



THE BLOOMSBURY HANDBOOK OF 21ST-CENTURY FEMINIST THEORY

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B L O O M S B U R Y

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CHAPTER THIRTY

Migration

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Feminism and migration are terms referring to sets of embodied thought and lived experience whose histories have crosscut and impacted each other. For years, the migratory flows of women and feminist theories across regional and transnational borders have served to forge links between women in different sites within an increasingly globalized economy. At the same time, contact between women's varied experiences of being in the world, which resulted from this migratory activity, has also contributed to Western feminism's "legitimation crisis" (Kaplan 6) and helped diversify its predominantly white, middle-class and heterosexual political agenda. Postcolonial, black, and transnational feminisms in particular have consistently critiqued Western feminism's racialized gender underpinnings and its privileged collusion with imperialist, neoliberal and heteronormative positions. These newer trends in feminism have thus prompted feminist theorizing and activism to face up to their exclusionary practices and reinvent themselves as heterogeneous and internally differentiated political formations, "multiple, contradictory, wedged ambivalently and precariously between diverse sets of subject positions and subjectivities" (Brah 13).

Today, most contemporary feminisms have issues of multiplicity and diversity high on their agendas and are hard at work seeking to articulate a contingent politics of difference that will allow them to encounter and decode multiple and mobile differences (of class, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, or species) in non-appropriative and inclusive ways. It is perhaps no accident that, being so informed by the tensions inscribing women's multiply located, migratory experience, feminist theory and research have emerged as promising sites especially suited to addressing the complex and multidimensional problematic of migrancy. As I suggest in this chapter, with its attentiveness to the gendered dynamics of migration, feminist thought has worked toward defetishizing the figure of the migrant—unpacking and diversifying the unitary character of a conceptual category that has allowed "different forms of displacement to be gathered together in the singularity of a given name" (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 5). It achieves this by bringing into sharper focus the embodied, historically and culturally embedded, and power-bound character of migrant mobilities (Blunt 691), by reconfiguring home in terms of movement (Fortier, "Coming Home"; Brah; Ahmed et al) and foregrounding representation and its contingencies as crucial to how borders, movement, and spaces of belonging and unbelonging are made intelligible and inhabited.

Migration can be understood as referring to material acts of individual or communal relocation, involving leaving what is perceived as home and moving to a different place, and at once as a metaphor that is used to theorize the mobility of identity in a world

whose ways of knowing have grown more fluid—identity as migrancy. In that sense, migration is a term that provides a framework for thinking about embodied, cultural, and economic movement across material, subjective, and affective locations in a world of global flows. Whether lived, imaginary, forced, or voluntary, it engages issues such as home and settlement, national belonging, sovereignty and citizenship, travel and mobility, transnationalism, creolization, and diaspora. Though a hallmark of human activity since ancient times, migration in the context of globalization is a multifaceted social process (Hondagneu-Sotelo 112), marked by the diversification in the identity of migrants (Blunt 688; Papastergiadis 39), the widening variation in their resources, a change in the patterns of settlement and return (Piper 136), the proliferation in the direction of migratory movements that are increasingly directed toward and within non-Western locations (Papastergiadis 39, 45) and, crucially, the feminization of the migrant labor force (Piper 151; Silvey 138). The complexity of global cross-border connectivity is further registered in the contradictory languages of migration that produce identities and cultural sensibilities. These languages and sensibilities are played out and acutely felt in the field of public discourses through which both migrants and locals are accorded or dispossessed of meaning and life.

