulfilled resolution. He admits about the garden: "I liked it better as it was, with its weeds and its wild, rough tangle, its sweet, characteristic Venetian shabbiness." Captivated by his machinations, he has literally cultivated deception, transforming his former, honest, natural self in the process. Looking back through time, he recalls "the real summer days" before his falsehood fully blossomed: "[…] as I look back on them they seem to me almost the happiest of my life," days when he sat in the garden arbor when it was not too hot, "always with some business in writing in hand," enjoying the pure pleasure of his chosen work (78).

The narrator's compulsive self-deception parallels the intrigue surrounding the papers. Juliana never provides him with a receipt for the large payment that he gives her for renting the rooms (75–76), a lack that also casts doubt on whether or not the Aspern papers actually exist. After confirmation that they might be extant, he comes to suspect that they might be hidden in a green trunk in Juliana's quarters of the house, and then that they might have been removed to a secretary bureau desk. According to Miss Tita, the papers turn out to have been

concealed in Juliana's bed—between the old woman's mattresses (so in that sense she was still sleeping with her dead lover). Their shifting location emphasizes the dubious, invasive nature of the narrator's plot to obtain the papers—clearly a violation of Juliana's most intimate possession, an attempt to steal her heart's fondest remembrances and turn them into public exposition. He tells her that critics "often lay bare the truth" (108), but ironically the truth uncovered lies within his own heart, and it proves a painful embarrassment to him. His physical invasion of her inner rooms at night to look for the hidden papers leads to her near collapse, and he feels "reprimanded and shamed" (123). When she unexpectedly rises from her illness to discover his treachery, he is confronted by her famous eyes, the subject of Aspern's most vibrant poetry, but covered in all of her previous encounters with the narrator by a face veil—"a horrible green shade, which, for her, served almost as a mask" (64). Now "[t]hey glared at me, they made me horribly ashamed" (127).

He has other reasons to be ashamed, for the confessional narrative is overlaid with other imagery that reinforces the intrusive manner in which he has played with Miss Tita's inexperience with men, using her as a tool in his manipulations. Two contrasting scenes illustrate the extent of his mendacity. Luring her with his garden flowers and increasingly intimate conversation, he removes her from the isolated palazzo on a gondola trip to the center of San Marco, treating her to ices at Florian's café. Reflecting on the experience, he considers: "I felt that she surrendered herself. She was more than pleased, she was transported; the whole thing was an immense liberation" (99). He does pity her secluded and restricted existence, but his actions here are hollow, designed to achieve his aim of opening a route to the papers. In the end, though, unable to achieve that aim, to accommodate his desire against the Bordereaus' resistance, having refused Tita's offer of marriage in exchange for the papers, he finds himself adrift, his conscience badly rent. He "float[s] aimlessly about on the lagoon" (140) with his gondolier, then meanders upon the loose beach sands of the Lido, before returning to the boat and telling the gondolier: "Go anywhere—everywhere—all over the place" (142).

Therefore, the false claim that lies behind his manipulations in rented accommodation, assaulting the Bordereaus' private citadel from within its

walls, results not only in the apparent destruction of the Aspern papers but in the narrator's multi-layered remorse and damaged conscience. James's revision of the ending of the text for the later New York Edition of his works reveals in the structure and punctuation of the final sentence a suggestion of even further damage to the narrator's psyche. Concerning the miniature portrait of Aspern that is the one tangible acquisition from the narrator's efforts, the revised line reads: "When I look at it I can scarcely bear my loss—I mean of the precious papers" (James, *Aspern Papers, The Turn of the Screw* 143). The dash may indicate that the material loss of the papers is an afterthought, and that, as Ellen Brown suggests, the narrator suffers "a more ambiguous, unnameable loss" (269), perhaps of his honour and integrity, his self-respect, or of his essential selfhood. The dash acts like the physical, epistemological, and moral distance between his rented rooms with all his premeditated deceits and the main residence of the villa where the treasured letters have been kept. The moral tale gains depth and weight from the late-delivered information that the palazzo itself is owned on a lease for an unknown term of years. With the death of Juliana, the inspiration for Aspern's best poetry, and with the end of the narrator's attempt to provide the public with fresh reasons to appreciate the poet's work and fill a void within himself, the text highlights a further theme—that of our lease of life, in which we have to determine how best to act before the end, to discover how well our moral compass works by deciding whether we will pursue private obsessions at any price or accommodate the feelings of others in this short residency on earth.

2. Accommodating Fractured Modernity: *The Beautiful and Damned* and *The Day of the Locust*

While *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Aspern Papers* involve clearly defined rented properties that serve as places for characters to disguise their motives in the pursuit of set aims, even though concrete outcomes are not achieved, my selected American novels from the twentieth century present locations that resist clear definition and reflect the complexity of modern life and its representation. *The Beautiful and*

Damned and *The Day of the Locust* each contains a rented house that provides temporary accommodation for characters who are drifting along in life and who seek some further satisfaction and purpose in their existence.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, involves the glamorous young couple Anthony and Gloria Patch. He expects to inherit millions from his Puritanical grandfather, while she is enraptured with her own beauty and status. The novel chronicles their economic and moral decline, and a key theme in the narrative is their inability to find a vocation that would give meaning and purpose to their lives. James L. W. West III reminds us that

> "Vocation" comes from the Latin *vocatio*, a word which carries the literal meaning of "calling." This is not the same thing as work, a more specific word with overtones of the mundane and financial. For Fitzgerald, the idea of vocation was crucial: one had literally to be called or summoned to meaningful efforts in life. (50)

Without a true vocation, Anthony and Gloria question whether a life of leisurely pursuit in itself might be worth devoting themselves to. However, that solution to their existential dilemma requires the expected inheritance from Anthony's plutocratic grandfather, an ultra-conservative anti-vice campaigner.

Fitzgerald depicts the flaws in Anthony's indirection and Gloria's nihilistic philosophy—"a violent affirmation of the negative principle 'Never give a damn!'" (172)—through significant locations involving temporary spaces. The turning point leading to Anthony and Gloria's financial, social, and moral collapse occurs in a rented summer house, called the grey house, near the town of Marietta outside of New York City, that they have taken a lease on for a third summer. In keeping with their nonchalant attitudes, they sign this new lease during a house party, in "one last burst of garrulous decision," when "[i]t had been easy to work themselves up to a sense of how hot and deserted the city [New York] was getting, of how cool and ambrosial were the charms of Marietta" (196). The next day they awake to the realization of what they have really done:

> ''Anthony, she cried, ''we've signed and sent it!''
> ''What?''
> ''The lease!''
> ''What the devil!''
> ''Oh, *An*thony!'' There was utter misery in her voice. For the summer, for eternity, they had built themselves a prison. (196)

It turns out to be a prison of their own making, not so much because of the house itself, but of how they misspend their time there in a degenerative and largely aimless series of entertainments and desultory quarrels. Their rootless existence there mirrors their inability to find worthwhile employment with what little talent they might have and little effort they can muster. The novel revolves around the moral precept that a fulfilling life is a life of fulfilling work, in the sense that Voltaire recommended in *Candide* that we each tend our own gardens, seek an occupation that brings personal satisfaction and yields social benefit, too. The most obvious work that Gloria and Anthony Patch do in *The Beautiful and Damned* is to waste their time.

The ruin of their hopes for a life of financial ease comes in the grey house at the end of an elaborate party, narrated in an oddly styled chapter entitled ''The Broken Lute,'' which is presented like a play or film script, complete with stage directions and director's notes along with the dialogue. Anthony's grandfather, Adam Patch, arrives unexpectedly with his lawyer and estate manager, Mr Suttleworth, during the height of the riotous party, and the cantankerous old man is not amused:

> SHUTTLEWORTH: (*Passionately*) Your grandfather thought he would motor over to see your house. I phoned from Rye and left a message.
>
> (*A series of little gasps, emanating, apparently, from nowhere, from no one, fall into the next pause. ANTHONY is the color of chalk. GLORIA'S lips are parted and her level gaze at the old man is tense and frightened. There is not a smile in the room. No one? Or does CROSS PATCH'S drawn mouth tremble slightly open, to expose the even rows of his thin teeth? He speaks—five mild and simple words.*)

> ADAM PATCH: We'll go back now, Shuttleworth—
>
> (*And that is all. He turns, and assisted by his cane goes out through the hall, through the front door, and with hellish portentousness his uncertain footsteps crunch on the gravel path under the August moon.*) (231)

Anthony can never patch things up again with his grandfather. The rented grey house is a scene of family trust torn asunder, and no rapprochement is possible. The setting also conveys the characteristic rootlessness of American society, uneasy with the complexities of urban life and nostalgic for a return to nature, and therefore always living nowhere in-between. Anthony and Gloria are spoiled and aimless childish adults, and their temporary residence is dissatisfying because they are forever dissatisfied, perpetually waiting for the golden moment, hoping for the release of funds from his grandfather's will, held in limbo financially as well as spiritually.

After the climactic and life-changing incident at the grey house, when Anthony and Gloria travel back to New York City by car, passing through small towns and residential suburbs: "The drab visions of train-side Mamaroneck, Larchmont, Rye, Pelham Manor, succeeded each other with intervals of bleak and shoddy wastes posing ineffectually as country" (236). The inconsequential and vaguely noticed chain of locations reflects the couple's insecure future and the state of the nation, progressing haphazardly forward into metropolitan modernity. The narrator conveys Anthony's thoughts:

> Life, it seemed, must be a setting of props around one—otherwise it was a disaster. There was no rest, no quiet. He had been futile in longing to drift and dream; no one drifted except to maelstroms, no one dreamed, without his dreams becoming fantastic nightmares of indecision and regret. (236)

The imagery of dangerous natural and psychological forces here runs counter to the Edenic visions of American frontier mythology and the all-conquering determination of Manifest Destiny. Earlier, Anthony had

reflected upon what the new era entailed for him, when capitalist prosperity limited opportunities for meaningful work and heroic action ''—And there used to be dignified occupations for a gentleman who had leisure, things a little more constructive than filling up the landscape with smoke or juggling someone else's money'' (98). Recognizing that ''it's impossible for an American to be gracefully idle'' (60), he fails to perform any role other than an inebriated idler, and the props he sets up are mainly bottles of bootleg alcohol and glasses on speakeasy bars. While America builds its smoky industrial landscape and raises titanic banking institutions to hold all of its despoiled natural wealth, Anthony inhabits a world of temporary residences—from his first, luxurious bachelor apartment on 52nd Street, Manhattan, interspersed with three summers in the grey house, and lastly to an insalubrious apartment with Gloria on Claremont Avenue, ''two blocks from the Hudson in the dim hundreds'' near Central Harlem.

One winter evening Gloria looks out from a window-sill of this apartment to see ''Palisades Park, where the brilliant revolving circle of the Ferris wheel was like a trembling mirror catching the yellow reflection of the moon'' (339). The mirrored artificiality of the wheel reflects the whirling spiral of the Patches' fortunes as well as their distance from the solid reality of nature. Natural rhythms and life cycles also play a part in the associations with the moon, for Gloria at this point is also at the end of her third decade and has no children, having earlier either experienced a false pregnancy or induced a miscarriage with the aid of an abortifacient. The loss or at least absence of children for Gloria is another consequence of the emptiness of purpose associated with the rented grey house. That is the locale where ''It had occurred to the estimable Gloria that she was probably with child'' (172), the narrative casually and uncertainly announces. Anthony takes an insouciant tone in his discussion with her about a pregnancy and potential termination, while Gloria's reluctance to accept parenthood is allied to her fear of losing her beauty, as she complains: ''afterward I might have wide hips and be pale, with all my freshness gone and no radiance in my hair'' (173). He says in frustration at both her and his indecision about what course of action to take: ''See here, Gloria, I'm with you whatever you do, but for God's sake be a sport about it'' (173). After confirming the end of

the (phantom or real) pregnancy, "[t]hey rejoiced happily, gay again with reborn irresponsibility" (177).

However, Gloria's unwillingness to give space in her body to new life haunts her for the rest of the narrative. After a shopping trip, Gloria is lying asleep on a sofa, and "[h]er face was as untroubled as a little girl's, and the bundle that she pressed tightly to her bosom was a child's doll, a profound and infinitely healing balm to her disturbed and childish heart" (191). At the same time when her final chance for a career as a movie actress fails because she is considered too old after a screen-test for a starring part, she walks along a street that Fitzgerald describes through sentence fragments that act like abortive thoughts: "Little girls soberly wheeling their buggies along the damp sunny walks. The nursery-maids chattering in pairs about their inscrutable secrets" (332). Her own loss of youth and her unwillingness to commit to engendering new life both collapse in her affective realisation: "'Oh, my pretty face,' she whispered, passionately grieving. 'Oh, my pretty face! Oh, I don't want to live without my pretty face! Oh, what's *happened?*'" (333). Her question reaches beyond solipsistic grief. Without a future in which she can be her ideal self, or one in which she can reproduce her youth in a child, Gloria cannot accommodate herself to the mutability of time and matter. She and Anthony simply float along on a journey to nowhere, renting space instead of building meaning and genuine substance into their lives.

A sense of unrelenting unease in an unsettled universe is also reflected in the final text that I wish to analyse. Nathanael West's novel *The Day of the Locust* is usually read as a satire on the pitiable lives of people who are drawn to the artificial world of Hollywood and the disconcerting modern environment of Los Angeles, but I would like to consider some deeper, philosophical claims. Of particular relevance is the depiction of rented accommodation, starting with the San Bernardino Arms, the apartment complex known to its residents as the San Berdoo, located in the hills outside of central Los Angeles. The three-story building has a plane back and sides but Moorish pink columns on the façade—a cultural misrepresentation that is mirrored in the Hollywood studio sets and that is replicated in the many other incongruous pre-postmodern houses that

populate the city. These houses are built in a variety of styles ranging from "Mexican ranch houses, Samoan huts, Mediterranean villas, Egyptian and Japanese temples, [and] Tudor cottages [...]" (8). The multi-cultural blend suggests that modern California either has not found its own distinctive identity or that this *is* its identity, a world-embracing mélange, a global appropriation of architectural styles and borrowed cultural referents that combine into a universal declaration of America's exceptional right to claim everything and understand nothing. "It is hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance," West's narrative voice declares, "no matter how tasteless, even horrible the results of that need are. But it is easy to sigh. Few things are sadder than the truly monstrous" (8).

A pitiable monster in *The Day of the Locust* inhabits the saddest house in the Pinyon Valley, a bit higher up the road from the San Bernardino Arms. This is the residence of Homer Simpson (the original Homer Simpson), an innocuous lost soul, whose most distinguishing feature is his self-propelled hands. They operate independently of his own will:

> One day, while opening a can of salmon for lunch, his thumb received a nasty cut. Although the wound must have hurt, the calm, slightly querulous expression he usually wore did not change. The wounded hand writhed about on the kitchen table until it was carried to the sink by it mate and bathed tenderly in hot water. (42-43)

Martin Rogers argues that "Homer's inability to control his hands—to keep them ordered—results in a compulsive display of monstrosity, a body bereft of control and behaving as if animated but effectively dead" (374). Like Frankenstein's creature in his alienation, and like his detached, rented house—which Homer takes on the first day he is shown around LA "because he was tired and because the agent was a bully" (32)—Homer's hands reflect his whole existence, detached from companionship, not self-determined, unwilling and unable to form a lasting bond with his environment. His rented house is filled with artificial objects and strange incongruities: "Some of the plants were made of rubber and cork; others were real." He also finds

> the [door] hinges had been carefully stamped to appear hand-forged [....] a lamp with a paper shade, oiled to look like parchment [....] There was a spool bed made of iron grained like wood [....] a Governor Winthrop dresser painted to look like unpainted pine [....] On the wall facing the dresser was a colored etching of a snowbound Connecticut farmhouse, complete with wolf. (33–34)

The disconnection between Homer's core body and his appendages emphasizes the aberrations of space in this description of the house's furnishings, not just in the artificiality of materials made to look like plant fibre, parchment, forged metal, or real wood. The "complete with wolf" appended clause in the description of the painting strikes a further note of intentionality, for the canine predator is not an artistic afterthought but rather a necessary element to add regional authenticity to the fully furnished New England landscape, making it even more oddly placed in this western residence. The dissonance of a snowbound scene on the wall of a California house lends a bizarre note of aesthetic derangement that is reiterated in the incongruous movie-sets depicted elsewhere in the text, where Napoleonic armies converge with Mississippi steamboats (5–6) and a Greek temple collides with "Dutch windmills, the bones of a dinosaur, the upper half of the Merrimac, a corner of a Mayan temple" (98).

Homer's disjointed and blinkered view of the world does find some relief in Nature, however; and *The Day of the Locust* offers other reminders of how the natural world operates in contrast to the temporality and uncertainty of modern civilization. In another scene, set far from the housing estates, we are treated to a vision of the tough but beautiful and refreshing original Pacific Coast territory: "It was full spring. The path ran along the bottom of a narrow canyon and wherever weeds would get a purchase in its steep banks they flowered in purple, blue and yellow. Orange poppies bordered the path" (74)—and the passage runs for another three paragraphs. Gardens on the grounds of houses feature in *The House of the Seven Gables* and in *The Aspern Papers*. Gloria and Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned* rent a bucolic country house in order to escape the heat and boredom of summertime New York City. Homer's

connection to nature is not exactly mysterious or transcendental, nor is it purposely designed nor especially welcoming: he sits in his back yard, facing the door of the garage, looking at "a sooty, brick incinerator and a pile of rusty cans" as well as "the remains of a cactus garden in which a few ragged, tortured plants still survived" (43). One of the cacti is in flower, and Homer likes to watch a lizard who lives in a hole beneath it and catches flies that stray over from the old cans.

As a betwixt and between resident of a rented house, accommodating himself to a largely unnatural world, Homer is neither happy nor unhappy. Alone in his empty house at night, he sings to himself the only song he knows and afterwards feels "a pleasant sadness" about his life. The many people and events that fill his life and his house from this point are too numerous to recount here—covering chapters 13 through 25 of the novel's twenty-seven chapters. But suffice it to note that after an unruly party (more bezerk than the one in *The Beautiful and Damned*), Homer is completely traumatized, his speech discombobulated so that "[t]he words went behind each other instead of after" (145). His body also reverts into a foetal position, and West uses free indirect discourse in a passage that combines an image of the womb with earlier depictions of the house into a philosophic thesis which could be applied to all of the texts examined here:

> What a perfect escape the return to the womb was [....] Everything perfect in that hotel. No wonder the memory of those accommodations lingered in the blood and nerves of everyone. It was dark, yes, but what a warm, rich darkness. The grave wasn't in it. No wonder one fought so desperately against being evicted when the nine months' lease was up. (149–150)

The metaphor of the house has entered deeply existential territory, the womb imagined not merely as a place of shelter and protection (or as a void, as it is for Gloria in *The Beautiful and Damned*) but as a pre-existence before a woeful and frustrating life begins, full of dissatisfaction and confusion, and sometimes brutishness, where there is no refuge from sadness, sorrow, humiliation, loneliness, and especially hopelessness.

But, perhaps thankfully, the novel suggests, human life is also on a short lease, and it is not long before we either go insane or die.[68]

I could end there with that cheerfully morbid thought, in the *Inferno* of Hollywood—the novel ends with an apocalyptic scene of a riotous mob of people in front of a cinema for a movie premiere: "—all those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and then only to violence" (166).[69] But West's image of the womb as a rented accommodation could be extended into a useful conclusion. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Phoebe and Holgrave, reborn in marriage, leave the mother house of seven gables to a new life together in the country. In *The Aspern Papers*, the unnamed narrator returns to his study in England with the umbilical cord of his deception and loss of integrity still attached in the form of a baby, miniature portrait of the poet Jeffrey Aspern given to him by the spurned, virginal Miss Tita. If the theme of invasion and deceit dominates the image of rented rooms within larger houses in those two nineteenth-century texts, then the theme of dis-ease and dislocation runs through the two twentieth-century novels, in which semi-settled locations are aborted or miscarried. But novels also give our imaginations a new lease of life, a rebirth of creative energy within the house of fiction. These four texts reveal that depictions of rented accommodation are flexible conduits for questioning American national identity, for examining the moral fabric of American lives, and for exploring critical philosophical issues about the human condition.

[68] The logical conclusion of that line of thought is expressed in the title of David Benatar's philosophical argument *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence.*

[69] My emphasis on Homer Simpson's lack of agency is explained by Chip Rhodes in a different way, as a failure of romantic desire (600–601). However, he finds a sense of self-awareness in the crowds of the novel's ending: "They are subjects who are angry because they can see through their ideological construction" as products of consumer-orientated mass culture (591). Peter J. Pappas also explores desire and autonomy in the novel, while Martin Rogers provides valuable cultural-historical context in relating *The Day of the Locust* to the horror-movie genre.

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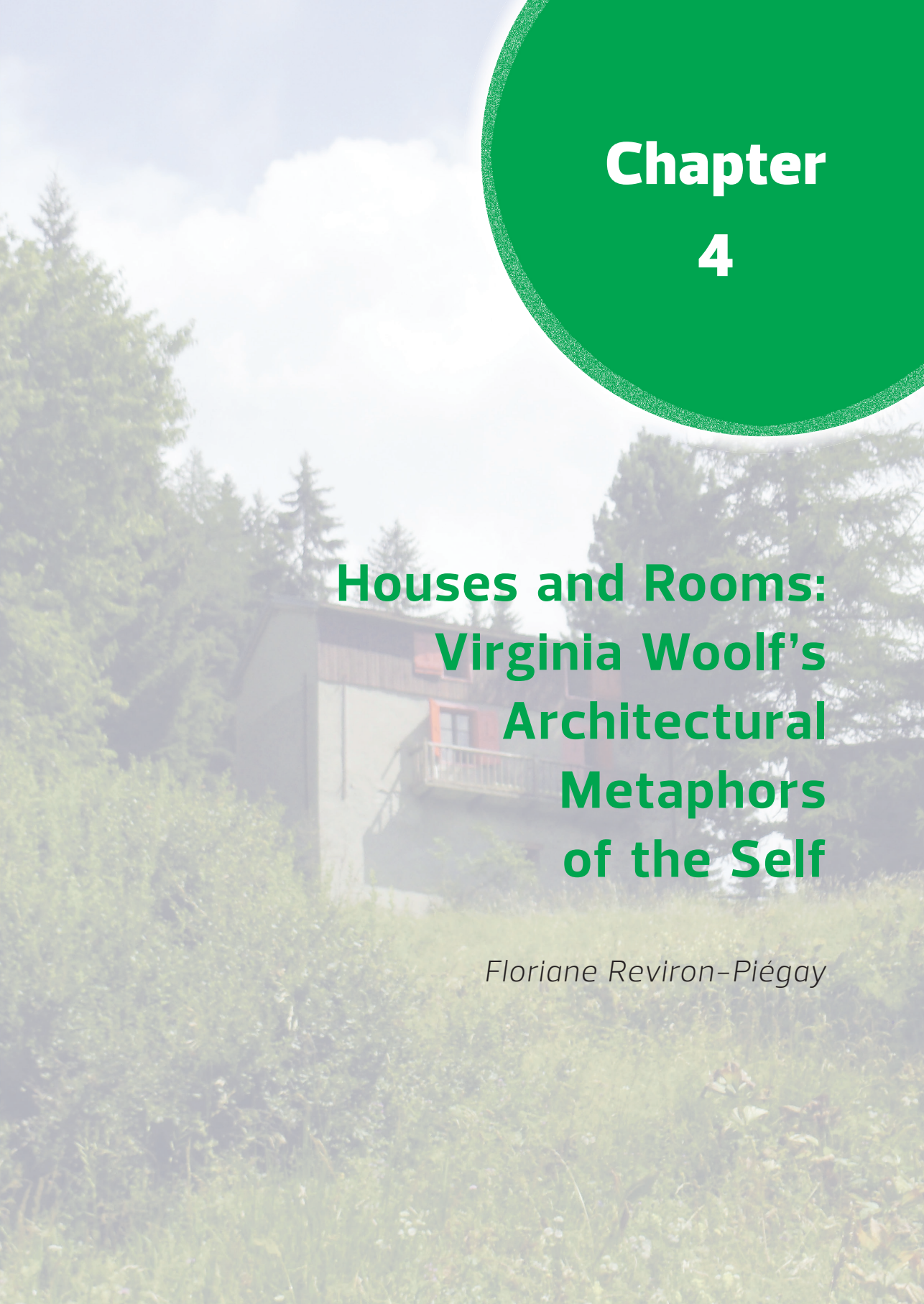

Chapter 4

Houses and Rooms: Virginia Woolf's Architectural Metaphors of the Self

Floriane Reviron-Piégay

Chapter
4

Virginia Woolf changed houses quite a lot in her life. 22 Hyde Park Gate, Talland House, 46 Gordon Square, 52 Tavistock Square, Hogarth House, Asheham and Monk's House are as famous to her readers as her novels, and houses occupied a large part of her imagination, time and writing all her life long. Her diary and letters are a detailed record of her interest in changing places, buying new homes, and the excitement and anxiety triggered by each new acquisition and settlement. From Kensington to Bloomsbury, London to Richmond and then Lewes and Rodmell, changing houses meant changing lifestyles, Woolf's sanity and creativity depended and fed on this alternation between the calm and remoteness of the Sussex countryside and the bustling activity of party-going and socializing in London.[70] Her work and life attest to the permanent crossing of boundaries between writing and living, and house decorating was part of her worldly preoccupations. Monk's House which the Woolfs occupied from 1919 to 1941, at first only as a summer residence, then permanently as the war drew nearer and destroyed their London flat, still attests to the care and taste with which it was decorated notably by Vanessa Bell

[70] Leonard Woolf was naturally well aware of the importance of houses in Virginia Woolf's life, which is the reason why he chose to organize his recollections of his life with her during the years when she wrote her major novels around the houses they inhabited together. This is the justification of his choice: "Facts about the houses in which one lives during the whole journey from the womb to the grave are not unimportant. The house—in which I include its material and spiritual environment—has an immense influence upon its inhabitants. [...] The house determines the day-to-day, hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute quality, colour, atmosphere, pace of one's life; it is the framework of what one does, of what one can do, and one's relations with people" (L. Woolf 13-14). No doubt Virginia Woolf herself would have agreed with him.

and Duncan Grant who lived nearby at Charleston. Hermione Lee notes that Woolf made a pencil sketch of a new bathroom and study addition to Monk's House on the back of some quotation from Geraldine Jewsbury, or that she listed the rooms that needed painting in the middle of her notes on Henry James letters. This just goes to show that what is now called home interior design was a source of creation and pleasure for Woolf no less than her own literary creation.[71] This may explain her obsession with houses and buildings in her fiction. As Rebecca Sinclair and Mark Taylor point out in "Vivid Spaces: The Settings of Virginia Woolf and Edith Wharton," many of Woolf's titles allude to the importance of architecture and interior spaces in her works: *Jacob's Room*, *To The Lighthouse*, *A Haunted House*, *A Room of One's Own*, *The Mark on the Wall* to quote but a few,[72] indeed draw attention to the materiality of space, houses and architecture but we shall see that they serve different and sometimes jarring purposes and that titles can be misleading. Likewise, Woolf's evocation of her childhood homes has a dual role: although the affective dimension of the term "home" badly fits the descriptions Woolf made of 22 Hyde Park Gate,[73] we shall see that together with Talland House and 46 Gordon Square they stand prominently among her childhood reminiscences and memoirs and help chart her ambiguous relationship with space and home in her later fiction.

In a second move, we shall discuss *A Room of One's Own* and the way it affects our reading of rooms in Woolf's fiction: the rooms reserved to women in her essays and fictions are very ambiguous and liminal spaces, offering porous boundaries with the exterior world. These are places that are continuously threatened by male interruption and hegemony, only partly affording the means for woman's self-expression and privacy. "While private, domestic space, the woman's room is at the hub of her feminist politics, it is from this room that she became one of the key writers of

[71] For further information about Woolf's interest in the renovations at Monk's House see Victoria Rosner (181–194).

[72] One may add "The Leaning Tower," "The Elisabethan Lumber Room," "Reflections at Sheffield's Place" among the lesser known essays.

[73] Woolf spoke about her personal reminiscences of 22 Hyde Park Gate in three different essays which were gathered by Jeanne Schulkind in her 1976 edition entitled *Moments of Being*. This article refers to the second edition of these autobiographical fragments, published in 1985. See in particular "A Sketch of the Past" (Schulkind 116–126, 147–159), "22 Hyde Park Gate" (Schulkind 164–177), "Old Bloomsbury" (Schulkind 181–184).

urban modernity, particularly in its feminist articulation'' (Snaith and Whitworth 1). Rooms are present in Woolf's texts as a feminist metaphor for women's imagination and creativity and they also pervade her metatextual comments about her own creation. But paradoxically, rooms and houses also bear witness to the writer's inability to grasp and create character. The materiality of walls is indeed a stumbling block which prevents the writer from truly expressing his characters' iridescent personality. More than a feminist tool, rooms and houses are also a metatextual tool that allows Woolf to pit the realist and materialist writers' technique against that of the Georgian or modern ones, to the benefit of the latter. Rooms therefore also helped her articulate the modernist ethics and aesthetics she theorized and explored in her novels.

I would finally like to argue that the one work that best expresses Woolf's interest in homes while exploring her fascination for the multifarious aspects of personality is also one of Woolf's most innovative, the one that equally challenges genre and gender: *Orlando* may indeed be read both as a recreation of Knole, the Sackville-Wests' ancestral home and as Vita's mock biography. It seems to me that *Orlando* subsumes all the inner contradictions the rest of her *oeuvre* is fraught with, all the tensions between masculinity and femininity, outer and inner spaces, privacy and publicity, stability and change to finally create the perfect metaphor of the home as mindscape.

1. The Original Home: Masculine and Feminine Spaces Revisited

> Woolf's fictional and non-fictional writing is consistently concerned with the politics of spaces: national spaces, civic spaces, private spaces or the textual spaces of the writer/printer. The psychology of space resonates in particular through her autobiographical writing. (Snaith and Whitworth 8)

Woolf made no mystery that her childhood memories were shaped like a sacred place, likening her childhood to a ''great Cathedral space'' (''A Sketch of the Past'' 81):

> That is a rough visual description of childhood. This is how I shape it; and now I see myself as a child, roaming about, in that space of time, which lasted from 1882 to 1895. A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. (''A Sketch of the Past'' 79)

If Anna Snaith and Michael Whitworth have noted the change from the claustrophobic Victorian rooms of 22 Hyde Park Gate, heavy with tangled emotions, to the airy, liberating rooms of 46 Gordon Square, in Bloomsbury, they have overlooked Talland House, the house where the Stephen family summered regularly from 1882 (the year Virginia was born) to 1894, just before her mother died. Yet it figures no less prominently in her autobiographical fragments. Situated in St Ives, in Cornwall, it stands in sharp contrast to 22 Hyde Park Gate, not just in terms of geographical and spatial setting: Talland House was ''a square house, like a child's drawing of a house'' at the top of a hill, with a ''perfect'' view onto the Bay and Godrevy Lighthouse (''A Sketch of the Past'' 128), whereas 22 Hyde Park Gate was situated at the end of a ''little irregular cul-de-sac'' (''Old Bloomsbury'' 181). Talland House also represented the most blessed and cherished memories of a happy childhood, before the period of ''Oriental gloom'' (''Reminiscences'' 40) engulfed the family.[74] Woolf first wrote about ''22 Hyde Park Gate'' in an eponymous memoir which she read as a contribution to the Memoir Club in 1920. But contrary to what the title seems to indicate, the memoir is more about her coming of age and her half-brother's role as an abusive chaperone than about the house itself. The essay finishes on George Duckworth stealthily entering her room and her bed after an evening in the glittering London society. The final revelation that ''George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also'' definitely associates 22 Hyde Park Gate to masculine intrusion and aggression (''22 Hyde Park Gate'' 177). It is synonymous with no less than oppression and invasion of the young Virginia's mental and bodily integrity. Almost

[74] Julia Margaret Cameron died in 1895, then her first daughter and Virginia's half-sister Stella Duckworth died in 1897, then Leslie Stephen himself in 1904.

20 years later, "A Sketch of the Past" (1939) would silence the abuse but indict George Duckworth in an acerbic way, linking him ever more closely to the corseted and conventional Victorian world of 22 Hyde Park Gate. "A Sketch of the Past" spans the childhood and adolescence of Woolf until after her father's death, it comes and goes between different places, different spaces, but it is essentially an oxymoronic exploration of two main houses. Talland House is the site of the first, very sensual memories of her mother, whereas Hyde Park Gate is linked to her father's histrionic grief. The "idyllic," sunny and insouciant seaside summers are contrasted to the gloomy, dark and cramped atmosphere of Kensington. Talland House is associated with bliss, rapture, perfection, freedom and the loving and beautiful motherly presence, whereas Hyde Park Gate stands for constraints, decorum and the tyrannical presence of the father. Not only do the two houses evoke very different memories, but they are also alluded to in a very different way: St Ives and Talland House are evoked through sense impressions and emotions. As we have seen, the house itself is very simply and sketchily described. The large garden is as much part of her reminiscences as the house itself; there is no boundary between inside and outside. What matters is not so much the architecture of the house as the sensations Woolf associates with it. She only mentions the kitchen and its situation beneath the children's nursery to say that she can remember the different sensations of drawing the heavy basket up when Sophie, the cook, sometimes put in it left-overs from the grown-ups' dinner. She only mentions the nursery's balcony joining the balcony of her parents' bedroom to link her first memory of lying half asleep, half-awake in bed, to the presence of her mother on this balcony. In an incredibly powerful synesthetic vision, Woolf associates the sound of waves breaking on the beach, the yellow blind and its acorn being drawn across the floor, the passion flowers growing on the wall next to the balcony and the figure of her mother in a white dressing gown:

> If I were a painter I should paint these first impressions in pale yellow, silver and green [...]. Sound and sight seem to make equal parts of these first impressions [...]. The quality of the air above Talland House

> seemed to suspend sound, to let it sink down slowly, as if it were caught in a blue gummy veil [...].
>
> The next memory—all these colour-and-sound memories hang together at St Ives—was much more robust; it was highly sensual. It was later. It still makes me feel warm; as if everything were ripe; humming; sunny; smelling so many smells at once; and all make a whole that even now makes me stop [...]. It was such a complete rapture of pleasure that I stopped, smelt, looked. ("A Sketch of the Past" 66)

The evocation of Talland House in the memoir is not architecturally rich but very suggestive and evocative. Hyde Park Gate "led nowhere" ("A Sketch of the Past" 119) Woolf said and this could be interpreted in a metaphorical way, whereas Talland House led her to the creation of what remains one of her most elegiac evocations of childhood: "the novel of her childhood is Talland House, and of its loss is *To the Lighthouse*" (Lee 23).[75] Hyde Park Gate is described in a much more clinical and analytic way in all of the memoirs where it was dealt with, chronologically in "22 Hyde Park Gate" (written around 1920), then in "Old Bloomsbury" (written between 1921 and 1922) and finally in "A Sketch of the Past" (written in 1940), which attests to the long-lasting impressions the house left on Woolf. The house was "a complete model of Victorian Society" ("A Sketch of the Past" 127). It was a sectarian microcosm, a many-tiered place with landings and half landings, each being identified by different smells. Its different storeys represented the different strata of society, with the servants at the bottom in the basement, and her father's study at the top. It was an overcrowded house accommodating seven maids and ten family members. In Woolf's memoirs 22 Hyde Park Gate is personified, becoming a fully-fledged character in the tragedy that unfolds behind its doors: the tea-table represents the belly (the centre of Victorian family-life), the double-bedroom is the sexual centre, Eros and Thanatos being linked because the mother and father die in the bed where the children were born, her father's study is the brain of the house.

