

## 2. Explorations of Home

---

Home can define local and specific places as well as feelings of belonging, memories, family, and relationships. Many experiences of home transcend time and space, even as they occur in specific moments and locations. To begin to parse what we mean when we talk about, engage with, and imagine home, this chapter weaves together literature about home as place and home as affective feelings, including belonging. As an affective experience, home can also include absences, be defined through narrative, and be subject to longing and vulnerability. Later in the chapter, I address home specifically in political, religious, and migratory contexts. Home can provide a sense of identity, yet it can also become tied to systems of power and belonging. I hope this survey unpacks hegemonic and idealistic notions of home, which can come to dominate both dialogue and research. Particularly in the context of migration, or when considering other marginalized experiences, creating this distance between dominant definitions makes room for alternative perspectives and experiences about home.

Home is a complex, powerful, and arguably universal concept in human experience. Even as migration and globalization blur borders and render the world increasingly “placeless,” the concept of home remains a powerful signifier. While home is multi-faceted and difficult to pin to any one definition, it is often related to meaningful life experiences, identity, belonging, and security.<sup>1</sup> These diverse associations with home are often generalized and assumed, making it a difficult concept to grasp. As Beate Beckmann-Zöller and René Kaufmann write, home can be understood as the place where one was born, it can be a geographical area with historical connections, it can be a metaphor for safety, it can be a place of stability, and it can indicate family, friends, and important social connections.<sup>2</sup> Home might be defined as

- 
- 1 On the other hand, home can also be a place of danger, violence, and grief, as will be addressed later in this chapter.
  - 2 René Kaufmann, “Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug. Betrachtungen zum Spannungsfeld von Heimat und Fremde,” in *Heimat und Fremde: Präsenz im Entzug: Festschrift für Prof. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz*, with the assistance of Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöller and René Kaufmann, 2. überarb. Auflage (Verlag Text et Dialog, 2016), 21–25.

a physical location, a mythic or desired place, or as a sense of identity and belonging.<sup>3</sup>

Home is influenced by multiple forces, making it a slippery concept, particularly for those who have lost home. Rowan Hisayo Buchanan, author and editor of the anthology *Go Home!* and a former refugee, writes:

My idea of home is a verb. Home is a straining toward belonging. For me the feeling of wanting to go home is home. For others, home is a place they want to escape, a place that doesn't exist, a place that exists only in time, a place that exists in the breath of a parent, or the mouth of a lover. For some, home is geographical, but they cannot return because of political, financial, or personal reasons. Others are seen as foreigners in their chosen homes.<sup>4</sup>

This complexity makes even the word *home* a nebulous concept that can be used to mean a mix of places, states, feelings, and desires and to refer to a range of meanings – from a particular house, to a group of people, to a nation-state. In this exploration, home is considered an empirical category, one that is defined and designated by those who experience it. At the same time, there are parameters that make home more recognizable across the landscape of experiences. Home is a powerful connection to place, people, and practices, and yet it can be ambiguous in meaning.<sup>5</sup> Home as a particular town or mountain lends specificity to home as a particular location, yet home as tastes and smells means home is more mobile and potentially transitory, even as it is rooted in embodied experiences.

The ubiquity of home in discourses speaks to its importance in human life. Home might serve a diversity of purposes. It may indicate membership, serve as a social, religious, or political characteristic, or designate important people, places, and experiences. When talking about home it often isn't clear what is meant: a feeling, a loyalty, a place, an idea, or a hoped-for future. In fact, home is used to indicate a variety of places, feelings, and experiences, from a childhood home, to a piece of music, to a group of people one has never met. Amélie Adamavi-Aho Ekué, a theologian, writes that there is a semantic continuum between words for home that includes the terms “home/homeland/belongings,” each of which can produce innumerable contextual arrangements.<sup>6</sup> This book's exploration of home takes this continuum as a starting point to explore personal, cultural, and religious perspectives on home.

---

3 Femke Stock, “Home and Memory,” in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*, ed. Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin (Zed, 2010), 25, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350219595.ch-002>.

4 Rowan H. Buchanan, ed., *Go Home! Twenty-Four Journeys from the Asian American Writers' Workshop and the Feminist Press* (Feminist Press, 2018), 2.

5 Stock, “Home and Memory,” 25.

6 Amélie Adamavi-Aho Ekué, “Heimat suchen: Interkulturell-theologische Suchbewegungen zu Heimat und Migration,” in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélie

Notions of home are also subject to idealization, and home in some contexts can become reflexively associated with certain characteristics, beliefs, or circumstances. This tendency toward idealization can also occur in academic inquiries into home, as Kim Knott, a scholar of religious studies, summarizes: “both phenomenologists of place and phenomenologists of religion have fallen prey to processes of idealisation and essentialisation in their accounts of home and place as sacred.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Joachim Klose, a theologian, cautions that with any research into home, there is both an opportunity and a challenge to distance home from ideological associations.<sup>8</sup> Especially in the context of migration, research into home benefits from moving away from essentialized definitions and instead exploring how home is lived and practiced.<sup>9</sup>

Assumptions about home can provide a unifying narrative that generates feelings of belonging through shared language and experiences. Yet, ideals about home can become unquestioned parts of cultural norms and identities that can reinforce sexism, racism, and hierarchical systems. When someone hears the word home, many different feelings, images, or memories may occur for the person. Assuming home means one thing misses the diversity of experiences and associations it encapsulates. A first step in creating a broader, but still useful, concept of home is to acknowledge the multiple nature of home.

To guide this exploration of home and challenge idealized and ideological associations, I will start by unpacking two assumptions about home: that home is a place and that home is an experience of belonging. I will examine how each of these has shaped and is shaped by the discourse on home. Place is often assumed to be a marker of home. Common questions such as “Where are you from?” and “Where is your home?” reflect the assumption that home is located in a particular place. A common definition of home is the house and place where one lives. Yet, as Brain K. Pennington and Amy L. Allocco, professors of religious studies, ask in the forward

---

Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017), 43.

- 7 Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (Acumen Publishing Ltd, 2013), 97–98.
- 8 Joachim Klose, “An Den Rändern Von Heimat,” in *Heimat und Fremde: Präsenz im Entzug: Festschrift für Prof. Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, with the assistance of Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz*, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöllner and René Kaufmann, 2. überarb. Auflage (Verlag Text et Dialog, 2016), 98.
- 9 Paolo Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives, Mobility & Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58802-9>. Boccagni explains his research on home as necessarily experientially and exploratory, versus essentialist. “My aim here, then, is not to assert what home is – a dubious and unnecessarily ‘essentialistic’ effort, given the variety of stances on the question. Rather, it is to dynamically trace out the prevalent meanings of home, the ways in which it works out as a social experience and its societal consequences, in practice.”

to the book *Culture, Religion, and Home-Making in and Beyond South Asia*, what makes one particular place, and not another, home? “How does a particular site, whether it is a built structure, a network of dwellings, a region, or a nation, come to evoke the memories, emotions, persons, and physical features that we associate with the richly evocative but perhaps undefinable idea of ‘home?’”<sup>10</sup> Home is a local, embodied experience as well as one that resides in ideas, longings, memories, and imagination. Femke Stock describes these parallel aspects of home as “a realm of concrete locality and everyday experience on the one hand and a more ideational, symbolic or discursive realm on the other.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, home is both a located place and an attachment to feelings, ideas, and longings.

One feeling that is often associated with home is the feeling of belonging. Belonging is an affective feeling that can be both internally and externally defined. One may be considered part of a group yet have no affective attachment to it. Or one may feel connected to a place or experience that one has only read about or imagined. Belonging, as attached to home, is ambivalent and contextual and is only one of many feelings associated with home. Many people know when they “feel at home” but have a harder time describing the qualities, circumstances, people, or places that create an experience of home. The organizers of the Swiss exhibit, *Heimat als Grenzerfahrung*, discovered, when they asked 1001 people “What is home to you?”<sup>12</sup> that there were as many different answers as there were people.<sup>13</sup> While home as place figured prominently in their answers, and included landscapes, towns, and villages, other associations also emerged, including tastes, sounds, and smells, as well as significant experiences, relationships, and social practices.

While unpacking the concept of home, I will wander through many aspects, theories, and uses of the word home in order to create some theoretical sensitivity with which explore alternative aspects of home. Strauss and Corbin, the founders of grounded theory, recommend developing theoretical sensitivity to topics and con-

---

10 Brain K. Pennington and Amy L. Allocco, “Forward,” In *Culture, Religion, and Home-Making in and Beyond South Asia*, ed. James Ponniah (Fortress Press, 2020), xiii, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvvoqv4n.5>.

11 Stock, “Home and Memory,” 26.

12 Stapferhaus Lenzburg, ed., *Heimat: Eine Grenzerfahrung* (Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ Libro, 2017), 102–11.

13 Stapferhaus Lenzburg, *Heimat*, 81.

cepts in order to develop points of comparison.<sup>14</sup> This development of a “sensitizing concept” serves this research project by sketching out the many angles and approaches to theories of home. Sociologist Kathy Charmaz has described sensitizing concepts as “those background ideas that inform the overall research problem.”<sup>15</sup> They are distinct from “definitive concepts” in that they resist fixed attributes and instead aim to provide reference points to guide empirical inquiry.<sup>16</sup> I explore concepts, approaches, and complexities related to home by taking a meandering path through studies of space and place, theories of affectivity, relationships to place that are shaped by absence and loss, accounts of home in political and cultural arenas, and the roles played by migration and home in religious narratives. This exploration of home reveals the tendency of definitions of home to become hegemonic and rigid as well as the diversity of experiences to which home is ascribed. It is my hope that the shape of home that emerges is broad but not fixed, instead offering boundaries and perspectives for reflection to create points of engagement with home in the context of asylum-seeking in Basel, Switzerland.

## 2.1 Home as Place

Home is often understood in terms of geographic roots, where a person grew up or spent significant time, or where their family originates from or identifies with ethnically, culturally, or religiously. Because place holds so much potential information about a person, the question “Where are you from?” is frequently asked, especially when first meeting someone. The question seeks to locate a person spatially, socially, and politically and to understand more about them. It also aims to generate social connection, establish mutuality, and uncover identifying characteristics. The simplicity of the question and its goal, to understand more about a person, belie the complex meaning assigned to someone’s geographic attachments. Answers to the

- 
- 14 For a discussion of grounded theory, see, among others: Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2015); Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (Sage Publications, 2006); Glenn A. Bowen, “Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3, no. 5 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500304>; Herbert Blumer, “What Is Wrong with Social Theory?,” *American Sociological Review* 19, no. 1 (1954), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2088165>.
- 15 Kathy Charmaz, “Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods,” in *Strategies for Qualitative Inquiry*, ed. N. K. Denzin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2003), 259.
- 16 Blumer, “What is Wrong with Social Theory?”; Glenn A. Bowen, “Sensitizing Concepts,” in *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*, ed. Paul Atkinson et al. (SAGE Publications, 2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036>; Bowen, “Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts.”

question “Where are you from?” reveal not only geography but also climates, activities, language, politics, food, arts, family history, cultural affiliations, and religion.

Place acts as a fulcrum when discussing home, it is the center around which other connections and characteristics revolve. As theologian Jan Holton writes, “We are embodied and thus emplaced creatures; the place we call home and our relationship to it can have a remarkable impact on us.”<sup>17</sup> The nuances of the smell of bread, a view from a window, the tempo of language, and the company of people shape specific places into meaningful locations, such as home. Definitions of home, and the sense of identity they provide, are often embedded in geographic attachments such as “my home or house, my neighbourhood, my city, my region, my homeland.”<sup>18</sup> Identification with place embeds a person in a geographic location through social and emotional connections, sensations, and emotions. Understanding how place is both geographically and socially constructed offers insights into individual and collective experiences of home as well as into how it can serve as a placeholder for family, identity, and meaning.

### 2.1.1 The Spatial Turn

With the “spatial turn” in the late 20th century, the focus of social science research turned to the category of space. This “turn” considers new theoretical frameworks and perspectives through space and human relationships to space.<sup>19</sup> The consideration of space has impacted academic disciplines from geography, to sociology, to history. The spatial turn looks at how space is organized, utilized, and controlled. Theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Michel Foucault explored dynamics of power within space, raising issues of interpretation and representation.

With the spatial turn, concepts of place and space evolved beyond considerations of static geographic location. Space instead becomes constituted in particular ways at a particular time through relationships between people, practices, and geography. Social geographer Doreen Massey writes that place is created through a particular confluence of time and space and is not necessarily a concrete geographic location.<sup>20</sup> This overarching theoretical shift moves away from the Cartesian separation of mind and body, and instead focuses on how space is produced in social and relational processes.

---

17 M. Jan Holton, *Longing for Home: Forced Displacement and Postures of Hospitality* (Yale University Press, 2016), 31, <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300207620.001.0001>.

18 Bieler and Kunz, “Responding to the Loss of Home,” 136.

19 Beat Kümin and Cornelia Osborne, “At Home and in the Workplace: A Historical Introduction to the ‘Spatial Turn,’” *History and Theory* 52 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10671>; Angelo Torre, “A ‘Spatial Turn’ in History? Landscapes, Visions, Resources,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, no. 5 (2008): 1127–44.

20 Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (SAGE Publications, 2005).