As evidenced by popular media discourses and heated political debates during several recent electoral campaigns in the immigrant-receiving countries of the Global North, migrants—be it documented or undocumented immigrants, political refugees or asylum seekers, educated professionals, “accidental” immigrants of the heart (Kelley), or seasonal migrant laborers—are routinely constructed as alien even within the legal and cultural frameworks that organize apparently difference-loving contemporary multiculturalures. Post-Brexit Britain might best exemplify the tensions inhering in balancing out the demands of a national imaginary that constructs itself as a defender of civilized, transcultural symbiosis and a new kind of virulent, nationalist backlash that narrates European-Union citizens as strangers. Though clearly a more familiar “other” to the British public than Syrian refugees seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom, both Eastern and Western Europeans residing in Britain are still fetishized as a group of foreign bodies that is being used as a potent bargaining chip in the British government’s negotiating strategy with Europe. These Europeans are for the most part constructed as enjoying a closer relationship of proximity to the (white) native Briton. Even so, they are still coded in ways that are as homogenizing as those reserved for the Asian and African migrants currently arriving at Europe’s doorstep via the Mediterranean and are represented as a “threat” to British territorial sovereignty and national interests.

Being classed as bodies “out of place,” European residents in the UK as much as asylum seekers have been made to move, to borrow from Hanif Kureishi’s chilling description of the migrant condition, from “reality” to a nation’s “collective imagination.” Stripped of “colour, gender and character,” they are made into “something resembling an alien,” an “example of the undead, who will invade, colonise and contaminate,” figures that “we can never quite digest or vomit” (27). Ontologized and cut off from the social and material relations which determine their existence, an effect of what Sara Ahmed terms “stranger fetishism” (*Strange Encounters* 5), migrant subjects are assigned a pre-given meaning through a system of binary distinctions that delegitimizes them (legally, culturally, morally, sexually) in discourse and real life, and installs them as signifiers of illegality and subjects in need of surveillance and visa, passport, or residence control. What motivates the staging of migratory subjectivities in terms of a philosophy of “distinction” (Mountz 262) is partly the desire of national communities to preserve subjects

and places (of migrant settlement and origin) sealed and firmly bounded, untouched by the fluidity affecting human living and mixing. Clearly, the ideologies of racial and cultural purity that were vital to Western colonial practices continue to fuel contemporary attitudes to migratory mobility and settlement and to determine restrictive, and deeply uneven, strategies of discursive and physical exclusion and inclusion.¹

Feminist-informed work on migration coming out of different disciplines suggests that these shifting processes of migrant incorporation and expulsion must be addressed within a more complex and nuanced framework of differentiation. Working against earlier elaborations of migration as a monolithic, either-or/us-them binary construct, feminist researchers' engagement with the gendered dynamics of migration has contributed to a perceptual shift in understandings of migrant politics as diverse and contradictory. Feminists call attention, for instance, to the embodied materialities of women's migrant mobilities, the asymmetrical power relations determining their movement across spaces (how some move and some fail to move), and the uneven effects of that movement on their subjective states of being, social positionings, and sense of belonging. They address the political constructedness of borders and boundaries along lines of gender, race, class, nation, caste, or religion (Silvey 139). They also ask to know how different women on the move inhabit, narrate, imagine, and affectively relate to homes—households, families, homelands, or communities that they lost, forcibly abandoned, rejected, or built anew—making us, thus, alive to the fact that homes are not given but “enacted” in relation to the differential dynamics of migratory movement that might have been willingly undertaken, forced, or forbidden (Ahmed et al. 2).

Such gender-inflected approaches to the problematic of migrancy and home are especially indebted to brands of postcolonial and transnational feminism that are concerned with the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the production of transnational spaces and subjects, forms of national and supranational belonging or citizenship and statelessness (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Mohanty; Butler and Spivak; Butler and Athanasiou). They have also been made possible by broader cross-disciplinary feminist inquiries into the work of difference and the limits of diversity (Weedon), the embodied and spatialized basis of subjectivity (Massey), and the importance of power relations, structures of inequality, and historical and cultural determination in shaping patterns of living mediated by representation and discourse.

To begin to understand how feminists have started to debunk the assumptions built into migrant ontology and complicate popular encodings of migration, it is important that we consider their interventions into the politics of mobility and home. In what follows, I will, first, discuss how feminist concern with gendered mobilities has served to highlight the extent to which movement is connected to conditions of privilege and marginality and constitutes, therefore, an embodied practice that is bound to concrete networks of power relations and meaning. This gender-specific critique, as I argue, taps into the concerns of the influential “mobility turn,” as it has been emerging across the social sciences, and its expressed desire to rethink contemporary geographies of mobility as historically determined and differential practices that materialize within specific embodied, representational, and material contexts.