[75] See Hermione Lee for further references as to how the memories linked to Talland House also went into the making of *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves* (24-25).

Two characteristics stand out in this description of childhood space in Kensington: the lack of privacy and the tensions between the different functions of the rooms. 22 Hyde Park was indeed divided/quartered into private spaces and public places: the dining room was also used for the children's lessons, the drawing room was the theatre of social life, synonymous with constraint, decorum and hypocrisy. "The division in our life was curious. Downstairs there was pure convention; upstairs pure intellect. But there was no connection between them" ("A Sketch of the Past" 135). It is no wonder that Woolf started her eponymous memoir with the evocation precisely of the black folding doors that partitioned the drawing-room at Hyde Park Gate (142), they are a fitting synecdoche of the multiple divisions that reigned supreme in the house, between private life and public receptions, between convention and intellect, between two ages, the Victorian Age and the Edwardian ("A Sketch of the Past" 126). The private spaces are barely alluded to, except for Leslie Stephen's study and Virginia's bedroom, which is also divided into the sleeping half and the living half: "I was thinking; feeling; living; those two lives that the two halves symbolized [...]" ("A Sketch of the Past" 124). She was promoted to that bed-sitting room when she was fifteen, a young lady, and suggests she felt both rapture and anger in that space. Her bedroom was indeed not really a room of her own: she explains how, enthralled by a book, she would suddenly be interrupted by the irruption of "Adrian, George, Gerald, Jack, my father" ("A Sketch of the Past" 123), the litany of names forcefully signifying the masculine invasion of her privacy. We therefore understand why the move out to 46 Gordon Square was a relief when Leslie Stephen died. Somehow, the new address where Vanessa, Virginia, Adrian and Thoby lived until Vanessa's marriage was in stark contrast to 22 Hyde Park Gate, all for the better. Whereas 22 Hyde Park Gate stood for a schizophrenic mapping of space where Woolf failed to establish connections,[76] 46 Gordon Square, forever identified with the

[76] The very last pages of "A Sketch of the Past" are fraught with references to the "lack of connection," they read like the culmination of Woolf's exasperation with this state of things: see in particular Jeanne Schulkind's second edition of *Moments of Being*. Woolf, speaking about convention and intellect: "But there was no connection between them" (157), "There was no connection. There were deep divisions" (158). And about the great figures like Meredith, Henry James, Burne-Jones, Sidgwick, Haldane and Morley who belonged to her parents' close circle of acquaintances she said: "But with them again, we had no close connection" (158), and a little further down: "And I, sitting by the table, was quite unable to make any connection" (158).

Thursday evenings which launched the Bloomsbury Group, proved to be a place where long-lasting connections would be established.

We may say that this irreducible dichotomy between Virginia Woolf's two childhood homes and the way she presents her childhood places as divided may explain the ambiguities and contradictions which inhabit her essays and fiction when it comes to spatial representation. In other words, the way she mapped her childhood territory be it mental or spatial in her autobiographical essays reverberates in the novels and essays she wrote from the 1920s. Later Woolf was to turn back to her room at Hyde Park Gate and imagine people having read *To the Lighthouse*, *A Room of One's Own* and *The Common Reader* saying "This room explains a great deal" ("A Sketch of the Past" 124-125) which means she was very much aware of the porosity between her own personal vision of space and the way she analysed and represented it in her novels and essays. The tensions between femininity and masculinity, domestic bliss and domestic agony, private and public, inner and outer were to remain at the core of her literary and political preoccupations.

2. Houses and Rooms: a Means to Explore Feminist *Topoï*

We have just seen that Woolf attributed a very symbolical dimension to her bedroom, to her childhood homes and to the way space shaped her own psyche and *vice versa*. It is perhaps not surprising to see the persistence of such themes in her essays and fiction and notably in her feminist texts. Rooms and architecture stand prominently in Woolf's feminist writing. The argument in *A Room of One's Own* that each woman must have money and a room of her own to write is famous enough and has been diversely appreciated. Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) criticized Woolf's privileging of domestic space in her 1929 essay, arguing that "the concepts of androgyny and the private room are neither as liberating, nor as obvious as they first appear. They have a darker side that is the sphere of the exile and the eunuch" (285). In other words, as Ángel Luis Jiménez argues, the private room "ultimately dissociates women from a socially and politically engaged life" (3). Julie Robin Solomon, conversely, asserts that "'the room' serves as a potent

political metaphor for women because it concretizes visually, tactilely the politicization of the personal and the personalization of the political" (331–332). Again, according to Ángel Luis Jiménez, "this debate epitomizes the most salient feature of scholarship devoted to Woolfian space: a sustained focus on the relationship between domestic and public space, considered both materially and metaphorically" (6). The rooms and houses in Woolf's fiction are at times places where the feminine self finds expression, at other times, they are the locus of internal strife. Katherine Hilbery's room in *Night and Day* is a case in point. It is at the top of her parents' house. The large looking-glass (another common feature to Virginia Woolf's room and Clarissa Dalloway's) reflects her as she should look to take her place within the upper-middle class to which she belongs, that is, pouring out tea in the drawing room or entertaining her parents' guests in the dining-room. Except that among the bills on her mantelpiece and reminding us of her domestic duties, one can see a large Greek dictionary hiding sheets of paper covered with mathematic problems. Although these pages make Katherine feel as if she were the mistress of her "own kingdom," she hides them from intruders into her room because she recognizes "the unwomanly nature of the science." As Smith argues "Her room, like Clarissa's fails to offer her a private space in which she can define herself in terms other than those imposed by her society" (222). Clarissa Dalloway represents the perfect "Angel in the House," at one with her home, the perfect hostess who knows how to organise a party: "strange [...] how a mistress knows the very moment, the very temper of her house!" (*Mrs Dalloway* 160). But she also feels the need to have a room of her own. As she stitches her dress before the party she is organising on the very same evening she feels quiet, calm and contented, alone in her attic room. It is a room which figuratively represents a kind of haven, away from the hustle and bustle of the household and yet at the same time, it does not really afford her the peace of mind she searches for, nor the opportunity to grasp her own desires. She is interrupted by Peter Walsh who enters the room unannounced and unexpectedly, a nuisance akin to the incessant interruptions Woolf mentions both in "A Sketch of the Past"[77] and in

[77] See *supra*.

"A Room of One's Own" about women writers in the early 19th century and about Jane Austen in particular: "If a woman wrote, she would have to write in the common sitting-room. And as Miss Nightingale was so vehemently to complain [...] she was always interrupted" ("A Room of One's Own" 86). Clarissa's attic room is no more private than Jane Austen's sitting-room because it lacks a lock on the door. The whole scene, her stitching being interrupted by a man and her attempt at hiding her dress "like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy," (*Mrs Dalloway* 161-162), recalls Jane Austen (and her predecessors) being careful that their "occupation should not be suspected by servants or visitors":

> Jane Austen hid her manuscripts or covered them with a piece of blotting-paper [...]. I wondered, would *Pride and Prejudice* have been a better novel if Jane Austen had not thought it necessary to hide her manuscript from visitors? ("A Room of One's Own" 86-88)

By bringing together the image of the Angel in the House and of the writer in the same character, Woolf indicts a common enemy, the intrusion of masculine presence in a space that is supposed to preserve the privacy of her soul.[78] In fact, most of Woolf's rooms within the family home, fail to afford women a real sense of property, intellectual or material, because they do not protect them from what Smith calls "the family hegemony" (219). These rooms limit these women[79] to roles sanctioned for them within their culture. Only Mary Datchet's room in *Night and Day* (1919) seems to offer the possibility of genuine emancipation because

[78] Interestingly Peter Walsh does not just interrupt Clarissa while she is stitching, but he also interrupts a moment of reverie, a memory of the very fleeting but very pleasurable kiss she received from Sally Seton years ago during a stroll outside. The kiss was in effect interrupted by Peter Walsh and Joseph Breitkopf who suggested they should all start star-gazing (so Peter Walsh interrupts both the kiss and its reminiscence). The memory of this interruption is evoked in the following way by Clarissa: "It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!" (Mrs *Dalloway* 159). See Lenora Penna Smith's "Spaces, Places, Houses, Rooms: a Feminist Perspective" for a very interesting reading of this scene as allowing Clarissa to revise "the homoerotic moment with Sally to fit into the larger scheme of heterosexuality" (Smith 221).

[79] Katherine Hilbery and Mrs Dalloway belong to two very different novels but to similar environments: *Night and Day* has often been considered as "the most traditional of Woolf's novels" (Raitt xiii) whereas *Mrs Dalloway* is a much more modernist novel. Yet although different in terms of age and experience, Katherine and Clarissa are two versions of the same upper-or upper-middle class woman about to be married or married for quite a while who experiences frustration and resents the role ascribed to women in her *milieu*.

it does not confine her to a domestic activity. It is perhaps the room which most resembles the "room of one's own" Woolf was to imagine ten years later as Smith argues very convincingly (219–220). Woolf's vision of women's rooms in these 1920s novels casts an interesting light on the way fiction shaped the feminist thoughts she expressed later on in essay-form.

But it remains that Woolf's fiction offers relatively few examples of consistent descriptions of rooms and homes. Rooms and houses were in fact probably too tightly linked to the "tedious materialism" of the Edwardian writers she wanted to do away with (Wisker 5). In 1924, in her essay entitled "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" describing the method used by Mr Bennett (whom she ranked amongst the Edwardian writers together with Mr. Wells and Mr. Galsworthy) she denounced his fallacious belief that "because he has made a house, there must be a person living there" (330). And she argued that by looking at their characters' house and furniture, by giving us details about their social environment the Edwardians used the wrong tools:

> House property was the common ground from which the Edwardians found it easy to proceed to intimacy. [...]. The Edwardian tools are the wrong ones for us to use. They have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things. They have given us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live there [...]. But if you hold that novels are in the first place about people, and only in the second about houses they live in, that is the wrong way to set about it. ("Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 332)

Woolf's own tools were different: she limited the reference to houses and rooms in her works, eschewing the hard materiality of walls to the benefit of character building and she used them instead as means to show that they failed to give access to the personality they were meant to represent.[80] Interestingly she described the Edwardian method by

[80] She also "fused elements of the English country house tradition with psychological insight and the supernatural," as Gina Wisker has consistently argued in "Places, People and Time Passing: Virginia Woolf's Haunted Houses" (5).

using architectural metaphors. When she wrote *Jacob's Room* (which is considered as her first real attempt at reshaping the realist novel) Woolf was aware that the elimination of the "scaffolding" and "bricks" of a conventional plot and "the effort of breaking with strict representation" would be "unsettling" (*Diary* vol. 3, 13).[81] She conceived her method as shifting the focus from the mind of the narrator to the minds of the characters and it was during the writing of *Mrs. Dalloway* that she found a way to create character:

> I should say a good deal about The Hours & my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; [...] the idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment. (30th of August 1923, *Diary* vol. 2, 263)

Later she referred to this as her "tunnelling process" and she added, "I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it" (*Diary* vol. 2, 272). Like any builder then, the writer must excavate and build solid foundations if his/her work is to endure the passage of time. She conceived *To the Lighthouse*, in the same way. As *Mrs Dalloway* neared publication, *To the Lighthouse* began to take clearer shape. Her first notes for it began with the form of the book, and with an idea of Mrs Ramsay:

> All Character—*not* a view of the world.
> *Two blocks joined by a corridor.* (Lee 475) [emphasis mine]

This quotation from the holograph draft of *To the Lighthouse*, appendix A, added to the previous references, shows that Woolf repeatedly resorted to architectural metaphors to describe her creative process, but considered that this method was inadequate for drawing characters themselves. This shift may look innocuous enough but it is the (building) site of Woolf's revolution of fiction in the 1920s, no less. Woolf's novels deconstruct the Edwardian houses and rooms, showing that they

[81] For more on the way Woolf reformed the realist novel see Susan Dick, "Literary Realism in *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and *The Waves*" (50–51).

are empty shells, unable to transmit personality in an efficient way. *Jacob's Room* is a very good example of this process, the deceptive function of rooms and houses in fiction is mirrored by the deceptive title which misleads the reader into thinking that Jacob's personality will be found in his room. The novel disappoints both the readers' and the characters' expectations and "ends with Jacob's mother and friend amazed at the mess and disorder in his room after his death; having finally penetrated its walls, they find they do not understand who Jacob was" (Taylor 4). The same applies to "The Lady in the Looking Glass" where the narrator muses about Isabella Tyson's personality while looking at the interior of her home and at her mirror only to discover at the end, when Isabella finally stands before the mirror in question, that "there was nothing":

> Here was the hard wall beneath. Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. ("The Lady in the Looking Glass" 219)

The actual description comes as a shock and as an anti-climax after the richness of the metaphors used by the narrator/writer to try and give her a life:

> She suggested the fantastic and the tremulous convolvulus rather than the upright aster, the starched zinnia, or her own burning roses alight like lamps on the straight posts of their rose trees. [...] Such comparisons are worse than idle and superficial—they are cruel even, for they come like the convolvulus itself trembling between one's eyes and the truth. There must be truth; there must be a wall. ("The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection" 216)

The hard wall represents the barrier that the biographer or novelist meets when trying to sum people up. Through this choice of architectural metaphors, Woolf articulates her rejection of biographical "materialism" in fiction.

The complexity of Woolf's reliance on architectural imagery throughout her work may have stemmed from the dichotomy between theory and practice which her work exhibits: If in theory, having a room of one's own meant independence and the ability to create, in practice, in her novels, rooms both fail to give women autonomy and to give writers access to their characters' innermost thoughts. This dichotomy is fully expressed and subsumed in a ground-breaking work in which the house is both liberating and emancipating and yet an indissoluble component of the main character, Orlando.

3. Knole: *The* Home

Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf met in 1922 and they immediately embarked into one of the most intimate and important relationships Woolf engaged in with a woman. The admiration and rivalry were reciprocal for different reasons. Vita was impressed by Virginia's brilliant intellect and by her by then well-established reputation as a gifted novelist and literary critic,[82] Woolf was somewhat intimidated and impressed by Vita's long line of aristocratic ancestors and notably by their home, Knole, an exceptional country house which dated back to the 15th century and was said to be a calendar house.[83] The house itself partook of the fascination exerted by Vita onto Virginia.

> Soon after Woolf met Sackville-West, she wrote to ask her for a copy of the recently published book entitled *Knole and the Sackvilles* that traced the history from the 13th to the 20th century of Vita's ancestral home in Kent. (DeSalvo 197)

[82] In her letters to her, Sackville-West often praises Woolf's "genius," calling her "a very remarkable person" (DeSalvo and Leaska 66, 74, 144). Conversely, Woolf who half-jokingly described herself as a "coronet snob" in one of her autobiographical essays admired "the high aristocrat called Vita Sackville-West, daughter of Lord Sackville, daughter of Knole, wife of Harold Nicolson and novelist...," Mitchell A. Leaska quoting one of Woolf's letters to a friend (DeSalvo and Leaska 9).

[83] Vita Sackville-West herself participated in spreading the legend that Knole had "seven courtyards correspond[ing] to the days of the week, [...] fifty-two staircases to the weeks of the year, [...] three hundred and sixty-five rooms to the days of the year," but she added wistfully "I do not know that anyone has ever troubled to verify it" (Sackville-West 47).

Right from the start then *Orlando* was to be as much about Vita as it was to be about Knole: it was the result of several visits from Woolf to Knole. At the time Woolf conceived *Orlando*, Vita had been dispossessed of her home because of the old Kentish inheritance law of male primogeniture. It has often been said that thanks to her pen, Woolf gave it back to her, forever associating the place with Vita rather than with her cousin Eddy Sackville, the actual inheritor.[84] And as it was written just before *A Room of One's Own*, *Orlando* could be read as a plea in favour of the equality between men and women concerning the inheritance laws (as we have seen, Vita could have inherited more than a room of her own). The realism of the descriptions of Knole is in stark contrast to the fantasy which characterizes the portrait of Vita as Orlando, a character who lives for 400 years and changes sexes half-way. The house is the only sign of the passage of time: it functions like Dorian Gray's portrait and seems to age in Orlando's stead. Because Orlando barely ages during her four-century-long life, the passage of time is only registered thanks to the changes in the furniture and interior decoration of Knole. Yet a feeling of historical continuity also emanates from the rooms Orlando roams through, remembering or evoking the famous historical figures who have been received at Knole:

> Many Kings, Queens, and Ambassadors had been received there; Judges had stood there in their ermine [...] There were the long tables where the gold and silver plate was stood; and there the vast fireplaces of wrought Italian marble where nightly a whole oak tree, with its million leaves and its nest of rook and wren, was burnt to ashes. (*Orlando* 79)

Orlando's mansion to which (s)he returns continually throughout the novel functions as a constant: while all around the world is changing, the house has a timeless quality, acting as a mirror of Orlando's essentially unchanging character (despite his/her change of sex). The house is

[84] For the way *Orlando* was acknowledged by Vita as a compensation for the loss of Knole see in particular Nigel Nicolson—"*Orlando* became a memorial mass and gave Knole back to Vita by identifying her with it forever" (40)—and Glendinning (204).

personified by numerous pathetic fallacies which reinforce the symbiosis between Orlando and Knole:

> As soon would she come home, and leave her own grand-mother without a kiss as come back and leave the house unvisited. She fancied that the rooms brightened as she came in; stirred, opened their eyes as if they had been dozing in her absence. (*Orlando* 284)

The house is given permanency thanks to a series of repetitions: the tapestry hanging in the Leicester Gallery is described at different moments and comes back in the text like a leitmotiv, it rises and falls in the faint breeze like a heart beating. Each time Orlando comes back to Knole (s)he feels the need to walk the long corridors, to visit each room, in a kind of pilgrimage which allows him/her to keep his/her memory intact. In a kind of exchange, as the house is personified, Orlando's mind is described thanks to architectural metaphors: ''Orlando was mounting up the spiral stairway into his brain—which was a roomy one—'' (17) or else ''some change it was suspected must have taken place in the chambers of his brain'' (48). As Emily Clark argues:

> During the linear yet cyclical narrative, Orlando seeks comfort in the familial crypt located in the house, (s)he finds solace and renewal in the presence of the deceased upon which the house is literally and figuratively based. Orlando's visits to the crypt serve as interludes in the recurrence of the themes of gender, time, history and literature. (Clark 50)

The crypt which lies quiet and undisturbed and is the *inner sanctum* of the house, an actual Mausoleum, is seen by Emily Clark as the sub-conscious part of the house: Woolf intertwines death and the house in Orlando's life as a wellspring to which (s)he returns for restoration. Just as life and death are intrinsically linked in the house, Knole is both a public and a private space: it is compared to a city many times and so many servants and domestics are necessary to its upkeep that the

crypt is the only place where Orlando can retreat when (s)he needs privacy.

Through this very original text, Woolf tackles the essential questions of ownership, property and identity: she shows that a woman may manage an estate as well as a man given that Orlando's relationship to the house does not change when she changes sexes. The house is both a *locus*, and a *topos*, both very concrete and metaphorical. It is her attempt to reconcile "granite and rainbow," the hard materiality of facts and fiction, of walls, houses and rooms on the one hand and personality on the other.[85] But unlike Emily Clark who claims that Orlando's "organic kinship with the house is not broken: she believes that in death she will become part of the structure and furnishings just as her ancestors reside in the crypt"(57), I would like to suggest that severing the metaphorical link between Orlando and Knole might have been an attempt on Woolf's part to force Vita to turn her back on the painful question of inheritance and loss. It might indeed have been Woolf's attempt at giving Vita a therapeutic shock in order to help her transmute her grief into a life-saving instinct. The moment when Orlando must part from the house is partially compensated for by the fact that she becomes a wife, a mother and that her long narrative poem entitled "The Oak Tree" gets published: a new lease of life which only imperfectly atones for the loss of the ancestral home turned into a public place, a museum. "The house was no longer hers entirely, she sighed. It belonged to time now; to history; was past the touch and control of the living. [...] The great wings of silence beat up and down the empty house" (*Orlando* 286). Yet *Orlando* ends on a lyrical evocation of loss that associates Knole with death while Orlando, as a character, decidedly embraces life. At the very end of the text, in an unusually erotic and ecstatic moment, akin to a "modernist epiphany,"[86] Orlando bares her breast to the moon for her gleaming bosom and pearls

[85] The phrase "granite and rainbow" stems from Woolf's article entitled "The New Biography," first published in *The New York Herald Tribune* on the 30th of October 1927, while Woolf was working at *Orlando*. In this ground-breaking article in which she theorized the advent of a new form of biography which would revolutionize the Victorian biography she argued that the task of the biographer was a "stiff one" as (s)he had to weld into a "seamless whole" the "granite-like solidity" of truth and the "rainbow-like intangibility" of personality ("The New Biography" 229).

[86] This phrase was suggested by one of the two readers who reviewed this article and I take this opportunity to thank them both for their valuable comments which helped me improve this paper.

to guide her husband's aeroplane towards her. Orlando's body is made alive to the present time by her lover's return to her, and in a synesthetic and highly sensual move[87] she embraces life and her husband while the house stands, remote and spectral, bearing witness to a past that is no longer hers:

> All was still now. It was near midnight. The moon rose slowly over the weald. Its light raised a phantom castle upon the earth. There stood the great house with all its windows robed in silver. Of wall or substance there was none. All was phantom. All was still. All was lit for the coming of a dead Queen. (*Orlando* 294–295)

The insubstantiality of walls and windows is precisely the reason why Orlando gains substance and enjoys the present moment so fully: she is finally free to be her own self. The end of the text therefore dis/locates the spatial frame of the mythopoetic biography, the better to highlight the temporal frame: the text ends on an epiphany, or to use Woolf's term, a "moment of being" which grants Orlando/Vita eternal life as it forever associates, not so much Vita/Orlando and Knole, but Vita and *Orlando*, the date upon which the text concludes being the date when the book was released.

Thus, the final departure Orlando takes from the house proves biographers wrong: however symbiotic their relationship, Orlando should not be confused with Knole which belies Helen Clare Taylor's assumption that "Orlando is Knole" (4). In an essay she wrote just one year before the gestation of *Orlando* for the *Yale Review* (October 1926) Woolf pondered over what she described to Vita as "a matter of dazzling importance and breathless excitement" (*Letters* vol. 3, 220): "How should one read a book." The essay is as much about how one should read a book as how writers should write as writing and reading are one and the same reversible process:

[87] In a single paragraph, Orlando's senses of hearing, touch and sight are awakened: "As she spoke, the first stroke of midnight sounded. The cold breeze of the present brushed her face with its little breath of fear. She looked anxiously to the sky. It was dark with clouds now. The wind roared in her ears. But in the roar of the wind she heard the roar of an aeroplane coming nearer and nearer" (*Orlando* 295).

> Shall we read [biographies and autobiographies] to satisfy the curiosity which possesses us sometimes when in the evening we linger in front of a house where the lights are lit and the blinds not yet drawn, and each floor of the house shows us a different section of human life in being? Then we are consumed with curiosity about the lives of these people—the servants gossiping, the gentlemen dining, the girl dressing for a party, the old woman at the window with her knitting. Who are they, what are they, what are their names, their occupations, their thought and adventures? Biographies and memoirs answer such questions, light up innumerable such houses, they show us people going about their daily affairs, toiling, failing, succeeding, eating, hating, loving, until they die. ("How Should One Read a Book?" 3-4)

The implied answer to the initial question in this quotation is "no" and in fact *Orlando* may be read as an attempt to show how fallacious and beside the point such readings are. Both the biographer and the reader should resist the temptation to write/read the biographees' personalities in the homes they inhabit, in the objects they possess as personality is fundamentally irreducible to materiality. Because in the end, Orlando proves to be much more than Knole and reinvents herself as a woman, a lover, a mother and a poet.

It is perhaps vain to look for a consistent and stable representation of home in Woolf's work. Because houses can change, decay and be renovated like Mrs Ramsay's house in *To the Lighthouse* or Orlando's Knole, they point at time passing and as such they are important reminders of the transience and fragility of life. Woolf was aware of the significance of houses and rooms in the making of character, but she was more interested still in the intangible manifestations of the mind, a dichotomy expressed through the metaphors of the "granite-like solidity of truth," facts and material objects *versus* "something of rainbow-like intangibility," personality and the workings of the mind. Interestingly it is when she reflected upon the particularities of biography that she best managed to express this dichotomy: the task of the new biographer she said was to weld these two "into one seamless whole" ("The New Biography" 229). It is no wonder her conception of houses should have

reached such an elaborate stage in her biography of Vita Sackville-West who, with the legend of Knole attached to her, proved the perfect object of study and allowed Woolf to be "subtle and bold enough to present that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow" ("The New Biography" 235).

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Chapter
5

Home Bittersweet Home. Hemingway and the Maternal Sovereign

Rédouane Abouddahab

Chapter
5

He was in his home where he had made it.
Hemingway, "Big Two-Hearted River" (1925).

– there's more to the making of home
than I ever expected:
a process of excavation, of finding [...]
John Burnside, "Settlements."

There are numerous houses in Hemingway's fiction but, more often than not, their description is stripped down to the essentiality of their objective structure, as if they were soulless places made for dwelling, not for *inhabiting*.[88] Suzan E. Farrell contends in a study she devotes to the notion of home in *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, that the male protagonists' attempt to create a home through love relationships never reaches a successful outcome: "In each of these works Hemingway's male soldiers repeatedly try to create safe, domestic spaces for themselves while at war or while suffering the repercussions of war," yet they fail (Farrell 16). This deficiency is due to the damaging effects of the war: "[A]ll three of the novels finally offer

[88] To inhabit a place means much more than to live in it or occupy it. See the quite significant etymology of "inhabit" that denotes to have and to hold (*habere*). In this sense, it is possible to say that to inhabit a place means to take hold of it not only in the financial (or military!) sense of the word, but also creatively and spiritually. According to Heidegger, inhabiting a house corresponds to transforming it into a "world"; it means, too, finding one's place in this terrestrial life.

a tragic vision in which such unity is impossible, in which the trauma of war destroys the possibility of home," with greater reason since "[o]ld gender roles, upon which the traditional homes were based, no longer make sense" (Farrell 16). This is probably true but it is also true for Pound, Fitzgerald and other contemporary expatriate modernists, who are all dramatically familiar with the "waste land" wailed by T. S. Eliot.

It has often been discussed that Hemingway and the expatriates of the 1920s rejected momentarily life in America during those "roaring" years, when life in Europe seemed altogether freer, more artistically rewarding, and proved more advantageous financially speaking. Alex Small, a reporter, wrote in 1929 an article about those Americans who would rather "go into exile" than undergo the oppressive policies and infantilizing dogmas of the administration in office then. He notes: "[...] many an American who feels outraged at living under a government which treats its subjects like a set of naughty children, who shall be told what to drink, to read, to wear, and to see at the theatre, prefers to go into exile" (Small 51). But they went back home where they remained somehow uprooted, for, as Malcolm Cowley wrote in 1934 in his *Exile's Return*, the American expatriates' "real exile was from society itself, from any society to which they could honestly contribute and from which they could draw the strength that lies in shared convictions" (Cowley 214). This generalization gives to Cowley's comments on the relation between the American expatriates and their homeland a much less historical dimension and a much more philosophical one. He confirms the point further when he writes that, after all, his and the expatriates' experiences "follow the old pattern of alienation and reintegration, or departure and return, that is repeated in scores of European myths and continually re-embodied in life" (Cowley 289). Hemingway, one of the main expatriate writers Cowley deals with in his book, dramatizes home along these political and ethical lines. Yet, what is particularly interesting is the way the fictionalized intimate story of the writer explains these macrostructural ideologies and existential choices Cowley, Small and Farrell refer to.

In Hemingway's work, the impossibility of home is tainted with a sharp sense of rejection that seems visceral. Hemingway's complex relation with his own past branches out into different effects around the

notion of home in the normative sense, whose quasi-total absence in his fiction, becomes a textual symptom worth analyzing as such. Therefore, the critic needs to look for other much more deeply rooted reasons than the ones that History might offer, even if its determining forces are to be taken into account, too.

Significantly enough, both home and mother are interlocked by the same forces of negativity. Apart from a brief mention in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "Now I Lay Me," an even more fleeting allusion in the posthumous unfinished novel *The Last Good Country*, and a laconic hint dropped in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the protagonist's mother is nowhere to be seen. Not unlike the houses, when she is physically present she is never described. Thus the omission of one corresponds to the omission of the other. That elision can be considered as a negative paradigm that concentrates a whole set of dark undertones implying trauma ambivalent affects, denials, and strategies for psychic survival.

If things are so then, why write a study on the figure of home in Hemingway? At least for two reasons. The first one corresponds to the cornerstone of Hemingway's own theory of writing, based on the hypothesis that the omitted diegetic element can be in certain cases more important than the stated one. According to Hemingway's famous "iceberg theory" as defined in *Death in the Afternoon*,

> [i]f a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing. (153-154)

Bearing in mind this minimal definition of omission, the very absence of home from most stories and nearly all novels becomes a significant generative *textual* element, all the more so as that figure is the core of a complex made of a series of rejections and sublimations. The second reason lies in the intimate connection between home and the maternal

Other, whose 'volume' becomes coextensive with it in the double sense of family and homeland.

Minimally and yet fortunately for the critic, there is one narrative that presents the Hemingway protagonist (here a war veteran named Harold Krebs) in an interactive situation at home with his family and especially with his mother. "Soldier's Home" (1925) brings to light the complex interaction between the subject, on the one hand, and the mother-home dyad, on the other. Ruben De Baerdemaeker identifies in Krebs's detachment from home distorting effects on the way he perceives his past. Krebs "has come undone [...] because he is not in touch with home, or does not feel at home in Oklahoma, and because this present unease taints his past, rather than vice versa" (De Baerdemaeker 59). Yet, is it not possible to see in the protagonist's past, determining factors and uncontrollable forces that affect the present and distort the protagonist's perception of what he has to go through and of what he cannot go through in the present? A second level of analysis can also be taken into consideration: writing per se is a way of sorting out the past in order to *inhabit* life and consequently imagine and improve one's relation with the world as home.

In Hemingway, there is the persistent desire of the protagonist to empty down the house from its 'hominess,' considering it as the simple location of some action. To the notable exception of very few narratives, houses are indeed mere settings stripped of any affective or socio-cultural complexity. Strikingly enough, even in narratives that develop a non-American protagonist's story, the reader can identify the same process of negation and reduction. In "The Undefeated," for instance, Zurito, the picador who enfolds Manuel with brotherly love, invites the ageing matador to his house in a gesture of generous hospitality:

> "Come on," said Zurito. "Come on up to the house."
> Manuel reached under the seat for his suitcase. He was happy [...].
> "Come on up to the house and we'll eat," Zurito said. (225)

For sure, this moment of warmth enlightens the gray life of the waning and lonely bullfighter, who, like most Hemingway protagonists, has

no home worthy of notice. Strikingly enough, the heartfelt words of Zurito betray some unconcern, not as regards the invitation per se, but the way he refers to his place as "the house." While the intention is cordial the way the house is mentioned is somehow dried-up; the picador does not even use a possessive pronoun to bring together the two. Zurito's invitation is followed with a typographical blank that points to the obliteration of the expected *life* within the house, not only from the diegetic scene but also from the text being generated, in the sense that the narrator does not give the reader the slightest indication on Zurito's house, let alone 'invite' him into it. This omission, which refers to the complexities of the affects that determine the subject's relation with home, is structural in Hemingway's fiction where home is usually nothing but a house, and is part of a poetic ensemble that values the surface elements at the expense of inwardness.

Conceptually, home is a place teeming with the life of the people or the person who reside in it, and the memories derived from that life.[89] Far from being a simple structure engaging a reflection on the representation of space, home is indeed a "cradle," a temporal complex internalized in the subject's mind, both at the conscious and the unconscious levels. This is far from being the case in Hemingway's narratives. In *The Garden of Eden* David's rooms in his long stay residence hotel are the locus of the erotic experimentations he goes through with his young and daring wife Catherine, and the private workshop for his regular writing activity. But the features of this transient 'home' remain completely abstract. And so is Jake's own flat in Paris in *The Sun Also Rises*: far from illustrating positively the Bachelardian theory of the house as a complex space made of memories and emotions, it presents no life of its own.

Indeed, Jake's flat is an anonymous stripped down setting that has a simple diegetic function, being incidentally the place where the meeting with Count Mippipopolous, impulsively invited by Brett (and not by Jake!),

[89] See Bachelard whose approach to the material imagination of space focuses on the emotional and psychological dimensions of the house. A house is "a body of images" (Bachelard 3), a complex structure made of memories, experiences, emotions, meanings... It is a protective shelter that connects past and present. Thus defined the house structures the mind of the human being. Deprived of this structuring factor the house is, man will be dissipated: "In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies [...]. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. Before he is 'cast into the world' [...], man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle" (6–7).

takes place, and a dramatic stage where the "funny" injury of Jake is alluded to. The reader will never know how the apartment is furnished, what colors it is painted or tapestried with, what kind of atmosphere prevails in it, or how far it might symbolize or reveal Jake's intimate world. More generally, the houses as presented in the novel show impenetrable façades whose interest is mainly aesthetic or architectural but is not emotional at all. They are "houses and villages [that] look well-off and clean," or "nice farmhouses, low roofs, and all white-plastered" (91), that Jake Barnes looks at while riding a rented car through the Basque country. He does not pay heed to the life they might harbor, but seems only interested in the pattern they trace out against the majestic-looking Pyrenees. Strolling in the streets of Paris in company of his friends Bill and Mike, Jake looks at the buildings, recording their most salient visual features, such as the "high old houses" he can see on both sides of "smooth narrow streets," some of which "ju[t] out toward the street," while "others [are] cut back" (78). In Spain the house can be associated visually albeit vaguely to family, but no hominess and no nostalgic reverie flows through the edifice. Jake mentions generically and rather detachedly "whitewashed stone houses, [with] families sitting in their doorways watching" him and Bill on their way to the inn (109). The Hemingway house, like his texts, is a-psychological; it has no *character* and remains most of the time stripped down to its objective core.