Before the spatial turn, static notions of space and place dominated scholarly discourse. Cartesian and Newtonian conceptions of space as absolute and fixed began to shift with 17th century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who conceived of space as having a relational dimension.<sup>21</sup> For Leibniz, relational processes impacted the content and meaning of space, in contrast to the static and unchanging qualities of Cartesian notions of space. Thus, relationships among objects, especially social relationships, are just as critical to spatial meanings as the locations themselves. Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space*, argued that space is not inert or fixed, but relational and social, and thus that space happens through processes, that it is *produced*.<sup>22</sup> It is how space is used, not the fact of its existence, that gives space meaning. Space and place are not static but evolve and change with time and circumstance. In this reconceptualization, offered by the spatial turn, the place of home is more than land, location, and geography.<sup>23</sup>

Relationships among people, practices, experiences, and objects create meaning and organize space into a more bounded and knowable subset, making it a malleable concept for meaning-making. Places are grounded in human embeddedness and interaction with the physical and social world and are always being created through relationships. Because of this social dimension of space, the spatial turn resulted in an increased focus on dynamics of power, social issues, politics of representation, and environmental impacts. As Knott writes, “This spatial turn challenged earlier Cartesian approaches, focusing attention on social as well as physical space, foregrounding spatial practice and representations, and stressing the importance of power and the production of space.”<sup>24</sup> This is particularly true for places such as home, which hold significant personal as well as cultural and political meaning.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.1.1.1 Space, Place, and Location

Before delving deeper, I will discuss the terms space, place, and location and clarify their uses. Since my research languages are both German and English, I will introduce terms in both languages. The terms space (*Raum*), place (*Ort*), and location (*Stelle*) are distinct terms, yet they are often used fluidly and interchangeably.<sup>26</sup> In

21 Setha M. Low, *Spatializing Culture: The Ethnography of Space and Place* (Routledge, 2016).

22 Rob Shields, “Henri Lefebvre,” in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2011), 281.

23 See: Shields, “Henri Lefebvre”; Low, *Spatializing Culture*; Massey, *For Space*.

24 Kim Knott, “Religion, Space, and Place: The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion,” *Religion and Society* 1, no. 1 (2010): 29, <https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2010.010103>.

25 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 12.

26 While these terms were encountered in the works of numerous theorists, I draw my choices of English terms from the work of the geographer Doreen Massey and her extensive work on space and place: Massey, *For Space*; and from the sociologist Setha Low’s chapter “Genealogies: The Concepts of Space and Place,” in her book *Spatializing Culture* (2016). I draw my

the end, these terms and definitions must be treated with some degree of translation and fluidity both in this book and among scholars.<sup>27</sup> Yet, to begin it is helpful to distinguish their definitions and highlight the ways their meanings overlap and intersect. Location distinguishes itself more readily from space and place and is defined by its specificity, often referring to a particular position in relation to other positions.<sup>28</sup> It might be used in the task of locating specific boundaries or as a fixed point of reference. Space is a more abstract and undefined term, as reflected in its use in the phrase “outer space.”<sup>29</sup> Place contains qualities of both previous words by creating relationships between locations in space. Many social scientists consider place a more specific subset of space. Anthropologist Setha Low writes, “space is the more encompassing construct, while place retains its relevance and meaning but only as a subset of space.”<sup>30</sup> Even ancient Greek thought understood place as a specific and relational part of space. For the Greeks, *chora* denoted more abstract space while *topos* denoted more specific place. Plato imagined *chora* as pre-existent, the material that was necessary for human and divine activity. *Topos*, in contrast, was considered a vessel or container that gives more specific shape to *chora*. Thus, place is a vessel or container that leads to greater specificity of meaning. It is a bounded but flexible concept created through relational activity.<sup>31</sup>

Knott refers to place as “a moment in space” created through the specific relationship of people, practices, and environment in a certain time. Knott writes, “The particularity of a place arises from the complexity of its social relations and the sum of the stories told about it. Being a progressive part of space, or a moment in space, it is open to a spatial analysis.”<sup>32</sup> This relational understanding locates place, including home, in a web of social relations and lived experiences. In Lefebvre’s examination of space, as well as for subsequent theorists, social activities produce the specificity of place.<sup>33</sup> Lefebvre argued that geographic space is inherently social and created through lived experiences.<sup>34</sup> This social configuration means that when considering questions about what a home is, geographical place is not enough from which to

---

German terms from my own translations and from Karen Joisten’s book *Philosophie der Heimat – Heimat der Philosophie* (2003).

27 John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology* (Ashgate, 2003).

28 Knott, *The Location of Religion*.

29 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.

30 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 12.

31 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 3–5.

32 Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 33.

33 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 23.

34 Shields, “Henri Lefebvre,” 281. Shields explains this social basis of experience as critical to Lefebvre’s understanding of space. “Lefebvre attempted to establish the importance of ‘lived’ grassroots experiences and argued that geographical space is fundamentally social.”

theorize. Instead, place, practices, and people and the relationships between them must be considered. A cornerstone of the notion of the social construction of space is the importance of relationality. As Convery, Corsane, and Davis, in their book *Making Sense of Place*, write, “Place is thus bound up in people’s sources of meaning and experience; people and their environments, places and identities are mutually constructed and constituted.”<sup>35</sup> Relationality as the interaction of people, practices, and locations occurs throughout time and space.

Knott also argues for a more fluid understanding of place, which she defines as “gathered, produced and reproduced by spatial practice, configured and also openly extended by social relations, constrained by the dominant order, but the living expression of everyday practices and dynamic local interpretations (local knowledge) of that place.”<sup>36</sup> The practices of groups and individuals can be viewed, formally or informally, as place-making activities. *Place-making* is often used in urban planning to consider the deeper purpose of place beyond its utility. Urban places are not just zones for commerce, transportation, or housing. They are dynamic sites of human interaction; they are where life occurs. Place-making acknowledges the dynamic impact of local activities, the interactions of people, and the open-ended possibilities for spaces. It speaks to the power of human activity to shape and define a place. Place-making asserts that place does not have limited meaning or utility, that places can be reimagined and re-engineered to serve broader needs. This is often achieved by creating more community spaces and increasing accessibility in urban areas. Architects, community groups, local governments, churches, and civic organizations contribute to reimagining space in these ways.

This book uses the word *place* to refer to geographic space that is socially shaped. Place as social has a particular resonance when attempting to name and describe home. Convery, Corsane, and Davis continue, “Place, as distinct from space, provides a profound centre of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties and is part of the complex processes through which individuals and groups define themselves.”<sup>37</sup> The embodied experiences, emotions, and processes that build home are shaped through relationships and affectivity, as will be explored in the following sections. Understanding home as a socially produced place also reveals why home is a slippery concept – it is shaped and impacted by diverse forces and experiences. As Pennington and Allocco write, “By reflecting on the process of home-making, it reminds us that homes are not naturally occurring entities, but rather they must be fashioned through human processes and that they are produced

---

35 Ian Convery, Gerard Corsane, and Peter Davis, eds., *Making Sense of Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Heritage Matters, vol. 7 (Boydell Press, 2012), 1.

36 Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 33.

37 Convery, Corsane, and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, 1.

and reproduced within political contexts, social systems, and economic flows.”<sup>38</sup> The argument that home is not “naturally occurring” challenges essentialist and idealistic notions of home. Home is not a neutral, natural place or experience. It is a place that is produced through the many experiences of living that coalesce in distinct, and often individual, ways.

### 2.1.1.2 Place as Being in the World

Philosopher Edward Casey writes, “To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place.”<sup>39</sup> Humans are placed in the world – they exist not in abstract space, but in specific places. The social production of space is based on this human embeddedness in place. Philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty have foregrounded the impact of this embeddedness on human experience in the world. Martin Heidegger’s concepts of dwelling and being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) emphasize human activity in the world. Dwelling is a reclamation of the German word *bauen*, meaning to build. Heidegger draws on an analogous meaning – to build means that one dwells in a place, builds community, and sets down roots.<sup>40</sup> As Low explains, “Dwelling is the basis of place-making activity and reflects the entanglement of human beings’ relationship with the world.”<sup>41</sup> In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes human existence as “being-in-the-world,”<sup>42</sup> *Dasein*, which situates human experience in a specific place in the world. This “placedness” is critical to defining humanness and human activity in the world.<sup>43</sup> Heidegger argues that we are beings who *are* insofar as we dwell, that is, insofar as we are making a place for ourselves.<sup>44</sup> The primacy of human interaction with, and impact on, place means that human experience and meaning-making cannot be separated from human placed-ness in, and connection to, the world.

Being situated in the world informs other phenomenologies. Pierre Bourdieu posits that social systems become embedded in everyday practices in the form of embodied practice, which he calls *habitus*. *Habitus* is knowledge that is contained in the body, which shapes everyday actions and places. “It is the idea that ongoing, practical everyday activities – articulated through bodies – contain prior cultural

---

38 Pennington and Allocco, “Forward,” xiii.

39 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (University of California Press, 1997), 93.

40 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 19.

41 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 17.

42 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, neunte unveränderte Auflage (Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960).

43 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 18. Inge further explains Heidegger’s understanding of *dasein* as necessitating place. “For Heidegger, the human person is a *dasein*, literally a ‘being-in-the-world’ – so that placedness is of the essence.”

44 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*.

dispositions that weigh upon, but not definitively so, ongoing actions.”<sup>45</sup> *Habitus* describes activities that generate culturally meaningful spaces, including home. In his original development of the concept of *habitus*, Bourdieu researched home among Algerian Berbers. Bourdieu determined that, as described by Low, “it is through the experience of living in the spatial symbolism of the home that social structure becomes embodied and naturalized in everyday practice.”<sup>46</sup> Places generate meaning due to the interaction of people with their lived environment, with other people, and with social systems. De Certeau sums up this interaction by defining place as shaped by practices and reconfigured through narrative.<sup>47</sup> It is everyday tactics, how geographies are used and engaged with, that shape and give meaning to a place.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.1.1.3 Home as Process

Reconceptualizing place as socially constructed challenges fixed ideas of place. While many places hold meaningful associations, these associations may change with time and circumstance. As relationships and practices change, how a place is experienced and perceived also changes. These places may be re-shaped through new relationships and experiences. For a meaningfully dense place such as home, there is a tendency to attach concrete meaning at individual and communal levels. Fixed definitions of home provide boundaries that determine what exactly makes something home, including what belongs and what does not. These boundaries are necessary, yet so are flexibility and openness. As social anthropologist Mary Douglas writes, “Home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space.”<sup>49</sup> A nation-state may have fixed definitions, yet if it does not account for new people, cultural shifts, or political and social developments, it risks becoming irrelevant or authoritarian. In the same way, if the childhood house represents home, when the house is sold or as relationships with parents change, understandings of home must also change. Geographers David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli write that home “is a process, an achievement involving both the people we share home with but also the material objects therein.”<sup>50</sup> Home, like other meaningful places, is an evolving relationship between physical place, people, and experiences. Because relationships evolve, definitions of place and home also evolve.

---

45 Gary Bridge, “Pierre Bourdieu,” in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publication, 2011), 77.

46 Low, *Spatializing Culture*, 18.

47 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1984), 117.

48 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35–36.

49 Mary Douglas, “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space,” *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (1991): 289, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2023.2170118>.

50 David Ralph and Lynn A. Staeheli, “Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings, and Identities,” *Geography Compass* 5, no. 7 (2011): 521, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2011.00434>.

x.

Home is a dynamic, evolving, and created process. Meanings and experiences of home can and do shift over time. As philosopher Karen Joisten explains in her exploration of home, human life occurs in a specific space, time, and location (*Raum-Zeit-Stelle*) with specific people, in a specific language, within certain traditions and histories, and with particular values and rules.<sup>51</sup> Home is unique to a certain time and place and a certain configuration of relationships, memories, and places. As Joisten writes, home is not a rigid, fixed “*Etwas*” (something), it is a life-long process that is constantly realized through new ways of being at home.<sup>52</sup> This fluidity leads to ongoing renegotiations and reconfigurations of home. It can be argued that there is no single concept of home, even at the individual level, and that home changes shape. Dwelling in the world is not fixed, but constantly in motion. This fluidity reconstellates relationships and is a dynamic process whereby place is continually created. Joisten’s philosophy of home is grounded in this concreteness of being-in-the world while also emphasizing that relationships within the world are always changing. Joisten uses the analogy of standing in a river to illustrate that the same place is not static, it changes in each moment.<sup>53</sup> The specific constellation of time, place, and experience means that new relationships to place are created in each moment.

This continual moving towards home means that home is more of a verb than a noun. Sociologist Paolo Boccagni defines home as a dynamic and created process, which he calls *homing*.<sup>54</sup> “Homing is ultimately an invitation to reframe and approach home as becoming, rather than only as being, feeling, or making.”<sup>55</sup> Humans are embedded in the world and constantly creating meaning through relationships between people, practices, and environment. *Homing* is a product of these relationships and includes both real and desired experiences.<sup>56</sup> The process of creating and becoming home is ongoing. As sociologist Karen Jacobson writes, “there is no escaping the fact that we are beings who are always making ourselves at home and always such that we are never completely at home. We are forever becoming at home.”<sup>57</sup> There is often a strong desire to establish a clear definition of home, especially when

---

51 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 38.

52 Karen Joisten, “Woher komme ich? Wohin gehe ich?,” in *Zukunft Heimat*, ed. Joachim Klose and Ralph Linder (Thelem, 2012), 41.

53 Joisten, “Woher komme ich?,” 36.

54 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 24–25.

55 Paolo Boccagni, “Homing: A Category for Research on Space Appropriation and ‘Home-Oriented’ Mobilities,” *Mobilities* 17, no. 4 (2022): 585, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2022.2046977>.

56 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 24–25.

57 Kirsten Jacobson, “Philosophical Perspectives on Home,” in *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*, ed. Susan J. Smith, Marja Elsinga, Lorna Fox O’Mahony, Ong Seow Eng, Susan Wachter, and Robyn Dowling (Elsevier, 2012), 181, <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-047163-1.00321-0>.

home facilities feelings of security and belonging. Yet, home is not a single place, event, or feeling.