Given that migration and home are as intimately connected to each other as mobilities are to immobilities, the final part of this chapter will focus on feminist challenges to dominant ideas of home or the homeland as a unitary and static site of comfort. The presumption of home as static is foundational to analytic discourses that perceive migration in mechanistic terms as a structure of displacement that operates between two fixed points of origin and

destination and defines migrant mobility as “rootless” in opposition to the “rooted” sense of belonging afforded to the citizen subject, underwriting the invocation of the migrant as alien. Feminists suggest, instead, that there are no single or final points of departure or arrival and attempt to reconfigure home as a space internally ruptured by the work of intersectional differences, antagonisms, and desires, hence, as a site of nonending negotiation and often uncomfortable incompleteness. Rethinking the limits of attachment to a place and the borders of the communal as being continually adjusted to different relationships of proximity and estrangement allows ethical strategies of inclusion to develop that resist producing the migrant as a given and knowable other with a fixed ontological essence, a figure to be rejected or appropriated at will. Rather, migrants as multiply-situated subjects can alter the language of the host community (the nation) and its public spaces and forge a contingent sense of belonging for both those who cross boundaries and those who stay put. To address these issues, theoretical reflections will be interwoven with readings of artistic and literary responses to migration, the work specifically of Austrian artist Tanja Boukal and British writer and activist Rahila Gupta’s short story “Leaving Home.”

(MIGRANT) MOBILITIES

Migration cannot be theorized outside spatialized relations of power, outside, that is, its connection with place, home, and enclaves of belonging. Understanding migration begins with the migrants’ embodied stories of how they inhabit and move across physical and social spaces, the histories and the conditions of their departures and arrivals. In that sense, recent approaches to mobility that involve research on “the combined movements of people, objects and information in all of their complex relational dynamics” (Sheller, “Mobility” 1) are both informed by and extend the study of migration. As Alison Blunt observes, while research on mobilities and migrations cannot be collapsed onto each other, there are many productive connections between them, particularly in their shared concern with materiality and politics (685). Feminist researchers in these two fields are especially keen on calling attention to the material, situated, and historically distinct conditions framing women’s movement and constructions of home as part of their continuing struggle against the abstraction of thought that underwrites masculinist ideas of a universal, common humanity whose rules systematically override, obscure, undervalue, and marginalize women’s specificities, experiences, and positions in the world. As I will argue in the next section, feminist concern with materiality, which is at once a concern with locating and reevaluating (sexual) difference, runs parallel to—and at once informs—the production of social theories that are situated within the “new mobilities paradigm” which has proved instrumental in redressing the “unspecified” nature of mobility in an increasingly mobile world (Cresswell, *On the Move* 2).

Whereas absolute space, what is commonly understood as “real” space in Western societies (Smith and Katz 75–6), has been repeatedly critiqued for its assumed transparency and abstract neutrality by Marxist and feminist critics,² the notion of mobility has received much less rigorous attention. In spite of its centrality to life experience and the production of knowledge, movement has been routinely coded as a “kind of blank space,” contentless, apparently natural, devoid of meaning, history, and ideology (Cresswell, *On the Move* 2, 3). To challenge the ideological transparency of such an encoding, a politics of mobility that seeks to historicize the production of mobile practices has begun to be articulated. For Tim Cresswell, that means reconfiguring forms of mobility as involving