There is doubtless a realistic explanation for that. As an expatriate living in Paris and a tourist travelling in the Basque country Jake has no a priori access to the interiors of the French and Spanish houses; he expresses no wish to enter one either. Most of the time his gaze unfolds from a distant, mobile point of view—in the above-given examples, he is walking and riding—that leaves no place for a close relation to blossom into affection or attachment, emphasizing on the contrary the fleeting dimension of the moment and would-be relation, in a world where home—that is, the feeling of familiarity and intimacy with the world—is to be founded yet. This having been said, one will be ill-advised to think that the reason for this apparent affective neutrality can solely be explained by the non-nativeness of Jake Barnes here, or Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, or David Bourne in *The Garden of Eden*.

Hemingway shuns interiority and what seems to be haunting depths, favoring on the contrary exteriority, as if focusing on the house, analogically related to the self, would lead the protagonist to some unpleasant memories and deeply buried traumas from the disquieting past. The interior, usually figured by the intimacy of rooms, turns out to be a hazardous place to be eschewed in a poetic system that fosters the surface elements.

The famous initial chapter of *A Farewell to Arms* opens on the mention of the house the narrator (Frederic Henry) lives in: "In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains" (7). Significantly enough, Henry's vision remains centrifugal throughout the chapter, as he is absorbed by what goes on outside, not paying the slightest attention to what the inside looks like and even less to what it might be. It comes as no surprise that Henry's attention should be drawn to the world outside and brush aside the interior. Indeed, beyond the dynamic action of gaze and the formal complexities of focalization, the incipit of Hemingway's war and love novel has a symptomatic dimension to it that points not only to the disinterest in, if not disregard for real homes, but to what might be called *home-phobia* as the study of "Soldier's Home" will show us later.

The house usually plays the role of a prefatory structure through which some action unfolds. It is almost systematically an interchangeable place throughout the wide geography outlined by the indefatigable traveler or "migrant" the Hemingway protagonist is. Houses are rather stages where events occur without leaving a sensitive touch. The recurrent hotel rooms, tents, cottages..., allude to change and instability in the life of protagonists who are on the move or live in foreign countries, in quest for some real home, that is, some powerful means for being closely connected—both in the physical and the spiritual sense—with this world, beyond the geographical national borders.

Unlike some of his major contemporaries such as Anderson, Faulkner or Fitzgerald, whose works probe important social, historical, and cultural aspects of America, Hemingway turned his back on his homeland in his work. With the exception of a few short stories and the rather insipid *To Have and Have Not*, all of his creative texts are located in foreign

countries.[90] In his novels and in most of his stories, the protagonist's homeland looms vaguely in the background or is not even mentioned. Like the Jamesian hero the Hemingway hero lives far from the motherland without managing to create a personal, stable one. There might be hints to America in the protagonist's mind, but more often than not they convey negative memories or ideas. For instance, the unique allusion to Robert Jordan's homeland in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* consists in the violent memory of a racial lynching that he witnessed as a child back home (121). The only "chapter" or short short story from *in our time*[91] that refers to America, presents a racial crime committed by a police officer who hates Hungarians ("Chapter VIII"). More often than not the protagonist thinks, talks and behaves as if he had no home or no past. Furthermore, in the stories where action takes place partially or wholly in America, plot is most of the time built on a violent traumatic event (violent birth and suicide in "Indian Camp" (*In Our Time*), the disturbing destruction of the father's collection of objects in "Now I Lay Me," the impending murder in "The Killers" (*Men Without Women*) ...). Moreover, these "American" stories do not explore the dynamics of American society but most of the time use wild nature ("Big Two-Hearted River," "The Last Good Country") or dramatic anecdotes ("The Battler," "The End of Something," "Fathers and Sons") to stage the protagonist's inner conflicts and resolutions, as well as his personal perspective on what happened to *him* back then.

Hemingway's fiction does not express directly a political, cultural or sociological judgment on the USA; it merely produces textual elements that connote a mute and nonetheless significant rejection of family and homeland, and concurrently bespeaks persistent forms of identification with other cultures, mainly African and Spanish. The acts and speech of the protagonist are often determined by an inner necessity as will be studied now through the focus on "Soldier's Home" a story where

[90] Actually, even the plot of *To Have and Have not* unfolds in between Cuba and Florida. This amphibological novel apart, the action in all of Hemingway's novels develops exclusively in international settings. As for the short stories, only a few of them are America based. The action in *The Torrents of Spring* published in 1926, develops in the USA, but this novella is a simple parody of Sherwood Anderson, written hastily and slyly by Hemingway in order to break his contract with Boni and Liveright, also Anderson's publisher.

[91] *in our time*, with a lower-case title, is a collection of numbered short "Chapters" or vignettes, published in Paris in 1924, one year before the publication in New York of the well-known short story collection *In Our Time*.

homeland, home and the maternal are interlocked in a relation that implies denial, hatred, and guilt.

"Soldier's Home" is centered on the complaint of Harold Krebs, a young man whose desires have been apparently atrophied by the experience of the war in France and Germany. Krebs feels somehow ridiculous to come back long after the end of the war, now that the "greeting of heroes was over" (138). His life is marked with the will for seclusion that paradoxically brings forth a continuous feeling of frustration. He only wants to "live without consequences," in other words, without having to pay the symbolic price of life as set by social intercourse, one of the causes of which lies in the problematic relation with the feminine. The horizon of Krebs is defined by the interiority of his home, which is dominated by his quite active mother, while his links with the outside, where masculinity is supposed to be *demonstrated* through competitive relations with other men and seductive ones with women, are on the whole reduced to mere distant noncommittal observations and brief occasional excursions down town.

To Krebs, the feminine is somehow generic and abstract. The young man finds the girls of his hometown "too complicated" and not engaging enough; in any case, he does not want to make the slightest effort to seduce one. Albeit he "vaguely" feels desire for some good-looking girl he does "not want to have to work to get her" (140). When he looks at the girls from a *safe* distance, he finds them pretty, especially since they almost all have short hair (140). But when he approaches them in town or in the tearoom, they leave him more or less indifferent. No girl stands out from the crowd. On the whole, the girls' "appeal to him [is] not very strong"; "he [does] not want them really," and does not even "like them when he [sees] them in the Greek's ice cream parlor" (140). This contradicts the sense of masculinity that is displayed, though ironically, at the beginning of the story, through the reference to two different pictures.

The very first lines of the story give realistic details about Krebs's enlisting in the Marines then fighting in the Rhine area, and about his return to his homeland two years later. Before enlisting Krebs was a student in a Methodist college in Kansas: "There is a picture which shows

him among his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and style collar'' (138). The realistic detail actually offers a key for understanding one of the reasons why Krebs rejects his home. The picture mirrors a significant sense of identity suggested by the way these young men, who look and are dressed ''exactly'' alike, are ''all of them'' made to act and think in the same fashion. A similar image of conformity appears later in the story when the narrator mentions the ''pattern'' the girls of the town give shape to. Through Krebs's eyes Hemingway associates social identity to a boring sense of uniformity that Krebs is not in tune with anymore:

> Nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up. [...] He liked to look at them, though. There were so many good-looking young girls. Most of them had their hair cut short [...]. They all wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars. It was a pattern. (140)

Krebs is somehow attracted to the girls but the energy of desire is not strong enough to make him move forward with it. The girls have become mere images to be simply appreciated from some distance, a detachment that indicates the gap which separates his ''world'' from theirs, since ''the world they were in was not the world he was in'' (141). Like the fraternity brothers the girls look alike. The word ''pattern'' unifies them into one design, while the ironic ''collar,'' also worn by the ''brothers,'' points out the social imprisonment Krebs does not want to be part of anymore. He feels very different now from his fellow citizens, all trapped into conventionality and imitation; yet he has not come up so far with any existential solution to get out from all this crushing uniformity and from the circles his mind moves in. Thus, what thins out Krebs's sense of liveliness is the tedious endemic social sameness, a conformity he probably was not aware of prior to going to war but that has now grown into a will for rupture. The veteran's experiences abroad seem to have created a gap between himself and what his homeland has to offer in terms of desire and evolution. That gap gives the measure of the intellectual and spiritual evolution of Krebs, who has developed a sharp sense of observation through his experience

of otherness and of the tragic in Europe, a necessary achievement made on the path towards artistic awareness.

Ironically, the American *uniform* does not fit him either, as the second picture mentioned in the story shows, where he is seen in company with "two German girls and another corporal" (138). Indeed, Krebs and his comrade "look too big for their uniforms" (138). Krebs is "too big" not simply for the garment but for the *uniformity* it connotes, which means that he has outgrown the nationalistic limitations that impose the way a citizen is supposed to inhabit the national space and make of it *the* home. This is probably why Krebs "did not want to leave Germany" and come back home (113). The war led the soldier to self-awareness and to the realization of his own otherness as well as the existence of a universal home, beyond the limits of identity. This widening sense of self has created a feeling of marginality Krebs cannot cope with now, but that he should overcome in order to get out of the double bind that endangers him mentally. And it is his mother who triggers the decisive action that forces him into making an existential choice, while the masculine model, normally incarnated by the father, remains absent and "non-committal."

However, Krebs's mother uses the father or his function strategically and fittingly as an alleged source of authority to fuel the maternal sovereign she incarnates. What I call the maternal sovereign is a form of domination that derives its power from the patriarchal phallic supremacy the mother serves and preserves devotedly. But beyond *power*, which is, by definition, extrinsic and derived, the mother possesses *potency*, which can be defined here as an *intrinsic* disposition to dominate and to exert influence, the source of which are the omnipotent fantasies generated by the mother's unconscious, identifiable namely in the way she controls all the details of daily life and the way she *occupies* the home space. The maternal sovereign feeds too on social mimesis.

Krebs's mother sounds indeed like the guardian of social values, calling her son to order for the good of the community, and reproaching him with his idleness and lack of social ambition. She uses the ideology of competition to stir her son's drives of rivalry into action, reminding him that the "boys" his age are "'all settling down [and] determined to get somewhere'" (143-144), and "'are on their way to being really a credit to

the community'" (144), contrary to her son who, as his father allegedly thinks, has "'lost [his] ambition'" and has not "'got a definite aim in life.'" The mother specifies Krebs's purposeless and reprehensible situation even more harshly when she compares him to an acquaintance of his, a certain Charley Simmons, "'who is just [his] age,'" and yet has already got "'a good job and is going to be married'" (144).

Hence, the mother speaks on behalf of the whole community—which is the microcosmic representation of the nation—whose consistency should be maintained and not endangered by lazy outsiders like her own son. Social coherence and order are the supreme good in the mother's perspective. Her words bring together the sacrosanct social trinity of work, marriage, and community, in other words, work, family, and homeland, which constitute the old style conservatism Krebs's life abroad has alienated him from. In the mother's view, home as family and as nation are coextensive in the field of patriotic loyalty and religious devotion. This leaves no place for the modernist ethos that gave shape to Hemingway's worldview, specifically during those long years he spent in Paris in the 1920s, not unlike other 'subversive' expatriates. Krebs's unwillingness to come back home bespeaks Hemingway's awareness of the wide world out there, beyond the American way of life, seen no more as unique or exceptional. And yet, here he is sitting on "the front porch" of his family house, reading books or looking at the "good-looking" girls passing by (141).

Krebs's contradictory desires (he went back home against his own will) underline a mental situation that borders on a double-bind impasse, being both repelled and attracted by home and what it stands for. Yet, he seems to know why he likes being abroad. The comparison he makes between life in France and in Germany, which he prefers (141), presupposes a rational analysis of his situation. Nonetheless, he does not know why he came back home; there seems to be some unconscious desire that drew him back like an irresistible magnet. The security and comfort the maternal sovereign offers and the closely related regressive impulses might be the reason behind his return home. Krebs's presence at home is comfortable in spite of his feelings of disgust, because he seems to have regressed to childhood, spending most of his time in activities that imply enjoyment (playing pool, practicing the clarinet, reading, strolling

down town, sleeping late...). Just like a child whose life is devoid of any sense of responsibility or constraint, his life is thus organized around the satisfaction of his pleasures (139).

Clearly enough, his perspective is temporally regressive, fueled by unconscious fantasized feelings of might, just like those of a child who thinks he is the center of attention and believes his mother holds herself at his disposal: "He was still a hero to his two young sisters. His mother would have given him breakfast in bed if he had wanted it" (139). The experience of the war has not propelled him forward regarding his affects, but pushed his wishes back toward archaic repressed desires and probably feelings of guilt, that turn out to be obstacles to sexual gratification, preventing enjoyment and active participation in social life. The belief that he could be served by his mother at will testifies to the return of repressed archaic desires and thus to the failure of the process of symbolization that should normally put an end to the problematics of the Oedipus complex phase. On the contrary, Krebs's eroticism is passive: "He would have liked to have a girl but he did not want to have to spend a long time getting her" (140). The refusal to go with girls despite some feelings of sexual attraction just shows how sexual frustration has triggered in part his neurotic symptoms.

Krebs thinks he can do without the symbolic order (that is, the order of the signifier) which imposes intersubjectivity and language as a relational tool and channel for desire. The subject is constantly confronted with the risk of otherness in social interactions, in the sense that his desire can be rejected by the other. Krebs is confined in the Imaginary where everything is prefixed and easy to predict. It is the girl, in a maternal unconscious position, who is the source of the active erotic force, while Krebs remains an object satisfied to satisfy the Other, a position that refers back to the archaic infantile position when the baby, not yet a speaking subject, considers itself the object of desire of its mother. Thus, in Krebs's fantasmatic scenario, the active source of desire is external and structurally maternal: "Now he would have liked a girl if she had come to him and not wanted to talk. But here at home it was all too complicated" (141); "complicated": folded together, intricate, just like the cultural complex.

Helen, Krebs's sister, is also an active seducing force. The manifestation of incestuous desires through the frolicsome allurements of Helen, and through Krebs's equally playful response to it—and it is easy to understand that the sister is a metonymic figure of the maternal—, shows, too, how far Krebs's sexual desire (or libido) is still trapped in the archaic incestuous fantasies of the self-erotic phase, which prevents him from directing his sexual desires toward the beautiful young girls of his town. On the contrary, the whole story's affective field is centered on Krebs's relation with his mother. Home is characterized with the omnipresence of the maternal force and the weakness of the paternal function. Because of this lack of balance, home also comes under the dangerous spell of incest and consequently the *unconscious* fear of punishment that paralyzes Krebs's desire and prevents him from moving toward sexual otherness.

The father is indeed conspicuous by his absence in the story (and in Hemingway's work generally), only referred to as "he" or "your father," whereas the mother's presence is powerfully felt. The dominating maternal Other seems to have absorbed the paternal function though the mother also imposes her authority on its behalf. The absence of the father, whose words are merely conveyed by the mother, emphasizes the maternal domination of the home space, while the power of her normative and injunctive language makes her son feel all the guiltier. In the face of Krebs's embarrassed and certainly uncomfortable silence, his mother strategically refers to the paternal pole to convince her son to 'get moving' (144).

The mother is a conservative woman who speaks in the name of the father, but Krebs knows she is the one pulling the strings of power behind the scenes (141–142). The soldier believed that the experience of the Great War would be enough for him to become a man, which in his mind confusedly means a hero. His war stories are meant to be proofs of his heroic virility. However, they no longer interest anyone, and the heroes' welcome is in any case over. His mother, who often comes into his room when he is lying down in bed and asks him to talk to her about the war (139), does not listen to him for long, as "her attention always wander[s]" (139).

The narrative voice does not give the reasons behind this paradoxical and highly revealing disinterest, since it is at his mother's request that Krebs starts telling his war stories. One can nevertheless deduce from her attitude a true knowledge of the war from a more reliable source that allows her to see through Krebs, who likes to stage his virility in his "apocryphal" narratives (139). Indeed, she seems to have had her own heroic ideal and truthful narrator in the figure of her own father:

> "I've worried about you so much, Harold [...]. I know the temptations you must have been exposed to. I know how weak men are. I know what your own dear grandfather, my own father, told us about the Civil War and I have prayed for you. I pray for you all day long, Harold." Krebs looked at the bacon fat hardening on his plate. (143)

The mother's knowledge, insisted upon through repetition (*I know...*, *I know...*), is coupled with a power derived from paternal filiation. That powerful knowledge both victimizes and infantilizes her son, now deprived of the possibility to develop his own heroic fantasies and to gain her admiration. "Boys" like Harold are not heroes but "weak" creatures and easily tempted sinners worth being prayed for "all day long" for forgiveness. The mother's words are meant to reveal not only Krebs's "lies" about his allegedly heroic deeds but also his guilt (or sins). The reference to the two German girls at the beginning of the story supports the mother's both intuitive and rational knowledge. Moreover, the emphatic expression "'your own dear grandfather, my own father'" suggests the daughter's attachment to and admiration for her father, whose authentic heroic stories are well kept in her memory as a trustworthy testimony on what wars really are. Krebs can therefore only equal the authentic heroic grandfather by inventing heroic stories to take the place of his mother's hero. However, these scenarios are disrupted by internal forces that demand the real thing. He can brilliantly display a certain image and assert himself before the maternal Other, but this Other is far from complacent. Home has become thus a place of confrontation with one's truths as reflected by an uncompromising mother, who does not consider her son man enough to fight in a real war and to assume

his social responsibilities: finding a good job and getting married like the other "boys," who apparently have no sexual problems and no difficulty in getting a girl suited to their desires.

Krebs's masculinity, comically displayed at the beginning of the story, is to be reimagined or reinvented through fictionalizing his self-representation, which "consist[s] in attributing to himself things other men [have] seen, done or heard of, and stating as facts certain apocryphal incidents familiar to all soldiers" (139). The reader might have noted the suggestive use in this excerpt of the word "men" before "soldiers"; indeed, the real issues at stake have to do with a deficit of virility not of warring valor.

Krebs is a storyteller, an imaginative spirit whose lies are the very proof of his creative talents and the sign of a personality yet under development. However, his imaginative faculties, which his gullible sisters have made admirable, no longer correspond to the true requirements of the subject. Invaded by a feeling of abjection of which he himself is the source and the object, Krebs is the victim of an internal conflict between, on the one hand, the brilliant image he gives of himself and his imaginative mental predispositions that allow him to create it, and, on the other hand, what he is in truth: a non-heroic man according to the standards of a rigorously defined masculinity, here circumscribed in the warlike sphere where he tried to look and maybe even be heroic and manly enough. His true self (the *subject* within) is not satisfied by warfare but by music and reading, and by the intimate interiority of closed places. When he goes down town, it is to fetch a book from the library (139), or to spend "the hottest hours of the day in the cool dark of the pool room" (139), an antithetical image that tacitly opposes the paradigms of the masculine (the heat brings to mind the firearms of the war) and the feminine as a shelter whose watery consistency is suggested by the signifier "pool" buttressed by "cool" and by the overall delicate music of the words. Thus, the activities he carries out, far from reflecting a strictly defined mannish self (as the opening paragraphs of the story suggest ironically), point to a delicate sensitivity.

Krebs's inner space, as mirrored by his home, is therefore dominated by a powerful sense of the feminine, an atmosphere where the mother

holds sway. This maternal supremacy is made clear at the end of the story when his mother triumphantly makes her son kneel down in prayer in spite of his reluctance and his belief that he is not in "'His kingdom'" (143). Yet, the confrontation with his mother makes him feel "embarrassed and resentful as always." Even if he does not pray he lets his mother do so for him, while the act of kneeling down per se symbolizes his capitulation to the maternal sovereign. Indeed, after a vain attempt at unfulfilled resistance, he surrenders to his mother by vowing "'[he]'ll try and be a good boy for [her]'" (144), and a good citizen too since he finally makes the promise he will go to Kansas City to look for a job, thus honoring the moral and social expectations of his mother and of the nation at large. This said, does this comic conclusion prove Krebs's conciliation with the social order he has been shunning and despising so far? Actually, to Krebs work has a much different meaning from what is expected by his mother, even if his decision is meant to please her.

For the mother, as a spokesperson of the American way of life, man, work, and home are coextensive and absolutely interdependent; it is a matter of order and loyalty. A man's existence is justified by what he can do to build up and improve his home through hard work and religious devotion. Work is a moral obligation that makes man worthy of the mission entrusted him by God because, as she reminds her son, "'God has some work for everyone to do.'" Therefore, "'there can be no idle hands in His Kingdom'" (143). Man can thus affirm himself as a synthetically apprehended conscience, capable, thanks to the reason it is based on, of regulating a world threatened by the dark forces of jouissance, including unrestricted sexuality and its satanic avatars. The enjoyment recommended to Krebs by his mother (for instance driving his father's car and taking "'some of the nice girls'" for a ride) is none other than that of social production and sexual reproduction, both well marked out and necessarily transitive and finalistic.

Now, for the Hemingway protagonist (fisherman, hunter, writer), work is subjected to the interplay of Eros and Thanatos according to primitive rules that recognize the excesses of the body while symbolizing them by actions involving both matter and spirit, thus channeling the violence of the drives into symbolical cultural forms. It is not the socially

defined reason that underlies the protagonist's activities, but the free play of sexuality and the *letter* (or writing). The play of the letter and the enjoyment it entails is already suggested by the implicit connection between Krebs's intention to go to Kansas City and get a job there so that his mother "would feel all right about it," and the *Kansas City Star*, his father's paper he enjoys reading while taking breakfast (142). In this sense, going to Kansas implies a symbolical move toward the father, whose desire is figured metonymically by the *Kansas City Star*, and by the pleasure of reading the newspaper every morning, *before* his father, a habit that points to the structuring issues of the Oedipus complex. This, too, foreshadows Krebs's professional future which is connected with writing and, therefore, with the possibility to emancipate himself from the maternal grip. Albeit slightly distorted, the biographical reference is barely veiled: Hemingway began his career as a journalist at the *Kansas City Star*, though he did so *before* going to war as a volunteer.

When Hemingway went back home from Italy, he was already a celebrity (Baker 84), hailed by newspapers such as *The New York Sun* as a hero who had "defied the shrapnel of the Central Powers" (Lynn 96). Yet, this heroic return home from the war was marred by arguments with his mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, who did not let him enjoy his heroic aura as long as he wished. Kenneth Lynn writes that "[w]hat was particularly maddening from Ernest's point of view was that his status hadn't changed after all. It was as if he had never [...] helped to remove the remains of dead women from a field in Lombardy, or felt the pain of shell fragments tearing into his flesh" (101). Thus, the non-complaisant reaction of his mother frustrated and then enraged him. A few months later Hemingway started working as a reporter for the *Toronto Weekly Star*, before heading for Europe where he became the European correspondent for the Canadian paper until 1924. He then established himself as a professional writer.

The fiction explores, albeit cautiously, the relationship with the all too present mother and the insufficiently present father during that period of his life. Hemingway's writing is not a matter of reporting exactly what happened nor imagining some non-existent world, but of *acting* upon reality through its symbolization. In "Soldier's Home" Krebs's father,

a real estate agent, has a very different job from Hemingway's father, who was a brilliant obstetrician. The job of Krebs's father (which consists in selling and buying houses) can be understood as the sublimative expression of his will to take hold through work of what he has been dispossessed of, that is, the control of home and its maternal powerful soul. In this sense, father and son share the same concern and the same oppressive condition, a commonality that is hinted at by the newspaper as an object of identification with the father, which belies the explicit hatred expressed toward him.

So it is not the biographical fact as such that matters here, but the way writing symbolizes it in the sense of *performing* it, liberating its unconscious meaning and channeling the affects that fuel it into meaningful combinations. While the conclusion of "Soldier's Home" suggests the obedience to the mother's injunctive wishes and the submission to her sovereignty, the general frame of the story shows that the rupture with home and the mother has already taken place. By locating the soldier's home in Oklahoma, Hemingway has already *written*, in the sense of acting out, his ambivalent break with home and family. *Oklahoma* is a portmanteau word that combines tellingly *Oak* and *home*, thus twisting the notion of home in two ways. The signifier distorts Oak Park, Hemingway's place of birth and growth till 1920. But contrary to "Oak Park," which sounds sweet thanks to the diphthong /əʊk/ in "Oak" and the beautiful image implied by "Park," *Oklahoma* associates *home* to the harsh initial *ok*, where the air is constrained by the stop consonant *k* followed by the liquid *l*. Moreover, the signifier sounds especially ambiguous on account of the final syllable 'ma' which surfaces phonetically in the childish "Mummy" and of course in "mother." Writing is supposed to rationalize, dramatize, and symbolize this indestructible knot between home and Mum.

An additional remark can be made here about the evocative and striking power of writing: Krebs's 'fate' is written in Kansas, which is not the place of his rebirth as a good citizen, the one whose identity preexists his own existence and his own existential choices. Hemingway understood quite early that an authentic writer is an authentic man, one who first tries to get rid of the alienating forces within, through the rational analysis of his emotional complex. He writes in *Death in the Afternoon*:

> I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced. (11–12)

In order to reach a high level of self-understanding the artist has to confront *home* as a place overflown with the confusing desire of the maternal Other. Krebs has not succeeded to do so yet, but the writer who organizes his fictional life has. This is why Krebs's fate becomes starkly etched in the enigmatic dynamics of writing. The reader who loves the poetic and microtextual incidences of meaning can appreciate the way the *k* and the *s* phonemes, which frame the two signifiers "Krebs" and "Kansas," bring another dimension to the text by revealing the other meaning that the writer gives to work, the work of the letter precisely, the infinite activity of converting the violence of jouissance and chaos (*KS*: *chaos*) into creative language. Not only the chaos of war and its terrible disorders, but the chaos that the human subject carries within, of which war is only the most spectacular manifestation. The productivity of this *work* presents itself as a formidable liquidation and distribution of energetic impulses that put the text to work, as the writer strives uninterruptedly to find a balance between contradictory pressures and pressuring desires related to the maternal sovereign.

The mother is supreme not only because she is a dominating and influential person, but also because she is right in pushing her son to action, getting him out of the depths of melancholia, thus assuming the defective paternal function. Krebs's aggressiveness, which no doubt conveys Hemingway's, is determined by the necessity for him to free himself from home and from the maternal grip. Through writing as an act of omission, rupture, denial, and symbolization, Hemingway 'commits' matricide in order to sublimate the invading maternal jouissance.[92] The final scene between mother and son is forcefully germane to the story and to the current discussion.

[92] For a theoretical background to this complex notion of maternal jouissance, see Morel.

In the face of his mother's admonitions Krebs seems frozen like the bacon fat he was about to eat (''Krebs looked at the bacon fat hardening on his plate,'' 143), a reference to the psychic paralysis caused by the mother's invasive and powerful words that forced him into silence. But how can he oppose this mother who only wants the good of her son, acting and speaking on behalf of that noble and yet so ambiguous affect called love? The subject feels trapped by the language of the mother, which is both intelligent and sentimental. What is more, the mother has a keen sense of observation and seems to be able to see through her son: '''Don't look that way, Harold,' his mother said. 'You know we love you and I want to tell you for your own good how matters stand'" (144). The heroic soldier who, allegedly, stared death in the face, is addressed like a little child who does not know how ''matters stand'' yet, and who still needs to be reprimanded by his parents.

The mother is all the mightier as her argumentation, not unlike her grammar, is irreproachable. She is the master of knowledge and the master of truth, the one who says how things are exactly and how they should be, leaving no place for doubt or questioning, even more so as her proselytizing is, after all, meant to stir her sluggish son into action. This maternal impeccability proves hard to deal with and to bear, as it chokes down the energies of desire which, in order to develop, need to identify some form of lack, want, and failure in the Other. When the Other bears no mark of lack the subject verges on psychosis. To put an end to his mother's invasive discourse, which is insidiously violent, Krebs mobilizes the energy of cruelty and hatred, and brutally breaks the homogeneous union where she has tried to locate the filial relation between the two:

> ''Is that all?'' Krebs said.
> ''Yes. Don't you love your mother, dear boy?''
> ''No,'' Krebs said.
> His mother looked at him across the table. Her eyes were shiny. She started crying.
> ''I don't love anybody,'' Krebs said. (144)

Krebs, who cannot inhabit his mother's and his community's world anymore, has to search for new modes of belonging irreducible to that

world and to the identity his mother incarnates. In order to let loose his authentic desires he has to recognize his hatred for home which amounts to the hatred of himself, or, at least, to one part of himself. This is the bitter truth, yet his feelings of guilt still hamper his irresistible though hurtful will for rupture. This is why he feels guilty immediately after the incident, trying therefore to comfort his mother, telling her he "'didn't mean it'":

> [...] His mother went on crying. Krebs put his arm on her shoulder.
> "Can't you believe me, mother?"
> His mother shook her head.
> "Please, please, mother. Please believe me."
> "All right," his mother said chokily. She looked up at him. "I believe you, Harold."
> Krebs kissed her hair. She put her face up to him. (144)

Krebs's reactive kindness toward his mother is obviously motivated by the feeling of guilt she herself has prompted. This guilt peaks when Krebs uses the childish and endearing expression *Mummy*, now proving the effectiveness of maternal sovereignty:

> "I'm your mother," she said. "I held you next to my heart when you were a tiny baby."
> Krebs felt sick and vaguely nauseated.
> "I know, Mummy," he said. "I'll try and be a good boy for you."
> "Would you kneel and pray with me, Harold?" his mother asked.
> They knelt down beside the dining-room table and Krebs's mother prayed. (144–145)

The rejection of the mother is a reaction against her dominating power seen also as a castrating threat that probably dates back to early childhood. When called up by the mother, the memory of early childhood does not bring to the sensual surface the feeling of some initial happiness, the melodious music of a lost Eden, but a negative sensation that immediately translates into a symptom of rejection. The mere idea of physical closeness between the two during that phase of absolute

dependence upon the maternal Other, brings back to life infantile traces probably connected to early incestuous desires not yet symbolized. Indeed, Krebs's symptom of rejection can also be interpreted as the surge of unconscious sexual pleasure dating back to archaic pre-symbolic times. The preverbal jouissance, normally forbidden by the Law of the father, morphs into a symptomatic reaction against the mother's own blissful power that held sway during childhood and that still goes on as proved by the symbolic act of making him kneel down.

Krebs's situation is ambivalent: both trapped and repelled by this jouissance that holds him from within and from which he has to emancipate himself. Saying to his mother he does not love her is already an attempt to *mark* the mother who incarnates the totality of maternal otherness that still dominates Krebs. The interplay of marking and masking, saying the truth and lying, is the starting point of a process of rupture Hemingway has already put in place while writing his story, but that he has to repeat and confirm through the writing act. Writing (about) home is generated in between the peremptoriness of *I don't love you*, and the denial implied by *this is not what I meant*.

The omission of home and especially of the mother from most of Hemingway's creative work conveys the affective radicality of the subject's will for rupture, but at the same time omitting one's original home does not mean annihilating it nor being indifferent to it. Just like negation in linguistics and psychoanalysis, omission *is* admission. Omitted (textually), negated (linguistically), denied (psychoanalytically), the maternal figure combined with the complex effects of home is still present as a congested affect to deal with repeatedly through a series of dramatizations that induce the necessary moderation of the death drive and the impulses of cruelty it conveys. Foreign places and cultures offer some sublimative possibilities for the protagonist in quest for a subjective home, far from the original "complicated" one.

Hemingway published in 1935 *The Green Hills of Africa*, a book where he gave voice to his growingly affective and intercultural relation with Eastern Africa, and simultaneously his more and more pronounced rejection of America. It had not been long since he arrived in the Kenyan

wilderness, and yet Hemingway (or his persona) already felt "homesick": "All I wanted to do now was get back to Africa. We had not left it, yet, but when I would wake in the night I would lie, listening, homesick for it already" (76). Now that the safari was nearly over he delivered his thoughts on his homeland in striking words, while expressing his desire for inhabiting the world authentically:

> [...] I would come back to [Africa] where it pleased me to live; to really live. Not just to let my life pass. Our people went to America because that was the place to go then. It had been a good country and we had made a mess of it and I would go, now, somewhere else as we had always had the right to go somewhere else and as we had always gone. Now I would go somewhere else. (274–275)

Hemingway would write nearly twenty years later in the posthumously published book on his second safari to Africa, *True at First Light*, that he "[...] had been a fool not to have stayed on in Africa and instead had gone back to America [in 1933] where [he] had killed [his] homesickness for Africa in different ways" (162). His involvement in the Spanish Civil War and, later, in World War II, and his move to and permanent residence in Cuba, barred him for more than two decades from going back "home" to Africa. When he finally did in 1953–1954 he became a member of one of the local Kamba tribes he admired so much, thus carrying Africa in his heart forever. Hemingway's rejection of home is accordingly cultural (or ideological) and affective. The love of this finally found and founded subjective home is based upon the dolorous ruins of the objective original one, negated, rejected, and, on the whole, *omitted*.

The awareness of being a stranger to one's own family and homeland, which came up progressively in the 1930s, surges sharply and bitterly through Robert Jordan's monologue in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a novel that stages the fraternity of humans beyond frontiers—geographical and ideological—as announced by its very title from John Donne's "Meditation XVII." The only real family recognized by Jordan are his brothers in arms now fighting the Fascists: "But you have no house and no courtyard in your no-house, he thought. You have no family but a

brother who goes to battle tomorrow and you won nothing but the wind and the sun and an empty belly'' (376). The final triad brings together a sense of immanence combined with a will for transcendence or holistic awareness. The body and its pressures are fundamental elements in the awareness of oneself as an existing subject, but only after recognizing oneself through a global perception of belonging. This is probably what Harry's ultimate ''flight'' toward the top of Kilimanjaro refers to at the end of Hemingway's second ''African'' story, ''The Snows of Kilimanjaro'' (1936). Hemingway mentions the Kilimanjaro in the epigraphic introduction of the story as ''the House of God.'' The meaning of this cultural reference comes full circle in the final masterful sylleptic passage on the flight of Harry's soul toward the top of the Kilimanjaro, which appears to him ''as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun'' (78).

The flight, as experienced in and through Harry's dying mind, is therefore a return to the original ''House.'' Harry is about to inhabit the only House fit for his powerful and absolute desire of connectedness, now appropriated through the East-African culture he has already made a home of. That belief and the desire of Africa at large are made alive and communicable—as much as Hemingway's poetics of suggestion allows—in the fiction, which has become the writer's real home, as ''wide'' as the international geography and transnational culture he both created and enjoyed. A home which is, just like the ''square top of the Kilimanjaro'' (78), extensive and inclusive enough to embrace the whole world, and complex enough to sublimate the maternal sovereign.