### 2.1.2 Home as Affective Associations

Identifying home with place provides some description of what and where home might be. Yet, for many, home is captured more through feelings or senses and described through memories, affective associations, and stories. As Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, a Zimbabwean writer and refugee, writes in her essay “New Lands, New Selves,” home is a feeling and a place of longing. “Though I still yearn for “home,” I no longer think of it as a place out there, to go to. It now resides in me, a “feeling at home” inside of me that I try to cultivate every day, that I can take with me wherever I need to go.”<sup>58</sup> Affective dimensions of home are portable. While they may be generated by experiences in specific locations, these feelings are not confined to specific places.

Affective experiences produce associations and interpretations of place, including home. Experiences of home are defined not only by where they occur and who they occur with but also by the emotions and feelings associated with these interactions. Ralph and Staehli, in their book *Home and Migration*, write that “home is experienced both as a location and as a set of relationships that shape identities and feelings of belonging.”<sup>59</sup> Relationships and places generate feelings, emotions, and moods to create a sense of a particular place at a specific time.<sup>60</sup> These interactions are modulated on an emotional-affective level and are interpreted by describing them through feelings, moods, and emotions or attaching them to memories and longings. Interactions with and in places and experiences may generate positive or negative emotions, become associated with certain memories, or call up states of being.

While difficult to describe or categorize, affective experiences give shape to nuanced experiences of living and are closely linked to the physical and embodied world. The philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs explains affective associations, which he calls *affectivity*:

They vary between short-lived, intense, object-related states and longer lasting, objectless states remaining in the background of awareness. This is mirrored in

---

58 Novuyo R. Tshuma, “New Lands, New Selves,” in *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, ed. Viet Thanh Nguyen (Abrams, 2018), 90.

59 Ralph and Staeheli, “Home and Migration,” 518.

60 Andrea Bieler, “Exploring Affectivity: An Unfinished Conversation with Pamela Sue Anderson,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 25, no. 1–2 (2020): 247–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2020.1717810>.

the host of terms such as mood, affect, feeling, emotion, passion, or sentiment that have been variously used and defined, but still may not be neatly separated.<sup>61</sup>

Affective associations are difficult to describe because they include complex states and feelings that often exist below the surface of awareness. Theologian Andrea Bieler writes that the human experience of affectivity is often difficult to articulate or even recognize. “The embodied sense of aliveness exists as the backdrop of our cognitive reflections, our actions, and our directed, intentional feelings. Most of the time this sense is unnoticed and unvoiced.”<sup>62</sup> Yet this background experience adds resonance to life experiences and creates associations with particular times and places. Affective associations generate attachments and aversions that become associated with people and places. For this reason, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, a professor of education, argues for the inclusion of affectivity as an important vehicle of engagement with the world.<sup>63</sup> Affectivity serves to reinterpret experiences, especially when the feelings are particularly intense, either positively or negatively. While emotions are often categorized as good or bad, welcome or unwelcome, emotions are embodied responses to lived experiences just as physical and mental responses are reactions to the lived environment. These “affective responses,” as de Oliveira calls them, are ways of engaging with, learning from, and being in the world.<sup>64</sup>

The body and emotions are not separate entities but instead inform and build on one another. Affectivity is both a physical and a social response. As Fuchs writes, “In contrast to current opinion which locates mental states including moods and emotions within our head, phenomenology regards affect as encompassing phenomena that connect body, self, and world.”<sup>65</sup> Fuchs further describes how affectivity becomes attached to particular positionalities through “social existential feelings.”<sup>66</sup> It is both individual and collective affective responses that shape engagement with the world. These feelings generate an orientation toward places in the world. In this way, knowledge of a place is made up of a dense network of reactions, feelings, and affective associations.<sup>67</sup> As theologian Mark Wynn writes, “Knowledge of place consists,

---

61 Thomas Fuchs, “The Phenomenology of Affectivity,” in *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*, ed. K. W. M. Fulford et al. (Oxford University Press, 2013): 613, [https://www.rosearchgate.net/publication/293769263\\_The\\_Phenomenology\\_of\\_Affectivity](https://www.rosearchgate.net/publication/293769263_The_Phenomenology_of_Affectivity).

62 Bieler, “Exploring Affectivity,” 247.

63 Vanessa Machado de Oliveira, *Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity's Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism* (North Atlantic Books, 2021).

64 Machado de Oliveira, *Hospicing Modernity*, 48–49.

65 Fuchs, “The Phenomenology of Affectivity,” 612.

66 Fuchs, “The Phenomenology of Affectivity,” 612.

67 Mark Wynn, *Faith and Place: An Essay in Embodied Religious Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199560387.001.0001>.

at least in part, in an embodied, practical and, very often, theoretically inarticulate responsiveness to a given region of space.”<sup>68</sup> These affective responses means that a place is never entirely knowable or definable in an objective sense and is more than its constituent parts.<sup>69</sup> Instead, affective associations generate a “sense of place” that constitutes a source of meaningful experience.<sup>70</sup> Home is often described through these senses and qualities, even when also described as a specific place.

Affective response can include feelings of connection and disconnection that help shape feelings of home. As Ahmed writes, “being-at-home is a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*.”<sup>71</sup> These may include strong feelings of belonging or not belonging that have multiple sources, including experiences with other people. Feelings of home are generated as much by communal as by individual experiences of belonging. As Fuchs continues, “Social existential feelings refer to states such as feeling at home in the world and with others, feeling welcome, familiar, connected – or feeling like a stranger, distant, disconnected, rejected, or isolated.”<sup>72</sup> Social feelings about home may also include love, or hate, and become attached not only to specific experiences but also to specific places. Boccagni defines home as a social relationship comprised of security, familiarity, and control of one’s environment.<sup>73</sup> These associations are often connected with childhood experiences of innocence, safety, and close relationships with caregivers.<sup>74</sup> Feelings of familiarity are also associated with home, including familiarity with one’s first language, sometimes referred to as the “mother tongue,” as well as familiar smells, sounds, climates, and landscapes.

Many philosophers have tried to capture the affective qualities that makes a place home. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term *topophilia* to mean love of place. *Topophilia* refers to “human being’s affective ties with the material environment.”<sup>75</sup> These affective ties can create attachments to place associated with feelings like love and commitment. Place-identity theory, which was developed by environmental psychologists, similarly explores the deep feelings that are associated with place. These associations serve to make sense of the world and one’s place in it and can facilitate identity formation. As Holton writes, how people identify with a place is

---

68 Wynn, *Faith and Place*, 8.

69 Wynn, *Faith and Place*, 8.

70 Convery, Corsane, and Davis, *Making Sense of Place*, 2.

71 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 89.

72 Fuchs, “The Phenomenology of Affectivity,” 616.

73 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, 9.

74 Holton, *Longing for Home*; Christoph Türcke, *Heimat: Eine Rehabilitierung* (Zu Klampen Verlag, 2006); Christoph Türcke, “Sehnsucht: Heimat Ist Immer Auch Utopie,” in *Heimat: Eine Grenzerfahrung*, ed. Stapferhaus Lenzburg (Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ Libro, 2017).

75 Yi-Fu Tuan, “Place: An Experiential Perspective,” *Geographical Review* 65, no. 2 (1975): 93, <https://doi.org/10.2307/213970>.

often connected to how people identify and describe themselves. “[P]lace-identity is very relevant to how the home place contributes to the creation of who we become particularly in relation to meaning-making, identifying the places that are safe and creating a sense of place belongingness.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, affective associations connected to home often include feelings of security, familiarity, and belonging.

Yet, these are not the only affective associations that become connected with home. As feminist scholars have pointed out, idealizing home as a place of security and safety can obscure the ways home controls and excludes.<sup>77</sup> Often the safety of home is predicated on the subjugation of other populations, as in the case of settler colonialism, or on allegiance to social hierarchies and expectations that rely on the unacknowledged work of women and other groups.<sup>78</sup> Thus, home can be defined by a diversity of affective experiences, including loss, violence, discord, and exclusion. Experiences that disrupt home, such as migration, can also reveal nuanced understandings of the affective qualities of home.

### 2.1.2.1 Home as Absence

There are many sayings about home, including losing home. One adage says that you don't really know what home is until it is lost, and a second one stresses that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Several theologians and philosophers echo these sentiments, asserting that leaving and separating from home bring important relationships to place into focus. Philosopher Christoph Türcke writes that the moment when home is lost is the moment when one learns to value home.<sup>79</sup> And Kaufmann writes that when home is close and familiar, we lack the necessary distance in order to view and recognize it. The familiar home can become so closely tied to the self-evident aspects of life that it is hidden from direct view. Only when it is gone or viewed from a distance does it come into focus.<sup>80</sup> Only when it is lost does it paradoxically become present.<sup>81</sup> Theologian Joachim Klose describes a similar experience, saying that it is only on the edges, from an external perspective, that home is visible.<sup>82</sup> Paradoxically, home can become more present, and its shape can come into view, through the experience of its loss and distance. Often home is only understood when it is left, lost, or seen from a distance. At these moments homesickness and longing also characterize the relationship to home.

76 Holton, *Longing for Home*, 17.

77 Allison Weir, “Home and Identity: In Memory of Iris Marion Young,” *Hypatia* 23, no. 3 (2008): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2008.tb01202.x>.

78 Weir, “Home and Identity,” 7.

79 Türcke, “Sehnsucht,” 31.

80 Kaufmann, “Heimat Als Präsenz im Entzug,” 15–24.

81 Kaufmann, “Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug,” 32.

82 Klose, “An den Rändern von Heimat,” 111.

The longing for a lost home can be experienced as a physical or affective pain, often described as an experience of homesickness. The German word for homesickness, *Heimweh*, translates as home-pain. In Switzerland, homesickness was once considered a physical illness and often afflicted mercenaries serving foreign armies far from home.<sup>83</sup> Christian Schüle describes this experience of missing home as a “phantom pain” or a longing for that which is lost.<sup>84</sup> The absences caused by losing home generate feelings that become attached to the place of home.

Joisten includes absence as a key element in her philosophy of home. She argues that homesickness, loss, and longing are not the opposite of home, but experiences of home, where absence itself makes home visible. More specifically, she says that home is found in the tension between absence and presence. The importance of home is not only in being there, but also in leaving it. Joisten argues that there is no pure form of living (*wohnen*) because it is always tied to leaving.<sup>85</sup> In fact, human life would not be possible if home only meant staying; the tension of leaving is necessary for life, and the importance of place is not only in being there, but in leaving it.<sup>86</sup> Human experience is defined by this tension of being grounded in a place while also experiencing its absence. While home is often associated with words such as living, security, and familiarity, Joisten argues that home is also, and equally, found in leaving, insecurity, and unfamiliarity. Other theorists describe similar tensions in home, including home being found in the interplay of staying-going; mobility-stability; closeness-distance; imagination-reality; close-far; longing-memory.<sup>87</sup>

Migration highlights the loss of home as one of its defining aspects. This experience transcends forced migration or other radical experiences of losing or leaving home. Loss may occur through migration, natural disaster, or the loss of parent or life partner and is a fundamental human experience found across cultures and personal experiences. Even for those who never change geographic location, loss of home occurs through loss of relationships; changes to local economies, cultural values, and landscapes; the cycles of birth and death; and ultimately one’s own death. Those who do not leave home also experience longing and absence as parts of home. Loss of home is caused by geographic moves, whether related to work, family, or adventure. It also occurs through other losses, such as losing family or friends or

---

83 Alexander Rechsteiner, “Homesick for the Mountains,” Schweizerisches National Museum, accessed July 2, 2023, last modified January 30, 2023, <https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2019/09/homesick-for-the-mountains/>.

84 Christian Schüle, *Heimat: Ein Phantomschmerz* (Droemer, 2017), 13.

85 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 33.

86 Bhabha and Stierstorfer, “Homi K. Bhabha in Interview with Klaus Stierstorfer,” 14.

87 See, for example: Ralph and Staeheli, “Home and Migration”; Heidrun Friese, “The Limits of Hospitality,” in *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time*, ed. Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, Paragraph Special Issue, vol. 32, no. 1 (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.3366/e0264833409000406>; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

previous work that created meaning. Memories of these previous times may arise through sensory experiences, including sights, sounds, and smells that are associated with home.<sup>88</sup> Losses, including experiences of homelessness, exile, and absence, are important to definitions of home and shape hopes and desires associated with home.

In Joisten's philosophy, home is found not in a static place, but at the confluences of staying and going, of distance and closeness, of stability and mobility.<sup>89</sup> It is the interaction of these seemingly contradictory human experiences that defines home. Joisten describes home with the phrase *Heim-weg*, a play on the German words for home and away.<sup>90</sup> This definition recalls home as a process, one that is continually shaped by small and large changes, including those precipitated by loss and leaving. While these changes are more visible in migration, staying and leaving are embedded in any home experience. Ralph and Staeheli describe the changing nature of home as an experience that transcends international migration. "Even people who do not cross such borders live in homes experienced in many of the same ways – as locations, as relationships, as simultaneously fixed and fluid."<sup>91</sup> Staying informs leaving and leaving informs staying. Sara Ahmed's work highlights the interactions between those who leave and those who stay and how strangeness and alterity are present in home.

There is already strangeness and movement within the home itself. It is not simply a question then of those who stay at home, and those who leave: as if these two different trajectories simply lead people to different places. Rather "homes" always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive, and those who leave.<sup>92</sup>

There is movement and exchange in leaving, and arriving, making home both familiar and unfamiliar.<sup>93</sup> Ralph and Staeheli also define home as occurring in the interaction between the sedentary and the mobile. "Home must be conceptualised as both dynamic and as moored in order to reflect the complexity and ambivalence that makes it such a tricky and slippery concept."<sup>94</sup> This ambivalence is part of the pull of home. Steeped in deep emotion and longing, the search for home is constituted by memories and associations that may not exist in their former ways. De Certeau

---

88 Bernhard Schlink, *Heimat Als Utopie*, Edition Suhrkamp, Sonderdruck (Suhrkamp, 2000), 24–25; Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home."

