

# Writing Home: Books on Home and Exile<sup>1</sup>

*Willis Jenkins*

For so foundationally human a theme, it can be difficult to track down the scholarly literature on home. Outside of improvement manuals, buyers' guides, and interior magazines, the theme lacks a genre. Or perhaps it proliferates in too many literatures to become the expertise of any few. Just consider how pervasively we encounter its Greek root, *oikos*, as prefix to vocabularies describing the human habitat. Economics and ecology seek the laws and logics of how humans find themselves at home, and the two often compete to normatively guide our way "back home," as it were. But where do we turn to consider what a home might be, and what it might mean to dwell or return there?

So too for losing our home. As insidious, inevitable, and regenerative as the experience of exile, it too seems a foundational human theme without a dedicated literature. The haunting absence of home stolen underlies many a political menace, yet also evokes personal creativity and social innovation. The textual traces of exile thus promise ways of understanding chronic distress as well as sources of renewal. But where do we turn to make sense of those traces?

We find fragmented hints of home and its complexity, along with many clues to making sense of exile, by reading memoirs and fiction. Many such personal narratives powerfully address the remembrance, loss, haunt, and rediscovery of home. But works tracing common strands of reflection on home or framing the experience of exile are fewer. The lists below avoid fiction and memoir (with a few exceptions) in order to gather together kinds of synthetic reflections on home, dwelling, household, displacement, homelessness, and exile.

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*Home, Dwelling, and Place*

This list offers some initial suggestions toward a descriptive account of home. Each in its own way engages what it means for humans to dwell in a place of their own. A number (Bachelard, Rybczynski, Tuan) address themselves to that topic with explicit theoretical treatment. Others explore historical, cultural, and symbolic correspondences between the physical house and the subjective home (King, Marcus, Oliver, Rosner). Several recontextualize the meaning of home by reference to extrahuman places (Brown, Seamon, Smith) or to wider social systems (Harvey, Lefebvre). Reed and Prince show how home may be reclaimed from historical repressions, while some offer proposals for constructing homes attentive to social goals (Chow, Kunstler) or more attuned to nature (Franck, Hagan, Steiner).

- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. 1964; Boston: Beacon, 1993.
- Brown, David. *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Chow, Renee Y. *Suburban Space: The Fabric of Dwelling*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Franck, Karen A., and R. Bianca Lepori. *Architecture Inside Out*. West Sussex: Academy, 2000.
- Hagan, Susannah. *Taking Shape: A New Contract between Architecture and Nature*. Woburn: Architectural, 2001.
- Harvey, David. *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2001.
- King, Peter. *Private Dwelling: Contemplating on the Use of Housing*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2004.
- Kunstler, James Howard. *Home From Nowhere: Remaking Our Everyday World for the 21st Century*. New York: Free, 1998.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Malden: Blackwell, 1991.
- Marcus, Clare Cooper. *House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home*. Berkeley: Conari, 1995.
- Oliver, Paul. *Dwellings*. New York: Phaidon, 2003.
- Prince, Valerie Sweeney. *Burnin' Down the House: Home in African American Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Reed, Christopher, ed. *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1996.
- Rosner, Victoria. *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. New York: Penguin, 1987.
- Seamon, David, ed. *Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Smith, Mick. *An Ethics of Place*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

- Steiner, Frederick. *Human Ecology: Following Nature's Lead*. Washington, DC: Island, 2002.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. 1976; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- -----, *Cosmos and Hearth: A Cosmopolite's Viewpoint*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

### *Domesticity and Gender*

These books identify, complicate, redescribe, or contest some association of domestic arrangements with patterns of gender expression. What has home historically meant for females? How do gender socialization and concepts of home reflexively condition each other? What could it mean for women to “stay at home”? Or to reclaim it? How have men made themselves at home? Perhaps the writings of women can be read to reflect, disrupt, or rebuild the domestic household. What then happens to notions of home as gender relations change? Or when families move (or are moved) into new cultures and new homes? Finally, within this domestic flux, how do children make and discover homes?

- Christensen, Pia, and Margaret O'Brien, eds. *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood and Community*. London: Routledge Falmer, 2003.
- Domosh, Mona, and Joni Seager. *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World*. New York: Guilford, 2001.
- Foster, Thomas. *Transformations of Domesticity in Modern Women's Writing: Homelessness at Home*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Hilde, Heynen, and Gulsum Baydar, eds. *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place and Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Okin, Susan Moller. *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. New York: Basic, 1991.
- Pearlman, Mickey, ed. *A Place Called Home: Twenty Writing Women Remember*. New York: St. Martin's, 1996.
- Pink, Sarah. *Home Truths: Gender, Domestic Objects and Everyday Life*. New York: Berg, 2004.
- Spain, Daphne. *Gendered Spaces*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Sullivan, Oriol. *Gender at Home: Changing Practices and Relations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Wiley, Catherine, Barbara Bowen, and Fiona Barnes, eds. *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home*. New York: Garland, 1996.