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Chapter 6

American Wanderings and Anchorings: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald's Nomadic Artistic Home

Elisabeth Bouzonviller

Chapter
6

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Hotel Child," the Schwartzes intend to go "home" after "three years" during which they have "lived in hotels—in Paris, Florence, St Raphael, Como, Vichy, La Baule, Lucerne, Baden-Baden and Biarritz" (*Short Stories* 606). When the story opens, Fifi rebels: "Mother wants to take me back to America, but I'm not going" (607). Eventually, after various mishaps, the end of the story remains uncertain about the family's geographical intentions, "'We've got to go back and testify, and we'll stay a few months anyhow,'" Fifi says (615). In their own way, the Fitzgeralds were hotel children themselves. They never owned a house and wandered between the United States and Europe, even as far as North Africa, between St Paul, New York, Montgomery and Hollywood, without settling anywhere, only stopping for a few days or months at hotels, rented apartments and villas. Their fictional works stage the turbulence of urban life and the transatlantic exchanges of the age, while their life narratives and Zelda's paintings are also proof of a restless existence within a world that Henry James had predicted would become as small as "an orange,"[93] that Henry Adams believed was caught in an entropy process[94] and that Marc Augé describes today as "shrinking,"[95] thus echoing James's foresight.

[93] "Who shall say, at the rate things are going, what is to be 'near' home in the future and what is to be far from it? [...] The globe is fast **shrinking**, for the imagination, to the size of an orange that can be played with; the hurry to and fro over its surface is that of ants when you turn up a stone [...]" (James 650). My emphasis.

[94] Chapter XXXIV of *The Education of Henry Adams* is entitled "A Law of Acceleration" (489–498) and concludes: "The movement from unity into multiplicity, between 1200 and 1900, was unbroken in sequence, and rapid in acceleration" (Adams 498).

[95] My translation from the original French "rétrécissement de la planète" (Augé 44).

In their artistic production, the Fitzgeralds captured this nomadism which had replaced homes by "non-places," those spaces of transience lacking roots and anthropological meaning according to Augé (100). In their own specific ways, through their works, they made a home out of the fleeting places they passed through during their national and international travels. Relying on some of Scott's and Zelda's self-narratives and her paintings (Lanahan), I intend to explore how they both expressed the wandering quality of their lives and the dynamism of modernity, or even "supermodernity," which is the term used by Augé (100), but I shall underline that their homelessness led to contrasting explorations and representations. While Scott's texts keep recalling his American rootedness despite restlessness, Zelda's works appear as an exploration of a much more intimate space behind an impersonal façade.

1. Hotel Children

On April 3rd, 1920 the Fitzgeralds married in the Rectory of St Patrick's Cathedral in New York, away from their homes and parents. Zelda's three sisters attended the wedding, but her parents had not made the trip from Montgomery and neither had Scott's from St Paul. No party or wedding lunch concluded the day, and they honeymooned at the Biltmore Hotel at 43rd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, from which they were eventually expelled for disturbing other guests. Then they settled at the Commodore, two blocks away on 42nd Street. In "'Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number——'," first published in *Esquire* in May-June 1934, Zelda chronologically recalls the hotels where they stayed from 1920 to 1933 (419-431). Thus, her article opens on "the Biltmore paneled luxe" and "[t]he faded rose corridors of the Commodore [which] end in subways and subterranean metropolises" (419). For the newlyweds, this transitory accommodation rhymes with ceaseless movements as Zelda overlooks the rooms themselves and focuses on "the sway of the first bobbed heads," the "corridors," "the revolving door" and bustling underground passages (419). As Bruccoli notices, "[d]uring the spring of 1920, Fitzgerald tried to be a writer in the confusion of hotel rooms" (*Some Sort* 163). "After a month of New York hotel life [they] were in need of a place where he

could work without distractions and she could swim and amuse herself'' (*Some Sort* 167), therefore they bought a Marmon touring car—''a broken Marmon,'' says Zelda (''Show'' 419). In May 1920, they moved to Westport, Connecticut, where they rented the Wakeman House on Compo Road near the Long Island Sound until October when they moved back to New York City ''at 38 West 59th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues, [...] near the Plaza Hotel, from which they could order meals'' (*Some Sort* 169). This was the beginning of their wandering married life, which included travelling back and fro within the United States, but also staying almost six years abroad, mainly in Paris and on the French Riviera. Indeed, they first sailed to Europe on May 3rd, 1921 to be back home in July. Their second crossing was in early May 1924 with a return in December 1926. They were in Paris again in April 1928 and back in the United States on October 7th. Eventually, they left one last time for Europe in March 1929 with a sad return due to Zelda's health condition on September 15th, 1931. Despite its American enrooting, since they regularly went back to their families and stayed in various American towns and cities for professional or personal reasons, this type of nomadic life and their lack of regular earnings prevented them from ever acquiring a home of their own.

Their ceaseless moving from hotels to other hotels, but also from rented houses to temporary apartments, is consequently a feature of their self-narratives which often turn out to be travelers' narratives. In 1924, Scott published several of these which all emphasize their restlessness and lack of stability. *The Cruise of the Rolling Junk*, written earlier but published in installments in *Motor* in February, March and April 1924, recalls their 1,200-mile road trip from Westport to Montgomery in July 1920. ''How to Live on $ 36,000 a Year,'' published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on April 5th, 1924 and followed on September 20th by ''How to live on Practically Nothing a Year,'' tackles the topic of money and traveling, and how they decided to move to France in early May of that same year.

At the beginning of *The Cruise of the Rolling Junk*, the young couple are elated to be on the move and leave behind ''the dullness and the tears and disillusion of all the stationary world'' (33). During this trip, the Fitzgeralds' Marmon, transformed into a fictional Expenso, becomes their dilapidated, although cherished, home while they stop on the way

at various welcoming or shabby hotels. It is not surprising therefore that the gag photos accompanying the publication should show the car as a place fit for sleep; indeed, it really becomes their home and the main topic of this road trip narrative whereas hotels are always difficult to reach, sometimes unappealing to the travelers, and never described in detail nor photographed. At the beginning of the journey, lost in the middle of nowhere, they even imagine humorously that they can "camp out," "turn the car upside down and [...] sleep under it" (35), but it is eventually at the Nassau Inn, in Princeton, that they find "a room and a bath" thanks to Louie, the barman remembered from college days (36). Then, "'Dr. Jones's Guide Book for Autoists'" (38) and the poor mechanical state of the Rolling Junk combine to bring about numerous mishaps. Stranded in Philadelphia with a flat tire, they are at the mercy of a dubious-looking garage owner and feel they "ha[ve] lived [there] for many days, that the Rolling Junk ha[s] become a house and [will] roll no longer and that [they] had best settle down and advertise for a cook and a maid" (42). Once in Washington, after another misadventure with a wheel, they fear being rejected at the fashionable Willard hotel for their dirty looks. In a suspense scene relying on the contrast between the filthy and exhausted amateur mechanic and the impassive hotel clerk, the text strikes a definitely humorous note at the expense of the former, who falters and imagines the worst whereas, against all odds, the latter eventually registers them without flinching:

> He raised his head and regarded me dispassionately. It forced my face into a conciliatory smirk. Then he beckoned a bell-boy and we made ready for forcible expulsion. But when he spoke his words were like a benediction.
> 'Twenty-one twenty-seven' he said without hysteria. 'Garage one block down and one over. They'll take any kind of a car.' (50)

To an optimistic, home-sick Zelda, the Willard does not have much to dwell upon except its heralding the South, with "electric fans [blowing] the smell of peaches and hot biscuit and the cindery aroma of traveling salesmen," as recalled in "'Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number——'" (419).

Later on, in Richmond, they rely on the same introductory words as at the Willard to obtain "a room with a bath" and unexpectedly get "the bridal suite—an immense and imponderable affair as melancholy as a manufacturer's tomb" (*Cruise* 60). The funeral vocabulary is only a prelude to a macabre discovery as they find "a piece of tongue" on the carpet in another very comic scene involving the hilarious contrasted reactions of the outraged guests and the unemotional, deferential staff (60–61). Zelda's memory of the place avoids the gruesome detail but conjures up a gothic dimension redolent of romantic entrapment as she describes the hotel "marble stair and long unopened rooms and marble statues of the gods lost somewhere in its echoing cells" ("Show" 419).

As they progress further South, hotel accommodation worsens, for example in Clarksville, Virginia, at the Dominion Hotel, where the travelers are "not nearly so well housed as the Rolling Junk" with no food and no hot water for their baths (*Cruise* 64). Next, about the O. Henry Hotel in Greensboro, North Carolina, both narrators comment respectively on the muddy red water in the tub and Scott notices "the elaborate hostelry" which leads Zelda to hide her traveler's knickerbockers under a skirt for propriety (*Cruise* 71, "Show" 419). Then, before arriving in Montgomery, they both record one more hotel night at Athens, Georgia (*Cruise* 82, "Show" 420). There, they are given "a salesman's display room—a huge chamber with sample tables and a business-like air, haunted by the pleasant ghosts of lazy southern commerce" (*Cruise* 82), and they leave "at dawn" ("Show" 420) to the dismay of a "drowsy clerk" and a "drowsy watchman" (*Cruise* 83).

Along the way, all these hotels are always very briefly described, several recalling the anonymous salesmen who have stayed there on their way toward professional destinations, and nobody being met apart from the furtive staff. Through an accumulation process, Zelda's long list of hotels paradoxically manages to fuse them together despite its precision and operates a kind of anonymization effect. In the end, the travelers never manage to inhabit those places; they just stop over for the night and establish no links either with people or the environment, they do not even describe their being there, they come and go while thinking of the outside, which is to them a sign of the remoteness of the South at

first and then of its exciting, progressive approach. The South seems to get closer as they see girls dressed in organdy ("Show" 420) or muslin (*Cruise* 82), and as they notice African Americans in the fields and towns. The red water of the tub is also a sign that they are close to Zelda's home with its typically southern, red-earthed ground. Clearly those hotels are "non-places," as termed by Augé, although the anthropologist applied his neologism to a much later period. The travelers go through them, like the preceding salesmen, and those overnight stopovers conjure up no sense of belonging. They are dots on a route map, left behind as soon as they are reached. They herald Augé's "supermodernity" of speed and excess with its anonymous places devoid of roots, identity and human relationships (100). In that respect, it is meaningful to notice that in her *Esquire* publication, Zelda locates the O. Henry Hotel in Greensville, South Carolina whereas, it was actually located in Greensboro, North Carolina, two hundred miles north ("Show" 419). This mix-up precisely recalls the mistake made by Scott as regards the place where he had asked his bank to wire them money. In Washington, he had optimistically asked for the money to be sent to Greenville, South Carolina (*Cruise* 55), whereas their tired vehicle takes them only to Greensboro, North Carolina, at the end of Part Two of the narrative (70-71). Hence, the reason for Part Three to open with: "Greenville or starve!" (73). Zelda's mistake when she wrote her article fourteen years later is not surprising and confirms the anonymous quality of those hotels, "non-places" that fade away from memory since they are part of a series of places lacking enrooting and personal connections. Her taxonomic narrative gives an impression of fleeting time and places, emphasizing more than ever those "non-places" where the characters only pass through without meeting anyone and noticing anything striking, although they sometimes stay at fashionable, luxury hotels. This is precisely in keeping with Augé's theory that "[t]he traveler's space [is …] the archetype of *non-places*."[96] For the year 1921, for example, Zelda rapidly mentions a succession of hotels in London, Paris, Venice, Florence, Rome and eventually St Paul, and never dwells on the exciting exoticism and singularity of these European landmarks, thus

[96] My translation from the original French "L'espace du voyageur serait […] l'archétype du non-lieu" (107).

conjuring up blasé travelers. It is meaningful that for their second stay in London she should comment on "the waiter [who] didn't care whether [they] left or not, and [who] was [their] only contact" ("Show" 420). The description of this sort of "non-place," despite its architectural beauty, emphasizes the travelers' isolation and recalls Augé's claim that "[t]he space of non-places creates neither singular identities, nor relationships, but only solitude and similitude."[97]

This anonymity echoes the deserted cubistic paintings Zelda made of New York and Paris in the 1940's. Those places where they had lived are shown through their famous architectural landmarks but seem devoid of inhabitants, only objects are sometimes left in the foreground, bearing witness to previous human presence but not particularly to meetings. They are a proof of the solitude and emptiness of the great, beautiful cities that Edward Hopper would tackle in his own way although his cityscapes include lonely human figures. As Kathryn Seidel, Alexis and Alvin Wang notice about Zelda's *Time Square*, for example, "Dark, turbulent clouds are in the sky, tall imposing buildings replace people, all of which suggest the coldness and dehumanizing quality of the modern" (148). The same human emptiness and solitude are to be found in the Parisian landscapes of *Notre Dame Cathedral, Place de l'Opera*, *The Pantheon and Luxembourg Gardens* (Lanahan 57-59), people being at best replaced by empty cars and carriages or abandoned personal objects. Thus, in both the Fitzgeralds' self-narratives and in Zelda's paintings, the travelers are restless, life is a ceaseless succession of journeys, and hotels are necessary stops that leave only very elusive memories as opposed to a chosen, cared-for home, which they actually never had in real life nor managed to imagine in their art works.

"How to Live on $ 36,000 a Year" sets the tone of this nomadic life spent in hotels. It starts with a narrator who feels confident about his financial means due to his hotel choice, although he has actually no money left: "[...] why, it was impossible that I should be poor! I was living at the best hotel in New York!" (89). After a trip to Europe and the birth

[97] My translation from the original French "L'espace du non-lieu ne crée ni identité singulière, ni relation, mais solitude et similitude" (Augé 130).

of their child, he explains that they have moved "to a town about fifteen miles from New York, where [they have] rented a house for $300 a month" (89); it was actually located at 6 Gateway Drive, Great Neck, Long Island. He then dreams of buying a house once his play[98] has succeeded (91–92), which unfortunately fails and leads him ironically to imagine "[getting] in touch with a reliable poorhouse where [they] could hire a room and bath for nothing a week" (94). Eventually, synthetizing his account books and his wife's household record for the year 1923, he produces a list of expenses which, among other things, includes "Automobile," "Taxis," "Trips," and "Hotel bills" (96), the obvious signs of their wandering life.

In "How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year," the family is off to France to "economize" (105). They stop over in Paris to find a nurse for their child; their hotel room is the place fit for interviews where their daughter rings the bells which call "the different *fonctionnaires* of the hotel" (102). Fitzgerald's hesitant French seems here to point out the lack of charm of the place with its staff performing tasks as if they were a military routine. In Zelda's essay, this anonymous Parisian hotel becomes "The Deux Mondes, [which] ended about a blue abysmal court outside [their] window," the only other memory of the place being the erroneous use of the "bidet" as a tub for their daughter ("Show" 420). For Scott, it is a place to run away from, due to the invasion of "familiar faces" as "[e]very morning a new boatload of Americans poured into the boulevards" ("How to Live on Practically" 104). As if anything that reminded the travelers of home was to be avoided, like a mere linguistic familiarity, they flee to the South in haste. Once in Hyères, on the Riviera, in his comic awkward French, Scott tries to find "le best hotel dans le town" (105) and is the victim of the local crooks in his quest for a "modern hotel, with a bath" (105), which recalls his accommodation requirements during the "cruise of the Rolling Junk." They eventually briefly settle at the "Hôtel du Jardin," the main quality of which being its rate of less than 8 dollars a day for the four of them (106). This was probably the Grimm's Park Hotel, as remembered more accurately by Zelda in her article

[98] This is an allusion to the failure of *The Vegetable*, written in 1922 and staged in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1923 (*Some Sort* 195–197, 219–220).

("Show" 421), although both writers do not dwell on its architectural interest, but rather remember its unusual dish of goat meat ("Show" 421, "How to Live on Practically" 110). In any case, they do not intend to stay for they want to rent a villa. Thus, they first acquire a car ("How to Live on Practically" 108), which recalls their Rolling Junk, and eventually manage to find a house ("How to Live on Practically" 112), trying to leave behind their hotel experience of transience and impermanence. In real life, they settled at Villa Marie at Valescure, a residential area of Saint Raphaël, which they mistake, in the essay, for a long-sought home: "Within an hour we had seen our home, a clean cool villa set in a large garden on a hill above town. It was what we had been looking for all along" ("How to Live on Practically" 112).

2. A National Perspective

Despite the restlessness and lack of stable rooting betrayed by these autobiographical texts, Scott's life narratives never forget the American scene. In *Travelers, Immigrants, Inmates: Essays in Estrangement*, Frances Bartkowski compares the traveler's experience with that of children entering life and language. According to her, travelling places one in a situation of dependence and vulnerability, like children entering social life. Thus, focusing on journeys and their narrations, she claims that "[...] this becoming-a-child-again holds the potential for jubilation as much as it does for humiliation at any given moment; this vacillation tells readers much about the relation of writers to their own sense of authority and identity." She adds that "[t]he demands placed upon the subject in situation of unfamiliarity and dislocation produce a scene in which the struggle for identity comes more clearly into view as both necessary and also mistaken" (XIX). In Scott's case, traveling and writing about it bring about the national issue and a questioning of his own American identity. Whether in the United States or Europe, he always writes about America and his relationship with it. As shown by Bartkowski's pattern, traveling involves issues of power and identity; thus, his personal journeys become spaces for national reflections despite the lack of geographical rooting in one specific home.

In *The Cruise of the Rolling Junk*, the hotels are neglected by the narrative, they become "non-places," but on the other hand, the American scene of the South is at the heart of the text, which moves from the private to the national. The personal details of the trip are erased or modified, but the journey from the North to the South does unveil national history with the looming presence of slavery and the Civil War with their lasting scars. Even if humor offers comic relief, the ghosts of the dead soldiers in southern marshes as well as those of the slaves cannot be ignored. Although Fitzgerald's "prejudices reflect rather than transcend the prejudices of his day," and "[n]owhere in the essay is there any reflection on the history of American race relations," as Kirk Curnutt says in his review of the latest publication of the text (159), the curse of the South is there to be felt. As Toni Morrison demonstrates in *Playing in the Dark*, "National literatures, like writers, get along the best way they can, and with what they can. Yet they do seem to end up describing and inscribing what is really on the national mind" (14), and in this case, beyond the amusing mishaps of the travelers, the racial issue and the fears it involves are always at stake, whether it be through the description of the "niggery streets of Baltimore" (Cruise 44) or of an isolated attack on the road by a man wearing a "black mask" (Cruise 58), or through the evocation of a crowded store in a "sinister" town named Niggerfoot (Cruise 59).

In the other two self-narratives, Scott offers a generational approach followed by a transatlantic perspective. In "How to Live on $ 36,000 a Year," he is the fashionable writer of the Roaring Twenties, whose success reflects the dynamism of the Jazz Age during which America asserted its new international, cultural, and economic power. The insolence and self-centeredness of the young couple echoes a period of American isolationism and booming economic success. In this self-narrative as in the other two, the car owned by the narrator is typical of the age which celebrated the access to transportation for millions of Americans thanks to Henry Ford's Model T, which was made available due to mass production, advertising and easy bank loans.

In "How to live on Practically Nothing a Year," the couple's hotels are of little importance; what matters is the European experience which had become an American feature of the age as evidenced by the New

York steamship agent, at the beginning of the essay, who keeps seeing customers keen on a transatlantic crossing (101). Even if, at the end of the essay, the protagonists intend to stay "another year" (116) and avoid "hang[ing] around big hotels" (113) and "patronizing tourist hotels" (114), unlike their compatriots who "won't lead a real French life" (113), they remain American and write from an American point of view as they represent a generation of expatriates who recreated an American social life abroad. They embody this generation in quest of pleasure, artistic modernity, and a comfortable life at an excellent rate of exchange, without the constraints of the 18th Amendment and the fundamentalist discourse of the rigorous Bible Belt. In a 1927 interview, Fitzgerald declared: "The best of America drifts to Paris. The American in Paris is the best American. It is more fun for an intelligent person to live in an intelligent country. France has the only two things toward which we drift as we grow older—intelligence and good manners" (*Some Sort* 299). But "How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year" is nevertheless an opportunity to emphasize a certain American superiority at the expense of French inhabitants,[99] whose language and customs are neither described accurately nor understood. Gerald Kennedy argues that settling in France meant an access to "an altogether different class status" (120) for American expatriates like the Fitzgeralds. The narrator boasts that he has "entered fully into the life of the Old World" (114), "made excursions to quaint little out-of-the-way restaurants, with the real French atmosphere" and "short trips to beautiful historic old towns, such as Monte Carlo" (114), in short, "[they]'ve become absolutely French" (113). However, his lack of linguistic skills and his portraying of ridiculous and dishonest French characters lead one to doubt his French immersion, especially as we know the Fitzgeralds were mainly in touch with American friends and artists during their stay and only their daughter Scottie eventually managed to speak French fluently. As pointed out by Kennedy, Scott is good at "satirizing [their] own resistance to the foreign" (120) and this humorous essay is actually teeming with self-mockery.

Focusing on "travel narratives" within the autobiographical genre, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson make the following observation:

[99] See Kennedy 120.

> Subordinating other aspects of the writer's life, they typically chronicle or reconstruct the narrator's experience of displacement, encounter, and travail and his or her observations of the unknown, the foreign, the uncanny. In this way they become occasions for both the reimagining and the misrecognizing of identity (Bartkowski XIX), and for resituating the mobile subject in relation to home and its ideological norms. (284–285)

Undoubtedly, the Fitzgeralds' journeys, whether through the US or overseas, led Scott to reflect about the nation and his own identity as an American. In fact, he never blended with foreign places neither settled anywhere, as his recurring motif of the car and hotels proves. His traveling rather challenged his sense of American belonging and identity and led him to express his feelings about them in restless self-narratives of transience, which heralded the acceleration of the 20th and 21st centuries. Echoing Caren Kaplan who contends that distance may offer "the best perspective on a subject" (36), historian Lucy Moore concludes about the American expatriates of his kind:

> The more insightful among them recognized that, paradoxically, living abroad made it possible to look more clearly at the United States, to better judge and comment on what they had left behind. Their time away actually intensified their Americanness, rather than diluting it, and this became a powerful inspiration for many. Then, too, returning Americans found that they liked being back home—that the familiar had charms more potent than they remembered. (240–241)

3. "[T]he Inmost Me behind Its Veil"[100]

Personal events within an American or European traveling context led Scott to reflect about America itself, whereas we shall see that Zelda's texts function differently. *The Cruise of the Rolling Junk* includes fictional

[100] In his introductory chapter to *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Custom House," Hawthorne mentions an irresistible "autobiographical impulse" but also insists on the possibility to "still keep the inmost Me behind its veil" (1–2).

inventions, but it is written in the first person and mentions Zelda's name as early as the second paragraph. The travelers are repeatedly alluded to as "Zelda," "I" and "we," establishing that way an "autobiographical pact" (Lejeune) with the reader and promising a kind of true-to-life account of the novelist and his wife's journey. Lejeune defines autobiography as "[...] the retrospective prose narrative that someone makes about their own life, when they emphasize mainly their individual life, in particular the story of their personality," which is what the reader feels he/she gets here.[101]

In "How to Live on $ 36,000 a Year," the narrator mentions his "wife" (105) and the essay is again written in the first person by the successful writer whose name is openly mentioned when he imagines, humorously, he might open "a community store known as 'F. Scott Fitzgerald—Fresh meats'" to fight prices on the rise in his neighborhood (91). In "How to Live on Practically Nothing a Year," the narrator refers again to his "wife," and the couple is now accompanied by "the baby" (116), called once "our child" (102). In a passage in direct speech, the "wife" becomes "Mrs Fitzgerald" for the well-mannered nurse (110), a direct identification which is then repeated twice by the narrator to emphasize humorously her irritation with the nurse, her disgust at the French menu and her consequent sudden disappearance: "'Did you ever taste goat's meat, Mrs Fitzgerald?' But Mrs Fitzgerald had never tasted goat's meat and Mrs Fitzgerald had fled" (110). Toward the end of the narrative, more precisely "[i]n the late afternoon of September 1, 1924," the narrator suddenly refers to a "distinguished-looking young man" and "a young lady" with "a small black child" (113). The strangers described in the third person here turn out to be the Fitzgeralds themselves, well-tanned after a wonderful summer by the sea, who imagine they now pass for "two cultured Europeans" (114) whereas they used to be "barbaric Americans" on arrival five months before (114). This amusing shift does not deceive anyone though, as their financial and cultural troubles with the locals betray their fake assimilation (114-115).

[101] My translation from the original French: "[...] le récit rétrospectif en prose que quelqu'un fait de sa propre existence, quand il met l'accent principal sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (*L'Autobiographie* 14).

Thus, in Scott's three texts, there is an obvious autobiographical intent although we know these are reconstructed memories not exactly true to reality, but rather meant to entertain the reader, especially as they all rely on irony and humor. These texts are perhaps closer to Doubrovsky's concept of autofiction, which he defines as "[...] the fiction I have decided, as a writer, to give myself of myself [...]".[102] Scott and Zelda created their fictional selves, which contributed to their public image, a constant preoccupation, as Mellow explains: "The Fitzgeralds had always been public property, adepts at self-advertisement. [...] the ultimate fascination [...] was what masters of invention they became, creating new versions of themselves, putting themselves into their stories, acting out their stories in real life" (XVII, XX). As they were a fashionable couple in the spotlight of American artistic life in 1924, it is not surprising that Scott should have chosen this tone and genre to display their lives and assess their identity by "resituating" themselves "in relation to [their] home" along Smith and Watson's theory about travel narratives (284-285). His autobiographical essays gave a certain image of themselves while at the same time sketching a national picture, which would contribute to his reputation as a writer embodying the spirit of the Jazz Age he claimed to have named (*Some Sort* 199, 368).

But ten years later, after her nervous break-down and a national economic collapse, Zelda's two autobiographical essays "'Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number——'" and "Auction— Model 1934" offer another approach to their busy lives as ceaseless travelers. While the first article lists their hotels and stays, the second one enumerates heterogeneous objects they have accumulated during their restless existence despite their lack of a home to harbor them. In both cases, the taxonomic quality of the texts paradoxically echoes a sense of loss. The accumulation of places and objects jars with the emptiness of the present, the absence of home and the irrecoverable nature of the past.

Unlike Scott, in these essays Zelda never uses the autobiographical "I," and rarely mentions proper names. The travelers are always referred

[102] My translation from the original French: "L'autofiction, c'est la fiction que j'ai décidé en tant qu'écrivain de me donner de moi-même [...]" (87).

to through the anonymous and collective "we," even though the capital F of the title barely conceals the travelers' identity. The pronoun is used repeatedly as in an effort to annihilate individuality. Under the 1920 caption, "'Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number——'" opens with the sentence "We are married" (419). There follows, year by year the description of their hotels, always using the pronoun "we," even to evoke Zelda's pregnancy in 1921 ("we were pregnant" 420), or her health trouble in 1925 ("in the Pyrenees we took a cure for colitis" 423), or Scott's in 1927 ("one of us thought he had appendicitis" 424).[103] Personal descriptions do not depart from this collective approach, as when the narrator says: "one of us wearing a blue hyacinth and the other an ill temper" (423), the latter turning out to be Scott as confirmed by the following use of the pronoun "him" (423). Equally surprising is the vague reference at the end of the 1925 section: "we went to the Roosevelt Hotel in Washington to see one of our mothers" (424). As for their daughter, she is "our child to be born" and eventually "the daughter" (420), but she is never referred to through her first name.

What is emphasized here is a married life at the expense of individuality, and almost an age group existence, as in Annie Ernaux's *Les Années,* which relies on the recurring use of the French terms "nous" and "on" to express a woman's life narrative as part of a generation. Actually, this expresses the lack of individual freedom Zelda enjoyed as a married woman, but above all as a writer. The peculiar publishing circumstances of both her life narratives are, indeed, to be taken into account. Bruccoli specifies that they were "[p]ublished as by F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald], but credited to Zelda in his Ledger" (419, 433). Because she could benefit from Scott's reputation, she often had to publish under his or both their names. It seems that Scott suggested the idea of the hotel essay[104] and by the end of March 1934, she mailed him "a 35-page triple-spaced typescript, without a title" (Fitzgerald, *My Lost City* 301). The typescripts kept at Princeton University and the University of Virginia

[103] See Milford's biography for Scott's appendicitis episode (127).

[104] In a letter dated March 1934 from Craig House, a sanatorium at Beacon, New York, Zelda wrote to Scott: "I have been working on the hotels, and will mail them as soon as they're finished" (Bryer and Barks 178).

demonstrate that Scott chose the title, introduced the sentence "We are married" and "shifted to first-person pronoun throughout" the text whereas Zelda had alternately used the second-person pronoun "you" and the first-name "Scott" (Fitzgerald 2014, 302).[105] James West argues that Scott considered "'Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number——'" as "a true collaboration" (Fitzgerald 2014, 302), but the plural first-pronoun choice, be it her own or not, remains proof of constraining marital and literary circumstances for her.

Zelda's health condition collapsed completely in 1930; that dreadful year is not mentioned in "'Show Mr. and Mrs. F. to Number——,'" but the ellipsis is not complete as the 1929 section includes the Algerian trip supposed to relax her in February 1930. The detached mode of expression reaches a climax when the dilapidated description of one of the visited towns conjures up Zelda's state: "The world crumbled to pieces in Biskra" (428). With the sentence "Then Switzerland and another life" (428), the pronoun "we" has completely disappeared, as Zelda becomes the inmate of clinics rather than hotels, and the couple no longer share a common daily life. The pronoun "we" comes back in the 1931 section to recall the Annecy outing (429) and a few other European stops before the last Atlantic crossing, a few escapes from solitary clinic existence and an attempt at recovery. Back home in Montgomery in the Fall of 1931, the narrator chooses distance and detachment again by avoiding names and possessive adjectives to suggest her father's final days when she writes: "There was sickness in the family and the house was full of nurses so we stayed at the big new elaborate Jefferson Davis" (430). In these private recollections, the painful intimate is hidden behind the collective and impersonal, however it is not annihilated. In a way, it is felt even more acutely through ellipses and silence. In this article, the general impression remains one of endless movement, multiplicity, speed and the unavoidable passing of time, and if strong emotions are kept at bay, they nevertheless resonate sharply.

[105] In a letter from May 15th, 1934 to his editor Maxwell Perkins, Scott referred to Zelda's two autobiographical pieces as follows: "There are also a couple of articles in which Zelda and I collaborated—idea, editing and padding being mine and most of the writing being hers—[...]" (Bryer and Kuehl 198).

In "Auction— Model 1934," which comes immediately after the previously mentioned article as indicated by its date, the travelers want to believe they have reached a destination, "a perfect house" (433) according to their friends. In real life, for the nomadic Fitzgeralds, it was 1307 Park Avenue in Baltimore:

> The idea was to stay there [...] then we wouldn't have to pack any more [...]. We could travel again in a suitcase, and not be harassed by bills from a storage warehouse. [...] maybe we'd like the new place so well that we'd never move any more but just sit behind the wisteria and watch the rhododendron disintegrate beneath the heat of June, July, and August, and the fanfare of the dogwood over the hills. (433)

A desire for permanence is felt but the botanical perspective amounts to a cliché that already heralds self-delusion. With the benefit of hindsight, we know, indeed, that their hopes would not be fulfilled, home escaping them once more and ceaseless movement, together or apart, remaining their lot till the end.

Imagining they will settle there, they "[open] the packing cases" containing their belongings accumulated over fifteen years of wandering life. Once again, the pronoun "we" is used repeatedly, without any differentiation between the two married subjects, and Scottie is "the daughter" (436). But this essay is less anonymous than the other, as well-known friends are mentioned like Mencken (435), Nathan (436), Mac Arthur or Hemingway (438). Scott's roots are conjured up through the allusion to his illustrious ancestor and name-giver Francis Scott Key (438), although "the family" (434) remains vague when their unfulfilled desire of a life of permanence for the restless couple is suggested through their gift of literature and science symbols to ornate a stable home: "Two bronze busts of Shakespeare and Galileo with which the family had hoped to anchor us to permanent abodes" (434). Last of all, Scott is even referred to nominally as the purchaser of the narrator's Patou suit after "the marriage ceremony" (436), which is incidentally not personalized by the possessive adjective "our": "it seemed very odd to be charging things to Scott Fitzgerald" (436-437). The acquisition seems here to symbolize

the transition from girl to wife, without the expected emotional effect that should have accompanied the transformation.

Whereas Scott's travel narratives transcend the personal to convey the history of the nation and the spirit of the age, Zelda's hide the personal behind what appears, at first, to be an extreme detachment, but this apparent lack of sensitivity points out a deep personal quest which remains linked with restrictive publishing circumstances. If traveling brings about wonderings about power and identity, as explained previously, Zelda's taxonomic and unemotional travel narratives may be perceived as an original artistic gesture dealing with these issues. The repeated "we" of her essays, whether it be her choice or not, and the accumulation of places and objects might stand for an attempt at finding her voice as an artist and independent woman in the very description of the constraints she endured. As excellently demonstrated in Linda Wagner-Martin's biography of Zelda,

> [i]nscribed and reinscribed in conventional social roles, the Fitzgeralds (Scott as breadwinning husband and Zelda as supportive wife) had never been so unconventional as they had liked to imagine. Zelda's role as wife had included being Scottie's mother, being the person who ran the household, and being the beautiful woman known as "Mrs. Scott Fitzgerald." Once she stopped being only a wifely appendage, however, she became an object of criticism. (107)

As Bartkowski notices, "The traveler's identity is constructed by a remobilization of psychic shifts in the face of cultural dislocations in which, as an adult, the writer once again comes to terms with questions of language and power, authority and selfhood" (25). Thus, in this quest for identity, the particular unemotional style of Zelda's travel narratives recalls the trope of "coming to voice" of the 1970s and 1980s. Smith and Watson explain that "'[c]oming to voice' meant articulating an emergent subjectivity outside or against the repressive constraints of asymmetrical gender relationships" (85), women being called upon "to participate in consciousness-raising and express feelings that had been repressed in the patriarchally organized home" (84). In Zelda's apparently impersonal

travel narratives and deserted cityscapes, we might very well hear this muffled female voice arising.

"Auction— Model 1934" was Zelda's last publication. Discouraged from writing by her husband and most of her doctors, she then focused mainly on her painting. After the urban cityscapes of the places where she had lived but never settled, she eventually turned to natural and biblical topics, which express a permanence never experienced in her traveler's life. As for Scott, after his humorous 1924 narratives, his later darker autobiographical pieces[106] keep linking his personal life with the wider national scene, as both followed the same ascending line and violent collapse.

Thus, the Fitzgeralds' geographical instability reflected the American spirit of the age and heralded the following decades of speed and excess, the advent of "supermodernity" (Augé 42–43, 55, 100). Moving from hotels to hotels led them to write about their restlessness and evoke the "non-places" of their wandering lives, but they tackled this issue differently, as they perceived and experienced the topics of authority and identity differently. While Scott's travel narratives open on a national reflection, Zelda's works conceal the intimate behind deceptive detachment while she probably aimed at finding a voice of her own. But in both cases, they made of the "non-places" of their journeys their privileged artistic space, finding there the home they never owned in real life.