89 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*, 27.

90 Heimweg also means the path home, usually one taken frequently from home or work.

91 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 518.

92 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 88.

93 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 88.

94 Ralph and Staeheli, "Home and Migration," 518.

writes, “The places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences.”<sup>95</sup> The memory of people and places that once were continues to influence current understandings of home. De Certeau describes this as the way memories “haunt” a place.<sup>96</sup> Home as haunting speaks to the presence of loss and longing in even the most established notions of home. Haunting can also be understood as the presence of the “uncanny,” as described by Nausner. That which is strange or alien also constitutes home but these traits are often obscured in favor of unifying notions of home such as familiarity, stability, and continuity.<sup>97</sup> Yet longing, memory, and nostalgia often surface what is lost or missing.

Homi Bhabha describes home as a tension between “hereness and thereeness,” a tension between the particularity of the place and the returning, imagining, and longing of place.<sup>98</sup> Longing for the lost home is seen in the ways home is imagined from a distance. Tshuma describes her mother’s relationship to home as characterized by imagination and memory. “She is always dreaming of home, not the home of Grandfather’s imagining and design, but another home, probably the home our countrymen dreamed of when we attained independence from Britain in 1980.”<sup>99</sup> Losing home combines memory and longing to create imagined visions of home. Dreaming of home is a powerful metaphor for individuals as well as in literature and psychology. Longing for home can take the shape of story and myth, including fairy tales, heroes’ journeys, and religious narratives, which call out affective, ideal, or desired qualities of home, often in the context of loss.

### 2.1.2.2 Home as Narrative

Memories, mythologies, and imagination help to define affective associations with home and to link past experiences and future hopes. Theologian Hans-Joachim Sander argues that home is always a combination of imagined and remembered states and that home can carry symbolic power related to belonging, identity, and purpose.<sup>100</sup> Remembered and desired states can create symbolic and imagined associations with home. Casey writes that “places are not only spatial, as we often presume; they also bear history and narrative.”<sup>101</sup> Many people search for a place

95 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

96 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

97 Michael Nausner, “Homeland as Borderland,” 118–19. See also: Blickle, *Heimat*.

98 Bhabha and Stierstorfer, “Homi K. Bhabha in Interview with Klaus Stierstorfer,” 14.

99 Tshuma, “New Lands, New Selves.”

100 Hans-Joachim Sander, “Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung: Eine heterotope Herausforderung,” in *Heimatschichten: Anthropologische Grundlegung eines Weltverhältnisses*, ed. Joachim Klose (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013).

101 Edward S. Casey, “How the Place of Landscape Ends in Edges,” in *Heimatschichten: Anthropologische Grundlegung eines Weltverhältnisses*, ed. Joachim Klose (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013), 89, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04740-5\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04740-5_4).

where they feel at home, where qualities of home-ness exist for them. Feeling at home is often connected to a sense of being oneself, being seen, and being safe and may be connected to a place, may exist partially in some places, or may be a felt sense that does not yet exist. Home often contains deep desires that are ascribed to both lived and imagined states of home. These affective associations with home are also generated by memory and longing and are better captured through stories. Stories, narratives, and mythologies can capture the fluidity of home's location.<sup>102</sup>

Narratives describe both embodied and affective associations, link desired and actual states of home, and connect disparate people and places that might be associated with home. De Certeau bases much of his philosophy of space and place on the narrative agency of individuals whose actions delimitate and describe place. He writes that the "sayings and stories that organize places" create geographies and convey information and meaning that give unique shape to a place.<sup>103</sup> Narrative can capture disparate aspects of a place or experience and bring them into relationship. In addition to geography, narrative weaves in affect and imagination to describe multiple influences on a place. Narratives challenge concrete and hegemonic definitions of home and can become potent representations of home, apart from any geographically located reality.<sup>104</sup> In addition to the spatial reality of place and the everyday activities that give it shape, home is also an expression of something more than the activities of living.<sup>105</sup> Longings, desires, hopes, identities, and cultural and social expectations add density to the idea of home that is sometimes just beyond description. Home might be a place where one lives, but it is also often something much deeper. Narratives can help to capture some of the density and desire that is located in home.<sup>106</sup>

Especially in the context of migration, or when home is at a distance, home is frequently captured through narratives. These narratives might include moments such as meals that are missed and memories of family members, or they might describe idealized memories of home or a longing to return to a certain place. Memories and narratives are often embedded in homesickness, and the longing to return home brings back the former home.<sup>107</sup> Narratives include more than the sum of life events, and they are generated through the community's stories and experiences. In this way, narratives of home accumulate before any individual life begins.

---

102 Karen Joisten, "Woher komme ich?," 17–25. The narrative quality of life is understood across many disciplines as a critical aspect of meaning-making, including in the work of the theorists and philosophers such as Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Paul Ricoeur, and Alasdair MacIntyre.

103 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 118.

104 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 369.

105 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 367.

106 Sander, "Religion am Third Space von Beheimatung," 367.

107 Kaufmann, "Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug."

Joisten writes that human experience is always embedded in narrative, from the moment of birth. Joisten locates narratives of home in two fundamental human questions: “Where am I from? Where am I going?”<sup>108</sup> These questions bring memories and affective associations of the past together with imagined and desired possible futures. Joisten situates home in this tension between the past and the future, giving it a dynamic quality. At this intersection of past and future, home is rooted in the current place while being impacted by both memory and desire.<sup>109</sup> Matthew Croasmun and Miroslav Volf describe the longing for home as “back’ to a past yet to be realized, ‘forward’ to become what we’ve always been intended to be from the beginning.”<sup>110</sup> It is through the tension of staying and going, which is a dialectic that begins at birth, that an individual enters a larger human narrative, already steeped in story and contextually situated, that continues throughout the life span.<sup>111</sup> These home narratives are found in religious traditions about creation, in cultural myths of national origin, in community stories of migration and settlement, and in family stories of births and deaths.

Narratives of home capture the felt and lived experience of home over time and space, through relationships and life stages, and they are also found in individual stories of identity formation and feeling at home in oneself. Narratives are sometimes the vehicles that create home from disparate pieces. Home is itself a story, one that lives somewhere between myth and biography. Based on true events, it at the same time strives to capture deeper longings and connections. As Türcke writes, from birth humans are trying to find their place in the human story, they are trying to create a home.<sup>112</sup>

### 2.1.2.3 Home as Utopia

One genre of narratives about home is found in utopian visions. For some, home is a place that cannot be reached, whether because it is lost or because it is an imagined or ideal place. In his book *Heimat als Utopie*, German writer Bernhard Schlink defines home as an ideal, yet imagined, place, a utopia. First coined by Thomas More, the concept of utopia means no-place, usually one with idealized qualities that does not or could not exist in current society.<sup>113</sup> In Schlink’s theory of home as utopia, absence and longing are two important elements of home. Home, in any form, contains some element of loss, something unfulfilled, and therefore something of home remains

---

108 Joisten, “Woher komme ich?,” 25.

109 Joisten, “Woher komme ich?,” 25–29.

110 Matthew Croasmun and Miroslav Volf, *The Hunger for Home: Food and Meals in the Gospel of Luke* (Baylor University Press, 2022), 1.

111 Joisten, “Woher komme ich?,” 17–25.

112 Türcke, “Sehnsucht,” 25.

113 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*.

just outside a person's grasp.<sup>114</sup> Home is partly an imagined state and cannot be fully realized. Ernst Bloch, a Marxist philosopher, used the concept of utopia in his book, *The Principle of Hope*, to engage a desired vision with the imagination to call forth a more ideal future. This future is not attainable, at least "not yet," as Bloch posits, but it is instead having hope in the possibility that gives utopia its powerful role. A utopian vision, such as Bloch's, is grounded in the current world yet open to future, imagined possibilities.<sup>115</sup>

Home is both a forward and a backward motion, grasping at that which is remembered and longing for that which might be. In fact, Schlink argues that when home moves into concrete space, it is denatured and morphs from the imagined ideal.<sup>116</sup> Even as the ideal home becomes concrete, it never completely matches the former vision. This is because the imagined home can never be fully reached; longing and absence are always part of its definition.<sup>117</sup> Home as utopia combines the memory of a past place with the longing for a future place.

Home as utopic, mythic, or imagined often figures into migrant narratives of the place that was left. Vu Tran, an author and former refugee, writes, "And that space between what is real and imaginary is ultimately where the refugee resides."<sup>118</sup> Many who experience migration and long to return home remember home as an imagined place that cannot be reached even by returning. Often returning home leads to disappointment, disorientation, or alienation when confronted with what was once familiar, but is no longer experienced in the same way.<sup>119</sup> During the time away, the physical, political, and social constructions of place continue to shift. For both those who left and those who stayed, new experiences have reshaped place, and in the interim people and landscapes, as well as political and cultural conditions, have shifted. A new place has been created while the old place becomes remembered and imagined. This disconnect can occur even when home is left for short periods of time, especially when a person encounters very different experiences outside of the home. Home is an interplay of real and imagined characteristics and is conditioned by new perspectives.

---

114 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, 36.

115 Ernst Bloch, *Prinzip Hoffnung / The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (MIT Press, 1986).

116 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, 36.

117 Sara Ahmed et al., eds., *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Berg, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003087298>.

118 Vu Tran, "A Refugee Again," in *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, ed. Viet Thanh Nguyen (Abrams, 2018), 155.

119 Bieler and Kunz, "Responding to the Loss of Home," 143–44.

### 2.1.3 Home as Personal and Political

Idealized visions of home include important characteristics of home that may otherwise be lost or missing. Yet, utopias can also rest on harmful and unjust systems. Feminist scholars have criticized the ways that the comfort and security of home often come at the expense of women's bodies. Scholars such as Judy Tobler and bell hooks challenge idealized notions of home that center femininity and burden the female body.<sup>120</sup> In her essay "Home is Where the Heart Is," Tobler argues that idealized notions of home rest on the idealization of women. "At the core of idealised notions of 'home' reside equally idealised images of woman, or more specifically, the maternal body."<sup>121</sup> This idealization ignores the experiences of many women who are burdened with domestic, unpaid labor and denied opportunities for physical, economic, and social support.<sup>122</sup>

Idealized notions of home can serve to obscure the ways that home is also a site of violence, estrangement, and ambivalence. At the extreme, violence against women is most likely to happen within the home or from an intimate partner.<sup>123</sup> Yet even everyday tasks of making and caring for home fall disproportionately on women, and this labor often benefits others, while women are denied opportunities themselves. Notions of home can valorize the female body as mother, nurturer, and provider without acknowledging the ways women are burdened by the expectations of these roles. Philosopher Marion Iris Young builds on feminist scholar Luce Irigaray's argument to critique Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling as resting on women's bodies.<sup>124</sup> Heidegger's original description of building has two components: construction and preservation, yet preservation fades in his development of the theory of dwelling.<sup>125</sup> Construction is largely ascribed to the work of men, yet it is the – often invisible – labor of women, through preservation, that creates and cares for home.

---

120 Judy Tobler, "Home Is Where the Heart Is?: Gendered Sacred Space in South Africa," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 13, no. 1–2 (2000), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24764042>; bell hooks, "Marginality as Site of Resistance," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Documentary Sources in Contemporary Art (MIT Press, 1990); Katherine McKittrick, "bell hooks," in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchen, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2011), 244–45.

121 Tobler, "Home is Where the Heart Is?," 77.

122 Tobler, "Home is Where the Heart Is?," 77.

123 UN Women, "Facts and Figures: Ending Violence Against Women," accessed February 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

124 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Cornell University Press, 1993), 103–7.

125 Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," in *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal Through Politics, Home, and the Body*, ed. Caroline Wiedmer and Sarah Hardy (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2006), 136, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-12103-5\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-12103-5_8).

The philosophy of dwelling can reinforce patriarchal systems that rely on the work of women.<sup>126</sup> As Young writes, “In the idea of ‘home,’ man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original mother.”<sup>127</sup> The theory of building and dwelling subsumes this lost wholeness of home without fully acknowledging it.

Home has often been considered part of the private sphere and associated with domesticity and women. “The home,” writes James Ponniah, professor of religious studies, “has long walked hand in hand with the spatial politics of preserving the division of the home from the world such that the performativity of female and male identities is assigned space to the one and the other respectively and irrevocably.”<sup>128</sup> This idealization, especially of safety and security, can mask the complex realities of home. Affective associations with home are not confined to feelings of belonging and connection but span the spectrum of emotions, moods, and embodied responses. It can be argued that home is where more negative experiences occur in comparison to other places.<sup>129</sup> This is partly because home is a place where people spend significant periods of time as well as a where meaningful and complex relationships are found. Despite this, the idea of home remains tinged with “*heimatlichen*” or rose-colored glasses and positive emotions.<sup>130</sup> Many sayings associated with home reflect this nostalgia, including “Home is where the heart is”<sup>131</sup> and “Home is where you don’t have to explain yourself.”<sup>132</sup> These idealized reflections of home obscure the complexity of home and the ways that individuals may or may not experience the safety, physically or emotionally, that home promises.

Home can also be stifling, and a desire to leave home is a powerful catalyst in many lives. Young adults often leave home to discover themselves apart from their family and culture of origin. Those who experience themselves as different or “other” than the norms established by their home often feel they must leave to fully be themselves. Douglas describes this as “the tyranny of home.” This often-thwarted desire

---

126 Young, “House and Home,” 135.

127 Young, “House and Home,” 135, 140. Young further develops this idea by linking this nostalgia to a fixation on building and dwelling: “Man seeks nostalgically to return to the lost home by making buildings and putting things in them that will substitute for that original home.”