“a fragile entanglement of physical movement, representations and practices” (“Towards a Politics of Mobility” 18) that have a history and bear the imprint of specific cultural and social determinations. The dominant conceptualization of mobility as abstract and universalizable must give way, it is suggested, to a more political understanding of mobile practices as at once discursively constituted and embodied acts of relocation that are productive of the social relations, the spaces, and the subjects that traverse them, as much as they are produced by them. Mobility then needs to be reimagined as a resource that is differentially accessed, narrated, experienced, valued, and affectively invested depending on the concrete power contexts within which it materializes. In line with this theoretical take, the focus is currently on “mobilities,” which, as a category, comprises a host of terms such as travel, tourism, exile, cosmopolitanism, nomadism, or deterritorialization, names for relocation which, in alluding to migrant states that share continuities and discontinuities, tend to be seen less as synonyms and more as signs of different critical registers and historical instances (Kaplan 3). Such a differential mobile imaginary is in a position to trouble and complicate simplified notions of migration as a transparent line linking already constituted places of departure and arrival, which, according to Cresswell, is what classic migration theory often assumes. In his argument, a “man and a woman, or a businessman and a domestic servant, or a tourist and a refugee may experience a line of a map linking A and B completely differently” (“Towards a Politics of Mobility” 18, 21).

Through her photographic collage *Memories of Travels and Dreams* (Figure 30.1), Tanja Boukal clearly suggests that such an experience of moving along a line on the map is not simply different for different mobile subjects but, crucially, deeply uneven, conditioned as it is by the asymmetries of power that regulate human spatial crossings. First presented to the public in the summer of 2016 in the context of an art exhibition



FIGURE 30.1 Tanja Boukal's *Memories of Travels and Dreams* (2016)

entitled *A World Not Ours* and organized by the Schwarz Foundation on the Greek island of Samos,³ Boukal's artwork accords visibility to the power-inflected character of migrant mobility. It reflects on the reality of a tourist island-turned refugee detention camp as a result of uncontrolled migratory activity by visually juxtaposing tourist and migrant mobilities as interlocking and yet fundamentally distinct ways of crossing the narrow sea strip between Samos and Turkey. Advertising a day cruise to the Turkish town of Kusadasi on the shore opposite, the tourist poster at the collage's center promises cheap entertainment to those in possession of leisure time, money, and passports. Surrounding it are scattered photographs of torn life vests, discarded milk bottles, baby shoes, and pink ribbons, witnesses to the perilous migrant passage from Asia to Europe that costs over 3,000 Euros and does not guarantee an arrival.

Mae Henderson's observation that "Border crossings move in different directions and from different locations, some from positions of centrality and dominance, others from positions of marginality and powerlessness" (26) clearly has a special resonance here. If, as Henderson aptly notes, "power relations and positionality shape the consequences and possible inequities" resulting from such events, Boukal's collage openly puts forth the claim that tourists and refugees sail across the Aegean border having set off from diverse positions on the map of power hierarchies. As subjects, they are interpellated through their mobilities by being accorded distinctive subject positions in discourses, which are normatively associated with particular means and styles of moving (Cresswell and Merriman 7). In a global economy of capitalist social relations and policed territorial sovereignty, tourists travel freely, consume commodities, energize economies, and figure as vital components in the construction of transnational culture while refugees move in clandestine and enforced ways that demand to be policed and contained.

Boukal, however, does more than expose the power dynamics—and indirectly engage the histories of cultural and social determination—that control who can move and how. She brings into focus the relational character of mobilities in all their material manifestations. Countering dominant public discourses that stage migration as a threat inherently from the "outside," Boukal's work proposes a framework that identifies a relationship of interdependence connecting privileged and marginal mobilities. Encoded here through their representation as ruins, the synecdochic signs of migration encircle what is represented as a "fenced in" system of Western cultural and economic hegemony, rupturing its borders partly by means of resignifying its spaces. The same beaches that act as holiday resorts for the affluent Westerners are identified as sites of dispossession, death, and burial when their postcard-type photographs are strategically placed among the visual traces of missing migrant bodies. Migrant ruination is shown thus to haunt Europe with a vision of its own finitude and constructedness, suggesting that, as an idea and an institution, "it hasn't always been there" and "it will not always be there, it is finite" (Derrida 44). At once, it also confronts the West with the very precariousness that is lodged, even if foreclosed, at the heart of its self-perception and which migration itself embodies—migrancy posited here, in all its unpredictability, as a constituent element in Western ontological structures and histories.