[106] "Echoes of the Jazz Age" (1931), the *Crack-Up* series (1936), "Early Success" (1937) and "My Lost City" (1945).

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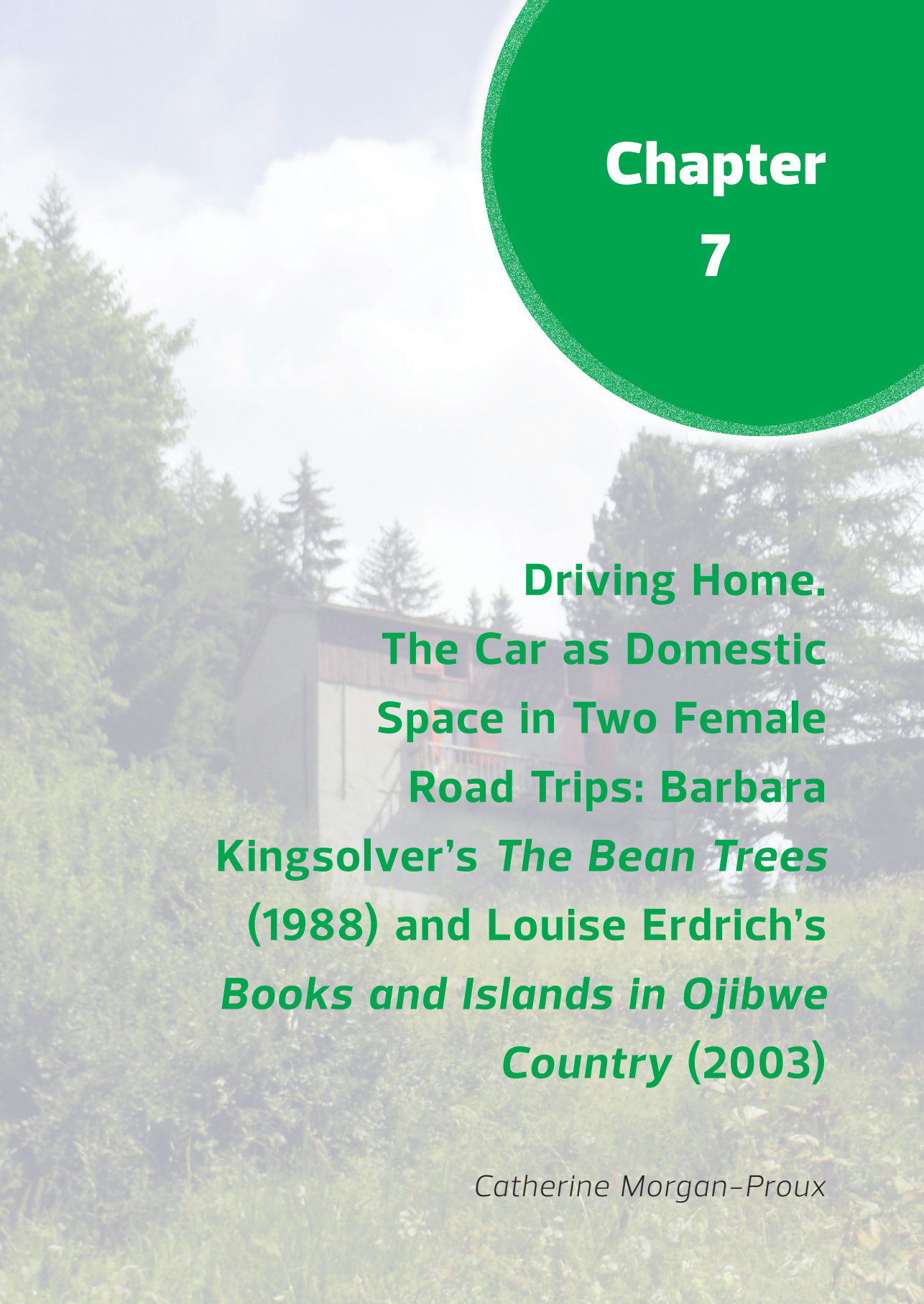

Chapter 7

Driving Home. The Car as Domestic Space in Two Female Road Trips: Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* (1988) and Louise Erdrich's *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2003)

Catherine Morgan-Proux

Chapter
7

Domestic space and car space are typically considered antithetical. In our collective imagination, "leaving" and "wandering" in pursuit of character-building adventure usually involves leaving domestic space well behind. This antinomy has been at the heart of literary representation of travel, certainly of Western voyagers, since its origins. From Homer's *Odyssey* to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the highway, commonly described as open and liberating, is positioned against "home," which is traditionally considered as anchored and stable. It is often the impulse to roam *away* from the constraints and routine of home, in a heroic quest for identity, that creates the driving force of the road trip narrative.

This paper will focus on two road trip narratives by women. Barbara Kingsolver's novel *The Bean Trees* (1988) and Louise Erdrich's text *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2003) which is part memoir, part travel journal. The aim of this paper is not only to give a female perspective on that most masculine of literary genres, the road trip narrative, but to demonstrate how these writers revise the home versus highway binary.[107] Female protagonists, too, have been drawn to the road "as a way out of the ideology of separate spheres" (Ganser 153), even if the open road is often experienced by women as a site of peril rather than an adventurous

[107] For a feminist geography of space and its implications for the travel narrative, see Linda McDowell's work: "Travel. Even the idea of travel, challenges the spatial association between home and women that has been so important in structuring the social construction of femininity in the West and western social theories and institutional practices" (206).

playground.[108] We shall point out ways in which Kingsolver and Erdrich re-invent this binary, blurring the social boundaries that have defined women as home keepers. Interestingly, it is their re-imagining of "home" that is an essential component of the process.

Ronald Primeau's *Romance of the Road: the literature of the American Highway* (1996), which identifies the key characteristics and defining moments of the genre, is a useful starting point for our understanding of the position of home in road narratives. From the outset, Primeau is clear about the iconic status of the 20th century American road trip and what it signifies for the heroic road traveller. The road has been elevated, as Primeau found in his study, to a "sacred space" (1) where the quest for identity can be enacted. "Getting away is a chance at a new start, a special time to discover self and country" (Primeau 1). According to Primeau, the vastness of the American landscape, combined with the exhilaration of motion, enables the traveller to move in a kind of fantasy world, unanchored by the constraints of reality. In his words, it is a kind of "free-floating state" (6). Importantly, it is a state where the traveller can shape a destiny outside the constraints of conventional domestic life. Home, on the other hand, is associated with "ordinary events and everyday delegations" (Primeau 6). It is where the hero returns after his extraordinary adventure and where he can tell his story.

However, there is a growing body of feminist critical theory (Brigham 2015; Clarke 2007; Enevold 2004; Ganser 2006) which points out that road trip narratives by women do not necessarily follow this pattern of rupture and re-entry into home life. Following a reading of the road narrative genre which takes into account the gendering of space, it would appear that women leave home but home does not necessarily leave them. Could it be said that the domestic plot, with its rituals, its spaces, its inhabitants, does, in some instances, continue to shape the female travel narrative plot in surprising ways? In a very thorough survey of women's road trips in fiction,[109] Deborah Clarke suggests that this could be so. Clarke posits

[108] The hugely successful road movie *Thelma and Louise* (1991) directed by Ridley Scott, with screenplay by Callie Khouri, illustrated that women on the road do not escape the policing power of the state.

[109] In *Driving Women. Fiction and Automobile Culture in 20th Century America*, Clarke studies 25 women writers including Zora Neale Hurston, Barbara Kingsolver, Toni Morrison, Joyce Carol Oates, Flannery O'Connor, Gertrude Stein and Edith Wharton.

that female drivers do not necessarily escape attachments, domesticity or responsibility in a "free-floating state" (Primeau 6). Domesticity, and its ensuing constraints, or "everyday delegations" (Primeau 6) sometimes come along with them in the form of passengers or family members to be taken care of. Women at the wheel, in both fictional and life writing road narratives, revise previous representations of home and hearth. In fact, according to Clarke, they invite the reader to reconsider the concept of home as a fixed space, and to imagine it rather as a series of domestic experiences of the everyday where women can reappropriate the travel narrative and gain agency. This is where the car plays a key role in opening up the possibility of "reconfiguring women's place as both situated and mobile, both domestic and independent" (Clarke 116). Our project is to examine how this concept functions in the two texts under discussion. We have selected these two texts in an attempt to cross the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction with the hypothesis that Clarke's critical framework can be applied to both forms of literature.

Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* (1988) is an American road narrative telling the story of a transformational road trip from rural Kentucky to Tucson, Arizona made by young Taylor Greer who is fiercely fleeing the constraints of her domestic life. For her, home is the desultory nowhere place of Pittman County. Its emptiness, which is referred to as "the pits" (4), has hollowed out the dead-end streets of a community where the only perspective is to be "hogtied to a future as a tobacco farmer's wife" (4), to borrow Taylor's words. She adds, "Mama always said barefoot and pregnant was not my style. She knew" (4). It is a vision of domestic confinement that Taylor herself flatly refuses, preferring the possibilities of the open road. She is, as the opening chapter title announces, "The One to Get Away" (14) and her getaway car is a "'55 Volkswagen bug with no window to speak of" (14). However, even if the mental space created by departure is thrilling, the physical space provides no easy ride. The landscape of her road trip cannot be considered an empty screen for her to project her fantasies on, when everyday constraints, both technical and familial, catch up with her. Not only is her car barely functional, threatening to break down at any moment, but she is soon burdened, as we shall see, by the kind of family responsibility that she wanted so adamantly to avoid.

Interestingly for us, her journey takes her through multiple homes and households in a way that would corroborate Clarke's theory of women's road trips as a series of domestic experiences. Firstly, let us consider the automobile itself as a home. It is certainly a getaway car but it also functions as an intimacy generating space, connecting Taylor to other women in ways that echo mother-daughter bonding. From the outset, it is the place where Taylor becomes abruptly, and rather randomly, a mother. Totally unexpectedly, while Taylor has pulled up in a parking lot, a stranger places a toddler in the car, nestling her in the passenger seat as if she were a part of the car: "she pushed it gently back into the seat, trying to make it belong there" (25). With no papers or even a name to identify her, the only clue to her origin is her Native American appearance. Taylor responds with initial incredulity but then with resourcefulness and a sense of responsibility, quickly finding shelter for her and her new travelling companion in another temporary home, the Broken Arrow Motel in Oklahoma. It is run by the nurturing Mrs Hoge whom Taylor persuades to let her and the little girl stay for several weeks despite Taylor's lack of income. This motel-keeper not only provides a roof but also a re-invented home, becoming a kind of surrogate grandmother to the little girl.

It is worth pointing out that the name and the location of the motel add another layer of nuance to this composite theme of home, reminding us that space has the potential to function as a lens that can reveal racial as well as gendered constructs. Broken Arrow, Oklahoma is an identified site on the Trail of Tears where the Creek people of the Cherokee Nation were forced to settle after having been evicted from their homeland in Alabama in 1838 by the United States Government. Within the upbeat travel narrative of Taylor and her unexpected "daughter," erupts a grave reminder of the historical, enforced displacements of Native Americans, a travel reality that had little to do with freedom to roam and everything to do with dislocation and boundaries. It would appear that in this novel the little foundling, found *en route* in the empty space of a car park, is at the intersection of questions about belonging and home. For our argument, this episode of finding a home for little "Turtle" as she becomes to be known, constitutes one of the "domestic experiences" that structures this female road trip, compelling the young woman at the wheel to meditate on what it means to put down roots.

Another "home" resourcefully located by this novice mother is the garage further on down the road where Taylor ends up taking her broken down car. It is run by Mattie, a skilled mechanic mother figure who unquestioningly welcomes this oddball family by providing sustenance and safety. Mattie runs a kind of car refuge where automobiles are not only repaired but where the old, broken ones end up in the nearest thing to a car haven. The garage spills out onto a garden where vegetation and vehicles intertwine in a pastoral idyll. Here, the Machine does not interrupt or disfigure the Garden, according to Leo Marx's paradigm, but instead offers structure and support. Flowers grow out of a Thunderbird car. CB antennas are shaped as a frame for tomato plants and Taylor anticipates seeing turnips sprouting in the car she leaves there for a repair job. This is where the "bean trees" of the title are growing. When Mattie explains that the plants are from her Chinese neighbour who brought the original seeds over in 1907, Taylor pictures the rampant, overgrown bean plants which blur the boundaries between these two neighbours' homes, "marching right over the Pacific Ocean, starting from somebody's garden and ending up right here" (63). It is a striking image of organic migration that turns displacement into fruitful connection. This allusion to a neighbour's unruly bean plants hints at a global travel narrative, which connects Mattie's garden/garage to the American story of migration and diaspora. If we have included this episode in Mattie's garden/garage as one of a series of "domestic experiences" on the road, it is because this episode seems to locate Mattie's place as an example of home-making in a rather unconventional way, beyond societal norms. Not only is it a site of female bonding and care-giving, it presents itself as a locus for cultivating encounters and empowering prospects for freedom.

As it turns out, Mattie's garage is more than a metaphor. It is literally a safe house, a place where undocumented Central American refugees can find temporary shelter from the road and its dangers of being exposed to the threat of state policing. Taylor is sensitive to the vulnerability of the refugees she meets there, and, like Mattie, her surrogate mother, she feels compelled to protect them too. Deep connections of friendship, even love, are made between her and a young married Guatemalan couple. In a rather satisfying denouement to the story, Taylor takes them on a kind

of reverse road trip back to Oklahoma where, thanks to her courage and her resourcefulness, all three characters find the security and freedom of a re-invented home.

Louise Erdrich's *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* (2003) offers a version of the mother/daughter road trip narrative which resonates with Kingsolver's novel. It is a piece of life-writing that charts a circular road trip from Minneapolis to Ontario, Canada and is a thoughtful meditation on departure, destination, and ancestral heritage. Interestingly for us, this short but eloquent *carnet de voyage* reveals the car as a domestic space that helps us explore the idea of home as a series of "domestic experiences." The narrative voice is that of Erdrich herself who, unlike the fictional character Taylor, is an experienced road tripper. In fact, this trip reminds her of many previous car journeys and some of our pleasure in reading her text lies in its tender layering of memory and musing. Like Taylor, she has a young daughter with her whose presence is fundamental to the experience of the journey. In fact, the motivation for Erdrich's road trip is to take her daughter to the lakes and islands of Southern Ontario, the site of her Ojibwe origins which continue to nourish Erdrich's sense of self and belonging. Here, the conventional adventure quest gives way to a search for ancestral connections, with Erdrich carrying some of her domestic load with her on the road thanks to her trusty minivan.

Let us consider Erdrich's relationship to her car as it is important in our understanding of how she formulates her road trip. Firstly, she describes the car as a reliable member of the family whose shared experience of being on the road has developed into a particular type of intimacy. The machine becomes a "she," inspiring affection, confidence, and connection:

> I am connected to and believe in my 1995 blue Windstar Minivan. We have history. I know exactly how to pack this vehicle and feel its personality is with me as I fill the crevices between, under, behind the blue cloth seats. The blue Windstar is sisterly, accommodating, personable. And a gallant hauler. (11)

Not only is the car presented as a familiar road trip companion, it also represents a mobile domestic space. Her vehicle is a living room in the

sense that it is room for ordinary, everyday living, for sleeping, eating and playing. Erdrich tells us that when the seats are down she can put a comfortable futon inside. Her daughter amuses herself in the car for long stretches of time, the sounds of her plastic, electronic toys signaling she has not yet nodded off. Her car is a domestic space in the way that it serves as a nursery for primary life skills, such as language acquisition. Indeed, Erdrich learns the Ojibwe language in the car thanks to the collection of cassettes that accompany her, not just on this particular trip but, during her everyday domestic journeys. She recalls being: "[i]n the isolation of my car as I dropped off and picked up children, brought groceries, navigated tangled New England roads" (82). Erdrich describes it an exceedingly difficult language, but one she does not consider foreign. It is more like a language of the heart that she embraces in a kind of homecoming gesture or as a new-born remembering the sounds of the mother's voice in the womb: "I love it. The sound comforts me. I feel as though all along this language was waiting for me with kindness" (84). This powerful impression of the car as a comforting space of language acquisition and maternal connection reinforces the idea of the journey as a domestic experience. This reading of the text correlates with Kingsolver's novel. Both stories incorporate the notion of home as an essential component of the road trip, rather than a constraint from which the protagonist needs to break free in order for the road trip to take place.

Books and Islands takes us on a journey to a succession of homes inhabited by Erdrich as if the writing of this journey of serial domestic experiences is an invitation to examine what home means to her. The house where she lives with her four daughters resists the notion of home as confinement, conveying instead profusion and unrestricted growth, rather like Mattie's yard. Inhabited by her growing family and an "overflow" (9) of books, it is surrounded, but not contained by trees to which she is emotionally connected. Like the Chinese bean trees of Kingsolver's novel, these trees also stand as a symbol of connection: they are transmitted and nurtured by women. Erdrich has named each one of them: "Tiny Offshoot of the Great Wahpeton Maple grows alongside.... I grew it from a seedling that took root in one of my mother's flowerpots" (7-8).

Being on the road is a source of joy to Erdrich the writer and Erdrich the mother. Her travels stimulate her sense of observation and her creativity at the same time including the everyday. In her words, "I've been filming everything I've described all along, as well as somehow brandishing a pen and notebook, all while nursing. One gets used to it" (28). As a member of the Ojibwe community, there is also a fascination with driving into her cultural past: the highway she drives along follows the trail of an old Ojibwe trade route, heading north. The homing frame is intimately connected to the route itself which retraces the itinerary of her ancestors. Erdrich reminds us that they carried with them both tangible and intangible markers of their culture: "Songs travelled this route, and ceremonies, as well as pelts and guns. Medicines, knowledge, sacred shells and secular ideas travelled this road" (20). This reflexion of the relationship between roots and routes and the practice of displacement as constitutive of cultural meanings ascribed to home is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say for our study of domestic experiences on the road, this collective and personal past, recalled by Erdrich, finds a poetic echo in the present-day trip. She evokes the "dreamy blankness" (28) of being in the here and now that comes with traveling with her daughter. Erdrich overturns the conventional association of family ties as a constraint, particularly the demanding dependency of a toddler, and relishes them as a particularly precious type of anchoring. Here is her description of falling asleep with her daughter while holding onto her foot:

> As I'm drifting away, I feel sorry for anyone else who is not falling asleep this way, holding onto her baby's foot. The world is calm and clear. I wish for nothing. I am not nervous about the future. Her toes curl around my fingers. I could even stop writing books. (65)

This emotional plenitude is matched by Erdrich's joy in revisiting the homeland of her Ojibwe ancestors, the motivation for her road trip. She visits the thousand-year-old rock paintings there and carries back these precious markers of her homeland in the form of photographs. Once home, she contemplates these visual reminders, re-living the trip and finding meaning in the sense of attachment it provided her with:

> I am looking at photographs I took of the paintings, I am afflicted with confusing nostalgia. It is a place that has gripped me. I feel a growing love. Partly it is that I know it through my baby and through her namesake, but I also had ancestors who lived there generations ago. (80)

Equally cherished, is the home Erdrich has created in the form of a bookstore: Birchbark Books in Minneapolis. She devotes the final pages of her travel journal to this home of her creation, describing the tangible signs that connect her permanently to it: books, of course, but also armchairs, music, wood. We are reminded that birch bark was traditionally used by Native Americans for making not only wigwams and canoes but also for scrolls and maps which gives a particular resonance to this ode to the written page. "[O]ur store is pure comfort," (137) she writes. "It is a home for people who love books" (137). Her homecoming is particularly comforting, generating as it does, the revelation that her bookstore is another island where she will never be alone.

As a conclusion, we have found that the literary road trips by the women in the texts under study give layered and stimulating versions of the relationship between home and the highway. Cars, parking lots, motels, garages and the road itself are sites where domestic acts can be played out, where individuals and families are cared for, language is acquired, where creativity is stirred and a sense of belonging and lineage can emerge. The intimacy that comes with being in a car is not just an individual one. The collective story too can come alive when the trajectory of journey retraces past trails. These routes may have become invisible but, in these travel narratives, they are subtly revealed and serve as careful reminders that the narrative of road travel cannot be reduced to a version of the road trip as escape from home. Our readings of these women's road narratives support Deborah Clarke's argument, that home and highway are not opposing binaries. They blur, rather, into a *homescape* that is both space and experience, affirming valuable truths about women's journeys and the value of connection.

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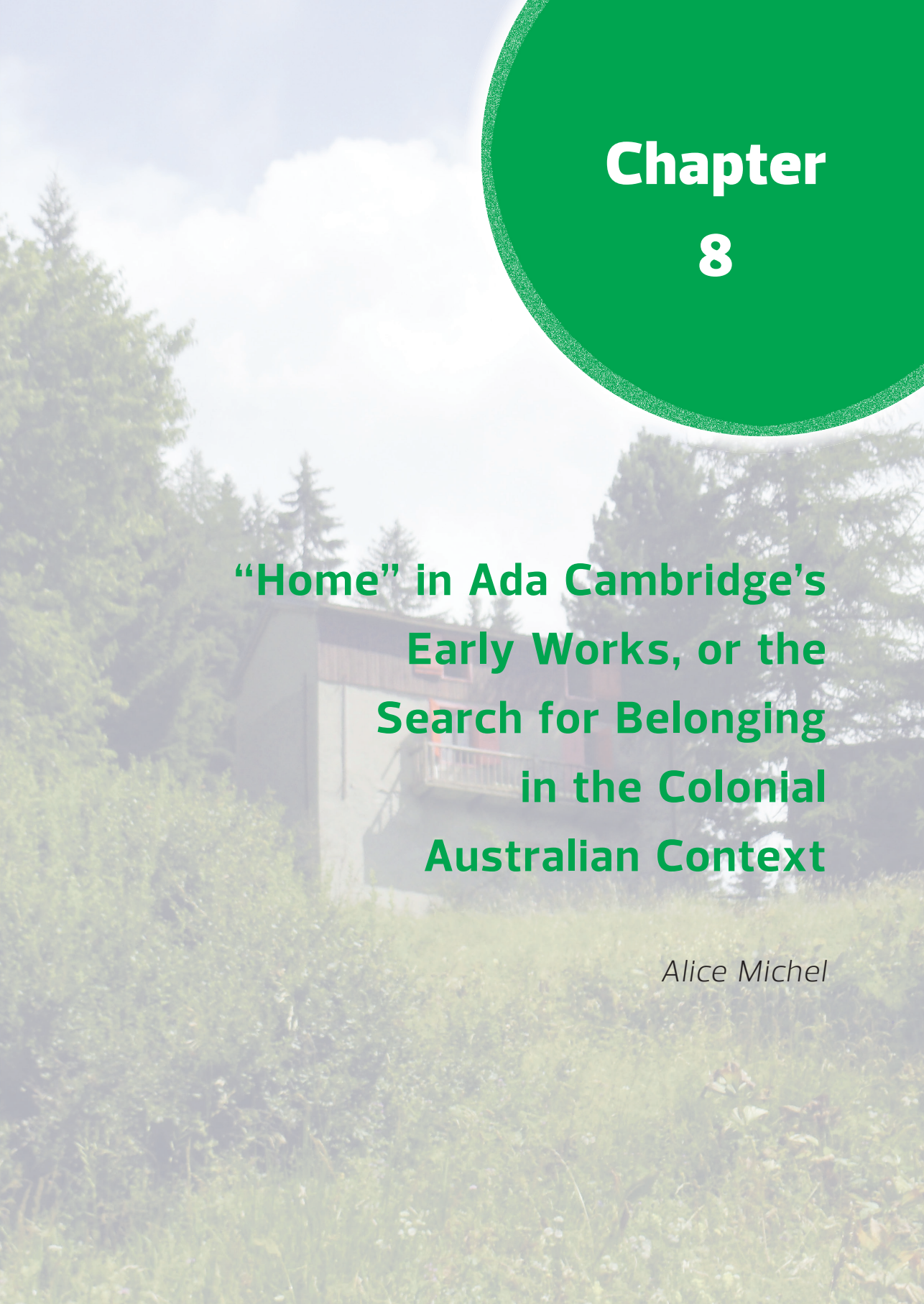

Chapter 8

“Home” in Ada Cambridge’s Early Works, or the Search for Belonging in the Colonial Australian Context

Alice Michel

Chapter
8

"The homesickness of those whose homes are on the other side of the world becomes a chronic complaint": it is thus that Ada Cambridge begins her first fiction written in Australia ("Three Years' Ago" 133). In her search for a home, Ada Cambridge knew all too well what she was writing about. A poet and a novelist, born in 1844 in England, she settled in Melbourne, in the colony of Victoria, in 1870, where she died in 1926. First feeling as an exile, "homesick practically all the time" (*Thirty Years* 1), she nonetheless later claimed that Australia was her "true home" (Letter, 1911, n.p.).

In Australia, she published regularly in the local press, at first using only her initials, "A.C.," to sign her serial novels, probably in order to avoid trouble for her missionary husband, as what she wrote was anti-conformist enough. Some of her favourite themes were indeed marriage, women's rights, social equality, class norms and institutional religion. Throughout her life, Cambridge was a prolific writer who was praised by her contemporaries, notably by literary critics, such as Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland: "Ada Cambridge is entitled to the first place amongst the novelists of her sex in Australia, [...] by reason of the quality of her work, and the varied distinctiveness of her several stories" (Turner and Sutherland 87). In the 1880s-90s, she was a major literary figure in Australia, writing in the Australian press as well as for the British and American book markets. However, at the turn of the

century, disinterest in Australian colonial women writers grew as their novels were often disregarded as tackling feminine, domestic concerns, away from the nationalist, masculinist trend that began to be asserted in the 1890s. In the 1980s, colonial women writers, including Cambridge, started to be reassessed by feminist critics. However, her novels remain neglected in Australian literary history, despite offering an alternative view on women's role and status in the construction of the Australian identity. More specifically, Cambridge's texts share a common concern for the search for a home in the colonial environment, which by definition disrupted the very meaning of "home" for this English-born writer settling in Victoria. Her production reflects on the polysemy of the term "home," referring in turn to England, Australia, and to the domestic environment. Indeed, the polysemous definition of "home" has to be read in the context of the social and literary upheavals of the second half of the nineteenth century, which led to a gradual change in the meaning of "home" in Australian narratives. The notion could in turn refer to Britain or to Australia, either to the place where the settlers came from or the place where they were now living. However, as human geography has shown, place is not only a geographical location, but "a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world" (Cresswell 16) and is linked to concepts of movement and (im)mobility. For Yi-Fu Tuan, "place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan 6). Home, which is at the heart of this paper, also articulates a tension between movement and suspension, which translates as a tension between displacement, belonging, and elusiveness. This notion is particularly relevant to nineteenth-century colonial context; as Tamara S. Wagner points out,

> [...] colonial settler fiction formed part of nineteenth-century transoceanic literary interchanges and genre developments that radiated through English-language writing across the Pacific as well the Atlantic. [...] These narratives articulated anxieties about home, how it could be transported or replicated, and how domestic values as probably the most definitional aspect of Victorian culture would bear up elsewhere. (Wagner 2)

The notion of home thus also had a domestic meaning as household. As such, home was a structural theme in domestic fiction, that is in narratives that focus on household and family concerns, as well as on the way these concerns were impacted by a voyage across the world.

The question of belonging, whether geographical, cultural or familial, was a continual concern of Ada Cambridge's work, from her very first Australian narratives onwards. As we will see, her first narratives written in Australia, notably her first tales and her first serial novel, tackle several themes that would become recurrent in the rest of her production, such as her characters' attachment to England and/or Australia. Ada Cambridge began to publish fiction in *The Australasian* in 1871 and her first literary steps in Australia took the form of a series of seven short tales—what she describes as "trifling little tales" in her memoirs *Thirty Years in Australia* (86). Despite their outwardly light and conventional features, her first narratives focusing on love dilemmas depict the experience of the characters' exile, whether their departure was voluntary or not. They are not altogether short stories, as these texts are closer in form to chapters of a serial novel, even if they remain structurally independent. These short tales are indeed thematically and chronologically linked; together, they form a single plot, foreshadowing the genre of the serial novel which Cambridge would later turn to. These seven narratives were published in the space of two years, three to six months apart, in the journal sections entitled "The Sketcher" and "The Novelist." These seven tales contain "Three Years' Ago" (July 1871), "Our New Chum" (October 1871), "Charlie" (January 1872), "Charlie's Wife" (May 1872), "Bachelor Troubles" (August 1872), "The History of Six Hours" (February 1873) and "At Sea" (June 1873). The same protagonists can be found in all of them and they include the same narrator, Jim Morris, an English vicar in the colony of Victoria. This article also focuses on Ada Cambridge's first serial novel, "Up the Murray," which was published a few years later in *The Australasian*, from March 27 to July 17, 1875, at the rate of one to two chapters every two issues. Neglected by critics, the novel, focusing on the three sisters Dorothy, Theresa and Patty, requires to be briefly summarised in order to best understand what is at stake. When the serial novel opens, Patty has settled in Australia and the heroine, Dorothy, is about to leave England to visit her in Melbourne.

The family members that Dorothy joins in Australia try to find her a good match, despite her opposition. Protection, financial issues and the age of the two potential suitors, Mr. Willis and Mr. Jocelyn, are criteria to be taken into account. The novel shows how women in Australia, outnumbered by men, could be the object of financial interest for a ruined settler, when Mr. Jocelyn decides to marry a wealthy woman instead. As for Dorothy, she is presented as completely detached from such financial considerations despite her humble origins, and after initial disappointment in her first suitor, she gradually comes to love Mr. Willis. Her sister Theresa rejoices at the news that Dorothy has not married for financial reasons, but cannot help but think that it is good luck that the three sisters eventually found good—wealthy—matches.

Neither this first serial novel, nor the series of seven narratives, have been re-published since the 1870s, and they have rarely attracted the critics' attention maybe because of their apparent triviality. The fictional narratives studied in this chapter therefore remain unpublished in book form today, even though they deserve being made more widely accessible, read and studied, as they shed light on a prominent yet forgotten colonial Australian woman writer. Furthermore, these narratives, being the first written by Cambridge when she had just settled in Australia, prefigure the rest of Cambridge's fiction, notably her concern for the difficulty of recreating a place that could be called "home" on the other side of the world, thus conveying the complexity of the exile's experience in relation to home.

This article aims to analyse the meaning of "home" in Ada Cambridge's colonial first narratives written in Australia, presented above, in the light of her memoirs of her first years spent in Victoria, *Thirty Years in Australia*, in order to show the inherent tension in narratives that attempt to construct a fictional representation of "home" in a context in which its very meaning was shifting, elusive, constantly changing. If the colonial home remains an elusive notion, the experience of the exile remains an in-between one, even if fiction can be used to bridge the gap between the two cultural referents of home, Britain and Australia. Yet the disruption of home is also familial and marital, all the more so for colonial women, which threatens the attempt at finding both a cultural and familial place of belonging.

1. The Elusive Colonial Home

> I knew nothing whatever of Australia when I rashly consented to marry a young man who had irrevocably bound himself to go and live there, and, moreover, to go within three months of the day on which the wild idea occurred to me. (*Thirty Years* 1)

Ada Cambridge's life changed dramatically in 1870 when, aged twenty-six, she married the Anglican clergyman George Frederick Cross in Ely, Cambridgeshire. Cross was appointed to an Australian parish on their wedding day, with the departure due three months later. It is with the memory of this turning point, this uprooting, that Cambridge starts the first chapter of her autobiography. *Thirty Years in Australia,* which contains the recollections of her first Australian years, was published first as a serial narrative in 1902 in *The Empire Review*, a monthly British journal focusing on the ties between Britain and its colonies, thus highlighting that Cambridge's work also aimed at reflecting on her experience for a British readership. The memoirs would be published less than a year later in book form in London. For Cambridge, the initial—almost initiatory—departure for Australia seemed like a leap into the unknown. Having no idea what life in Australia was like, she tried to fill in the gaps in her knowledge by looking for information in local libraries. Her source of information turned out to be a novel, Henry Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859). Cambridge doubted the lack of consistency with the Australian reality, but she turned to the story to feed her imagination: "*Geoffrey Hamlyn* was my sheet anchor, but did not seem to be supported by the scraps of prosaic history obtainable; we could not verify those charming homes and social customs" (*Thirty Years* 1). The reader's expectations needed confrontation with Australia. Young and confident, she was preparing for a life in which the unknown would be her ever-present fellow traveller. The young couple had promised to return to England five years later to visit their families—yet the return journey would not happen for financial reasons.

After a seventy-seven-day voyage from Plymouth, the description of their arrival in Australia is marked by a strong feeling of exile:

> We, strangers in a strange land, sat apart and watched these favoured ones—listened to their callings back and forth over the ship's side, beheld their embraces at the gangway, their excited interviews in the cuddy, their gay departures into the night and the unknown, which in nearly every case swallowed them for ever as far as we were concerned. (*Thirty Years* 15)

The couple has not yet set foot on Australian ground that a feeling of solitude takes hold of them. The description of the other passengers' reunions with their friends and families reinforces their own feeling of exclusion, all the more so as Cambridge and her husband have no one to meet in Australia. Yet, the isolation makes room for excitement when the couple discovers Melbourne, subjugated as they are by a city that no book they have previously read has done justice to. Melbourne, worthy of its nickname—Marvellous Melbourne—is indeed "marvellous" for them: "No description that we had read or heard of, even from our fellow-passengers whose homes were there, had prepared us for the wonder that Melbourne was to us" (*Thirty Years* 18). More precisely, "Marvellous Melbourne" is the nickname given to the city after the gold rush in Victoria in the 1850s. The modernity of Melbourne, contrasting with the descriptions of a savage Australia that Ada Cambridge had read, is a striking feature for Cambridge when she arrives in Melbourne:

> As I remember the metropolis then, and see it now, I am not conscious of any striking general change, although, of course, the changes in detail are innumerable. It was a greater city for its age thirty years ago than it is today, great as it is today. I lately read in some English magazine the statement that tree-stumps—likewise, if I mistake not, kangaroos—were features of Collins Street 'twenty-five years ago'. I can answer for it that in 1870 it was excellently paved and macadamised, thronged with its waggonette-cabs, omnibuses, and private carriages—a perfectly good and proper street, except for its open drainage gutters [...] (*Thirty Years* 18)

On the comparison between places in the colonial context, Bill Ashcroft, Graham Griffiths and Gareth Griffiths point out that "Victorian Britain had exulted in the disparateness of its empire, but in representing that empire predominantly as a site of the exotic, of adventure and exploitation, it had defined it as a contrastive element within the British world-view" (18). In this light, Ada Cambridge's perception of Melbourne relies on the colonial binary opposition between England and Australia, while her description portrays Melbourne as a place of culture and a reminder of home in Britain. Eight days later, the couple leaves the city on their first trip across rural Australia, into the bush. Cambridge defines the bush in a plain manner for her British readership who might not have been familiar with the term, reminding them of the specificities of Australia compared to Britain:

> When I speak of the Bush, it is understood that I do not mean a place of bushes. The term, with us, is equivalent to "the country"—the country generally, though particularly and originally its uncultivated parts. (*Thirty Years* 72)

Through the use of the comparison between the Australian "bush" and the British "country," Ada Cambridge relates to her British readers, but on the other hand, by using the pronoun "us," thus echoing the colonial opposition "Us Vs. Them" but subverting it as the "us" does not refer to the British motherland but to the Australian colony, Cambridge defines herself as belonging to Australia. Cambridge would spend her first Australian years in the Victorian bush, retaining a strong feeling of attachment for this environment even after moving back to the city.