128 James Ponniah and Amitha Santiago, “Introduction: Homes and Spaces under Transformation,” in *Culture, Religion, and Home-Making in and Beyond South Asia*, ed. James Ponniah (Fortress Press, 2020), 2, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqoqv4n.6>.

129 Frank Mathwig, “Heimat entdecken: Ein ethisch-theologischer Versuch über Heimat,” in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélie Adamavi-Aho, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017).

130 Mathwig, “Heimat entdecken,” 183.

131 Tobler, “Home is Where the Heart Is?,” 77.

132 Mathwig, “Heimat entdecken,” 168.

to leave home can dominate, determine, and control.<sup>133</sup> This ambivalence of home is also situated within definitions of individual and group identities.

While home is often theorized from the perspective of personal associations with home, home is shaped by the interplay between the individual and the social, the private and the public.<sup>134</sup> Humans are immersed in a world that is shaped by individual relationships as much as by social and political systems. As Jacobson writes, home is political even though we begin by making home in the family.

We make our homes with our families in the *oikos*—the household. We begin, Aristotle argues, in the situation of an immediate family. Although the family is the necessary condition for our being in the first place, it is not, Aristotle argues, a sufficient sphere in which to live if we are to fulfill our proper human nature, because we are by nature *political*.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, both the private, the *oikos*, and the political, the *polis*, reflect culturally imbued understandings of home and of belonging. The social production of place is impacted by political systems, cultural norms, and social contracts. Place is shaped not only by personal and affective associations but also by political systems, religious and social groups, and economic factors. These forces can include structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, and white hegemony.<sup>136</sup> Individual social locations in these systems also impact the experience of home. As Boccagni writes, “What is felt, understood, and enacted as home is affected by variables such as social class, gender, age and ethno-cultural background.”<sup>137</sup> Home is shaped by how people show up in the world, often by the lottery of birth. Characteristics such as gender, race, and health impact connections to home and social, religious, and political systems impact people differently.

Home crosses between the personal and the political and as such has the capacity to define boundaries of safety and belonging within home, but it can also create situations of violence and exclusion. As a powerful and far-reaching concept, home can easily become a subject of idealization, and hegemonic concepts can come to dominate and circumscribe its definition. The metaphorical and imaginative power of home functions as a social and political space as well. Ahmed describes nation-states as “simultaneously imaginary and real.”<sup>138</sup> They are real places, but their defining characteristics are often narratives that are shaped by the systems and people in

133 Douglas, “The Idea of a Home,” 303.

134 Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*, Critical Anthropology (Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), 12.

135 Jacobson, “Philosophical Perspectives on Home,” 178.

136 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 21.

137 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*, xxiii.

138 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 98.

power. Benedict Anderson coined the term “imagined community” to describe how nation-building relies on generating affective attachments and shared concepts and beliefs to connect otherwise unconnected people.<sup>139</sup> Imagination is a powerful force to conceptualize a home that is unifying to diverse people.

The political shape of home interactions is given further meaning through affective associations, including feelings, emotions, and moods.<sup>140</sup> As described, affective associations build a deeper sense of place, especially in culturally and personally meaningful places, such as home.<sup>141</sup> These affective attachments make home a salient cultural and political concept and a place that holds feelings of belonging and shared values. As Holton writes, “The home place is as much a cultural creation as anything else – and a powerful one.”<sup>142</sup> Cultural creations are embedded in narratives that describe the history, characteristics, and hopes for a group of people. Home is often defined in contrast to what is other, different, or strange.<sup>143</sup> Yet, as seen in exploring home as absence, leaving and staying, belonging and not-belonging are all critical in defining home. Sara Ahmed’s work on the figure of the stranger stresses that alterity and “otherness” are already part of home.<sup>144</sup> By trying to remove strangeness from home, home itself starts to lose its shape.

### 2.1.4 Vulnerability and Hospitality

Many philosophers and theologians argue that exile, not belonging, is the original human experience. “The first condition of humanity is exile,” writes philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle.<sup>145</sup> According to Dufourmantelle, these exiles include losses, illness, confusions, doubts, and eventually death – the final exile. “There are more than enough estrangements that can be visited upon an embodied self, then, without one ever needing to mobilize this body across the earth’s surface.”<sup>146</sup> As explored earlier in this chapter, losing and seeking home transcend cultures and personal

139 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

140 Fuchs, “The Phenomenology of Affectivity.”

141 Low, *Spatializing Culture*.

142 Holton, *Longing for Home*, 27.

143 See, among others: Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Nausner, “Homeland as Borderland”; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*.

144 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

145 Anne Dufourmantelle, “Hospitality – Under Compassion and Violence,” in *The Conditions of Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. Thomas Claviez, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (Fordham University Press, 2013), 14, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780823292806-002>.

146 Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, “Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time,” in *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time*, ed. Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, Paragraph Special Issue, vol. 32, no. 1 (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 11, <https://doi.org/10.3366/e0264833409000376>.

experiences. Exile might be temporary; it might be developmental, such as youth leaving the parental home; or it might be more permanent, through geographic moves, cultural and social changes, loss of community, and finally death.<sup>147</sup>

Many philosophers and theologians focus on the fragility of human life as a starting point for thinking about home. Joisten's philosophy foregrounds this human vulnerability by emphasizing loss and leaving as inherent and essential parts of human existence.<sup>148</sup> In fact, every human is born vulnerable. Bieler calls this fundamental vulnerability, in contrast to situational vulnerability. Bieler offers an alternate understanding of vulnerability, beyond fragility and woundedness. She suggests describing vulnerability "as a fundamental openness," with the potential to be touched and to touch others.<sup>149</sup> Vulnerability is based on the embodied reality of human experience and its potential for affectivity. This fundamental vulnerability characterizes the human condition of having a body in the world, what Bieler names "Being-Body-to-World" (*Leib-Seins-zur-Welt*).<sup>150</sup> This embeddedness echoes phenomenological arguments for human influence on and by the world. As Dufourmantelle writes, humans are fundamentally open to being affected by the circumstances of embodied life.<sup>151</sup> Alternately, situational vulnerability is based on circumstances, whether personal, social, or structural, that create vulnerable conditions. This might include migration, illness, or discrimination.<sup>152</sup>

The human experience of fundamental vulnerability is related to hospitality. Without the hospitality of the earth and caretakers, human life would not survive. Thus, hospitality is "the precondition to life," as Dufourmantelle writes.<sup>153</sup> Life relies from the beginning on hospitality: from the earth, from the bodies of mothers, and from those who care for a new life. Hospitality acknowledges the shared vulnerability of the human condition. Greek, Roman, and Hebrew cultures all valued hospitality. In Greek thought, strangers were to be welcomed because they might be gods or have the special protection of God. In Roman culture, hospitality was seen as a mark of civilization and a sacred duty.

The root words for hospitality, *hospes*, in Latin, and *xenos*, in Greek, can apply to both host and guest. In Latin, *hospes*, a noun, can mean either guest, stranger, or host. In Greek, *xenos* is most commonly translated as "stranger," but the meaning varies by context and can range from enemy to guest to friendship to host. In-

147 Schlink, *Heimat als Utopie*, 19.

148 Joisten, *Philosophie der Heimat*; Joisten, "Woher komme ich?"

149 Andrea Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit: Leibphänomenologische Erkundungen Im Praktisch-Theologischen Interesse," *Evangelische Theologie* 77, no. 3 (2017): 169, <https://doi.org/10.14315/evth-2017-0304>.

150 Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit."

151 Anne Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality," 22.

152 Andrea Bieler, "Verletzlichkeit," 169–70.

153 Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality," 17.

stead of setting up a strict guest-host dichotomy, these words play on the reality that all can and will likely be both guest and host. Theologian Letty Russell explains it as follows: “Both philoxenia and Latin *hostes* imply a reciprocal relationship of give-and-take, meaning host and guest sometimes exchange roles.”<sup>154</sup> This give-and-take grows out of the mutuality of fundamental vulnerability. The possibility of being affected by others and affecting others means that an individual moves between the poles of giving and receiving. In this vein, philosopher Mathias Risse similarly argues that common ownership of the earth and access to resources necessary for survival are moral rights.<sup>155</sup> It is unjust when people are not allowed access to land that could support their lives.<sup>156</sup> He writes, “Hospitality is not a ‘virtue of sociability,’ a benevolence one shows to strangers coming to visit one’s land, but it is a right ‘which belongs to all human beings insofar as we view them as potential participants in a world republic.’”<sup>157</sup> Participation by all people in life on earth, beginning with individual safety and survival, is a way of restoring right relationships, to the earth and to one another.

The tension between human exile and hospitality can also be understood as the tension between mobility and stability.<sup>158</sup> Being a host or guest is not a permanent state, as these roles can and do shift throughout a lifetime and within specific contexts. Someone may be a host at their place of residence, but while traveling they are a guest. This tension is apparent in diverse philosophical and religious traditions. In the Bible God commands the Jewish people to welcome strangers and refugees because they were once refugees (and could be again). Situational vulnerability also impacts hospitality. It is a matter of circumstance that a person is born in a certain place and time, with certain political rights and economic opportunities, and amid family and personal circumstances. The host/guest tension can also change due to natural events, political changes, or personal circumstances. The reality of this host-guest tension means that the condition of being host is tenuous – one could easily revert to exile and the experience of being a guest. Peter Admirand writes, “As displaced persons and irregular migrants know, their perceived status by the dominant

---

154 Letty M. Russell, J. Shannon Clarkson, and Kate M. Ott, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 84.

155 Mathias Risse, “On the Morality of Immigration,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2008): 25–33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2008.00127.x>.

156 Peter Admirand, “The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths: Enlightening Believers and Aiding Public Policy,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 4 (2014): 682, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.84736>.

157 Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*, John Robert Seeley Lectures, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790799>.

158 Dufourmantelle, “Hospitality.”

group in a society can literally change overnight.”<sup>159</sup> There is no guarantee that those who have the power to host will remain so.

In fact, philosopher Jacques Derrida argues that this tension is a requirement for hospitality. Derrida argues that to be hospitable one must have the power and resources to be a host. The host must have control of the situation, otherwise they cannot engage in “hosting” behaviors.<sup>160</sup> The host sets the rules, owns the implements of hospitality, such as space and food, and sets the terms for the engagement even in the most generous examples of hospitality. In other words, a host is able to invite another into their home because they have resources available that the other does not. There must be a power dynamic, there must be ownership, and there must be the tension of withholding. Therefore, hospitality and hostility are not opposites, he argues, but are two sides of the same coin. Hospitality and hostility also share the same Latin root. Derrida coins the neologism “hostipitality” to show the ambivalence of the relationship of hospitality and hostility.<sup>161</sup> Derrida argues that hospitality requires hostility, that one cannot exist without the other.<sup>162</sup> By failing to acknowledge this, hospitality often ignores power dynamics inherent in the host-guest relationship. In the same way, explorations of home can ignore power dynamics and imbalances.

From this tension, Derrida develops the definition of unconditional or unlimited hospitality.<sup>163</sup> Unconditional hospitality is the moment when there is no hostility, when the guest is fully welcomed, without limitations based on who they are or what they need. The door is fully open – in fact, there is no door. There is no ownership or control, just pure and unlimited hospitality and welcome. Yet, in Derrida’s philosophy, this kind of welcome is impossible, and therefore, unconditional hospitality is also effectively impossible – “the possible impossible.”<sup>164</sup> Unconditional hospitality requires that there is no ownership, no control, and no hostility, thereby making the conditions of hospitality impossible. Derrida considers unconditional hospitality as a moment in hospitality, not the totality of hospitality. This “yet, but not yet” definition echoes utopian ideals of longing and home as well as Christian eschatological themes of a future, redeemed home with God. Unconditional hospitality highlights

---

159 Admirand, “The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths,” 676.

160 Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford University Press, 2000); Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch, eds., *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (Fordham University Press, 2011).

161 Richard Kearney, “Double Hospitality,” *Journal for Continental Philosophy of Religion* 1, no. 1 (2019): 76, <https://doi.org/10.1163/25889613-00101005>; Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 75–77.

162 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 75–77.

163 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 77.

164 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 75, 119.

the ambivalent nature of home. It is at once personal and private yet also located in political systems and economies and shaped by cultural values. Home is something that is communal even though it is unique to each person. Home is a deep need that arises from human vulnerability, and many seek to protect its parameters from further vulnerability.

## 2.2 Home in Cultural and Political Contexts

Home as an ideal, imagined place allows it to be used for ideological and political purposes by groups and political systems, for instance, to define characteristics that unify national and ethnic groups. This unifying potential can elicit social cohesion that builds stronger communities, yet it can also reinforce boundaries that designate belonging and protect a collective identity that denies the otherness that is already part of home. The latter was evident under National Socialism in Germany as well as in more recent populist political movements. In the next section I will delve into several examples of how idealized and hegemonic definitions of home impact national identity politics and policies related to migration.

### 2.2.1 *Heimat*

The German notion of *Heimat* is one example of the ideological and political associations of home. At its root, *Heimat* calls up the affective feelings of home, generating a “sense of place” more than the specifics of place. There are several German words for home: *Heim*, *zu Hause*, and *Heimat*. *Heim* more often refers to the specific location or building where one lives or resides. *Zuhause* translates as “at home” and can mean a specific location, a physical space, or a more general sense of being at home. *Heimat*, often translated as homeland, connotes more affective qualities of belonging, and is often associated with a particular region and the foods, dialects, and practices of that place.<sup>165</sup> As Friederike Eigler, a professor of German, writes, “*Heimat* carries a rich set of cultural and ideological connotations that usually combine notions of belonging and identity with affective attachment to a specific place or region.”<sup>166</sup> These connotations have shifted in different historical eras, yet *Heimat* continues to embody the connection of place with identity.