FEMINIST MIGRATIONS

Feminists have been instrumental in uncovering the extent to which migration is imbricated in the production of power and relations of domination. In that sense, they have contributed to exposing migration as not only producing ruins but also being itself

structured by the logic of the ruin, never being completely one as a concept but rather multifaceted and multidimensional. Indeed, the growing body of feminist research into the gendered politics animating migration has called attention to gendered mobilities as being deeply political (Massey) and unevenly enacted in processes that reflect and reinforce social organization along the lines of race, class, nation, sexuality, caste, and religion (Silvey 138; Sheller, "Gendered Mobilities" 257).

Accordingly, it is constructions of gender as iterable performance and an engagement with intersectional materialist politics that inform those contemporary feminist responses to migration which seek to understand gendered mobilities as performed in specific contexts, allowing for differences among women to be analytically focused upon and generating differential (and contingent) understandings of displacement and relocation. Reworking "unmarked masculinist assumptions about the migrant" (Silvey 142), such theoretical approaches draw their energy from the need to situate and historicize the meanings invested in migratory patterns by highlighting their construction as embodied, socially embedded, and materially grounded processes. Their concern with the embodied materialities of women's migrant mobilities has proved vital in unmasking the vested interests served by the abstraction normatively surrounding the concept of movement. Additionally, it has also helped reassess the histories of its connection with women's lives and the frequent celebratory deployment of the idea of migration as a metaphor for liberation in women's worldly relations and writings as well as first-world feminist epistemologies.

To appreciate the political import of admitting to the material conditions (historical, geographical, cultural) that produce varied experiences of migratory mobility for feminist politics, it is important to remember that, in Western modernity, discourses of mobility (physical and discursive) have been actively enlisted to challenge structures of gender inequality often in universalizing ways that mystify and erase the histories of social relations. As it is by now well documented, gender categories have been historically articulated in terms of the spatial division of public and private that maps on to masculine and feminine (Cresswell and Uteng 2). According to this essentializing oppositional structure, the masculine is firmly placed on the side of progress and unimpeded movement forward while the feminine is associated with a sedentary, home-bound existence, often identified with domesticity, tradition, and the past (Parkins 3).⁴

Moving out of, across or between firmly bounded social, racial, cultural, or sexual spaces has been unsurprisingly construed by Western feminists as a sign of women's struggle against patriarchal control and has been accorded the status of an emancipatory gesture crucial to reimagining women's subjective and social positions, self-representations, and futures. When Antiguan-American writer Jamaica Kincaid admits, for example, that "[o]ne of the reasons why I left home was that I was a victim of tradition. I was on the verge of being a dead person because of tradition, and I think women especially have to be very careful of these traditions" (82), she speaks for many, fictional or real-life, women who identify in leaving home a means of survival and a strategy of resistance to hegemonic gender conventions by refusing to inhabit a particular space. "Travel," to quote Trinh T. Minh-ha, "allows one to see things differently," the "itinerary displaces the foundation" (23) and so offers women the promise of self-reinvention. In some feminist epistemologies, migration becomes, for this reason, embraced as a theoretical mechanism which, next to engaging physical movement, is employed as a metaphor that reconceptualizes women's gender identities as open to previously denied possibilities because predicated on movement. Migration, along with its cognate mobile metaphors of

the “nomad” and the “rhizome,”⁵ becomes celebrated for its anti-foundational thrust as a border-crossing notion that destabilizes and transgresses fixed forms of home and identity, a metaphor for dislocation and the lack of (stable) being that can generate alternative modes of agency, resistance, and subjectivities for women.