Nonetheless, the description that Cambridge makes in retrospect of her thirty years spent in Australia is not to be considered as a conclusive source of information on her colonial experience and her writing activity. As underlined by the authors of her biography, Margaret Bradstock and Louise Wakeling, the autobiography, far from reflecting "the absolute 'truth' of a life" can be no more than a reconstruction of often "conflicting realities" (xvi). Yet Cambridge's narrative enables us to grasp the tension between her faithfulness to her home England—in the sense of "native"

England—and her loyalty to her adoptive austral land. From the very beginning of her memoirs, the reader is indeed struck by the prevalence of the term "home." The very structure of the autobiography reflects this concern for the instability of the referent of "home," as the chapters follow each other at the pace of the different places where Cambridge settled. Each new location is presented without any geographical reference but only through a list repeating the word "home," thereby insisting on its plural and shifting nature: "The First Home" (chapter IV), "The Second Home" (chapter VI), "The Third Home" (chapter VII), "The Fourth Home" (chapter X), etc., up to "The Eighth Home" (chapter XIX), the last chapter before the conclusion. Despite the ordinal and repetitive structure of the list, in which the titles, similarly constructed and articulated in a successive manner, are therefore dependent on one another, the accumulation of references to the different homes one after the other rather conveys an image of disjunction. Each time the couple moves out is a new start and an additional uprooting. The towns—the small parishes around Melbourne—quoted below are only referred to using their initials in Cambridge's autobiography ("From here to W—is not distance as the crow flies"), reinforcing the instability of the home which lacks a geographical anchorage (*Thirty Years* 25).[110] Cambridge started to settle in her first Australian home in Wangaratta, where the couple lived from 1870 to 1872, including moving out in the same parish. It would be followed by a high number of new locations, the couple successively settling in the mostly rural parishes of Yackandandah (from 1872 to 1874), Ballan (until 1877), Coleraine (until 1883), Sandhurst, present-day Bendigo (until 1885), Beechworth (until 1893), then Williamstown near Melbourne (until 1912). As such, the bush thus became Cambridge's main home. The fragmentation of the landmarks, due to the fleeting aspect of the successive homes, was nonetheless in part compensated by the unity that the writer found in the bush, which became her new "world": "The Bush 'township' became my world" (*Thirty Years* 72). The common point between the successive homes was the discovery of life in the bush, which occupied Ada Cambridge's first Australian weeks, and the

[110] Ada Cambridge's biographer, Audrey Tate, has identified the full name of these locations (170).

bush would become a main setting in her first fictional narratives. This focus on the Bush as the epitome of the Australian way of life reminds us of the nationalist, masculinist trend which developed at the end of the nineteenth century, led notably by the *Bulletin* writer, including Henry Lawson. Yet it is interesting to see the way Ada Cambridge's narratives offer another perspective on the bush, foregrounding the domestic realm rather than the notions of wilderness and mateship.

The term "home," lacking any precise geographical reference in the structure of *Thirty Years in Australia*, thus refers to the connotation of the term as a private space in which an individual lives, attends to his or her personal activities, and can feel safe. In that sense, "home" refers to the household, a protective place for the family, away from the worries of the public sphere, according to the Victorian notion of the gendered separation of the spheres notably emphasised by John Ruskin: "This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division." According to this representation of the Victorian ideal of femininity, a woman had to take care of the household and the proper organisation of domestic tasks, while also embodying a moral force against the evils of society. The tight link forged between women and the household in part explains the importance of this theme in novels characterised as domestic, mainly written by women, and whose main events correspond to activities and concerns belonging to the private sphere.

The other very interesting meaning of the term "home" is that of the geo-cultural area which an individual is tied to. This meaning is prevalent in the novels of the colonial period, *i.e.* in novels belonging to a period of unprecedented emigration and global exchanges.[111] The meaning of "home" thus goes beyond the domestic sphere, referring to one's geographical and cultural place of belonging. For a British settler living in Australia, "home" could thus refer in turns to the Old Continent and the Australian colonies. In the first case, the term then implied "home-country,"

[111] The three most important groups of immigrants in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century were the English, the Irish, and the Scottish. In 1854, there were about 100 000 English immigrants in the colony of Victoria. In 1871, there were about 100 400 Irish immigrants in Victoria. One out of four inhabitants in Victoria was Irish. The Scots were 36 000 in 1854, 60 700 in 1861—the highest number up to this day ("History of immigration from England").

the original birthplace of the settlers. In the second case, it referred to their adoptive land, that is the place where they had settled. The fleeting nature of the referent of "home," in its geo-cultural connotation, underlines the fact that this word rather refers to an imagined place than to a strict geographical location. The term thus suggests the intersection of the private and the public, of the individual and the community (George 11-12). "Home" connotes a mental picture often associated with an emotional representation and the fictional aspect is consequently inherent to this notion, itself recurrent in literary narratives (George 11).[112] Home thus remains a polysemous notion, mirroring the experience of the British settler in Australia, that of the exile in-between geographical and cultural landmarks.

2. The In-Betweenness of Exile

Ada Cambridge's texts reveal her homesickness and nostalgia for her native England, but they also demonstrate a gradual adaptation to the Australian colonies. Indeed, in the absence of any possibility of physically going back and forth between England and Australia, Cambridge moves back and forth between these two points of reference in her fiction, to make sense of the in-between experience of the exile. In a context in which former cultural landmarks have been left behind while new ones are not determined yet, the search for a stable home drives the characters to go back and forth between England and Australia. For instance, in the serial tales, Jim goes twice to Australia while Colonel Devereux, an Englishman who has come to visit him, also makes the return trip. Another instance is found in the serial novel "Up the Murray," in which the heroine Dorothy leaves England for Victoria, consequently faced with the gradual process of familiarisation with her new environment. When she arrives in Melbourne, England and the colony are first constructed as opposed, as shown in the dialogue between Dorothy and her stepbrother Heriot:

[112] Rosemary Marangoly George relies on Nancy Armstrong's statement in *Desire and Domestic Fiction:a Political History of the Novel:* "[the] most powerful household is the one we carry around in our heads" (Armstrong 251). George adds that the mental image is also important in our understanding of what makes "home," so much so that most people are, according to her, able to make a list of the criteria that make "a good home" in their own culture.

> "How do you like the look of the country?" he asked her, for the sake of saying something, and to get a good view of her face.
> "Very, very much," she replied, regarding the ugly brick and mortar prospect around her. "I knew I should."
> "That's right. You know it's rather the fashion with you new people to turn up your noses at the young country, because it doesn't happen to be as old as its mother. I'm glad you don't." ("Up the Murray" 453)

Dorothy's elusive commentary in the form of an antiphrasis suggests a more than mitigated enthusiasm for what she has so far encountered in the colony, while Heriot's answer underlines the new settler's rejection of a colony perceived as "Other" as well as "younger" than native England. The story "Charlie" (January 1872), from the same series, offers another example of this colonial hierarchisation: when Jim, the first-person narrator, meets again with Charlie, his former Oxford classmate who has also become a vicar in Victoria, he underlines the contrast that he sees between the British upper-class education that Charlie has received and his new life in the colony: "There was a sunny atmosphere of wealth and prosperity and noble breeding about him, that could never have associated itself with a thought of his colonial life" ("Charlie" 37). The adjective "colonial" is pejoratively used, as it is also in "Our New Chum" (October 1871), in which the English Colonel Devereux despises the colonials, that is to say those who were born in Australia—"colonial born and bred" ("Our New Chum" 486). The use of the adjective "colonial" connoting a cultural inferiority, commonplace in the colonial context, was a source of debate in the press, as shown in this article published in the newspaper *The Brisbane Courier* on May 16th, 1898, which starts by recalling this widespread idea:

> It has been said of the colonial, born and bred in Australia, that he has no respect for history, traditions, and antiquities. All things and all people that are not up-to-date and immaculately modern are relegated by them to the class of "have beens" to the uninteresting past, to a fossil era. (Glennie 6)

The representation of the imperialist hierarchisation between the "old" and the "new" is also a regular feature of Australian nineteenth-century fiction, as shown in the novel *Policy and Passion* (1881), written by another major yet long-dismissed woman writer, Rosa Praed. In this novel, the character of Honoria Longleat thinks that to be considered "colonial" is demeaning:

> "Do not call me a colonial," said Honoria, with pretty petulance. "When you have lived longer in Australia you will know that you could not pay a young lady a worse compliment." [...] "To be *colonial* is to talk Australian slang; to be badly dressed, vulgar, everything that is abominable." (Praed 8)

Honoria firmly rejects this colonial label, associating it to a type of behaviour deemed socially and culturally inferior. The colonial binary opposition "Them Vs. Us" is thus subverted since the Anglo-Australian becomes part of "Them," as the Indigenous other would be, while the British subject belongs to "Us." Likewise, in Ada Cambridge's novel *In Two Years' Time* (1879), the British cousin of the Australian heroine Kitty is surprised to discover that Kitty, despite being a "colonial," has good taste and perfect manners:

> "How *very* nice looking Kitty is [...]. She doesn't look the least colonial, uncle, that is what surprises us so much. Mamma says she cannot understand it. We thought she'd be—well, a little shy and awkward—a little uncomfortable in society—that sort of thing." (*In Two Years' Time* 186)

This is evidence of a discourse based on difference and spread by the imperial power which frequently represented the British settlers in the colonies as inferior, reaffirming the supposed superiority of the British imperial centre (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 194). In "Bachelor Troubles" (August 1872), from the series of seven tales, the adjective "colonial" is also used in a negative manner when Jim describes his house as paradoxically not being a place deserving the name of home: "They

[i.e. the tiny rooms] were uninviting, common-place, and colonial. The house no longer looked like a home" (261). Being colonial prevents the house from being homely and the use of the adjective "colonial" is associated with Jim's impossibility to feel "at home." Jim's point of reference remains England, which is the object of his nostalgic thoughts, preventing him from building a new referent for home in the colonies.

To define and to look for a new home in the Victorian colony is a central theme in the seven tales, in which the process of feeling at home includes the appreciation and evaluation of the Australian landscape. For instance, in "Up the Murray," the narrator takes good care to underline the beauty of Australian nature and notably of "the beautiful Australian twilight" (517). As the narrator points out,

> [p]eople who are in the habit of depreciating the colony—not consciously prejudiced, perhaps, but looking generally upon the underside of things—have made up their minds that we have no twilight. [...] But the "glory is equal" to an impartial mind. Nature seems to have rubbed down her colours for each fair picture with the same free hand, but to have diluted them a little more in the one case than the other [...]. (517)

In Australia, the scene is compared to a "divine transfiguration" in which the metaphorical description of the sunset as a painting tends to erase the social and cultural hierarchy established between England and its colony, in favour of a comparison on poetic and aesthetic grounds that metaphorically unite the two worlds ("Up the Murray" 517).

In her memoirs, Cambridge also refers to the impact of the Australian nature on her mind, and among the unforgettable Australian recollections, she mentions the Victorian sunrises:

> That lake was the region of romance to me. The sunrises out of its mists and shimmers, the moonbeams on its breast at night, that I used to step out upon the terrace-like verandah to feast upon—they are pictures of memory that can never fade. (*Thirty Years* 65)

In this romantic perspective, the sight offered by nature enables the viewer to reflect upon herself in a place of rest, away from the concerns of society. Moreover, a visual, artistic metaphor is used again to convey the impact that nature has on her marvelled mind. The second volume of Cambridge's memoirs, *The Retrospect*, published in 1912, demonstrates the same type of attachment both to England and Australia, in which homesickness and love for her new environment are constantly mingled. The first chapter of her memoirs, entitled "Coming Home," with "home" referring in this case to her native England, starts with the nostalgia felt by the writer during the thirty-eight years that she spent in Australia between 1870 and 1908:

> For about seven-eighths of that long time in Australia, while succeeding very well in making the best of things, I was never without a subconscious sense of exile, a chronic nostalgia, that could hardly bear the sight of a homeward-bound ship. (*The Retrospect* 11)

The term "exile" conveys the strength of the uprooting; yet, having returned to England, the writer becomes aware of the beauties of Australia that homesickness prevented her from appreciating: "Australia is a land of plenty to all her people, high and low, but we forget it until we go away from her. Then we know" (*The Retrospect* 33). Exile thus enables the reconfiguration of the writer's perception of home, when she is away from her original home.

Last but not least, the oscillation between England and Australia can also be found in the different places represented in her first novels. *My Guardian: A Story of the Fen Country*, the novel published after the serial "Up the Murray," takes place in England from beginning to end, in the Fens region in the east of England, and focuses on a rising love story between the heroine Daisy, an orphan, and her guardian Jack Stafford. The novel was first published in serial form in England, in the *Cassell's Family Magazine* from 1876 to 1877, before being published in book form in London the following year. Contrary to "Up the Murray," its target readership must have been British. The references to Australia are rare, and the novel does not seem to be targeting a specific British

readership that would be looking for exotic references and information on the far-away land that Australia represented. This way of negotiating a change that was simultaneously geographical, cultural and social, *i.e.* the departure for the colonies, is very much present in Cambridge's first narratives, which also reveals quite a lot about the writer's own situation as a new settler in Victoria. This concern remains a recurring one in her following novels. For instance, in the novel *Materfamilias* (1898), written two decades later, the interaction between England and the Australian colonies is a central theme, as is the construction of the family home. The word "home" is also one of the most used in the novel, appearing seventy-six times, which highlights Cambridge's constant concern for this concept.[113] Likewise, in "The Perversity of Human Nature," the heroine Alexandra Hay is homesick for her native England:

> What she really wanted was to look at the fabric and the faces that had come direct from England and were going back there again—to get, in fact, as near to England itself as possible. She looked back to England now as the true believer looks forward to Heaven. There was the home of the elect—the city of satisfied desires—the haven where she would be. (*The Perversity of Human Nature* n.p.)

The imaginary going back and forth between England and Australia, in the form of the oscillation between nostalgia for the original English home and marvel before the Australian nature, and expressed through the regular comparisons between England and colonial Australia, conveys the attempt at finding a way of defining "home" at the end of the nineteenth-century, a period marked by the disruption of exile, immigration, and the transformation of the colonies.

[113] The term "home" is the ninth most used in the novel *Materfamilias*, in terms of recurrence. Amongst the words that are more repeated in the novel, there are "oh," "quite," "poor," "think," "thought," "looked," "dear"—and finally "mother." "Mother" and "home" are therefore the content nouns that are the most used in the novel, which is quite revealing of Cambridge's concerns in her fiction. "Home" is also the most used word in several chapters of the novel, as in Chapter 2, with 18 occurrences (with the exclusion of the characters' first names) or chapter 3, in which it is the second most used word with 13 occurrences after the noun "thing" (15 occurrences).

3. A Cultural and Family Disruption

In her writing, Cambridge seems to be putting into practice her aunt's opinion, who advised her to write about events and feelings that she had experienced: "And why don't you write what you understand?" (*The Retrospect* 79). As an expatriate, Cambridge had a first-hand experience of homesickness; for financial reasons, Ada and George Cross could not return to England as soon as they hoped and Cambridge had to adapt to her new Australian life. Her mother, forced to wait for her return, died without seeing her daughter again, a fact which caused Ada Cambridge great distress, and which is echoed in her fiction. Indeed, Cambridge's very first Australian narrative, "Three Years' Ago," opens on the pain experienced by the homesick settler:

> Time, it is said, cures all diseases, mends all the gaps that are broken in one's life, kills off and buries, sooner or later, all that progeny of troubles and trials that is born to each of us. But I think, the home-sickness of those whose homes are on the other side of the world becomes a chronic complaint. (133)

The metaphor of exile as a disease which cannot be cured is used by the protagonist Jim Morris, a vicar in Australia, to refer to his forced exile far from his native England, imposed on him by a family member who ensured that Jim received the necessary education in order to become a vicar in Australia. In both Cambridge's fiction and her memoirs, coming to Australia translates as suffering from isolation. The incurable nostalgia felt by Jim is indeed reminiscent of Cambridge's statement in her autobiography and echoes the homesickness which she claims not to have been able to get rid of:

> We have been homesick practically all the time—good as Australia has been to us. At any moment of these thirty odd years we would have made for our native land like homing pigeons, could we have found the means. (*Thirty Years* 2)

If references to homesickness abound in her memoirs ("the yearly aspiration of my homesick soul," "a home-sickness that could only be cured by fetching me back again," etc.) (*Thirty Years* 4, 176), the loneliness experienced by the settler is often projected upon the Australian landscape. The isolation of the characters in Australia is indeed transferred onto the Australian environment: "I fell to musing as I walked along round a bend of the solitary river," Jim thinks in "Our New Chum" (486). The hypallage underlines the fact that the young vicar feels alone when he wanders in the bush, a feeling which is intensified in "Bachelor Troubles," in which Jim admits his solitude: "I was more lonely than ever in this first 'home' of my own" ("Bachelor Troubles" 262). Here the term "home" is used by default, being the first house that Jim owns even if he cannot grant it the sentimental connotation of a home. The tension between the two connotations of the term "home"—on the one hand as household and on the other as native culture—is thus emphasised, shown as the result of the colonial situation having led to a disjunction between the two types of relationships. In this light, the narrative is used as a way to expose this disjunction and as an attempt to reunite these two binding spaces.

For the writer as for her characters, settling in Australia is described as a forced departure leading to a familial dissolution; in short, as a scission in filiation. In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Edward Said distinguishes between two types of bonds between individuals: the first one, which he calls "filiation," refers to a person's bonds with places and people according to his or her native culture; the second one, "affiliation," corresponds to ties established with institutions, associations, communities, *i.e.* with socially-created entities. The affiliative link replaces that of filiation, moving from nature to culture:

> A filial relationship was held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority—involving obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict—the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms—such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and hegemony of a dominant culture. The filiative scheme belongs to

> the realm of nature and "life," whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society (Said 20).

In *The Politcs of Home*, Rose Marangoly George offers a metaphorical analysis of the above-mentioned passage and considers "home" as a filial relationship in the nation itself and in the nation's discourses of affiliation. Comparing Said's statement with the words of Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of independent Kenya, George suggests that no "natural" bond exists between a place and a person, but only connections that can be tied or untied, on material or spiritual levels.[114] In Cambridge's novels, the filial connections are doubly deconstructed, at the collective level and at the level of the family unit. Just like Jim Morris in "Three Years' Ago"—whose experience mirrors Cambridge's—, the women characters in the serial novel "Up the Murray" are forced to leave England for Australia. For instance, Patty has to follow her husband and Dorothy has to join them after her father's death—her mother died giving birth and she is thus an orphan. In Cambridge's novels that deal with exile, the heroines are often orphans, having lost their mothers early in life. These include, among others and besides the sisters in "Up the Murray," the three sisters in *The Three Miss Kings* (1883), who have to find their way in the colonial society of Melbourne once orphans, the heroine of "The Perversity of Human Nature" (1887), who is an orphan without any guardian or close family members, and also the heroine of *Materfamilias* (1898), who runs away from her family home to go to Australia when her father dies. Hence the disruption is not only geographical or cultural for the Australian settler, it also refers to the family. The uprooting induced by the colonial experience takes place on the collective and at the national level, as well as on the individual, family level. Thus, to reconstruct a "home" is all the more difficult as the two referents of the term—"home-country" and "household"—are simultaneously disrupted.

The departure for Australia is felt as an exile when it is forced, as in "Up the Murray," in which Patty's and Dorothy's departures are reluctant

[114] "A culture has no meaning apart from the social organization of life on which it is built. When the European comes to Gikuyu country and robs the people of their land, he is taking away, not only livelihood, but also the material symbol that holds families together" (Kenyatta 54).

ones: "Patty did not want to go so far away, but, of course, she had to do what her husband thought best, and it was a very good thing for Heriot" ("Up the Murray" 390). The concision of the explanation and the addition of the commentary "of course" underline the social constraint weighing on women, whose will was submitted to their husbands'. In Cambridge's seven tales and in "Up the Murray," Australia is described as a land of personal and professional opportunities for male characters, as the above example of Heriot shows, but also that of Charlie in the eponymous tale. One of the direct consequences of these opportunities is the fact that the female characters—Patty in "Up the Murray," Charlie's wife Annie and Jim's wife Mary in "Three Years' Ago"—are forced to follow their husbands in a trajectory whose outcome is an uprooting imposed by their marriage to a man bound to leave for Australia. Once more, it reminds us of Cambridge's own trajectory: "I left them all, never—as now seems only too probable—to return" (*Thirty Years* 5). Interestingly, only the male characters are allowed to decide to settle in the country which suits them best. For female characters, the very possibility of going back and forth is constantly shown as aborted. For example, the serial tales end precisely when Mary leaves England for Australia in order to join Jim, so that her voyage from England to Australia remains a one-way trip. Sometimes, exile refers to the inverted route, that is to the voyage from Australia to England, but this happens more rarely in Cambridge's texts. Yet, this case is only applied to female characters, as in "The History of Six Hours" (February 1873), in which Kate, married to the English Devereux, leaves her home Victoria without being allowed to ever come back:

> "Colonel Devereux doesn't like the colony," she said. "He won't let me call it 'home,' though I was born there, and I am sure he will never take me back. [...] he doesn't understand that my birthplace can be to me what his is to him. Our family has only been 30 years in Australia, and his has been hundreds and hundreds in England. He thinks I was ill-used in my birth and bringing up, and that I am now restored to my proper rights and privileges." ("The History of Six Hours" 198)

Kate is not allowed to call her native Australia "home"; in this view, the status of "home" can only be assessed through time, history, ancestry, and hierarchy. In this sense, Colonel Devereux embodies the then widely-spread idea that the Australian colonies were below England in rank, and therefore refuses to return with his wife into the Victorian bush despite her own preference. The power relation between the metropolis and its colonial outskirts pervades the cultural background of the narrative in which two conflicting definitions of "home" are foregrounded, and this power relation is a two-fold one, also including a patriarchal hierarchy over women's choices.

However, despite the difficult conciliation between homesickness and revival put forward in "Up the Murray" and the pessimism of the first six tales of the series initiated by "Three Years' Ago," the seventh and final episode of the series, entitled "At Sea" (June 1873), ends on a positive note regarding the search of a home. Mary, the young English-woman loved by Jim when he was a child and for whom he has crossed again the ocean, is with him on board the ship that brings them back to Australia, when she utters the following words: "It is all different from that now. You have your wife now, my darling, and we are going *home*" ("At Sea" 806). The word "home" thus ends the series of seven tales, and it is highlighted both by its final position and by the use of the italics, underlining the importance of a notion whose meaning is as fleeting as the context in which it is used. Home—in the domestic sense—can finally emerge because Jim and Mary are now reunited and married, and the love plot opening "Three Years' Ago" thus has a happy end in this final episode. However, revealingly, "home" can only be defined precisely when the protagonists are in a transition phase, on board the ship between England and Australia, reminding readers that "home," in the colonial context, remains by definition a fleeting and unstable notion.

In Cambridge's narratives, crossings of the ocean are numerous and the word "home" is repeated as a leitmotiv in the mouth of the uprooted characters. Cambridge's constant concern for the fleeting and temporary nature of her home, conveyed through the prevalence of the notion of "home" in her autobiography as well as her fiction, is emblematic of the

colonial period. More specifically, "home" remains an elusive notion in Ada Cambridge's texts: the fleeting nature of the referent of "home," in its geo-cultural meaning, underlines the fact that it rather refers to an imagined place than to a strict geographical location. In Cambridge's texts, the fragmentation of the landmarks, due to the fleeting aspect of Cambridge's successive homes—more than eight in Australia itself—was nonetheless in part compensated by the unity that the writer found in the bush, which she lived in and which became her new "world" (*Thirty Years* 72). Furthermore, in the absence of the possibility of physically going back and forth between England and Australia, Cambridge moves back and forth between these two locations in her fiction, conveying the complexity of the exile's experience, between homesickness for England and a gradual settlement in the Australian colonies. She uses fiction as a way of erasing the social and cultural hierarchisation established between England and its colonies, and fictionally unites those two worlds. Last but not least, her texts emphasise the fact that the disruption of home, far from being only geographical *or* cultural for the Australian settler, is also of family—and marital—and all the more so for women. Ada Cambridge thus focuses on the social constraints weighing on women, in relation to the search of a home, threatening the attempt at finding both a cultural and familial anchorage, and constantly reminding us that "home," in the colonial context, remains a fleeting and unstable notion.

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Chapter 9

The Politics of Displacements: Homes within Home

Salhia Ben-Messahel

Chapter
9

In an interview titled "HOMInG," anthropologist and social theorist Ghassan Hage argues that the idea of a "home" is not the same as a "house" and that the issue of "home" is political considering that one's perception of home may vary according to a specific context. Hage insists on the idea that "occupying a space does not necessarily mean that you develop a homely attachment to it" ("HOMInG Interview"). Hage's arguments bring to mind Bruce Bennett's collection of essays *Homing In* published in 2006, which explores the various ways in which belonging occurs in the writings of Australian authors ranging from the colonial to the post-colonial period. In the introduction to the essays, Bennett argues that "finding a point of stability or belonging in some form of 'the local'—in a house, suburb, sea or landscape, or nation or region, for instance—can be fraught with contradictions and difficulties as well as pleasures" (2). In this article, I wish to take both Hage's and Bennett's arguments to examine the flexibility of the concept of "home" in some recent Australian fiction and see how post-colonial housing never simply translates as "residence" since it implies the transformation of borders and the complexity of boundaries (Ashcroft). Hage's insistence on "the continuous ambivalence of multiple spatiality for diasporic subjects" ("HOMInG Interview") will be explored alongside Bennett's ideas on belonging and displacement.

The perception of place and home was and still remains complex in Australia. Bill Ashcroft's critical work, *Postcolonial Transformations* (2001) astutely refers to the colonial process and to the way settler-Australia

imposed a European conception of "home" and "dwelling" onto a non-European space. Indeed, as the Australian colonies expanded, the European settlers tended to transplant the European home-model and European ideal of home on an alien territory at the expense of the Indigenous people, who from a European point of view did not occupy space but rather lived within space. Indigenous people were designated as hunters and gatherers and through a European perception were viewed as a nomadic people who did not belong anywhere.[115] So, as Australia expanded as a European settlement in the southern hemisphere, the settlers transplanted the European concept of "home" as much as European culture and habits. Settlers and colonizers sought to recreate a homely space in a geographic environment they saw as hostile and unhomely. In the colonial perception, the land thus needed to be tamed, and space needed to be occupied and apprehended as a new home away from Britain, the mother-country.

In Kate Grenville's novel, *The Secret River* (2005), which explores the way in which settlers coped with a new environment and went through the colonial process in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the issue of creating home is viewed from various angles so that the understanding that one has of home is dual. William and Sarah (Sal) Thornhill's respective understandings of the Australian environment are reflected in the way in which each of them, husband and wife, tends to conceptualize "home." The newly possessed land is viewed simply as "*my place*" by William Thornhill (144) while Sarah Thornhill tends to redesign and even map the land according to the model inherited from home, regardless of the local fauna and flora: "Within its [*the yard's*] boundaries she made something domestic [...]" (149-150). In her desire to set physical boundaries against the surrounding environment, the character is expressing her own colonial displacement. The outside boundaries reflect her inner emotional and psychological boundaries meant to protect her from what is becoming "home" and her new belonging. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" is useful here since it illustrates the extent to which the environment and the place where the Thornhills settle, surface as a practice and not as a

[115] Recent research, Bill Gamage's *The Biggest Estate on Earth* (2011) and Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* (2015), nonetheless shows that in fact Indigenous Australians managed landscape, did build homes as well as sow seeds and occupy what could be seen as 'villages.'

location for home. Indeed, William's settlement in the alien environment is marked by his willingness to become an Other, that is an Australian citizen and landowner free of the convict past, while Sarah's position and attitude both stem from her rejection and fear of the new place and from her belief that home is still in Britain. Sarah clings to Britain as the home-country even when she is falling sick and envisaging her own death: "She stared at nothing and sighed, lying stiff in the bed, and one day said *Bury me facing the north, Will.* [...] *Where Home is*" (184). William is in a state of occupancy in settler Australia while Sarah is in a transitory state in a place she does not want to relate or belong to. Grenville's novel shows how the reconstruction of a home away from the home-country tended to alleviate the anxiety and alienation felt by newcomers to Australia, how the construction of new homes provided former convicts or settler Australians with a sense of belonging and how it played a part in the configuration of an Australian identity in the antipodes.

During the colonizing process, and even more so during the Federation of Australia, issues of subjectivity and belonging were strongly bound to the discourse on the formation of the nation. Land ownership was secured by the imposition of architecture and housing, cities emerged along the coasts and expanded to the homely suburbs, to such an extent that in the aftermath of World War II, suburbia surfaced as home to working-class culture and Australian identity. The suburb and the Australian homestead signified in the Australian consciousness a break with Victorian homes and epitomized Australia's post-colonial nature. Thus, "the transformation of colonial space into post-colonial 'life-place'" occurred "through the interaction of habitation and representation" (Ashcroft 160).

1. The Exploration of Australia's Colonial Backyard

In his celebrated novel, *Cloudstreet* (1991), novelist Tim Winton delves into the space of the nation through the anthropomorphization of an old and cranky house located in the suburb of Perth. The house, like the geographic environment and landscape in Winton's writings, surfaces as a main character and encapsulates the issues working-class

Australians were faced with between the 1940s and 1960s. Speaking about the novel, Winton insists on the complex nature of the house as a signifier for subjectivity and highlights its intricate (almost umbilical) bond with the characters:

> Here's two families, against their wills, they go to a strange other place, and they settle in this house, which has lost its innocence and doesn't want them, and they don't like it, and they spend the rest of their life trying to belong.... After a while the house has come to seem normal and natural and important to them. Perhaps this is my sentimental hopefulness about the nation. (Niekerk)

The house, which is first introduced as home to the Lambs and Pickles, the two dysfunctional families, very soon operates as a space that the characters occupy owing to their social situation and not as a home. It only becomes a home through the relations that characters can have with it through experience. Commonly called N°1 Cloudstreet, the house naturally operates as a metaphorical space for Australian society, it also encapsulates the characters' personal stories and uncovers the hidden stories related to Indigenous people and to the colonial past. Thus, in the relational experience between the house and the characters, the historical and political nature of home surfaces to deconstruct the ideal of the nation and modernity. The ghostly figures of young Indigenous girls suddenly appear in the house in an attempt to restore the reality of place and history, especially the story of the Stolen Generations, of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1910 and the 1970s under various government policies, to be assimilated into white society. The occupancy of the ghosts places the main characters in the house as their being at home (the place where they had been brought in after they had been taken away from their families) while the Lambs and Pickles have to adjust to the house to feel at home. The house, which is a centre of historical reality, operates both as a character and as an exterior narrator, a literary device that provides extra-information to the reader, information that the two families themselves seem to ignore. For instance, when Fish

Lamb, the retarded boy, feels the presence and hears the voices of dead Indigenous girls, he is provided with details about the Stolen Generation he does not understand but which the reader does. In such a scene, Fish Lamb is both in place (location) and out of place (home), the house being the *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*. The uncanny nature of home tends to revolve around Gaston Bachelard's interpretation of the house and home as topo-analysis so that memories of the house, along with the memory of the ghostly Indigenous girls within the home, are entangled in the present of the main characters and are thus part of their ongoing experience and evolving subjectivity. As Bachelard asks:

> how can secret rooms, rooms that have disappeared, become abodes for an unforgettable past? Where and how does repose find especially conducive situations? How is it that, at times, a provisional refuge or an occasional shelter is endowed in our intimate day-dreaming with virtues that have no objective foundation? With the house image we are in possession of a veritable principle of psychological integration. Descriptive psychology, depth psychology, psychoanalysis and phenomenology could constitute, with the house, the corpus of doctrines that I have designated by the name of topo-analysis. On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being. (xxxvi)

In dealing with place, sacredness and identity in the postcolonial nation, Winton's story suggests that "in a new environment of determining rights over land, what is 'ours' is also potentially, or even always already, 'theirs', and a previously 'private' Aboriginal sacred enters the public realm in diverse ways" (Gelder and Jacobs 23). The narrative balances the various notions of "home," referring either to "habitation," "shelter," or to "national/political and cultural space," in an attempt to re-instate what was deliberately erased from the pages of Australia's history. Fish Lamb insists that the house is a living entity, that it is much more than just land or property: "The house sad, Lestah … It talks. … It hurts" (166). In saying so, the character suggests that the "theory of place does not propose a simple separation between the 'place' named and described in

language, and some 'real' place accessible to it, but rather indicates that in some sense place *is* language, something in constant flux, a discourse in process'' (Ashcroft 155).

The shifting nature of home which illustrates Winton's novel also surfaces in Nikki Gemmell's novel, *Cleave* (1998), to explore the belonging of characters to place and the issue of land's rights. The main character, Snip Freeman, is depicted as ''a wanderer'' (3) who never associates with home since home is everywhere in the deserted areas of the Australian outback. The depiction of the central and deserted areas of Australia, around Alice Springs, forming what is often referred to as ''the Dead Heart,''[116] relies on the importance of geography and topography. The central desert is both home to Indigenous culture and to the character's formation as a hybrid subject while the family-home epitomizes settler-Australia, the settler's wrong perception of landscape: ''A house that never celebrated the land it was on. A family home firmly shut to the world'' (82). The family-house is clearly not a home to the character but rather a place of enclosure.

The novel, published at a time when Australia had started to question issues of land's rights, issues that still are central in Australian discourse and politics, debunks the idea that one can have of ''home'' and suggests that landscape, the environment is to be apprehended in almost the Indigenous sense as ''country,'' which encompasses the reciprocal relationship between the land and the individual. Thus, not only is the outback a home and centre of reality for the main character but the geography and the topography of place both tend to surface as discursive spaces. The main character's interaction and connection with indigeneity is perceived in her being accepted as early as the age of seven, being given the skin name of ''Napaljarri'' and travelling back to the Indigenous Yapa community: ''But Snip only fleetingly comes back to this place that feels like home, the land that's a tonic to replenish her spirit'' (68). The cultural and social interaction which the character

[116] The expression was used by J. W. Gregory, Professor of geology at the University of Glasgow in his book *The Dead Heart of Australia. A Journey around Lake Eyre in the Summer of 1901-1902, with some Account of the Lake Eyre Basin and the Flowing Wells of Central Australia* (1906). It is also the name of a famous song by Midnight Oil, the Australian music band, a song dealing with the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians and the non-recognition of Indigenous cultures.

sustains with the community shows how "country," Yapa country, is "a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life," that "country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease" (Rose 1997).