---

165 For an etymology of *Heimat*, see: Svenja Kück, *Heimat und Migration: Ein Transdisziplinärer Ansatz Anhand Biographischer Interviews Mit Geflüchteten Menschen in Deutschland*, Sozial- und Kulturgeographie, Bd. 43 (transcript Verlag, 2021), 28–29.

166 Friederike Ursula Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative: Toward a Transnational Approach to Flight and Expulsion*, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture, vol. 147 (Camden House, 2014), 13, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781571138927>.

Some argue that *Heimat* is not translatable, but several scholars disagree. Peter Blickle,<sup>167</sup> a professor of German, identifies *rodina* in Russian and Bilgin Ayata,<sup>168</sup> a political sociologist, names *patria* in Spanish as having similar meanings to *Heimat*, with cultural nuances.<sup>169</sup> *Heimat* is used in both Switzerland and Germany. In this section, I will trace the roots of the *Heimat* discourse primarily through German history as a larger backdrop against which to reflect on its development.<sup>170</sup> *Heimat* fell out of favor following National Socialism, due to its association with the “fatherland” and the ethnic and racial violence that fueled the Holocaust. More recently, *Heimat* has experienced a resurgence on two fronts. This is seen, first, in the rise of romantic and nostalgic feelings toward German culture, which is evident in the idealization of traditional lifestyles, picturesque landscapes, and typical German food and dress. Second, political and cultural identifications with security and belonging have increased, as seen in the establishment of the German *Heimatministerium*, which is concerned with immigration and border control.<sup>171</sup> There is a debate over the role of *Heimat* in current German society. Some argue for a reclamation of the word apart from political overtones, arguing that *Heimat* can refer to an important sense of belonging and a connection to significant people and traditions. Others argue that the word *Heimat* has too much historic baggage to be reclaimed, arguing for the use of other words to denote home-feelings, such as *Zuhause*.<sup>172</sup>

In this second category, scholars such as Bilgin Ayata argue that *Heimat* is not a neutral term and cannot be neutrally reclaimed.<sup>173</sup> Instead, *Heimat* is rooted in a

---

167 Blickle, *Heimat*, 2–3.

168 Ayata, “Prologue.”

169 On the other hand, the English word home has more fluid and multiple uses – to refer to the building or region where one lives, to a sense of home, or to larger concepts such as homeland or place of belonging.

170 For a more detailed discussion of the social, religious, and political aspects of *Heimat*, see, among others: Kück, *Heimat und Migration*; Jessica Ansel, *Sense(s) Of Heimat: Plurilocal Self-Location and Emotional Geographies Through the Lens of International Migration*, BestMasters (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-38985-7>; Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative*; Eigler, “Critical Approaches to ‘Heimat’ and the ‘Spatial Turn’”; Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries, and Christiane Wiesenfeldt, eds., *Heimat global: Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, Edition Kulturwissenschaft, Bd. 188 (transcript Verlag, 2019); Blickle, *Heimat*.

171 The politicization of the word home to determine belonging and security is also seen in other countries, including the United States’ Department of Homeland Security or in populist slogans such as “Make America Great Again.”

172 Schreiber, “Heimatministerium.”

173 Bilgin Ayata, “Der Siegeszug Des Heimatbegriffs Gefährdet Die Europäische Demokratie: Geht Es Um Grundwerte? Oder Rassismus?,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, October 25, 2019, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/geht-es-um-grundwerte-oder-rassismus-der-siegeszug-des-heimatbegriffs-gefahrdet-die-europaeische-demokratie/25152490.html>; Ayata, “Prologue.”

history of power relations, racialization, and violence. The word *Heimat* emerged in the 18th century, when it originally referred to physical property and place of birth. Its legal parameters designated inheritance as well as rights of belonging within designated communities.<sup>174</sup> The use of the word *Heimat* grew in usage in the 19th century as a more centralized nation-state emerged and local rights were ceded to national standards. The nation-state replaced local political, social, and economic organizations and *Heimat* provided a more local sense of connection and security amid the changes of modernization (at least for white, male property owners).<sup>175</sup> Affective associations and the feeling of being connected to *Heimat* appealed to a population experiencing a shift in national and global systems, which personally impacted their lives and homes. In this way, *Heimat* offers “a sense of ontological security in the alienation and individualization of modern life.”<sup>176</sup> This time of increased centralization also correlates to the height of German colonialism, including the Berlin Africa conference (1884–1885). The colonial project used tropes of *Heimat*, especially images of landscape and nature, to connect Germans affectively to the colonies while downplaying violence and de-humanization. Ayata explains, “To make colonial projects readable for Germans – the trope of *Heimat* was employed as a core affective bond [...] to distract from the violence of colonialism.”<sup>177</sup> *Heimat* served to make colonial landscapes more familiar and the violence more palatable.

Broadly speaking, *Heimat* denotes an association with home and homeland characterized by affective attachments, including innocence and safety, nature, and a longing for comfort without conflict.<sup>178</sup> As Ayata explains, “*Heimat* received new meaning for an affective container of nostalgia of a world free of conflicts.”<sup>179</sup> Blickle further links *Heimat* to romantic concepts of innocence, including religious imagery. The affective associations with familiar cultures and religions serve to provide a sense of belonging that is perceived as natural and without demanding a personal sacrifice.<sup>180</sup> Blickle writes, “*Heimat*, like nature, religion, language, and the mother, is for German-speaking middle-class citizens something larger than oneself, something worth caring for, but also something in the face of which one feels essentially innocent and taken care of.”<sup>181</sup> In this way, *Heimat* acts as a protective agent against change. It serves to link ethnic and social identities with place through identity- and place-based narratives.<sup>182</sup> This is one reason that *Heimat*

---

174 Kück, *Heimat und Migration*, 29–30.

175 Ayata, “Prologue.”

176 Ayata, “Prologue.”

177 Ayata, “Prologue,” 42.

178 Blickle, *Heimat*, 6; Ayata, “Prologue,” 4.

179 Ayata, “Prologue.”

180 Blickle, *Heimat*, 6.

181 Blickle, *Heimat*, 149.

182 Eigler, “Critical Approaches to ‘Heimat’ and the ‘Spatial Turn,’” 42.

was so effectively harnessed during National Socialism. Following the First World War, *Heimat* was employed to solidify a common understanding of land, belonging, and identity and to act as a protective shield against perceived threats from the outside.<sup>183</sup> By creating a sense of safety rooted in nostalgic and normative ideals of belonging, *Heimat* demarcates belonging based on heritage, language, and shared understandings. These unifying features can create lines of division between those who are included and those who are considered other. Sometimes these lines are rigid and other times they are murky. Language ability, ancestry, and familiarity with cultural practices may indicate clearly designated parameters of belonging. Yet, at the same time, the concept of a stable and historic *Heimat* is challenged by the shifting of German borders. These include the redrawing of the border with Eastern Europe following the Second World War and the partition of Germany from 1949 to 1990.<sup>184</sup> The discourse on *Heimat* reveals that affective attachments are not necessarily neutral, but rather political associations that provide important frameworks for interpreting the world and that reach beyond personal and nostalgic definitions of home. As geographer Jessica Anel describes, *Heimat* is located in the emotional-geographic space of place relations.<sup>185</sup> These spatial relations can unify, but they can also perpetuate geographies of exclusion.<sup>186</sup>

## 2.2.2 Swiss Migration Policy and Home

Echoes of the exclusionary tendencies of *Heimat* appear in current European migration policies.<sup>187</sup> In the last decade, departments such as the German *Heimatministerium* have been formed, directly utilizing the cultural power of *Heimat*. Other initiatives have used more coded language to identify and protect normative manifestations of home. For example, the Commission on Migration was renamed: “Protecting our European Way of Life,” implying that migration threatens an established way of life that needs to be protected.<sup>188</sup> In a similar way, Swiss laws that require immigrants to “be familiar with the Swiss way of life” also function to encode normative definitions of being Swiss.<sup>189</sup> In these examples, *Heimat*, and related concepts, can

183 Kück, *Heimat und Migration*, 35.

184 For a deeper exploration see: Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative*.

185 Anel, *Sense(s) of Heimat*.

186 Eigler, “Critical Approaches to ‘Heimat’ and the ‘Spatial Turn,’” 38–39.

187 For a more complete exploration of *Heimat* and migration, see: Josef S. L. Cagle, Thomas Herold, and Gabriele Maier, eds., *Heimat and Migration: Reimagining the Regional and the Global in the Twenty-First Century*, *Interdisciplinary German Cultural Studies*, vol. 34 (De Gruyter, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110733150>.

188 Ayata, “Prologue.”

189 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über die Ausländerinnen und Ausländer*, 142.20; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, *Bundesgesetz über das Schweizer Bürgerrecht*

designate or imply who belongs to a nation, group, or identity group. Affective attachments cultivated by words such as *Heimat* and the attendant nostalgia of landscapes, traditions, and cultural heritage have power in defining citizenship and belonging. For example, political scientists Michael Di Gregorio and Jessica Merolli argue that citizenship is not, “a purely rational and administrative exercise of state authority.”<sup>190</sup> Instead, they and others, also note “the role of affect in production of regimes of inclusion and exclusion.”<sup>191</sup> As Anderson theorized, affective attachments are cultivated amid disparate groups of people, such as citizens or residents of a nation-state, to create shared history, attitudes, and beliefs.<sup>192</sup> Yet, these attachments are often predicated on excluding alterity and otherness, while ignoring the ways national groups already contain diversity. This is especially apparent in a country like Switzerland, which is a federation of distinct cantons, with many different dialects, political systems, religions, and economic models.

As with utopian or imagined ideas of home, nations can become associated with larger meanings and identities. In the case of *Heimat*, these go beyond individual associations with home and encompass projects to protect certain traditions and lifestyles. Often these national identities become codified in laws designed to protect normative ideas of home and homeland and exclude anything viewed as antithetical. These national identities might be based on privileged definitions of race, religion, language, or cultural norms. One example of this is the recent “Islamification” of the debate around migration in Europe, even though Islamic migration to western Europe is not new. In the 1990s, refugees from the former Yugoslavia settled in Switzerland and other countries. While many of these immigrants were Muslim, they were also European, creating a shared identity. When the next wave of Muslim immigrants arrived, starting in 2014, from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea, the debate about Muslim immigrants and Islam in Europe increased. In many countries Muslim immigrants were seen as a threat to the Christian majority. This perceived threat led to reactions, including a reemphasis on Christian heritage and laws targeting religiously associated dress and practices.

For example, in Switzerland, in 2009, a law was adopted by popular vote that banned the building of minarets. The ban was couched as a debate about building codes and preserving the “Swiss-ness” of towns and villages. Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, a Swiss professor of religious studies, describes the arguments in favor of

---

(*Bürgerrechtsgesetz, BÜG*), 141.0 (Fedlex, 2014), <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20092990/index.html>; Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, FDP, *Swiss Citizenship / Naturalization*.

190 Michael Di Gregorio and Jessica L. Merolli, “Introduction: Affective Citizenship and the Politics of Identity, Control, Resistance,” *Citizenship Studies* 20, no. 8 (2016): 934, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2016.1229193>.

191 Di Gregorio and Merolli, “Introduction,” 934.

192 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

the ban as serving to strengthen Swiss definitions of culture and identity.<sup>193</sup> The law does this by making a sharp contrast with perceived non-Swiss symbols and practices, especially in religious contexts. He writes that proponents of the law employed images of the minaret as a “religiopolitical symbol” that makes an ideological claim on Swiss society, and that “forbidding minarets thus would send a strong signal that Swiss society does not accept such claims and that foreigners have to assimilate.”<sup>194</sup> This argument, connoting Islam as embodying both religious beliefs and political systems, was used to create a dichotomy between Islamic and Swiss values. It made a clear separation between what/who does and does not belong in Switzerland by building on affective attachments to Swiss architecture, landscapes, and religious spaces, even in an increasingly secular country. Samuel Behloul, a Swiss professor of religious studies, writes:

Once the causal link between minarets and Islam’s “claim to power” is accepted along with the latter’s social and political consequences, one must conclude according to the minaret opponents, that not supporting a minaret ban means acting irresponsibly towards one’s own country’s concerns.<sup>195</sup>

Here, migration is framed as a threat to the Swiss idea of home. Building on seemingly benign affective attachments to architecture, religious expression, and landscapes, an ideological definition of home emerges that serves to exclude some communities based on race and ethnicity.

Home is often associated with country of origin or a homeland and these associations appear even more clearly in the context of migration. Migrants are regularly categorized and referred to by the country from which they migrate. This association of home with the nation-state emerged more strongly with the rise of nationalism and the creation of national myths and origin stories.<sup>196</sup> Previously regional identities, ethnic and religious groups, and other language indicated belonging. Yet, the concept of homeland, taken up by the nation-state, is not new and also appears in religious discourse.

---

193 Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, “Against Islam, but Not Against Muslims: Actors and Attitudes in the Swiss Minaret Vote,” in *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, ed. Samuel H. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, Global Local Islam (transcript Verlag, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839422496.285>.

194 Tunger-Zanetti, “Against Islam, but Not Against Muslims,” 295.

195 Samuel M. Behloul, “Introduction,” in *Debating Islam: Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, ed. Samuel H. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, Global Local Islam (transcript Verlag, 2013), 26, <https://doi.org/10.1515/transcript.9783839422496.intro>.