However, the narrative that posits migrancy as necessarily subversive has been challenged by materialist, anti-racist feminists who charge it with constructing, as Sara Ahmed puts it, “an essence of migration in order to theorise that migration as a refusal of essence” (*Strange Encounters* 82). What Ahmed finds troubling is the slippage between “literal migration and metaphoric migration” which erases the real and substantive differences between the conditions in which particular movements across spatial borders take place (*Strange Encounters* 80, 82). Caren Kaplan contends, in the same spirit, that “All displacements are not the same” (2), pointing to the “ahistorical universalisation” (3) and the lack of concern for material social relations that underwrite the conflation of different kinds of journeys under the sign of migrancy. The aim of such critiques is not to reduce the importance of migration as a critical term for thinking about movement, culture, and identity but to complicate the feminist narratives that produce the meanings of migration by introducing “questions of context (post-coloniality/globality), historicity, temporality and space” (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 81) into the debate. In a similar vein, what Chandra T. Mohanty suggests as a way of repoliticizing hegemonic feminism and the neoliberal politics of mobility thought to frame it is a “return to the radical feminist politics of the contextual” (987) and the need to uncover the complex and contingent relationships of antagonism that allow some subjects to move freely at the expense of others (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 86). Such a return involves a renewed concern with the embodiment of migration and how this is practiced in and through the sexed and racialized bodies of women whose meanings and movements intersect, in the context of global interconnectivity, with multiple and scattered structures of domination.

Indeed, as many materialist feminist analyses of women’s real-life transnational journeys demonstrate, the migrant mobilities made available to women materialize and are accorded meaning within intersecting and often competing configurations of power and are, therefore, never to be understood, as Rachel Silvey notes, exclusively in terms of “transgressive, agency-driven, potentially empowering moves” (142). Rather, the structural inequalities of gender, class, and race that operate in the state policies of sending and receiving countries, the household as much as the global and local labor markets (Raghuram 194), reveal women’s itineraries being often embedded in exploitative and coercive migration flows that are subject to increasing political and social controls.⁶ Women fleeing war zones, domestic violence, or the religious curtailment of their freedoms figure perhaps as the most obvious instances of enforced displacement.

Additionally, the increasingly feminized global labor and family migrations (for the purposes of family formation or reunification) have been also read as legitimating and reinscribing gender inequalities through forms of displacement that may not be desirable or evenly experienced by female migrants. The caring professions and domestic work sectors especially are singled out as labor spaces that reinforce the “caring ideologies” so central to restrictive and much challenged constructions of femininity within local and international networks of social reproduction. Filipina women, in Parvati Raghuram’s account, for example, are cast by government policies as global caregivers (187) while the Indonesian state is seen by Rachel Silvey as aggressively promoting the out-migration of women to work as domestic laborers in Saudi Arabia where a woman’s job “garners low wages, grants little security and few benefits, involves high rates of multiple forms

of abuse, and provides only slim chances of occupational mobility” (141). In both these examples, women’s migration patterns reproduce patriarchal gender spaces, install transnational women workers as “emblematic figures of contemporary regimes of accumulation” (Brah 179) and reveal their cooption into nationalist projects.⁷

In other words, what is suggested is that there is nothing essentially transgressive about migratory mobilities that can both resist and lend support to hegemonic gender norms. Their meanings and concrete effects are impossible to grasp in the present (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* 9), hence to stabilize, but must be decided upon in terms of the histories of determination that form the social, cultural, and bodily spaces within which they materialize and the futures they potentially gesture toward. Reconfiguring migration politics as historically grounded, hence differential, contradictory, and incomplete, has an immediate effect, as I argue next, on how the place of home within the context of transnational networks of connection is rearticulated by intersectional, materialist feminists who reconceptualize spaces of inhabitation as embodied, diasporized, and internally ruptured.

(MIGRANT) HOMES

Home, migration and belonging relate to each other in multiple ways. An object of strong affective investments, home has become in today’s globally connected world a political question enmeshed with struggles around the formation of familial, communal, national, and transnational identities and boundaries. Whether referencing a familial environment, a national homeland, or just the lived experience of a locality, home oscillates between different modes of articulation that are dependent for their meanings and effects on distinct configurations of migration.