While Gemmell's novel may indirectly anticipate Germaine Greer's appeal, at a later stage, that non-Indigenous Australians should embrace Indigenous culture as their own (Greer 2003)—an appeal which raised many concerns about cultural appropriation—the story tends to explore national history and personal story through landscape in such a way that Snip Freeman, who has a nomadic lifestyle, is fashioned by the earth, dependent upon the earth:

> Snip is slapped and steaked by red dust in this place, the tips of her fingers are valleyed as if all fluid has been drained from them, her long hair as weighted with smoke and dirt and wind, there are compacted crescents of dust under her nails, vivid accumulations between her fingers and toes, and in the palm of each hand a river map of ochre lines. She's stinky in this place, sweaty and smoky. She's manless and motherless in this place. She's been ordered to come here.
> The land where the light hurts is beyond the bulletproof glass and beyond the bulletproof glass, touching lightly the earth of the Tanami Desert, is a scattering of houses and humpies. (Gemmell 52)

This passage encapsulates the character's umbilical connection to the land and suggests that it bears an imprint on her subjectivity rather than the opposite—to such an extent that one could argue that in such a scene, the landscape is decolonized and absorbs the Anglo-Australian subject through a process of assimilation. In the novel, the understanding of subjectivity operates through constant movements of territorialization and deterritorialization to such an extent that the main character "does not move *to* a dwelling but *dwells* by *moving*, that is, by transition from place to place within (or again, as) a region" (Casey 2009). The main character's sense of belonging is subtly manifested in a space that "envisages forms in motion and in relation to other forms, one in which both geography and history are territories to be travelled"

(Bourriaud 117) and never owned. In fact, beyond its interest in the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia, Gemmell's novel suggests that in post-colonial Australia, the politics of "home" is still fraught with tensions, especially when defining what is "home" and "for whom?"

2. Home away from the Mother-Country

Ghassan Hage's perception that "there is a genealogy of thoughts between ways of inhabiting and habits" ("HOMInG Interview") is essential to the examination of writings dealing with migration and migrant integration in multicultural Australia. Despite Australia's multicultural framework, its economic and political integration within the Asia-Pacific region, migrant and refugee issues have tended to surface as a challenging force within fiction to subvert the politics of home and the multicultural country.

Displacement and un-belonging are recurrent themes and necessary processes in the work of Eva Sallis Hornung, especially when looking at the inclusion of the migrant other in multicultural Australia. A novelist and strong advocate for human rights, Sallis Hornung explores migrancy and the instability of home through the displacements of characters within and outside of Australia, characters who tend to be caught between divergent but nonetheless concomitant physical and psychological spaces. In her first novel *Hiam* (1998), the meanderings in the desert and bush areas of Hiam, a Middle Eastern female character, serve as a pretext to analyse the processes by which one feels at home and by which one relates to home. The character reminisces on her personal experiences, her life in Yemen and arrival in Australia, which operate around the issue of home: "Marriage, birth, emigration. It seems quite appropriate that life with Zena and Masoud meant a place, completely different. Adelaide, her brother-in-law's house, then this house, *our house*" (11). The stress laid on the house through the use of italics suggests that the claiming of being home, signified as "our house," is shifting and dependent upon what Hage interprets as "the double tie between the small and large scale of home, as much as there is a tie between here and there, origin and destination contexts" ("HOMInG Interview").

Home is both the place left behind in Yemen and the new place in Adelaide, both synonymous with loss and chaos while the rural and deserted areas in the Northern Territory reflect the character's sense of being in the world. The Australian outback represents an alternative space—and a Bhabhan third space where dialogue between cultures evolve—to the character's personal experience; it operates as a liberating device, a centre of reality to the alien and alienated character: "She was outside or more outside of something she had been in which had also been an exile from something else" (3). Hiam is only able to confront her own marginal position in Australia and the dramatic successive losses of both her daughter and husband, when she is in the central desert and confronted to her own nothingness.

The encounter and connection of Hiam, who is perceived as the "oriental" migrant other, with Indigenous Australia subtly operates through the overlaying of a geographic space marked by Indigenous songlines, the dreaming tracks and living narratives of the first inhabitants, and a personal space marked by the intertextual resurgence of stories that are reminiscent of *The Arabian Nights*. Place and the location of home are thus conceptualized through a network of relationships and stories that are constantly negotiated. In fact, the character's experience puts in perspective antinomian spaces, the East and the West—even if the part of the West (post-colonial Australia) is yet (dis)placed in the Asia-Pacific region—while at the same time juxtaposing those two geopolitical spaces (East/West) with the inner country, the outback as the space of Indigenous history and truth. Hiam's memory and dreams compel her to travel back and forth between home in Adelaide and home in Yemen despite her being positioned in place in the Australian outback. The character's constant shift between various homes emphasizes the plural nature of home and the idea that the definition of home relies on how an individual may apprehend "home" according to a particular situation: being a wife and mother, or a migrant or a multicultural other. In her second novel, *The City of Sealions* (2002), Sallis Hornung again tackles the issue of displacement through three distinctive geographic spaces: insular Australia, mainland Australia and Yemen. The experience of Lian, a young student who leaves her island home, off the coast of South

Australia, to study Arabic and absorb a new culture in Yemen, brings to the fore clashing cultures, intercultural relations and ethnic identity. The main character's experience, which owes much to her wish to escape from the heavy load of her mother's past and personal history, lays emphasis on the difficulty at defining "home" and thus on the divergent definitions and understandings one has of home. Lian's desire to cling to her settler heritage, on her father's part, "being an islander and an Australian" (5), points to her hybrid subjectivity and yet exposes her rejection of her Vietnamese cultural heritage on her mother's side. On the other hand, her desire to be home—"why can't one be at home anywhere?" (81)—relies on her inability to feel at home both on her native island and in Australia. Despite her identification with Australian culture, mainly her islander culture, and with the fishing community her father's family is from, Lian is nonetheless perceived as an Other, on the margins of the mainstream. Her uncle, just like other members of the small community, does tend to place her outside of the mainstream: "'You're so like your mother,' Mal says to Lian's flouncing teenage self. [...] you're both mean and nasty buggers with a hell of a stubborn exterior. You've got the motherlode running through ya, ..." (6).

The relationship that Lian has with her mother is central to the plot and illustrates the understanding of home that the characters have. The personal experiences of the migrant subject, the mother, a Vietnamese other and refugee, work contrapuntally so that feeling exiled and feeling at home concur.

Ghassan Hage's analysis of the nature of diasporic existence as taking a lenticular form is useful since the concept of home operates through the lenticular, the image that appears differently depending on how one looks at it. Hage argues that "in contrast to the single image/reality captured in the common photograph the lenticular surface contains a multiplicity of images/realities that reveal themselves perspectively and are continuously flickering and speaking to each other" ("Existential Territories"). Thus, in the novel, home cannot be synonymous with fixity since wandering is a human condition. Home can thus only be apprehended through displacement and from multiple perspectives. When the main character settles in Saana, Yemen, she soon perceives her new foreign environment as home, as a

space where she can embrace her Australianness without having to justify her Asian background. The various locations used as homes, away from the past and the family-home, tend to surface through a syncretic vision of reality and subjectivity. When Lian leaves her lover to move into the Jewish quarter (175), she metaphorically becomes the figure of the "wandering Jew," an outcast within Yemeni society in the same way she is when at home in Australia. The architecture of her new home may symbolically design the complexities of her life, her inner space and state of mind:

> Her house leaned against the house behind it, even fitted into it like a Chinese puzzle or a lopsided piece of joinery. Its off-perpendicular walls seemed to settle backward slightly, slumped and tired. It had a distinct belly, perhaps from an age rather than architecture. The interpenetrated houses of the quarter huddled blindly together, hugging each other, warding off erosion, trying to be blind to time. ... But a house could not stave off what was coming. She could hear the wet slap slap slap of Vietnam, the spaces and faces she had never let in. (176)

The design and features of Lian's house, the building that stands as the location of home, along with the other houses in the area, foreshadow the character's own desire to move away from her past and family history but also reflect her own dislocation and impossibility at escaping from home in Australia as conveyed through the sounds emerging from her Vietnamese heritage. While identity is performed through exile and within an alter space, the character's existence seems to draw on Homi Bhabha's theorization of the "unhomely" understood not as a state of lacking home, or the opposite of having a home, but rather as the recognition that the frontier between the world and the home is breaking down. As Bhabha puts it, in "displacement the border between the home and the world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (9). Moreover, the gradual interweaving of past and present experiences is emphasized by the associations that Lian makes between home in Australia and her new home in Yemen, by

the many angles through which she constructs an image (and definition) of home. These experiences may again rely on what Hage identifies as "lenticular analytics" ("Existential Territories") considering that migration and subjectivity are apprehended and understood through a transnational or cosmopolitan space that supersedes the "home and away" binary common in diaspora discourse. Hence, the narrative not only accentuates the dark side of multicultural associations and constructions but, above all, suggests that homeliness intrinsically co-exists with unhomeliness. Thus, the character's perception of her own alterity and idea of home seem to rely on Paul Gilroy's idea of the "geometry of colonial power," which is "notable for the stress it placed on recognition and interdependency and the way it pushed cultural questions to the fore: each racial and ethnic type turns out to have its own space where it is at home and can be itself" (51). Lian, just like her mother, seems to be caught in the geometry of a postcolonial power that tends to discard otherness under the guise of multiculturalism.

In balancing issues of home through the lenses, past and present, of place (Australia-Yemen-Vietnam), the story delves into the paradigm of multiculturalism and exposes the discriminating aspect that multiculturalism seems to encapsulate. Speaking about language, culture and identity, Eva Sallis Hornung insists that in Australia the "word multicultural doesn't manage. Multicultural is used to mean some of our [Australia's] cultures, not all of them. Ethnic means some of our ethnicities and not others. Further, each community and each age group have different specifications as to which cultural or racial groups are them, not us" ("Australian Dream"). The novelist's words suggest that the multicultural nation is, to use Hage's word "monolithic" ("HOMInG Interview"). Furthermore, her perception of multiculturalism harks back to the formation of settler Australia as a far-flung outpost of Britain and Europe, on the border of the Asian continent.

3. Reconfiguring Home

The place of Australia within the Asia-Pacific region and the ties that Australia may have with the Middle East are central to the work of Sallis-Hornung and to the work of some authors who do not relate or

relate in part to Britain and Europe. Authors whose work explore the meaning of being Asian-Australian. Bruce Bennett, in his critical book titled *Homing In* explores the place of Asia in multicultural Australia and refers to the novelist and essayist Brian Castro, and his plea against Eurocentric and neoconservative discourses in media and political circles:

> ... Australia ... has written off Asia for almost 200 years; written off the countries of Asia, with various cultural traditions of thousands of years. Perhaps it is time to write 'Asia', to write within it and of it, rather than just about it. The word Asia is found after all, in the word Australia. If Australia wants to refigure itself in its relationship to the countries of Asia, to become part of Asia, as it were, then Asia must also be part of Australia. (207)

In this statement, Castro, whose writings focus on hybridity, seems to call for a reconfiguration of space through the reterritorialization of Australia within the space of the Asia-Pacific region, advocating a movement backward whereby Australia would embrace Asia as a part of home. Like Castro, other authors have shown an interest in the place of Asia within Australia and have sought to demonstrate that while Asia is still often viewed as the unknown, mysterious and oriental Other against which Australian culture had defined itself since Federation, Asia nonetheless operates as a counter-discourse to the ideologies of the nation. Nicolas Jose, who used to work as a cultural counsellor in China once referred to Sang Ye, a Chinese journalist, to insist on Australia's ties to China:

> The Chinese-Australian writer Sang Ye calls Chinatown 'a flowerpot simply placed here', where no one puts down roots, because 'the soil in the flowerpot is segregated from the soil here' (The Finish Line, 1995). But that's only part of the story. That flowerpot has been in Australia as long as any European garden. (''What is a Chinese Garden?'')

Jose's use of the botanical imagery of plants and roots to describe the place of China within Australia echoes with Edouard Glissant's relational poetics whereby Chinese migration is part of the formation of the

nation, the "flowerpot" being a receptacle and an actor in the process of the relation between China and Australia, "a sort of consciousness of consciousness," turning each individual "into a disconcerted actor in the poetics of relation" (Glissant 27).

In his address on art in Chinatown, Sydney, Jose metaphorically highlights the negation of the Asian presence in Australia as early as the British settlement of the country in the 18th century and calls for a reconfiguration of national history. In his novel *The Red Thread* (2000) he focuses on the relations between China and Australia and through the dynamic of intercultural relations explores Asian-Australian encounters. The love-story between Shen Fuling, a Chinese art dealer educated in the US, and Ruth Garrett, an Anglo-Australian artist, in the present is intertwined with the ancient tale of two lovers, Shen Fu, a young Chinese poet and painter, and Yün, his beloved wife, in eighteenth century imperial China. The story not only connects Asia with Australia but also overlays Chinese concepts of space onto Western ones in a process of creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone of encounters between the past and the present:

> His (old Weng) parting advice to the young man was that the book might be medicine too. In that original narrative was a trace they must follow. Since it was working its way through their lives, they had no choice. It was deep, the old man said. He could see it clearly himself. It was certain, however, that they must find their way to the true end of the story. This was the path they must follow. (118)

The ancient tale delineates the modern narrative, designs cross-cultural encounters and explores the transcultural movements between China and Australia, bridging the gap that so often prevails in Sino-Australian relations. By entering the ancient tale, Shen Fuling and Ruth Garrett both penetrate the space of a mythical personal story and also delve into the historic account of imperial China. Such a journey through the spaces of time and reality is counterbalanced with the modern-day characters' perception of 20th and 21st century Chinese culture and politics so that the old tale (visible in the text through the typographic use of italics)

operates as a subverting agent to the present: "*One should try to show the small in the big, and the big in the small, and provide for the real in the unreal and for the unreal in the real. One reveals and conceals alternately, making it sometimes apparent and sometimes hidden*" (53).

The ancient tale and more importantly the last two missing chapters, which the characters strive to imagine and rewrite, all participate in designing an alter space within Shen Fuling's family home, an old but treasured place that attests to the importance of the past, in a communist country which is turning towards global markets and capitalism. The journey through time and place can thus only and symbolically take place first within the space of Shen's old family home, then through the location and transitory nature of an inn, and then as the story of Ruth and Shen is about to end, in the old house again so that beginnings are endings and the two tales interact and become one. The old family-home, like all the other old houses in the city, is about to be seized and demolished for urban-planning and housing-development. The house embodies not only the family history, having been built by Shen's grandfather, but also the possibility for the ancient tale to surface and interact in a rhizomatic fashion with the story of Shen and Ruth. The house is depicted as being a "mock-Tudor pile of red-bricks, half-timbering and fancy stonework" (36), standing in fact as a mimicry of the medieval English-style homestead and as the natural space where the ancient tale can resurface and act upon the present. It is only within the space of home that the tale can have an effect on the characters and that Shen and Ruth can enter the ancient tale as their own reality. As the house is about to be demolished, time has symbolically come for Ruth to meet her tragic death:

> The old stairs creaked under his feet as he climbed. He had looked everywhere else for Ruthand Han before he remembered how Yun's spirit had returned to the room where she and Shen Fu had found bliss, hiding in the flare of candles. [...] There was Ruth lying under the quilt. Through the dusty window and the wooden lattice the dusk light was cast like a glowing cage. The room was ghostly, with still a powdery coating over everything except the polished wood of the bed and his old camphor trunk.

> 'Han?' she murmured.
> She was alone and there was no sign of how she had got there or what state she was in. He hesitated to stir her.
> 'No,' he said. 'It's Shen.'
> 'Shen,' she repeated with pleasure in her voice. [...] 'I escaped,' she said. 'I wanted to come here. I'm waiting for the building to collapse around me.' She smiled, her face full of light and movement, her skin lucent. A film had been removed from her eyes, a heavy inert layer. 'I don't need the operation, Shen.' (158–159)

The sense of the gothic, which is encompassed through the setting and the elements such as the flickering light of the candles or the powdery dust, emphasizes the interaction of the ancient tale with the modern-day story, so that home surfaces as a space where the real characters can enter and experience the ancient tale, wishing to rewrite what is missing (*i.e.* the last and lost two chapters) and thus escape from reality. The space of the family-home combines fiction and reality but also serves as a prop to address current issues at a time when China is expanding as a major economic player. Shen Fuling, an art dealer, who is nostalgic about the past, is critical of the economic policy of the communist regime especially as far as the expropriation of land and housing. The loss of the family house is both interpreted as a dismissal of the past and as a step into the future:

> 'This house is as good as gone. It's history.'
> 'Your father's house,' Shen observed quietly.
> 'Don't remind me,' his father chided. 'That landlord father of mine brought me enough trouble with his grand dream of a house that no one could ignore. Yes, it's all history now.' (161)

The destruction of the house and family home interestingly takes place during Shen's integration in the poetic space of the ancient tale so that a fragment of the past is revived while the present, marked by economic expansion and urban planning, is nothing but an artificial construct. Shanghai surfaces as a dual place, being both an insecure home for

the commoners and a wonderful (economic) opportunity for money-makers.

Shen Fuling's home-city, like the old family home, embodies the transitory nature of characters as much as their sense of otherness: Shen Fuling being depicted as the westernized Chinese other, being on the margins of Chinese society, and Ruth being the Australian artist abroad, immersed in Chinese culture and at odds with her own home-country. In the opening pages of the novel, Shen Fuling reflects on his life, both as a graduate from Fudan University, Shanghai, or as an exchange student at Georgetown University. He expresses his assimilation into American culture as much as he is aware that his Chinese heritage has not yet been fully embraced: "Thus I came to realize that my own culture lay hidden deep within me and it would require work on my part to gain access to it" (10). Such a statement alludes not only to the forthcoming events and immersion in the ancient tale as a means to "gain access" to his own culture, but also as a means to relate and assume his hybrid self: being both westernized and holding on to his oriental culture.

Since the 20th century, the politics of home and belonging through displacement and the incorporation of cultural others within multicultural and post-colonial Australia have become critical issues, subverting existing discourses and manifestations of otherness along with diasporic encounters. For diasporic individuals, migrant others, the issue of "home" for instance tends to be either embedded in memories, personal histories, and also seems to rest on the idea of the lost and imagined community. Benedict Anderson's study of nationalisms, *Imagined Communities* (1983), asserts that one feature of the nation is that the nation is "'limited' because even the largest of [nations], encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (7). That very limitation and elasticity of national space, which individuals understand as "home," surfaces in Nam Le's short story collection, *The Boat* (2008). Nam Le's stories tend to focus on diasporic forms of nostalgia for the lost home, longing and memory; forms which often surface through the identification and un-relatedness of characters with Australia and Asia so that Asian-Australian encounters subvert the Anglo-centric configurations of home from an alter space, which is not

necessarily Asia or Australia. The characters' personal histories of disturbances and trauma tend to be looked upon through a global perspective so that the meaning of "home" relies on fragmentation, instabilities and displacements. Cultural alienation, migrancy, dual citizenship and identity are approached and looked upon from the perspective of former colonized places, including the Americas. Displaced subjects, in search of meaning and belonging to place, are caught in a reality that surfaces as a transitory space and form that are constantly subverted. The stories seem in fact to bring to mind Ahmed Gamal's assertion that "home" is redefined as a social reality that is structured by discourses and extends to "abroad"—a space that is situated in the liminal and borderline existence of the cultural Other. The first story of the collection, titled "Love and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice" and which openly refers to William Faulkner's acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, examines the relationship between the main narrator, called Nam, who is currently living in the US, and his Vietnamese father visiting from his then home-country, Australia. Family issues and cultural identities surface through the characters' respective geo-physical isolation and tangible exclusion from their current environment:

> HERE IS WHAT I BELIEVE: WE forgive any sacrifice by our parents, so long as it is in our name. To my father there was no other name—only mine, and he had named me after the homeland he had given up. … At sixteen I left home. There was a girl, and crystal meth, and the possibility of greater loss than I had imagined possible. She embodied everything prohibited by my father and plainly worthwhile. Of course he was right about her: she taught me hurt—but promise too. … When my father found out my mother was supporting me, he gave her an ultimatum. She moved into a family friend's textile factory and learned to use an overlock machine and continued sending me money. (21)

The first-person narrator is reminiscing about his family home and his personal history, attempting to write the "ethnic story" that is expected of him. In so doing, the character identified as "Nam" is confronted not only to the sacrifice that his parents may have made for him but also

to the consequences of such sacrifices on the stability of home and parenthood. The character's thoughts and association with his parents' native country both operate around memories and landscape associations that are trans-localised in the process of migration and displacement. The story tackles the issue of ethnic location as the only means for the first-person narrator, Nam, to assert himself and achieve recognition. Home is thus strictly circumscribed to otherness and the liminal space, to such an extent that all the main characters tend to be caught in the old colonial binary of "Them and Us." N. Le's short-story collection seems to dismiss any idea of "origin," "home" or "nation" laying stress on the conditions of individuals who are desperate to give meaning to their shabby reality. Through their universal themes and locations in an international environment, the stories clearly operate beyond the "ethnic" labelling that may be laid on non-Anglo Australian authors and may initiate a re-reading of Australian literature from outside a dominant culture, from a position that does not lie in the shadow of Britain or Europe but owes more to cosmopolitanism, so that "home" is the world.

The use of home as a signifier for either belonging, identity, inclusion or exclusion surfaces through the issue of migration so that post-colonial and multicultural Australia is being both subverted and reconfigured. Alice Pung's autobiographic narratives examine the issue of ethnicity and migration from an inside perspective, from the family-home in Australia, to interrogate the inclusion of Asian migration within the history of the multicultural nation, cultural gaps between different generations of the same family, the space of domesticity and home. Home is a transcultural space so that various rooms tend to metaphorize the characters' own subjectivity and positioning within Australia. Thus, in her memoir, *Unpolished Gem*, Pung confronts the inside (home) with the outside world (Australia) to examine the way in which some individuals may or may not assimilate in a home, which is yet a transitory location:

> You cannot tell that this is a Chinese house. No hexagonal I Ching mirror on the front door, no words of warning, no clipped hedge and double happiness signs anywhere, unless you count the name of our street. No neat little cumquat trees at the front for luck.

> We are trying to assimilate, to not stand out from the neighbours, to not bring shame to our whole race by carrying over certain habits from the old country, such as growing chickens in the backyard or keeping goats as pets. The plants we plant in the backyard are functional plants, herbs like hot Thai mint, basil, shallots and lemongrass, and we have geraniums and oleanders in the front yard.
> In fact, if you watch from the outside, you will see the crinkle-faced Asian grandmother watering the bird-of-paradise flowers with the hose. Through the back window of the house you will see the mother washing the dishes in the kitchen, and in the front yard you can watch the two children with half-coconut-shell haircuts poking holes in the dirt and trying to plant black custard-apple seeds, and everything seems so true-blue suburban that you would never suspect that the inside of the house is crowded with such a collection of curiosities that make us smile, make my father clap his hands in delight as he peers up at the smiling faces of Ordinary Australians cut up from the Target brochures and strung up in sticky-taped chains in every room. (20)

The new family home that the Pungs have created in the host-country, after fleeing China, encompasses the parents' desire to become other, that is Australian subjects, while retaining some of their cultural heritage, so subtly metaphorized through the figure of the grandmother and the way in which the inside of the house and the outside tend to operate through a dualistic framing: the house not being a home for Alice's grandmother and not quite home to Alice's mother. The depiction and perception of home is closer to Massey's ontology of place as a process in individual life, as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (66). Home is both the expression of enrooting within a new geographic, social, cultural and political space and it is also a substitute to the home left in the home-country, in China. This complex perception of home encompasses the spatial and temporal restructuring of home as the everyday suburban location and it also foreshadows the ambivalence of a multiple spatiality. In the above passage, the perception of home is viewed from the outside perspective which tends to focus on the Asian

otherness of the grandmother in opposition to the inner perspective, which shifts towards the integration of the mother in the ideal of the Australian suburban life, so that the space of home surfaces as a microcosm within a macrocosm. Alice even recalls at some later stage in her life that the whole family's house was "partitioned" (279). The idea of habitus, as Pierre Bourdieu defines it, is here relevant to the ethnographic representation of home, which tends to articulate upon relations of power between the older generation embodied by the grandmother and the younger generation embodied either by Alice's mother or Alice herself. Thus, feelings of inclusion and exclusion are manifested through the aesthetics of home, either in the architecture and/or design or in the way the various characters tend to inhabit their new home—a "dream home, in a location untainted by bad dreams and ominous paternal warnings" (127) that the father builds, and which becomes the habitus and connecting space between the material and social dimensions (the status that the father has gained as a business-owner) and the migrant body. Thus, the dream and conception of home both tend to emerge from the interrelatedness of the past and the present, both envisaged as distinctive but connected fields of the characters' social world: "Since there was no going back now, there was only one way for our little nuclear family to go and that was forwards. Forwards to the Great Australian Dream" (127).

In her memoir, Alice Pung examines her relationship with her mother and grandmother, with a certain amount of wit and clarity, expressing her own desire to be part of the multicultural nation, and it is thus symbolically by moving out and settling down in her own home, when entering university, that Alice becomes aware that she has gone through a process of assimilation, being part of the multicultural nation. Yet, despite her living in a new place of her own, Alice is nonetheless compelled to visit her parents and then to re-integrate the family-home, never being entirely able to escape from it, just like her parents are never able to escape from their personal history.

In the account of her family's personal story and observation of the processes at work in the experience of migration and incorporation in the Australian narrative of the multicultural nation, Pung joins the line of authors whose approach to home interrogates the construction

of Australia as a nation, as an imagined community in the South Pacific. Home surfaces as the space of the unhomely, which to borrow from Bhabha's own words "captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" (141).

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Chapter 10

Cosmopolitan Homes or Haunted Homes? Unsweetened Stories of Home in Transnational Culinary Memoirs

Corinne Bigot

Chapter
10

The title of Joyce Zonana's culinary memoir, *Dreams Homes: From Cairo to Katrina: An Exile's Journey* (2008) is a reminder of how fragile the concept of home is for diasporans. While the cities evoke the lost, ancestral, homeland and the home she made for herself in New Orleans, before she moved back to Brooklyn, "An exile's journey" evokes a life-long journey in search of home, which characterizes many diasporic, or transnational,[117] culinary memoirs. Most importantly, "Dream homes" reminds us that home is first and foremost a discourse. It is a discourse of locality—evoking a place with which we maintain intimate emotional connections even though we are no longer there, and thus a spiritual location—akin to Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands" (1992).

Home is a prevalent and useful trope in diasporic fiction. Avtar Brah posits that the concept of diaspora embodies a subtext of home (190). Similarly for Françoise Král, "The home marks the inscription of the diasporic self into the new land, but [...] also allows him to shelter his other half and keep the home country alive" (40). It is a core ingredient in diasporic/transnational culinary memoirs. Anita Mannur's work on "culinary fictions" shows how for immigrants "food has become a tool to articulate tensions that emerge through the chaffing of identity vectors of 'home'

[117] Anita Mannur uses the word 'diasporic,' Sandra Gilbert, 'transnational,' and Paula Torreiro Pazo 'multiethnic' to refer to the same memoirs. Although the word "diasporic" works well with Avtar Brah's concepts of the diaspora space and homing desire, "Transnational," which evokes lives on and across borders, allows me to define the home the memoirs create as cosmopolitan.

and 'diaspora'" (185). Food can provide immigrants with a connection to their homeland, it can also represent their struggle to assimilate and, for third generations, symbolize a connection to their ethnic legacy. So it is no surprise that the culinary memoir has been popular among diasporans and hyphenated Americans since the late 1990s, as shown by Smith and Watson, Roy, Mannur, Gilbert and Torreiro Pazo.

As these memoirs focus on domestic scenes—mothers preparing dishes in the kitchen, families sharing meals—the reader is invited into the author's home and becomes privy to a home life that often confused the author. What kind of home, then, does the transnational culinary memoir invite the reader in? While culinary memoirs with recipes can serve idealized versions, or even fictions, of home—Colette Rossant's *Apricots on the Nile* (1999), which recalls the author's childhood in her father's family's home in Cairo, is a case in point—most authors dispute the notion that home is a stable concept as they analyze their complex relationships with home, family and identity—three interconnected concepts.

In this chapter, I analyze culinary memoirs published in the 2000s, from several cultural backgrounds and culinary legacies: Louise DeSalvo's *Crazy in the Kitchen* (2004), Diane Abu-Jaber's *The Language of Baklava* (2005), Linda Furiya's *Bento Box in the Heartland* (2006), Bich Nguyen's *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* (2007), Laura Schenone's *The Lost Ravioli Recipes of Hoboken* (2007) and Joyce Zonana's *Dream Homes* (2008). The authors revisit their childhood homes, analyzing the affects that made them see it as a safe haven, a prison, or a battle field. Homes are shown to be essentially hybrid spaces—neither "American American" homes nor bastions of ethnicity. Revisiting their childhood home and the ancestral homeland are often seen as stages in journey in search of home as the authors interrogate their "homing desire"—a term coined by Avtar Brah (180)—which both stresses and questions the need to feel at home. Most authors also discuss the home they want to create for their own family—a home that is connected to the past but also to the world. Ultimately, I will consider the possibility that the memoir itself is the only home that the author can claim for herself, a home where her ghosts, and her readers, are welcomed.

1. A Safe Haven or a War Zone?

In diasporic studies the immigrant's home is seen as a "diaspora space"—the site where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed (Brah 208). A central trope in diasporic literature, "the home either becomes a place of confinement where the old self of the im/migrant becomes locked up [...] or can act as an interface, a locus of interaction with the outside world" (Král 41). Vietnamese-born Bich Nguyen, who grew up in Grand Rapids Michigan, explains that her memoir describes "an immigrant's dilemma to blend in or remain apart" (255). Culinary memoirs can appeal to readers who felt the same dilemma, regardless of their cultures, and to those who are curious about culinary legacies. Food, a strong marker of identity, is a useful trope to articulate tensions that emerge within the immigrant's home, as well as in the interaction with the outside world. As they focus on family life, scenes in the kitchen and around the dinner table, the authors of transnational culinary memoirs let their readers in, something they did not do when they were teenagers, as they were often confused by their immigrant home and by their feelings about home.

As the authors write about food as affect, a strong sense of intimacy is created. Affect, a visceral force beyond emotion, which Seigworth and Gregg define as "a body's capacity to affect and be affected" (2), "an impingement or extrusion of a momentary [...] state of relation as well as the passage of forces and intensity [...] that pass body to body and sometimes stick to bodies" (1), is a core ingredient of culinary memoirs. Food functions as a magnet, it crystallizes parental hopes to raise and control their children, and the children's strong reactions to home, family, and identity. Memories of sticky food remind us that "[a]ffect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, objects" (Ahmed 29) while evocations of the indigestible food parents would prepare, and children reject, function as embodied memories of painful family life. Eventually, instances of indigestion, choking, and nausea, can function as expression of self-loathing, and ethnic shame, contrasting with images of ethnic food as a source of comfort for the im/migrant.

In *Bento Box in the Heartland, My Japanese Girlhood in Whitebread America,* Linda Furiya, who grew up "Japanese" in a rural community in Indiana, opposes her parents' sense of home as a stable concept to her own ambivalent feelings and dilemma. She remembers her parents' isolation but also feels that they had a clear sense of what "home" meant; for them, home was, simply and always, Japan (173). Home food, that is to say, Japanese food, is depicted as a source of comfort for her parents—it "assured them they could make it through the daily challenges of living in a country not their own" (95)—and a source of anxiety for Linda. The obento lunches she brings to school are synonymous with shame and resistance. She eats the food, "a glaring reminder of the ethnic difference between my peers and myself (5), but eats it in the girls' bathroom.[118] Thus home is depicted as a safe haven, the only place where Linda "experience[s] an absolute peace and connection with [her] Japanese heritage" (279).

Such vision is always threatened. Furiya recalls how much she feared a visit by a school friend who was to eat with them and sleep over, assuming her friend would find her home and family too weird (71). Bich Nguyen explains that after her father's marriage to a Mexican-American woman she became "self-conscious about" her grandmother's rituals, in particular the food offerings at the foot of Buddha (29). Such fears—the knowledge that home is always potentially a source of discomfort, embarrassment and even shame—pervade many memoirs. In *Crazy in the Kitchen* Louise DeSalvo confesses that when her friends called her Italian grandmother a witch, she betrayed her by laughing at her with her friends because she was ashamed of the old woman in black (80). Leslie Li's *Daughter of Heaven* depicts the childhood home in Riverdale (New York) as a place of horticultural conflict and embarrassment after her "very odd Chinese grandmother" (1) came to live with them. While most of the front lawn had the regular roses and lilies of the valley, lurid bok choy leaves adorned the third patch that had fallen into the hands of her grandmother. Leslie and her sister were so embarrassed that when they

[118] Linda Furiya's obento lunches have already received critical attention (Gilbert 188; Torreiro Pazo 156) as glaring examples of ethnic shame, although shame is mixed with a visceral need to eat them.

brought white friends over, they used the back door to "avoid the front door and its embarrassing vegetable patch" (4). The back door, however, also posed problems of its own since their grandmother could hang bok choy leaves on the clothesline (4). More questions, and embarrassment, surfaced when their white friends noticed the (dead, in the process of being cured) chicken hanging from the light fixture in the center of the back porch ceiling (6).

Brah defines the diaspora space as the site where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed (208). The author's home is always a contested space. In *The Language of Baklava* Diane Abu-Jaber, who describes her home as a prison (230), under the control of her Jordanian father, explains that inviting friends over was an act of defiance and resistance. Similarly Nguyen, Zonana and Abu-Jaber depict their homes as a place where the immigrants maintain the family's sense of identity by cooking, *and* the place where their children growing up in America feel "overwhelmed by [their] home situation" (Nguyen 177). The teenagers "read [their] way out" (Nguyen 163) of their problematic homes. Zonana, who sees her mother's dedication to recreating the Egyptian food she ate in Cairo as a symbol of her connection to the past and a source of confusion over her own Jewish identity,[119] escapes "home and its ambiguities of identity" (31) by choosing English literature: "I found my home in books" (1).