196 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

## 2.3 Religious Threads of Home and Migration

While home is not typically discussed as an explicit theological concept, it is deeply connected to the meaning, relationships, and identity of many religions. Religion can itself be a kind of home, where an individual understands oneself within a larger context. To belong to a people, to God, and to a tradition often motivates and animates religious identity. Wynn, in his book *Faith and Place*, also asserts that God is a kind of place that can be sought and known by weaving together histories, stories, and experiences.<sup>197</sup> This “narratively mediated agency,” as Wynn terms it, is where identity and meaning emerge.<sup>198</sup> Finding a place to rest, to be known, and to be safe are qualities associated with God, as well as home.

The Judeo-Christian tradition understands home in both religious and secular terms. Home is an eternal home with God, while at the same time believers create a temporary home on earth.<sup>199</sup> Place figures prominently into Judeo-Christian understandings of home, yet the concept is larger than physical place. In addition to the social and affective dimensions of place explored earlier, place also holds religious meaning, often as the place where God or God’s work is encountered. Land is not seen as a static entity, but as a space imbued with relationships and religious meaning. For this reason, Cruz argues that “land’ is no longer a sufficient category from which to theologize about ‘home’ and ‘identity.’”<sup>200</sup> Cruz suggests that home is not simply a physical location but a quality of relationships and a responsibility for the world. These relationships and responsibilities orient religious and moral commitments. Below is a brief overview of some of the themes of home in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This is not meant to be an exhaustive survey, but it touches on some relevant themes for understanding religious influences on home and migration. Themes of loss, longing, exile, hospitality, and vulnerability will be explored as religious threads that echo the previous philosophical and sociological inquiry into home.

### 2.3.1 Home and Judaism

In the Judeo-Christian tradition home and migration are closely linked, having developed amid the history of the Israelites, a nomadic, agrarian, and often-conquered people. The experience of migration is found throughout the Jewish scriptures as the Jewish people search for a place, both on earth and with God, to call their own. In particular, their exodus from enslavement in Egypt and subsequent years searching for

---

197 Wynn, *Faith and Place*.

198 Wynn, *Faith and Place*, 45.

199 Kaufmann, “Heimat als Präsenz im Entzug,” 38.

200 Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 123.

a home shaped the identity and faith tradition of the Jewish people. The authors of the Jewish scriptures wrote from a migration perspective, which shaped their teachings, practices, and perspectives and even their interaction with God.<sup>201</sup> It is in seeking a home promised by God that the Israelites develop their understanding as a community chosen by God. Like many who have lost home, the Israelites came to understand longing and imagination as significant parts of home.

Theologians Peter M. Scott and Elaine Graham reflect on the specificity of place as well as the mobility of groups in negotiating a relationship with God. “Israel came to its understandings of polity and places as a nomadic people, that YHWH posed the question of Israel’s understanding of its identity not by reference to the fixity of place but by reference to the uncertainty of a future in pilgrimage.”<sup>202</sup> Their identity as a people seeking a home is not divorced from identification with a place or from uncertainty about that place. It is searching and often living in places that are temporary and far from home, that gives the Israelites’ pilgrimage meaning and direction as they seek both home and God. The exilic and migration histories of the Judeo-Christian tradition are steeped in loss, absence, and seeking.

For the Israelites, separation from the promised land shifted home from something that was purely territorial to something that included affective associations, memories, and imagined states. Adamavi-Aho Ekué writes,

Exile, as a decisive experience of the loss of state sovereignty and geographic roots, led to a reinterpretation of the concept of home in ancient Israel. Especially in the prophetic literature the line of development of an understanding of home is shown, which is no longer exclusively geographically, territorially and culturally shaped, but home now keeps the memory of the experience of the Exodus and the liberation of the slaves by God alive.<sup>203</sup>

Home is the memory of the experiences of exile and how they shape a relationship to God, even when home becomes more stable and permanent. Home is found within both alienation and homelessness, while it also arises from localized places and memory.<sup>204</sup> The memory of longing and seeking echoes within practices such as celebrating the Passover or acknowledging a shared humanity with strangers and migrants.

Perhaps the most enduring religious aspect of the interplay between home and migration is that of the diaspora. Historically, diaspora was associated exclusively

---

201 Polak, “Migration as a Sign of the Times,” 291.

202 Peter M. Scott and Elaine Graham, “Special Issue—Public Theology and the City: Urban Theology as Public Theology,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 2, no. 1 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1163/156973208x256411>.

203 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, “Heimat suchen,” 59–60.

204 Mathwig, “Heimat entdecken,” 165–66.

with the Jewish people's exile from Israel and dispersal in other lands. In the 20th century, diaspora becomes a more generalized term to refer to any group living away from their traditional homelands. As religious studies scholar Martin Baumann writes,

[T]he ancient notion of “diaspora” has become a fashionable term. Once exclusively used in a context-bound way, that of Jewish history and the plight of Jewish people being dispersed “among the nations,” in the late 20th century the folk term became generalized on a grand scale. Since the 1970s, “diaspora” was increasingly used to denote almost every people living far away from their ancestral or former homeland.<sup>205</sup>

Diaspora refers to a group of people dispersed or exiled from their traditional homeland. Originally used to refer to those living in colonies, the Greek root of the word diaspora is formed by “drawing on words that mean ‘to scatter,’ ‘to spread’ or ‘to disperse.’”<sup>206</sup> As seen in its etymology, diaspora maintains a strong link to spatial concepts of place and territory as well as relational and affective associations with place and people. Sarah Albrecht, a scholar of Islam, argues that diaspora maintains a “deep entrenchment in physical, imaginative and social space.”<sup>207</sup> Diaspora is connected to a sense of home and place as well as experiences of longing and absence. Diaspora can reinforce the connection between home and place, or home and ethnic and national identities, while diasporic groups also generate a unique identity apart from those who did not leave. Many who migrate to seek asylum or to pursue a better life are considered to live in the diaspora when residing away from their country of origin.<sup>208</sup>

### 2.3.2 Home in Islam

As diaspora is applied to more groups, it raises the question of how diaspora is understood for those without an identifiable homeland, as Israel is for the Jewish people. Specifically, for Muslims there is no distinct homeland from which diaspora occurs. Instead, diaspora in Islam refers to a separation of Islamic groups from the

205 Martin Baumann, “Diaspora: Genealogies of Semantics and Transcultural Comparison,” *Nu-men* 47, no. 3 (2000): 313, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1299150174?pq-origsite=summon&imgSeq=1>.

206 Baumann, “Diaspora.”

207 Sarah Albrecht, “Searching for the ‘Homeland’ of Islam: Concepts of Diaspora in Contemporary Islamic Discourse on Muslims in the West,” *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5, no. 1 (2016): 108, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-12341321>.

208 The term does not usually apply to those from wealthier countries who seek employment abroad, who instead are often referred to as ex-pats.

territorial, relational, and social aspects of their faith communities.<sup>209</sup> These connections are rooted in specific places but are more strongly reflected in affective associations with communities, practices, and religious beliefs. Albrecht argues that Muslim diaspora is more connected to a “symbolic place of origin, a religious and psycho-cultural estrangement.”<sup>210</sup> The idea of an Islamic homeland relies on a collective memory and a common community, sometimes referred to as the *umma*.<sup>211</sup> Yet, even the *umma* is disconnected from specific locations, apart from the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.<sup>212</sup> Thus, in Islam, diaspora, community, and homeland are not primarily bound by territory but rely on affective associations and a community of fellow believers. Diaspora is not only or primarily a physical dislocation, but also one that is often embedded in imagined and symbolic frameworks, both social and religious. The Muslim diaspora is rooted in a shared history. Sociologist Chantal Saint-Blancat describes the necessity of shared narratives and memories for the Islamic diaspora. “Faced with the fragmentation of the fates of individuals and families, with a multiplicity of lands of origin and with spatial dispersion, the construction of a collective memory is essential to the emergence of a Muslim diaspora consciousness.”<sup>213</sup> This memory is shared across geographic locations. In addition, in Islam, welcoming the stranger and hospitality are important teachings. God is often seen as a guest and believers must always prepare for God’s arrival. The Qur’an and numerous hadiths contain specific obligations and directives for believers to care for refugees, regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>214</sup>

In Islam, home is both a religious and secular concept. The true home is with God while there is also the temporary home of earth. The Qur’an does not mention homeland, though it does appear in the hadiths and the Prophet Muhammad talks about the love of country. Instead, Islamic homeland was defined by Islamic jurists in the

---

209 Albrecht, “Searching for the ‘Homeland’ of Islam.”

210 Albrecht, “Searching for the ‘Homeland’ of Islam,” 108.

211 Albrecht, “Searching for the ‘Homeland’ of Islam,” 108.

212 Albrecht, “Searching for the ‘Homeland’ of Islam,” 109.

213 Chantal Saint-Blancat, “Islam in Diaspora: Between Reterritorialization and Extraterritoriality,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, no. 1 (2002): 141, 144, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00368>.

214 Admirand, “The Ethics of Displacement and Migration in the Abrahamic Faiths,” 682; Salih Yucel, “Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland? The Notion of Watan Al-Asli and Watan Al-Sukna in Islam,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2015.1039813>. Salih Yucel, an Australian scholar of religion, makes a case for including the experiences of Muslims more directly in discourses on migration. Compared to medieval times, Muslims have not yet repeated their previous successful immigrations and subsequent contributions to adopted nations. Often Muslims’ current contributions are not sufficiently seen or acknowledged. Furthermore, the voices of Muslims themselves are largely absent in the public discourse about Muslim settlement and integration in Western nations.

eighth century based on teachings of the Qur'an. This interpretation led to three categories of homeland: "watan al-asli, the country of birth, the country of one's spouse or the place of permanent residence; watan al-sukna, the country of temporary residence and employment; and watan al-safari, the country that is traveled to."<sup>215</sup> Each of these terms applies to location and its social relevance, but does not discriminate based in racial, cultural, or ethnic identities.

For Muslims, the only true *watan al-asli* is the eternal home with God in paradise.<sup>216</sup> Because of this, wherever one is living on earth is the current home. Inevitably, the earthly home is left through death, making Paradise the only permanent home. While the true home is with God in paradise, a temporary home on earth is where basic needs of health, education, and safety are met. Yucel continues, "According to Islamic jurists, if a person leaves his or her country, immigrates to another country and finds a source of income, livelihood or marries there, and/or intends to live there permanently, then the new country becomes watan al-asli, the country of origin."<sup>217</sup> Yucel quotes a Muslim woman from Somalia who lives in Australia. She explains her concept of where she is from: "The whole earth belongs to God. Wherever I earn my sustenance, feel safe, and can practice my religion that is my country."<sup>218</sup> Because of this spiritual understanding of home, leaving one's country or homeland does not necessarily mean separation from home. This definition allows for greater flexibility about where a national home is located. If certain criteria for life are met, such as having a livelihood, family, work, housing, and education, a new country can become a new home.<sup>219</sup> Conversely, if the original country of origin is not able to provide basic criteria for living, it does not necessarily meet the criteria of a homeland. In many circumstances, non-majority Muslim countries, where Muslims migrate, are more able meet the criteria of providing for basic needs. It is often the fulfillment of these rights that make a place more desirable as a homeland.<sup>220</sup> An important aspect of diaspora is the ability to tell one's own story about home, even in contexts of asylum-seeking and arriving in a new country.<sup>221</sup>

---

215 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 191.

216 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 194.

217 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 194.

218 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 200.

219 Tariq Ramadan, *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* (Islamic Foundation, 2004); Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?."

220 Ramadan, *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity*; Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 196.

221 Yucel, "Do Muslims See Australia as Their Homeland?," 191.

### 2.3.3 Home in Christianity

Christians await a redeemed future with God and the physical place of earth is considered a temporary home until it is possible to fully join God in the promised heavenly home.<sup>222</sup> Home and belonging are associated with God, including through imagined and idealized homes such as the promised land, heaven, paradise, the New Jerusalem, and the Garden of Eden. At the same time, Christians are rooted in the realities of the world through the work of the church in areas such as liturgy, community, social outreach, and mission.<sup>223</sup> Life on earth is sometimes referred to as a pilgrimage to God, not a fixed place of belonging. While the earthly home is secondary to the heavenly home, it is also a theologically important concept. Christian theologies view meeting basic needs and living a full life as important aspects of home on earth. At the same time, earth is a place of pilgrimage on the way to home with God.<sup>224</sup> This pilgrimage includes numerous encounters with God and the salvation narrative. The Christian tradition identifies salvation with specific places. From the Garden of Eden to the Israelites' enslavement and exodus, to Egypt to Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai, to Jesus' ministry in Nazareth, to the many biblical events that occur in and around Jerusalem, God's work of salvation is intimately tied to specific locations where God creates, moves, and acts. As John Inge explains, "[T]he Christian religion is not the religion of salvation from places, it is the religion of salvation in and through places."<sup>225</sup> The story of God's people occurs in places, many of which become holy or are regarded as sacred because of this human interaction with God.<sup>226</sup>

Theologian John Inge and others argue for a relational view of place in biblical theology because the saving action between God and humanity takes place in specific places.<sup>227</sup> These place-based narratives are a source of connection that builds a relationship between people and God. A relational focus on place reflects understandings of the social production of place and could be termed the "sacred production of space" in religious contexts. Places become significant sources of meaning through affective associations generated by social and religious experiences.

---

222 Marion Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest: A Theological Hermeneutics of Migratory Narrativity," in *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*, ed. Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan, Christianities of the World (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13.

223 See, for example, the four traditional areas of church in Roman Catholic theology: Martyria, Diakonia, Leitourgia, and Koinonia.

224 Eduard Berger, "Heimat and Religion," in *Heimatschichten: Anthropologische Grundlegung eines Weltverhältnisses*, ed. Joachim Klose (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013), 429–30, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04740-5\\_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04740-5_25).

225 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.

226 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 33, 139.

227 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 46.