In sedentarist thought, for example, home is valued as a place of roots and spatial and social order while migration is regarded as morally and ideologically suspect (Cresswell, *On the Move* 26). Such a construction of home as a seamless site of belonging, origin, familiarity, and comfort is fundamentally gendered, racialized, and “intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion and exclusion operate” (Brah 192) within communities. It is at work in masculinist geographies of home as the space of feminine domesticity and in exclusionary nationalist discourses that imagine the national body as a sealed cultural system that casts migrants as alien bodies.

In the context of migration, the desire to defend a bounded conception of home, culture, and identity is perhaps best exemplified by the “refugee camp,” this politically contentious “zone of exception” (Agamben 174), which stabilizes the borders of the nation-state by incorporating what lies “outside” the homeland into the sovereign order in the form of a perfectly containable and fixed space of exclusion. Nomadic epistemologies, by contrast, have historically privileged migratory mobility at the expense of notions of attachment to a place and a dwelling which are duly represented as confining, static, and often politically reactionary. In this narrative about movement, home is posited as what needs to be “overcome” (Ahmed *Strange Encounters* 87) and repudiated in order for progressive, forward-moving thinking and action to materialize in the world. It is no accident that feminist nomadic politics and theorizing have made moving away from a symbolically feminized and devalued concept of home into a pivotal ideological gesture in the struggle against essentialist gender discourses. In suggesting, however, that homeless migrancy is the key to destabilizing identities, much of this research continues to construct home as a stable, unitary conceptual category—even if delegitimized by

being construed as what is best avoided—and has been critiqued for mystifying the histories of women's differential claims on the experience of being at home (Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Kaplan).

Attentive to the embodied materialities and variable forms and conditions of movement, transnational feminist works on migration and inhabitation propose, instead, an equally variable configuration of placement. Informed by the context-specific politics of intersectionality, they call into question the naturalization of home as origin and stasis and bring into focus the multiple senses of belonging that women negotiate and forge through their lived experience of being-at-home. Feminists, for example, have on many occasions critiqued the heterosexualized model of home as comfort by exposing it as a site of gender violence, inequalities, and trauma especially for queer subjects (Hondagneu-Sotelo 115; Fortier, "Coming Home" 409). In the case of the Filipina domestic worker whose story Geraldine Pratt gives, however, her cozily arranged room constitutes a personal refuge and comfort provider. As a contract worker admitted into Canada on a special visa (Cresswell, "Introduction" 18–19), her attachment to this private space strengthens her fragile claim on a new homeland, her pride in her financial independence (she pays for the room and can decorate it in the way she likes), and her hopeful self-representation as a migrant body "in" and not, as popularly assumed, "out of place."

Rather than having an essential meaning in advance of its making (Ahmed et al. 8), home in these cases is produced through the movement of desire, enacted and, hence, constituted as an open-to-possibilities "event rather than a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic" (Cresswell, "Introduction" 25). Such diverse accounts of migrant women's relationships to rooms, houses, households, families, or homelands in a context of transnational dispersal compel us to rethink the problematic of home as familiarity and sameness. They provide a framework for reconfiguring spaces of inhabitation as contingently structured around multiple forms of estrangement and attachment, as changeable and mobile because differentially embodied, narrativized, remembered, or emotionally registered following changes in the grounds and conditions that make placement and displacement possible.

In the short story "Leaving Home" by the British Asian writer Rahila Gupta, staying put is certainly not without movement for its protagonist Zara, a 21-year-old, second-generation South Asian woman. Split between filial duty toward her immigrant Pakistani parents' expectations to see her married off to a Pakistani man of respectable ancestry and her own desire to go to art school, Zara negotiates multiple belongings. The home that she tries so hard to leave—by arranging a marriage of convenience to a Muslim man whose political asylum applications have been rejected twice and exposing herself to the risk of rape in his hands—signifies on more than one level, complexly weaving together invocations of her parents' house, their immigrant reconstruction of Pakistani culture, and the diasporic space of late-twentieth-century Britain that she is born into. Zara's access to any of these home spaces is highly mediated by her gender, cultural creolization, and generational difference all of which direct her movement between competing codes of gender conduct and cultural belonging.