In these memoirs vocal protests often go hand in hand with a refusal to eat and/or cook "ethnic food," since the child is aware that for her parent(s) home food which is at the core of her parents' identity, is precisely what sets her apart from her peers. The authors recall being torn between liking and loathing home food, which is seen as a mechanism of parental control, or/and the essence of ethnic identity—leading to ethnic shame. Paula Torreiro Pazo's analysis of the intersection of food and identity in Asian American literature resonates with most transnational memoirs. The rejection of home food, either or both a manifestation of ethnic self-loathing and self-abjection or/and an act of rebellion against

[119] The Zonanas were the only Egyptian Jews in their Ashkenazi neighborhood, and language and food set them apart from the other Jews. The Zonanas did not speak Yiddish, they spoke French and Arabic, did not eat gefilte or bagel, but ate Egyptian food (26–27).

parental control, is conveyed through images of indigestion and vomit (Torreiro Pazo 147). Diane Abu-Jaber describes how her feelings towards home, family and ethnicity changed over time. As a child, Diane loved her "Jordanian home," and managed the separation between two identities and places—outside (American) and home (Jordanian)—well enough. As she grew older however she rejected her Jordanian identity, which she associated with her father's rule. The more her father would insist that his daughters were "good Arab girls" (*Baklava* 197), the more outspoken her protests that she was American were (182). The family home became the terrain where "the long war" (181) between Diane and "Bud" was waged. As a teenager, Diane claimed that she hated "Arab food" (185). Later, during her college years, Diane would be violently sick after eating the family meals (223-229). As an adult, the author of the memoir sees that she "rejected more than food" (229). Similarly, Leslie Li refuses to eat bok choy (3), but also rejects the American food her father prepares. She describes the overcooked food as barely eatable; to her, it is literally indigestible: "I tried not to chew but simply swallowed, or tried to. Instead I gagged. Out came the fish" (Li 51). In both Abu-Jaber and Li, the violent reaction to home food serves as a metaphor of the girls' inability to process their confused feelings for home.

Childhood homes are routinely likened to a battlefield, meals to wars. Food wars inform *Crazy in the Kitchen*—Louise DeSalvo writes of an ongoing "bread war," symbolized by her mother's white bread and her grandmother's Italian bread. She offers an interesting analysis of her mother's diet of American bread, which she explains as a desperate attempt on her part to lose her Italian, *i.e.* immigrant, identity: "my mother thinks that eating this bread will change her [...] Maybe my mother thinks that if she eats enough of this other bread, she will stop being Italian American and she will become American-American" (12-13). Louise's mother is angered and appalled by the fact that her husband and children prefer the Italian bread and food her stepmother bakes, as this annihilates her own efforts to reach the American dream—"my mother is striving for all that we can be" (15). Just like her stepmother's black clothes, cooking utensils, and use of dialect, the Italian food is evidence that their home remains an immigrant home: "It means that we are stuck in the rut of where we came from" (15).

DeSalvo exposes the violence, and danger, of her mother's attempts to become "American American" at all costs. Pointing out that she only cooked inedible meals and starved herself—lunch was, typically, a can of Campbell's soup diluted with water and dinner, two pieces of burnt toast, for the four of them—DeSalvo suggests that the battle her mother waged was also one against her own self. Her rejection of Italian food actually illustrates a concerted effort to educate immigrants away from their ethnic food that started in the first decades of the twentieth century. Food historian Donna Gabaccia explains that women reformers, domestic scientists and governments attempted to "educate" immigrants by encouraging them to give up their food, alongside the creation of a national cuisine (122-148). Girls' schools were specifically targeted and "as late as 1940, the Home Economics section of New York's Department of Welfare issued food recommendations aimed at immigrants" (Gabaccia 129). *Crazy in the Kitchen* both exposes the dangers of such policies by depicting the DeSalvo home as a battlefield and shows its failure.

A central chapter (73-83) devoted to the presence of her grandmother in the new house shifts the focus from the house as a battlefield to a "Third Space" (Bhabha 54): an in-between, hybrid, ambivalent space. The DeSalvos decided to move out of Hoboken's Italian neighborhood and turned the house they bought in a distant suburb into a "modern" *i.e.* American home. Yet, as they did in the Hoboken apartment, Louise's mother and grandmother fought over space in the Ridgefield house. Louise's mother pushed her stepmother away, into liminal spaces—the steps leading to the basement, on which the old woman stored her pots and pans. Louise's grandmother found refuge in a corner by the radiator, in the living room. She would remain there for five decades, knitting sweaters to protect her grand-daughters from the New Jersey climate and crocheting tablecloths—a traditional craft in Puglia. The memoir envisions this small corner in the living room as a third space, neither Puglia nor America: "there, by the radiator, my grandmother sat, ignored and despised, through the years, in that darkened room [...] in a space that was not Italy, but that was not America either" (81). The corner, a prison, the symbol of Louise's mother's victory, is also a pocket of resistance. The old woman sat there, a ghost-like presence and a persistent connection to Puglia,

and the past. She did not invade the house—she was ignored (80)—but she prevented it from being an American American home. Her cooking, her use of dialect, her crocheting, her very presence, all challenged the structure of Louise's mother's fiction of home. Louise DeSalvo's narrative of home, by contrast, incorporates these ingredients, moving to "a third space of enunciation" (Bhabha 54). After the old women's death, traces of the ancestral homeland, and the old woman herself, reappeared. Louise's mother got rid of all the doilies that her stepmother had crocheted, only to pick up embroidery herself. DeSalvo argues that without being aware of it, her mother embroidered flowers and herbs that grew in or near her stepmother's home village (126).

2. Haunted Homes

My contention is that in these memoirs the all-American home is always haunted by the past, the homeland and one's ancestors. The presence of her grandmother in the DeSalvos' living room or of Joyce Zonana's grandmother in Joyce's bedroom creates "unhomely moments [which] relate to the traumatic ambivalence of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (Bhabha 15). Joyce, who shares her bedroom with her grandmother, hears her moaning (in Arabic) every night (Zonana 52–54). Without being able to fully comprehend it, Joyce feels that her grandmother is haunted by the past and the memories of her lost home. With these women, "the recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions" (Bhabha 13).

DeSalvo explicitly argues that her family had unconsciously inherited the violent history of their ancestral homeland, Puglia, a region plagued by violence, poverty and famine.[120] She thinks that although she and her parents did not know about these historical facts, "perhaps [they] knew them in [their] bodies" (137). Thus her mother's relationship to food, starving herself and denying her children food actually "recreated the privations experienced by her people in the South of Italy" (124). A later chapter

[120] DeSalvo would later read books on the history of Puglia and discover poverty, food and water shortages, famines, unbearably hard-working conditions and extremely low wages for the farm hands. Peasant protests were brutally repressed by governmental troops who fired at the peasants, killing thousands.

sheds light on the bread war. She explains that the food her ancestors survived on was "mostly bread [...] just bread [...] poor bread that was made from flour that had been adulterated with clay, sand, chalk, that was infested with mites and contaminated with mice shit" (135).

Reading up on the history of Puglia, DeSalvo learns that poverty-stricken Puglia was also plagued by violence (rebellions, massacres), which explains the violence in the DeSalvos' home, from verbal abuse, to threats—Louise's father routinely threatens to kill her (30)—, to actual blows (81). Violence in the kitchen is also a trait that Louise herself inherited and strives to control—she evokes her own fights with her husband in her own home, which usually start over food. Cooking "perfect meals" for her family is for Louise a means to "undo [her] father's violence, undo [her] ancestors' history" (166). Writing humorously about her anger at the way her husband keeps "assassinating the carrots, [...] or massacring the eggplant" (162) is yet another strategy to cope with the ghosts of the past.

Diane Abu-Jaber devotes a chapter to describing the homes of her "immigrant-kid friends" (*Baklava* 161), paying particular attention to her friend Olga's home. Olga's Russian father, a man who had escaped a concentration camp, crossed Europe on foot and made his way to America, clearly fascinates Diane—she is certain that this man is haunted. Although he acquired a PhD, secured a university position, married and raised children, he kept trying to kill himself (161). Abu-Jaber describes Olga's mother as a woman who "ghosts around the corner," always alert for signs of a breakdown (163). Olga lay awake at night, "mentally meandering" after her father who wandered sleepless through their house.

In Nguyen's, Furiya's and Li's memoirs, meals where traditional food is consumed and the family's past evoked are crucial moments which help the girls imagine bridges between their worlds and their parents'. The Furiyas' apparently peaceful Japanese home in America is disturbed by her father's nightmares. Talks at the dinner table allow the child to gradually understand that when her father was a war prisoner in Russia he survived on watered-down soup and rice gruel (292). Each meal recalls the past and celebrates survival. Torreiro Pazo has convincingly argued that ritualized meals in Nguyen's and Li's memoirs allow the girls to experience postmemory—to feel a connection with their families' traumatic past and

engage in collective memory (116–123). In *Stealing Buddha's Dinner*, food offerings for Tet and the Lunar New Year serve to recall the violence endured in Vietnam, the family's flight, and to celebrate the family's survival (Torreiro Pazo 119–121). On occasions such as Tet, but also on the anniversary of her husband's and son's deaths, Bich's grandmother would place traditional dishes in front of Buddha's altar (Nguyen 189). Noi Noi's celebration of the dead is mirrored by the girl's private experience: Bich "would imagine [her] ancestors and relatives descending into the room" (190). Not only does the girl establish an "almost magical relationship with her dead relatives" (Torreiro Pazo 120), she also turns the Grand Rapids house into a home that can welcome the ghosts of the past.

Laura Schenone's *Lost Ravioli Recipes of Hoboken* shows that an all-American home can nevertheless retain traces of the past. The memoir also reveals the author's attempt to turn her American home into one that can accommodate ghosts. Schenone's parents moved out of Hoboken for a new suburb, hoping for "a fresh start, a *tabula rasa*" (78). They chose to sever all connections with their relatives, becoming an "island with no bridges to the past" (9). Yet early in the memoir Schenone mentions an old ravioli press that used to hang on the kitchen wall (16). Since the press had belonged to her father's Ligurian grand-mother, and had been brought from Liguria, her father had preserved tangible evidence of their past and legacy. As Schenone explained in a promotional video she posted on a website devoted to the memoir,[121] her quest for family and home started with this old ravioli press. Ultimately, Laura would feel a strong connection to her great-grandmother when she gets to use her rolling pin, to the extent that in her own kitchen Laura feels Adalgiza's presence and hears her whispers when she makes the ravioli dough (1). While Louise DeSalvo cooks to "undo the past," Laura Schenone cooks to create a connection to her past. Being a third-generation immigrant, Schenone depicts a journey which is different from the journeys of those who grew up feeling uncomfortable in homes with glaring remainders of ethnicity, from food to language.

[121] The website (www.lostravioli.com) is extinct but her video was posted on December 15, 2007 by a friend of hers and can be seen on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkoSY50FUBM.

3. A Homing Desire

Journeys are an essential trope in culinary memoirs, as most include a journey back to the ancestral homeland. This is what Linda Furiya points out when she says that going to Japan marked a "life-long journey in search of home" (173). Central to the transnational culinary memoir is a "homing desire" (Brah 16, 92)—that is to say a desire to celebrate a connection to the homeland, without glorifying it or turning it into one's only true home. The journey is often undertaken by choice. For instance, Nguyen decides to go to Vietnam with her grandmother, twenty years after they left Vietnam. Leslie Li travels to her grandparents' home town, Guilin (99–145), and once there, she feels a strong connection to the grandmother she depicted as an irritating figure in the first chapters of the memoir. Leslie feels that all the dishes that she eats have retained her grandmother's hand, although her grandmother is too old to cook. She is struck by the resemblances, rather than differences, between the house in China and her childhood home. Joyce Zonana decides to travel to Cairo (161–179), and although she fails to locate her parent's house, she finds a synagogue which gives her "the sensation of homecoming" (178). Schenone travels to Liguria, the country her great-grandparents left in 1907. There, in the Ligurian hills, Laura feels at peace and at home: "a place I have both lost and yet have always had within myself, somewhere deep in the physical roots of my body" (127). Thanks to the journey, home is no longer only an imaginary homeland, although it is a mental and emotional space.

The journey can either enrich their lives—this is clearly what happens for Schenone—or further disturb stable notions of home. Some women end up having their feet planted in both worlds, inhabiting what Haitian-born Edwidge Danticat calls "a country of uncertainty" or "floating homeland" (49). This is perhaps best illustrated by Leslie Li's realization that she feels most at home on islands. When on a tiny volcanic island in Finland, looking at the rocks and water, she suddenly feels "grounded in China" and "connected" with her heritage (175). *The Language of Baklava* offers a more radical version of the "floating homeland" or country of uncertainty. When in Jordan Diane feels homesick for America, when

she is back in America, she feels homesick for Jordan. She eventually understands that these feelings of being homeless, alone, and uprooted are her Bedouin heritage: "I am as surely a Bedouin as anyone who has travelled in a desert caravan" (327).

The authors typically bring back a taste for food and/or recipes from the ancestral homeland. Most of the time they acquire rather than inherit the ability to cook, and the desire to cook is central in the process of reconciliation and healing—a central trope in culinary memoirs. Several memoirs end with a family meal, combining tradition and innovation—family recipes and recipes borrowed from other traditions. Schenone's memoir ends with a meal that Laura prepares for her family and close friends. The ravioli she makes are half Hoboken (the Americanized Philadelphia cheese-filled recipe Adalgiza passed down to her daughters) and half Genoa—the Ligurian recipe Laura learnt there. The memoir also gives prominence to the home and family she has "created." The home that Laura builds for her family differs from the home she grew up in and which deprived her of her ethnic legacy since she intends to pass on her Ligurian heritage. The family meal gathers both parents and children, with the ravioli as symbols of a connection to the past and between generations. While Abu-Jaber's first memoir focuses on uprootedness, her second memoir, *Life Without a Recipe*, describes the home she made for herself, her husband and their adopted daughter, whom she named after her German grandmother. Diane's home accommodates two ghosts, her father and her German grandmother. Food connects all of them: the little girl loves to eat Bud's Jordanian dishes *and* the cookies that Diane bakes, using her maternal grandmother's recipes.

4. Cooking One's Way back Home?

Since ethnic food symbolizes the connection to the home country, transnational culinary memoirs question whether the immigrant can recreate a home by recreating the food of the past. For instance, Joyce Zonana who recalls how her Cairo-born mother spent most of her time in her Brooklyn kitchen makes her "the epitome of diasporic sacrificial dedication to recreating the food of her Egyptian past" (Sherman 279).

Colette Rossant, whose background is partly similar to Zonana's as she was born to a Jewish Egyptian father, wrote three successful culinary memoirs that testify to an exile's efforts to (re)create a home. Her first memoir, *Apricots on the Nile* (1999), which was first published as *Memories of a Lost Egypt*, opposes two halves of Colette's life, in Paris and Cairo. The memoir shows that the Paris apartment in which she grew up until she was five was never a home. Colette's French mother and grandmother are depicted as cold women who could only utter words of reproach and would send Colette out of the only place she felt at home—the kitchen. When Colette was five, her parents moved to Cairo, her father's ancestral home, and Colette stayed there with her Palacci grandparents after her father's death and her mother's return to Paris, until she was fifteen. Symbolically, a photograph of a sailing boat on the Nile (154) precedes the chapter entitled "The Return" (to Paris). Its caption—it is listed as "A *felouk* on the Nile two blocks from *our* house" (xiii, emphasis mine)—clearly posits Cairo as home.

The memoir claims Cairo, and more largely, Egypt, as home and the Palaccis as family. Colette is symbolically welcomed by her Palacci family *and* Egypt from the moment she steps out of the ship. Her grandfather picks her up and buys her a hot *semi*[122] from a street vendor (18). The Cairo chapters describe the palatial Cairo house—the repetition of the name Palacci and Rossant's explanation that it means "of the palace" (19) create a strong connection between the family and their house. They also evoke family life in the family quarters and scenes in the kitchen, with the cook, Ahmet, and Colette's grandmother, Marguerite. Since Colette would lose the Cairo home—her mother demanded her return to Paris when she was fifteen, and the Palaccis, like other Jewish families, left Cairo after the Nasser Revolution—food was the only element from the past that Colette could recover. Yet the memoir goes beyond nostalgia: claiming Egypt as the Palaccis' and Colette's true home is also a political gesture. The cook, who becomes a central, paternal figure in the memoir, after her father's death, also ensures Colette's connection to "real Egypt," as if to compensate for her aristocratic background. Thus Colette would

[122] Semit or simit is a popular type of bread, typically sold on the streets.

ask to eat the food the staff ate—*ful medames*[123]—rather than the tartines her cousins ate (57). She also talked Ahmet's son into smuggling *zalabia* into the house for her (62). Insisting that her grandfather loved "Egyptian food, especially street food, like *ful medames*" (33) and that Marguerite, who "loved all things Egyptian" (47), would prepare *mulukhiyya* soup, *cousbareia* sauce, or *sambusaks*, Rossant asserts the Palaccis' Egyptian identity, which would later be denied by the Nasser Revolution.

But the memoir also evokes Rossant's New York home—she moved to New York in the late 1950s, after marrying an American architect. There, Colette discovered Brooklyn's Atlantic Avenue shops and started to cook the Egyptian dishes from her past. The dishes—*semit, sambusaks* or *ful*—are (unrealistically) identical, and Rossant does not mention any difference in taste. The point is to recover the connection to her past and claim her Egyptian legacy: "Egypt was once more part of [her] life" (168). In this way she also indirectly tells her readers that they can "recreate the past by buying it," which Gabaccia identifies as a central strategy in culinary memoirs (181).

By contrast to such optimistic, or perhaps, unrealistic, views, *The Language of Baklava* suggests that the immigrant can never cook his way back home. Abu-Jaber details her father's struggles with the very concept of "home." When he resides in America, "Bud" is certain that home is Jordan, so he returns to Jordan twice, only to realize that Jordan is no longer home. In America "Bud" is the one who cooks the family meals and Diane Abu-Jaber analyzes his cooking (Jordanian food) as a desperate attempt to keep the connection alive: "He is eating the shadow of a memory. He cooks to remember, but the more he eats, the more he forgets" (190). Diane nevertheless understands her father's feelings, having spent two years in Jordan as a child, which both created a connection to the family's Bedouin culture *and* a sense of uprootedness. When she cooks, she fears that, like her father she is only trying to "live in the taste of things" (318). The memoir ends with her sense of uprootedness: "I feel shipwrecked, cut off from family and home, and even the idea of a

[123] *Ful medames*, a dish of cooked fava beans, is a staple of Egyptian cuisine, commonly eaten at breakfast. *Zalabia* are deep fried sweets. *Sambuzaks* are fried dumplings, filled with meat.

cultural community'' (319). The *Language of Baklava* radically embraces uprootedness and disconnection as home: ''my feeling of aloneness is also a bit like home'' (319).

5. Cosmopolitan Homes

There is no denying that Rossant's evocation of Cairo is part of a strategy to emphasize exoticism and nostalgia, but choosing her Egyptian inheritance over her French legacy for her first memoir[124] is also a strong, if not bold, gesture at the end of the twentieth century—considering that with the 1991 Gulf War hostility towards Arabs had increased in America. New York, not Paris, allowed Colette and her children to claim their Egyptian legacy. As argued by Anita Mannur, the culinary is a paradoxical space, at once a site of affirmation—embracing exotic visions of one self—and resistance, especially when visible minorities claim America as their home (7). Drawing attention to her tentative efforts to introduce Egyptian dishes into the family meals (once a month), Colette Rossant does hint at possible difficulties for her children to accept their Egyptian inheritance. This is perhaps best exemplified by her explanations: ''my son, Thomas, accepted his very curly hair, calling it his 'Arab inheritance.' [...] Cecile decided to dress up as an Egyptian princess at the school Halloween party'' (168). While one child picks up a costume, and an exotic look, another child accepts his *Arab* inheritance. The family meals and the shopping scenes in Brooklyn are also meant to praise New York's multiculturalism—clearly New York, not Paris, allowed her to recover her Egyptian identity.

As noticed by Gilbert (148, 168) and Gabaccia (181), the culinary memoir was framed by the increasing popularity of ethnic cookbooks, and corresponded to an increasingly strong interest in ethnic food in America. Americans and American readers have been crossing the boundaries of taste. Looking back at the time when they grew up in small town America, Furiya and Nguyen reflect on the changes highlighted by Donna Gabaccia—how America eventually embraced ethnic foods (Gabaccia

[124] She returned to her French identity in *Return to Paris* (2003) and *The World in My Kitchen* (2006).

149–201). Furiya notes that Japanese food became available, not only in Cincinnati, but also at the local grocery store (302–303). At the end of the memoir, Nguyen notes, "I will be astonished by how much [Grand Rapids] has changed: there are white people in the Vietnamese markets, white people eating bean curd and *banh bao*" (250). Parama Roy and Anita Mannur have criticized South Asian food-themed novels and cookbooks as catering for wealthy cosmopolitan diasporic South Asians and western readers who like to think of themselves as cosmopolitan. Transnational culinary memoirs with recipes offer traditional recipes (Leslie Li's for instance), but they also often put hybrid dishes on the menu, reflecting life in a diaspora space. This also evidences a desire to welcome readers from other cultural backgrounds and praises America's multiculturalism. However, introducing foreign words alongside English words, integrating both traditional and hybrid recipes, the memoirs themselves occupy a third space of enunciation (Bhabha 54). For instance, in *Bento Box* Furiya explains that her mother invented a few dishes that brought together Asian and western flavors and techniques. Furiya's mother's "Japanese-style omelet" (82) is evidence that the seemingly all Japanese home was permeable to western influence. The words "Japanese-style" and the recipe itself—vegetables, chicken and rice are cooked in the wok before her mother adds the eggs and, as a final touch, *tonkatsu* sauce (78)—also indicate that rather than simply adapt Japanese dishes to her American life, her mother hybridized a Western one. The "Japanese-Style Omelet," which is clearly endowed with a symbolic value, epitomizes her mother's life—her creativity—in a diaspora space.

Cosmopolitanism therefore can be seen as a positive driving force of the culinary memoir. The Greek roots of the word—*cosmos,* the universe and *politês*, citizen—indicate that the citizens of a state or nation feel that they belong to a larger space, that they are citizens of the world. Cosmopolitanism theory has drawn strong connections between cosmopolitanism and the power of imagination that allows human beings to construct their relationship to the world (Delanty), or, in Zonana's words, to construct "dream homes." Joyce Zonana's memoir symbolically ends with a Rosh Hashanah meal Joyce prepares in her Brooklyn apartment. The tiny apartment, then, seems to be the final point of destination of

her "exile's journey" in search of home. Yet, what kind of home does she ultimately create? Transnational culinary memoirs typically reveal a shift towards a more cosmopolitan home that can accommodate various traditions, and does not simply bind the author to one heritage and identity. Thus, the food Joyce cooks for Rosh Hashanah symbolically includes traditional Jewish dishes, such as her mother used to cook, and dishes that reflect Joyce's sense of belonging to the world: butternut squash, kale risotto and arugula and fennel salad (203). Similarly, in *Life without A Recipe,* Abu-Jaber synthesizes several cultures, notably her father's Jordanian legacy and her German grandmother's baking skills.

Nikos Papastergiadis argues that through the perpetual function of the imaginative world, art is always cosmopolitan (220–232). In his reading, cosmopolitan visual art that allows for intercultural dialogue between different perspectives, weaves new types of communities. I believe the same to be true for culinary memoirs. Even if we see them as commodities targeting a cosmopolitan audience, these narratives all suggest the possibility that cooking, sharing food, and speaking about food create a new form of hospitality and communication. Rossant entitled her third memoir, *The World in my Kitchen. The Adventures of a (mostly) French woman in America*. I find Rossant's title to be working both ways, as it suggests that a cook can bring culinary traditions from all over the world, and can wish to open her home, or kitchen, to readers, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. The dream home Zonana imagines is not a lost paradise, it is rather a home she intends to bring and welcome people in. Virginia Sherman argues that the recipes and the pieces of advice that Zonana gives her reader in her memoir "represent the ritual of the shared meal, the breaking of bread together […] A gift shared between author and reader" (279). Memoirs with recipes can be said to illustrate the concept of xenia—inviting strangers into one's home—that Zonana discusses with her students (195), and which Diane Abu-Jaber's father adhered to, all his life.

Although the ravioli are supposed to embody Laura Schenone's connection to her great-grandmother and to her Italian culture, the dish takes on a larger symbolic value—as a dish that travels across cultures. Schenone's research at New York's Public library reveals that stuffed

dumplings are common to many cultures across the world (174–175). Although she does not hesitate to say that she is Jewish, Zonana is often able to connect with Middle-Eastern shopkeepers in delis or bakeries throughout America, where she buys bread that is common to Arab and Jewish cultures, under different names (35). Diane Abu-Jaber learns that stuffed cabbage is common to Russian and Jordanian cultures. Her friend Olga's father, who is Russian and Jewish, steps out of his depression when he eats, and praises, Bud's stuffed cabbage (163–164). In return, the man makes *golubtsi*, a Russian-Polish-Ukrainian-Jewish version of stuffed cabbage, for Diane to bring home to her Jordanian father (164). Yet the memoir is never naïve: although the sharing of food transcended a Jewish/Arab difference, this was not sufficient to help this man who had survived a concentration camp feel at peace and at home in his host country.

Abu-Jaber uses "Baklava" as an instance of cultural resemblances and differences, and a language in itself. On a first, obvious, level the *baklava* embodies cultural encounters across borders—as her aunt points out, this is a dessert that is common to many Middle Eastern cultures (185). There are many versions of it, and different names. Diane having told her aunt that she hated "Arab" food, the latter tells her they should prepare *baklava* because *Baklava* is a Greek word, not an Arabic word. Drawing attention to words, Abu-Jaber suggests that cooking is a language that helps cross cultural boundaries. Intimate connections between food and words, cooking and writing are revealed—a message that also informs Schenone's memoir. She likens the shape of ravioli to an envelope—"a little square of ravioli is an envelope with a message" from one cook to another (4). The idea is repeated in the promotional video which moved from the website devoted to the memoir to *Youtube*, reaching a larger audience, as shown by viewers comments posted as late as 2017. Interestingly, the video shows Laura making dough in her kitchen—there are drawings on the fridge, the room is messy, with electric wires and plugs on the right hand-side. The reader is clearly invited into the author's kitchen, with the result that the boundaries between homes are blurred.

6. The Memoir as (a Haunted) Home

Sandra Gilbert argues that Linda Furiya's memoir illustrates "an attempt to create a gastronomic home: neither Tokyo nor Indiana, neither the lost original table nor the uncomfortable new world lunchroom, the dematerialized but scrupulously described kitchen in the pages of the book becomes the only culinary place to which the writer feels she can belong" (188–189). Gilbert similarly argues that Abu-Jaber "struggles to create a space elsewhere through gastronomical memory" (189). Perhaps, then, Zonana's opening assertion that "through the act of writing I found my home in the world" (1) provides an answer to Avar Brah's question, "when does a place of residence become home?" (1) Zonana clearly likens making vine leaves to writing the memoir: "assembling the fragments of my story and the story of my family, attempting to roll them together into tidy packets, letting them simmer in the juice of imagination" (26). Most memoirs evoke at least one dish that is made with layers of dough folded over fillings: baklava is made with several layers of filo, ravioli are made by placing a filling on top a first layer of dough and folding dough over the filling, Egyptian sambusaks are similarly made by folding dough over a filling, and so are Vietnamese *cha gio*—a rice wrapper is folded over the filling before it is rolled. They can be seen as metaphors of these memoirs which are often pastiches of memories, stories, photographs and recipes.

The claim that the author's home can only be found in the pages of the memoir is valid for those who attempt to deal with loss, and who decide to embark on a journey of reconciliation. Zonana's memoir becomes a place in which she accommodates her mother's recipes and gives her mother a place with her in the kitchen. Symbolically, the first recipes in *Dream Homes* are two recipes for stuffed grape leaves, the first one is "Joyce's recipe" (207), the second one, "Nelly's recipe" (208).

Reconciliation often implies redefining home as infused with love, and redefining the author's identity as a "collage" (Furiya 306). Furiya's memoir rests on a shift from her "Japanese girlhood in Whitebread America" (the subtitle) to "a girlhood in white-bread America—a collage

of Americana and Japanese'' (306). As the authors look back, they attempt to atone for their anger and shame towards home and family, feelings that dominated their childhood. So doing, they often pay a belated tribute to their families and the home they created. Bich Nguyen explains that she eventually understood that her stepmother and her grandmother had actually created a home that was ''real,'' unlike the visions of perfect American homes she saw on television and used to wish for (247). The title, *Stealing Buddha's Dinner*, can be seen as a way to acknowledge the impact of what the teenager did, an admission that she attacked her legacy, which she is trying to atone for. At the end of the memoir Nguyen recalls how her grandmother would ''squat'' in the front yard to pull out toadstools, even though the neighboring children laughed at her (247). She realizes that her grandmother exposed herself in order to protect her, since at that time the child would probably have picked up and eaten the mushrooms. The weirdest member of the household, the immigrant mother or grand-mother, is no longer a figure of shame but is remembered as a figure of resistance, or turned into a tutelary figure. Thus, in the final pages Nguyen pays tribute to her silent grandmother, who, throughout the years, had ''talked'' to her, through cooking (248). DeSalvo turns her grandmother into a symbol, the epitome of the ''immigrant woman'': a woman who kept ''affirming her right to exist in a world that did not want her'' (83). DeSalvo does not provide the reader with scenes of shared meals and cooking sessions (her grandmother used to cook and eat on her own), so she focuses on her grandmother's crocheting. Louise DeSalvo acknowledges that this craft gave her what the country she left and the country she came to did not give her: ''a sense of worth and some small scrap of dignity'' (83). There are no photographs as DeSalvo chooses instead the process of *ekphrasis*, when she describes and comments her grandmother's naturalization document, and textual pictures. Both her sister, mother and grandmother were dead when the memoir was written, and *Crazy in the Kitchen* is a tribute to the old woman in black, an attempt to reconcile with a difficult mother and understand why her sister killed herself, and a desire to get closer to the ghosts of the past. The section entitled ''Chasing ghosts,'' includes her DeSalvo

grandparents, *and* her Pugliese ancestors—many of whom died of starvation, or massacre.

If we see the memoir as a home, then, the transnational memoir is also a haunted home, as writing the memoir means accommodating ghosts. Even though Colette Rossant claims that she could replicate the dishes of her childhood in New York, the Cairo home can only exist on the pages of the memoir. The photograph of the Palacci home, which precedes the chapter entitled "The House" (16), illustrates her memories of a palatial home and reveals it to be lost forever. When Rossant went back to Cairo for the first time in the late 1970s, she found the house and—symbolically—"peered through the black gate into a mostly decrepit garden" (62). The photograph only shows part of the façade, from the outside—illustrating the description of Colette peering at the house. It places viewer and author in the position of an outsider who is forever denied entry. The memoir does not give any photograph of the Cairene cook, Ahmet, her grandmother Marguerite or the Parisian cook, Georgette, instead, the memoir features embedded recipes with a design—a frame—that evokes the shape of a photograph, as if to suggest that the recipes stand for the lost/missing photographs of her childhood. The memoir gives pride of place to a photograph of "My grandfather Vita Palacci surrounded by his children and grandchildren" (xiii) which is positioned after the title page, before the narrative. The cracked photograph captures everything that was lost, a home and a family.

When Rossant published the memoir, her mother and her grandparents were dead and the Palaccis had lost their Cairo home. The memoir offers them a place to rest, or haunt. As Rossant points out, her ancestors were exiles, having been expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century and moved to Turkey; then, after Turkey invaded Egypt, they settled in Cairo (20–22), until the Nasser revolution forced them to disperse. In *The Lost Ravioli Recipes*, Schenone attempts to retrace or find traces of her great-grandparents' lives. Both Laura's own kitchen and the memoir become a haunted home for her "ghosts" (the title of one chapter). The memoir offers the ghost a place to haunt, through photography. There are four photographs of her great-grandparents, one of which is their wedding picture, which features in the third chapter (25). It is also used as

peritext[125] for this chapter: a faded image of her grandparents' faces can be seen behind the words "CHAPTER 3" and "*Salvatore and Adalgiza*"—in an old-fashioned typeface (21). The artificially faded image gives Adalgiza and Salvatore's picture a ghostly quality (21).

Writing the memoir also gives Rossant the opportunity to create connections between generations, one striking passage in *Apricots on the Nile* is the description of Colette Rossant's grandson helping her prepare *ful medames*. It is the boy's face which triggers memories of Cairo—cooking with Ahmet and her grandmother (43). Her grandson's face, hands and hair are described as "sticky" (43) because he has been helping her. The description of his sticky hands and face reminds me of Sara Ahmed's proposal to think through affect as "sticky" (Ahmed 29). Through her grandson, Colette feels and draws connection between her past and her present, her lost Egyptian family and the next generation. Ultimately, readers are invited to share the cooking experience. These memoirs usually evoke the process of cooking, plunging one's hands into raw materials, kneading dough with one's bare hands. The reader is invited to join the cook, in the kitchen.

Thus, the home the author invites her readers into is both a cosmopolitan home, and a haunted home. Although the versions of home that are offered can be rather raw and painful—affects such as shame and anger are recalled, hunger strikes or violent quarrels around the dinner table rather than peaceful family meals are depicted—the transnational memoir has appealed to many readers. Its main ingredients are usually said to be exoticism and nostalgia for the past, but perhaps its secret ingredient is best defined as a homing desire, a desire for roots and legacy that many readers can relate to. If home life is rarely peaceful, the memoir does offer reconciliation with the past as its purpose is clearly to revisit home, as well as hopes that creating a home that is cosmopolitan, with connections to the past and to the world, is possible. Transnational culinary memoirs illustrate the concept of xenia, but the reader is not only a guest at the dinner table, she is also encouraged to cook with the author and see the memoir as a *lieu commun*, a meeting ground between reader and author.

[125] For each chapter, the design is the same, a faint image—usually an artificially faded photograph or painting—in an oval frame which appears as a background to the chapter number and title.

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Society

Relying on British, American and Australian novels and self-narratives ranging from the 18th to the 21st century, this volume focuses on the way home and houses can be at the heart of the narrative process. Actually, this literary topic echoes the global health crisis which kept people home for weeks in 2020 and led them to reflect about travel restrictions and the meaning of home as a place of confinement, but also of creation. The homes at stake here are not merely buildings but extend to places where memories are rooted. They may be family spaces with their specific spheres of influence, but also lost territories, nations entailing criticism or attachment, idealized and reconstructed homelands, or even abstract creative areas of artistic construction. No matter its size and its concrete or abstract meaning, home is space transformed by personal experience and can, therefore, take various shapes and give birth to various representations. From an enclosed space granting or hindering personal freedom to the nostalgia of a lost home, from the conquest of new homes at the expense of others through the colonial process to the post-colonial cultural reconquest of home beyond geography, from a place fostering or preventing the writing process to literatures that follow architectural rules and become homes themselves, this volume ponders the many facets of home and houses and, eventually, emphasizes a concept that transcends time and space while it entails stories of belonging and creation.

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