

Preface

We need this book to start to heal from the anxious safety of home, which produces terror as it appeals to its own defence. To have such a home – determined, bounded, inflexible, explicit – is to commit to a narrow inward orientation, to live in perpetual, precarious unhomeliness of the fearful Self and its frightful shadow of the Other. As the cornerstones of modern ideologies, the reified tropes of belonging, anchored in race, nationality, territory, class, and other entitled imaginations of the Self, conceal a deep alienation from the lifeworlds of home. The volume before you – aptly ending with John Donne’s famous poem – turns the tables on such insular regimes by carefully attending to the different ways home gets caught up between the personal, the communal, and the large-scale political. Home is observed as it travels from public discourse and historiography to the intimacy of sexuality, dwelling or meditations on the place of one’s own burial. In all cases, home appears as a verb, as an active process of communication with place and identity, never lending itself to easy definitions.¹ There is thus no home as such, free of negotiation and change, to be found in this volume. Yet, with each new chapter, we are able to find something powerful in home as a process of travelling towards oneself and others, which reiterates the importance of retaining the concept not only as a heuristic, but perhaps also as a window to our shared (more-than-)human condition.²

As Tom Selwyn reminds us in his Afterword, the result of home’s reification and confinement (with the proliferation of walls and hard borders) is unhomey isolation. It rips through the relational fabric to produce fragments and absences, so that home steadily comes to be expressed in the leftover lacunas of memory, landscape, dreams, and the supernatural. Like all spectral hauntings, these ways of holding on to or rediscovering the past, purposefully occupy the present until such time as some sort of resolution arrives. Strategies of homing, against various unhoming ruptures, sometimes require the piecing together of disarticulated stories and relations, and other times distil specific images, objects and stories as more instrumental in the process of perseverance.³ These strategies appear throughout the book, whether as the Sydney Moluccans sing about ‘coral-ringed islands, supporting harmonious family and community life’ (Chapter 6), or as an anthropologist does archival work on the reconstruction of family histories after the apartheid (Chapter 7), as the Chinese migrant workers dwell on the everyday absences of home in Shantou city (Chapter 2), or as Jewish people return from Israel to (pre-war) Odessa after protracted absence (Chapter 3). Encapsulating and fixing the desired past of home, or normativising the direction of resistance (Chapter 5), may be the outcome of deep changes to the fabric of the community. However, such efforts to freeze moments of social relations, imagined as harmonious or at least better than the present, and

transplant them into the horizons of the future are more imaginative than insular regimes.

To observe the inherent relationality of home, and with such fine-tuned anthropological sensibilities for the voices of others as the contributors demonstrate, is then a globally relevant critique of unhoming ideologies. For, as we journey with the authors' interlocutors, we shift not just geographically, but within and across the scales of *homewardness*, beginning to understand how home's diverse registers are dynamically negotiated: resisted, lived up to, co-orchestrated, dreamed, despaired, sung... These stories are imbued with temporal, spatial and emotional movement, so that home is never abstract, even if each contribution shows how actual people live with and against abstractions. Travel, forced displacement and return are revealed as forms of disorientation, in which one's world is shifted from its axis, but also moments when many assumptions about home are reconsidered and thus put into motion. For all its inherent movement, home is perceived in relation to orientational devices (kinship, landscape, community, architecture, calendar...), the habitual qualities of which are embraced, resisted and revised.

We learn that home may indeed be unhomey – exerting normative pressures or becoming the rationale for violence – yet continue to be called for, even longed for. This apparent paradox, of *homing home*, is expressed in the book's title as 'travelling towards home', which is not about destination or arrival, but a negotiation of orientations, meanings, and ideals, which is never one-directional, but cyclical, oscillating, spiralling, moving back and forth, or simultaneously moving along and against the grain of expectations.

These enthralling and often painful stories of homeward journeys are not clustered simply through the conceptual apparatus. Read together, the chapters cautiously venture to ask something more extensive about the patterns of tangible and intangible interactions of living beings with each other and their environments, about our increasingly shared task 'to deliver spaces and places where sociality and conviviality can flourish' (172). This question, as the book suggests through its grounded ethnographic approach, is not to be answered in any one way, but one to travel with, and often to travail with, as homing requires continual effort, albeit one that does not seem to have an alternative except total isolation. Therefore, homing appears in the chapters as a matter of reconfiguration of home to provide access to those for various reasons excluded from it. Desires and longings, for example, chip away at the confined structures of home and exclusionary articulations of belonging. The 'homeawayness', to use Shushua Chen's term (Chapter 2), in these contributions reads as a critically productive, if precarious, position from which to think accessibility.