There is a tension in being residents of a place while also being without a home on earth.<sup>228</sup> Adamavi-Aho Ekué describes this aspect of Christian existence as located between “the necessary rootedness in place and the simultaneous search for a home with God.”<sup>229</sup> Adamavi-Aho Ekué is referring to the tension between a life of faith while creating a home on earth and a longing and expectation of a home in heaven. Home is found in both the current material reality and the longing for something beyond the here and now.<sup>230</sup> This orientation understands home (in both the physical and spiritual realm) as something that has occurred but is yet to be fully realized, a “yet, but not yet” moment. Thus, home is not a place that can be fully experienced in this world or lifetime. The phrase “yet, but not yet” mirrors Bloch’s utopic language of “not yet” to describe a future that is not attainable, but desired. Bloch’s utopic philosophy points towards an ideal future, one that bridges the gap between the current reality and the hoped-for future.<sup>231</sup> Similarly, Christian eschatology promises a redeemed home that is both grounded in the current reality and still to be fully realized in the future. Theologian Frank Mathwig describes this as a tension between the “lost home” and the “hoped-for-home” promised through salvation.<sup>232</sup> Thus, Christian theology maintains a connection to and concern for the world as home while also orienting itself towards a redeemed home that is not yet fully here.<sup>233</sup> In Christianity, a yearning for this ideal home is a yearning for God and for salvation. Home is a life-giving place and a place of salvation.<sup>234</sup> Living between these worlds creates tensions and challenges that are central to the Christian faith.<sup>235</sup>

Absence, longing, and distance are important characteristics of home, not its opposites. As Joisten and others explore, leaving, distance, insecurity, and unfamiliarity are necessary elements of home.<sup>236</sup> For Mathwig, home in Christianity is found

- 
- 228 Amélie Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler, “Heimat zwischen Sehnsucht und Gefährdung,” in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélie Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017), 13–14.
- 229 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, “Heimat suchen,” 58.
- 230 Mathwig, “Heimat entdecken.”
- 231 Bloch, *Prinzip Hoffnung / The Principle of Hope*.
- 232 Mathwig, “Heimat entdecken,” 153–54.
- 233 Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.
- 234 Regina Polak, *Migration, Flucht und Religion: Praktisch-Theologische Beiträge, Band 2: Durchführungen und Konsequenzen* (Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2017), 312.
- 235 This metaphor of living between experiences, neither fully in one place nor in the other, is a “border theology,” which concerns ambivalent places that offer possibility as well as danger. For explorations of border theologies, see: Kwok Pui-lan, “A Theology of Border Passage”; Gruber, “Remembering Borders”; Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 122.
- 236 See, for example: Ralph and Staeheli, “Home and Migration”; Friese, “The Limits of Hospitality”; Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home*.

in the tension of comfort and discomfort, of staying and leaving.<sup>237</sup> Comfort may be understood as staying in a place that is familiar, while discomfort may be understood as leaving and seeking. In fact, the Christian story begins with the loss of a specific home on earth, namely the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.<sup>238</sup> The loss of this first home is a model for the final, restored home promised at the conclusion of the Christian salvation narrative. The new kingdom is a state of union with God, a longed-for and imagined place of salvation. For Christians, true home is possible through God's saving work, a work that has been completed, but not fully realized.

Christianity is located between situatedness in the world and a migration-orientation, seeking a true home with God. This identification with migration is both a concrete experience and a metaphor for the Christian path. The biblical motifs of exile, wandering, and migration begin with Abraham following God's commandment to leave his home for a new homeland and continue with the exodus from Egypt and the Israelites' journey through the desert to a promised home. The Jewish people searched for a home for generations, from Egypt to Canaan to Babylon. In the Christian tradition, Jesus fled to Egypt as a child, lived and died under Roman imperial rule, and left home to teach and preach. Jesus' ministry is enacted through traveling and homelessness and Paul's journeys take him throughout the Roman kingdom.<sup>239</sup> Spiritual themes of migration and marginalization characterize religious teachings, including Jesus' welcome of the outcast, his teachings to care for the stranger and those who are "least among us," and the metaphor of searching for God as a path, often through the wilderness. Whether seeking a promised home on earth or waiting for true home with God, home is characterized by waiting, longing, and seeking, often while living in less-than-ideal circumstances.

Theologians Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Zeindler, and Mathwig emphasize Christianity's embeddedness in a migration-history that shapes a current migration-existence.<sup>240</sup> Cruz identifies being the outsider as a defining characteristic of Christian people. In this logic, not only should the stranger and outsider be welcomed, but the spiritual seekers themselves are strangers and wanderers, seeking the fullness of life with God. Cruz writes, "Being a stranger is the primary condition of the people of God."<sup>241</sup> Being outside of the definitions, laws, and values of the secular world is an identification held by many Christians. Christians are also strangers in the ways they stand outside of normative systems. Christian teachings also address experiences of migration and dislocation, including practices of hospitality and welcoming the

---

237 Mathwig, "Heimat entdecken," 165–66.

238 Berger, "Heimat und Religion," 427.

239 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, "Heimat suchen."

240 Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Mathwig, and Zeindler, "Heimat zwischen Sehnsucht und Gefährdung," 13.

241 Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration*, 124.

stranger; themes of wilderness, darkness, and being lost; and an emphasis on care for the vulnerable.

Many philosophers acknowledge that exile is the foundation of human experience. This exile, and attendant vulnerability, necessitate hospitality for survival and for understanding home. In the Jewish scriptures, the Jewish people are commanded to welcome the orphan, stranger, and outcast because they also experienced exile. While in the desert, God instructs the Jewish people, “You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”<sup>242</sup> This value of hospitality is rooted in the Jewish scriptures’ exilic narratives and Jesus’ teachings and practices of welcoming the stranger, outcast, and foreigner. Stories such as the Good Samaritan, the woman at the well, and the loaves and fishes build out this ethic of hospitality. In one of his teachings, Jesus extols the disciples to care for the least of the people and tells them that in doing so they will care for him. “Anything you did for even the least of the my people here, you also did for me.”<sup>243</sup> Jesus often blurred the lines between those deserving of hospitality and those who were able to fill the role of host. In the Greek scriptures, the word *philoxenia* is used to call out this friendship aspect of hospitality, denoting a delight in the guest-host relationship. It is also used to describe Jesus as both host and guest.<sup>244</sup> Hospitality is located in a two-way relationship, as scholar of church history and spirituality, Amy Oden, describes: “Early Christian voices tell us again and again that whether we are guest or host we must be ready, ready to welcome, ready to enter another’s world, ready to be vulnerable.”<sup>245</sup> Both the guest and host are impacted by the experience of hospitality. Being a guest and being a host are shared human experiences, and at any given time these roles can change. Jesus’ teachings to welcome the stranger and outcast reflect this blurring of the guest-host divide.<sup>246</sup>

Many Christian theologies emphasize serving the poor and vulnerable. In situations of migration, this is extended to welcoming the migrant. Many Christian teachings identify Jesus with migrants and those who are forced to leave their homes. The World Council of Churches’ 2018 Christmas letter identifies Jesus as homeless and vulnerable. “Jesus is born homeless and experiences tyranny and suffering. He identifies with the refugee and the oppressed and calls on us to similarly identify compassionately with the vulnerable.”<sup>247</sup> The call to care for migrants and

---

242 Deuteronomy 10:19, The Contemporary Torah.

243 Matthew 25:40, New Century Version.

244 Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue* (Orbis Books, 2015), 69.

245 Amy Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Abingdon Press, 2001), 15.

246 For more on the concepts of vulnerability and hospitality, see section 2.1.4.

247 World Council of Churches, *Christmas Statement*.

others in need is rooted in the biblical understanding that Jesus paid special attention to the stranger and the outcast in his teaching, relationships, and interactions. Jesus' commandment to welcome the stranger and an understanding that life comes from God are foundational to the teaching of hospitality and of serving those with less privilege and fewer resources.

From a Christian perspective, the earth, and home on earth, are, first, gifts from God and, second, part of a co-creative existence on earth.<sup>248</sup> Theologians also point to the incarnation as a reason that borders, nation-states, and citizenship do not limit who deserves access to work, health, and basic rights that sustain life. Theologian Matthias Zeindler calls on human responsibility when considering home as a gift from God. God chose humans as co-creators, thus human agency plays a role in how creation unfolds and is experienced. The incarnation reflects a relationship between God and humans that is a model for relationships among humans.<sup>249</sup> Life itself relies on God and thus, the right to life is not earned, it is a gift, and the right to sustenance extends to all people. This means that all humans are children of God, that creation is a gift, and that God extends the promise of life to everyone, regardless of place of birth or citizenship.

## 2.4 Engaging Home and Migration

Home is a topic that encompasses the depth and breadth of human experiences. I have attempted to tease out patterns, nuances, and complications of home, yet this task is inherently incomplete. By exploring the ambiguity and complexity of home, this project takes a step back and resists idealizations and ideological understandings of home, especially the idea that home has fixed and unchanging boundaries. As Ralph and Staeheli write, “[M]any commentators challenge the way home is often imagined as bounded, and instead offer a conceptualisation of home as messy, mobile, blurred and confused.”<sup>250</sup> The messiness of home is seen by exploring home in a variety of contexts and distancing it from normative idealizations in order to draw out the diverse ways home is experienced. Idealization often defines a tension between belonging and exclusion, without a nuanced understanding of what home can mean, how it can change, and the power it can exert. This is particularly true in the context of migration, where leaving home brings new understandings home.

248 Matthias Zeindler, “Zwischen verlorener und erhoffter Heimat: Beheimatung im Kontext von Schöpfung, Versöhnung und Erlösung,” in *Heimat(en)? Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Migration*, ed. Amélie Adamavi-Aho, Frank Mathwig, and Matthias Zeindler (TVZ Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017), 88. In his article, the theologian Matthias Zeindler identifies four characteristics of home from a theological perspective.

249 Zeindler, “Zwischen verlorener und erhoffter Heimat.”

250 Ralph and Staeheli, “Home and Migration,” 519.

Establishing characteristics of home is a starting point for seeing how migration affirms or challenges these parameters. In creating a sensitizing concept, I have described home as influenced by place, affectivity, loss and longing, and cultural and religious narratives. Home is as much connected to presence as it is to absence. Home takes on cultural and political meaning, defines belonging and exclusion, and is often sought more than it is realized. Religion grapples with home through experiences of exile, through the tension between home on earth and home with God, and through teachings on vulnerability and hospitality.

Home lends concrete location and language to personal and group identity. Despite common associations across diverse groups, home is a social construct that offers both individual and collective identity markers. As a marker of these identities, home generates social cohesion, but it can also become rigid and nostalgic. Home can be both rigid and flexible, and access to power and resources can impact how it shapes individual and collective lives. These qualities of home, including relationships, time, practices, narrative, and loss constitute a *homeness*, an affective experience of place. In this way, Young describes home as both an emotional and geographic space.<sup>251</sup> *Homeness* captures qualities of home that are specific, yet portable; individual, yet collective; emotional, yet also concrete. Home is symbolic, containing a density of meanings that hold individual and corporate purpose and identity. This exploration of home provides a starting point for thinking about home within asylum-seeking and church practices. Even though loss is endemic to home, it is more difficult to pin down a definition of home in the context of loss, such as migration. Even more challenging is when home is detached from a single, concrete location. As a final note on migration and home in the Christian tradition, it is important to recognize that the Christian tradition is not *only* associated with migration. Ever since Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, it has also been associated with nation-states and established, settled, and institutional contexts. “Christianity and other institutionalized religions have been in tension with a nomadic lifestyle, because institutionalized religion relies on sedentary culture.”<sup>252</sup> This complexity of being associated with ruling institutions, while also privileging the vulnerable and marginal, is an important lens for viewing religious responses to migration.<sup>253</sup>

---

251 Young, “House and Home.”

252 Nausner, “Homeland as Borderland,” 138.

253 Kwok, “A Theology of Border Passage,” 115. Kwok Pui-lan further articulates this complexity as found between the political power of the church and the church that stands against the dominant powers. “The true indivisible church is always at odds with the church that wields so much power and cooperates with the crown. Throughout the ages, the pilgrims and monks who have gone out to the desert to form communities on the border and other alternative base communities have created important sites of resistance and renewal.”

Marion Grau explores this tension in her article, *Circumambulating the Exodus-Migration-Conquest*. Grau challenges Christians not to stay with the exodus, but to take seriously the stories of settlement. These include the biblical stories of Israel's eras of settlement, establishing kingdoms, and holding slaves.<sup>254</sup> It also includes modern Christianity's participation in colonialism and association with nation-states. Theologies from non-dominant perspectives can help to illuminate the tensions between migration and settled theologies and can offer different readings and perspectives from these narratives. Grau asks several questions in her article that encourage us to acknowledge this tension without looking for simplistic solutions.

How do we reroot ourselves and become people of the land wherever we are? How do we understand land and home on a planet where a changing climate is forcing many to migrate? What in the narrated changes and shifts of population allows the preservation of important cultural elements, while being open to other cultural practices? What would be a viable theological engagement with land, community, and livelihood seen under the aspect of migration?<sup>255</sup>

This book holds these questions as motivations for exploring what a just and sustainable approach to migration might be, particularly in the context of home, and how churches can engage authentically with migration. If scholarship does not take seriously Christianity's relationship to settlement, colonialism, and systems of power, then it becomes tempting to develop a simplistic theology of migration that essentializes or excludes the perspectives of those who experience marginalization. In the context of migration and home, the questions of who belongs and who doesn't, what forms of belief and self-expression are acceptable or not, and precisely what borders and walls serve to protect has become increasingly charged. This book will build on concepts of home, in conversation with experiences of asylum-seeking in Basel, Switzerland, to explore the intersections of church practice with home and migration.

---

254 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest."

255 Grau, "Circumambulating Exodus-Migration-Conquest," 12.