### *Home, Hospice, and Health*

Reflections on health care-giving practices increasingly consider the metaphorical and physical importance of home. Particularly in the United States, where health care seems characterized by impersonal procedures, bureaucratic institutions, and inadequate coverage, writers have begun revisiting the resonances of home. These books illustrate personal and institutional efforts to understand or overcome the medical displacement of patients from family and community. Books on hospice care reflect on its generative model of household care-giving, while another growing literature constructively attends the institutional exile of the elderly to nursing homes.

- Arras, John D. *Bringing the Hospital Home: Ethical and Social Implications of High-Tech Home Care*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Gates, Barbara. *Already Home: A Topography of Spirit and Place*. Boston: Shambhala, 2005.
- Parks, Jennifer A. *No Place Like Home: Feminist Ethics and Home Health Care*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Robertson, Heather. *Meeting Death: In Hospital, Hospice, and at Home*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000.
- Schwarz, Benjamin, and Ruth Brent, eds. *Aging, Autonomy, and Architecture: Advances in Assisted Living*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

### *Home Economics: Household, Garden, and Market*

These books suggest lines for pursuing the *oikos* relation among household, economy, and ecology. Perhaps the home might domesticate untamed markets and natures, or perhaps national economies and garden habits already shape our notions of home and their household relations. How do modern markets and nationalized landscapes change these relations, and along with them our concepts of home and garden?

- Berry, Wendell. *Home Economics*. New York: North Point, 1987.
- Brown, Jane. *The Modern Garden*. New York: Princeton Architectural, 2000.
- Bulgakov, Sergei. *Philosophy of Economy: The World as Household*. 1922; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Smith, Joan. *Creating and Transforming Households: The Constraints of the World-Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Smith, Joan, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Hans-Dieter Evers, eds. *Households and the World-Economy*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984.
- Stage, Sarah, and Virginia B. Vincenti, eds. *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

### *Home Displaced: Travel, Homelessness, and Immigration*

The books in this section consider how the significance of home changes for those who leave it behind, sometimes for domestic streets, sometimes for exotic lands; sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently. How does home become reconceptualized through the experience of migration? Of peregrination? Of eviction? Each sort of movement involves a loss of home, and the search for another or a renewed return to one's own. Is home ever regained or rebuilt, and how?

- Allen, John. *Homelessness in American Literature: Romanticism, Realism, and Testimony*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Arnold, Kathleen R. *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity: The Uncanniness of Late Modernity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Brettell, Caroline, and James Frank Hollifield, eds. *Migration Theory: Talking Across the Disciplines*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Feldman, Leonard C. *Citizens without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Hopper, Kim. *Reckoning with Homelessness*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Jacobs, Nancy R. *Immigration: Looking for a New Home*. Wylie: Information Plus, 1997.
- Kain, Geoffrey, ed. *Ideas of Home: Literature of Asian Migration*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997.
- Koser, Khalid, and Nadjie Sadig Al-Ali, eds. *New Approaches to Migration: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Kyle, Ken. *Contextualizing Homelessness: Towards a Critical Theory of Homelessness*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Long, Lynnelly D., and Ellen Oxfeld, eds. *Coming Home: Refugees, Migrants, and Those Who Stayed Behind*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Robertson, George, et al. *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*. London: Routledge, 1994.

### *Exile*

These books variously approach exile as political problem, national experience, social phenomenon, theological challenge, mode of reading, personal expression, and hermeneutic key, as well as the sense of homelessness and dislocation that marks many individuals' existential experience of contemporary life. As home's negative, exile summons reflection on the vital human attachments which surround our notions of home. Exile offers its commentators metaphor, theme, narrative, and content for investigating the role of place, movement, and community for human personhood. Together these texts begin to adumbrate exile and exilic humanity from a series of disciplinary approaches, illuminating a phenomenon at the heart of many contemporary literatures.

- Achebe, Chinua. *Home and Exile*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Berger, Peter L. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*. New York: Irvington, 1973.
- Brenner, Frederic. *Diaspora: Homelands in Exile*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003.
- Gergen, Kenneth J. *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. New York: Basic, 1991.
- Gurr, Andrew. *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1981.
- Hamid, Naficy, ed. *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Israel, Nico. *Outlandish: Writing between Exile and Diaspora*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Rose, Peter I., ed. *The Dispossessed: An Anatomy of Exile*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Weschler, Lawrence. *Calamities of Exile*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.