Working against isolation is not easy. Homing entails physical and emotional work, sometimes of the kind testing the far edges of human capacities. One of the catalysts for this book and the renewed attention to the questions of home and belonging is the global resurrection of unhoming ideologies and technologies (epitomised by the UK Home Office's anti-immigrant policy of 'hostile environment', announced in 2012).⁴ These powerful unhoming programmes, linked together by the reification of home through the fictional possibility of defending pure identities, have been emboldened through each other's outspokenness and increased levels of violence exercised on defenceless populations. In particular, people seeking refuge from various forms of harm, essentialised in policy and public rhetoric as 'the migrants', have been exploited to consolidate the body politic. The advocates of the 'hostile environment' have co-opted the intimate domains of religion, kinship, and community to stoke fear that home will be lost or changed forever by the arrival of dangerous foreigners, or by propagating the return of some mythical national greatness.⁵

This book shows us that, when faced with repeated violence, or nesting forms of inequity, home becomes an insistent exercise in creativity, an art of reappropriation and alteration of injurious social matrices and material contexts into more hospitable ones. The investment into the 'creative reconstruction of home' (170) is imaginative. It involves the work of memory and adaptation, of resistance and endurance, of crafting alliances and nurturing communities, of trust and discovery. Homing is about active orientations, whether it appears as 'bodily contortions' whilst shifting between spaces of normative masculinity and queerness (Chapter 1), adopting a different narrative register of home for an immigration tribunal hearing (Chapter 6), or visiting home for holidays whilst performing emotional distance from the nonhomely everyday (Chapter 2). It is this surprising creativity that best captures the active entanglements of people, places, and times in the chapters before you. An equally creative anthropology of home, with adaptive methods and conceptual apparatuses, is needed. The reader will surely find an excellent set of examples of it here.

This book is thus of medicinal use in a 'fragmenting world' (172).⁶ Its contributors are keenly aware of the need to avoid the 'danger of [home studies] becoming unmoored to specific lived realities' (2). Their anthropological sensibilities produce observations of homemaking not in static locations but in dynamic and diverse relations, which is why we are never asked to accede to the terms and conditions set out by the ideological co-optations of home.

Safet HadžiMuhamedović
London, 21 February 2023

¹ In Tom Selwyn's scholarship, home, and hospitality are not only the key words, but also indispensable questions of responsibility in what he has recognised as a 'fragmenting world'. I am lucky to be part of an ever-expanding group of researchers, artists, museum workers, students, and activists who have been guided by Tom into these questions. It is not surprising to me, then, that Tom has offered a set of *invitational endnotes* to this text, in the form of links to new communal initiatives, inclusive conversations, creative repositories, and collaborative learning programmes.

² In the first two weeks of February 2023, an exhibition was held at the wildlife conservation charity, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), displaying the artwork produced by *Refugia*, a programme jointly organised and managed by ZSL and The New Arts Studio, a therapeutic arts group for asylum seekers and refugees. Based in Islington, the latter holds weekly art therapy sessions for asylum seekers and refugees thus providing a safe space for some of the most dispossessed members of our society. Its overall aim is, in its own words, 'to enable our members to express experiences and feelings that can't always be put into words'. More information about the collaborative programme and the *Refugia* exhibition may be obtained from Lucy Brown (lucy.brown@zsl.org), ZSL's Public Engagement with Science Manager.

³ London's Migration Museum (www.migrationmuseum.org) is the primary centre for the articulation of stories, artwork, exhibitions, discussions/discourses, and school/university/extra mural education about the contribution of migration to the cultural and economic life of the UK. On 21 February 2023, after a ten year journey from wonderful spaces in the old fire station in Battersea and, more recently in Lewisham Shopping Mall, the Migration Museum announced that it has been given the green light for a permanent home in the City of London – a stone's throw from Fenchurch Street – where it will continue, in its own words, 'to explore how the movement of people to and from these shores have shaped who we all are – as individuals, as communities, and as nations'.

⁴ The Xenia Series (from Greek *Xenia*: hospitality) is a multi-disciplinary network of scholars from various universities in the UK and beyond who organise and manage monthly presentations and discussions on the nature of identity, together with such interrelated topics as home, hospitality, hostility, exclusion, inclusion, and migration. Further information about the series may be obtained from Tom Selwyn (t.selwyn@soas.ac.uk) and at www.xeniaseries.com.

⁵ 'Shared Sacred', an exhibition of anthropological photography organised by Safet HadžiMuhamedović at the University of Cambridge, delves into the proximities, relations and encounters between persons and communities of 'different' faiths. It introduces diverse examples of co-orchestrated rituals, feasts and holy spaces testifying to rich historical and present-day coexistences in polities increasingly partitioned along the lines of religious identity. Its contributors from across the world search for ways out of simple, one-dimensional narratives of religion by pointing out the travels and negotiations of meaning between the political and the everyday. Further details are available at www.sharedsacred.com.

⁶ In the academic year 2021/2, colleagues from Al-Quds Bard, Jerusalem, SOAS University of London, and the University of the Arts (artEZ), the Netherlands, assembled and taught the

course 'Dislocated Identities in a Fragmenting World' for the Open Society University Network (opensocietyuniversitynetwork.org). Taking the main inspiration from the work on socio-cultural identity by Amin Ma'aluf, the course covered topics from dislocation, shared sacred spaces, refugee return, cities of refuge, mediascapes, intergenerational trauma, and nationalism. The follow up course is presently in preparation. Further information is available from Carin Rustema (c.rustema@artEZ.nl), Jens Haendeler (jhaendeler@staff.alquds.edu), or Tom Selwyn (ts14@soas.ac.uk).

Pre-publication copy