What impresses in the story is the poignant way in which Zara's struggle to negotiate a multiply ruptured experience of home materializes at the level of lived embodiment. She dresses differently in and outside the home. Her public Punk image—spiked hair with hard pink tips, "skin-tight shiny, black trousers" boots and heavy makeup (32)—becomes transformed, with the help of a public-lavatory "Cinderella act," into one of conformity to household gender rules as her long T-shirt is made to look like a traditional churidar

kameez. Zara's gendered and racialized body, in its lived everydayness but also when made into the target of politically and culturally induced sexual violence, functions as the fleshy articulation of incomplete belonging. Zara is never quite fully at home in any of the homely spaces that she moves through. This failure to inhabit home fully is not regrettable but, as Sara Ahmed writes, it is the precondition for an "act of *making*" (*Strange Encounters* 94), making home into a more inclusive communal space by not allowing it to take one form only. Rather than a fixed sense of belonging, it is "motions of attachment," the idea that home "combines forces of movement and attachment at once" (Fortier, "Making Home"), that give shape to what the story suggests at its end (when Zara's mother embraces her daughter's hybridized state of being) might be a more supportive mode of living together.

In this chapter, I have suggested that the questions of migration and home are formulated and made intelligible in relation to each other. How one moves away from or between homes is formative of how one inhabits home and the way in which "processes of inclusion and exclusion operate" at individual and collective levels to regulate "belonging" (Brah 192). Feminist thinkers, especially transnational and postcolonial feminists whose work draws on the materialist politics of intersectionality, have proved instrumental in complicating and reconfiguring notions of migration and inhabitation by insisting on the need to understand them as context-specific, historicized, socially embedded, and embodied processes and states of being. Bringing into focus women's differential relationships to movement and placement within global networks of connection has allowed gender-inflected theorizing on transnational gendered identities, diasporic cultural spaces, mobilities and homes to work toward defetishizing the idea and practice of migration and de-ontologizing migrant subjectivities. It has thus contributed to thinking that has begun to articulate a more radical, ethical and just politics of living together that resists the originary distinction between home and away, preferring to conceptualize them, instead, as spaces that leak into each other—a leakage that under specific circumstances can yield support and acceptance.

NOTES

- 1 Western imperialist policies and colonial legacies are closely allied to mass migration in immigrant-receiving countries such as Britain and the United States. Ideologies and practices of imperialism continue to encourage legal and cultural suspicion toward new arrivals in both these countries while being at once one of the main causes that have led to migration to the West in the first place. It is by now well known that the waves of mass migration to Britain following the collapse of the British empire in the mid-twentieth century are the result of its colonial history. Millions of ex-colonial subjects move (from former colonies in the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa) to the metropolitan center as a way out of their poverty-stricken, exploited economies and a colonially instilled sense of duty toward the "motherland." In a different, yet equally historically determined context, the US imperialist interventions into Latin-American countries (in the form of direct rule in Puerto Rico or the overthrow of a democratically elected government in Guatemala) have contributed to the political unrest, corruption, and deprivation that have fueled the migratory flows toward the north and the dream of a prosperous, democratic United States. Tellingly, in both Brexit Britain and Donald Trump's United States, the historical connection between Western imperialism and migration are systematically disavowed and erased from political discourse.

- 2 Since the publication of Henri Lefebvre's seminal study *The Production of Space* (1974), the widely held conception of space as emptiness has come under rigorous scrutiny by Marxist geographers who have shown it to be an ideologically loaded representation that coincides with the "emerging space-economy of capitalism" (Smith and Katz 75–6). Beginning from the premise that space is a thoroughly gendered—and hence political—construction (Massey), feminists like Donna Haraway and Gillian Rose call attention, in their turn, to the masculinism associated with the illusion of transparent space and an all-seeing vision, often described as the "view from nowhere" (Staeheli and Kofman 4) while postcolonial feminists remind us of the invented character of absolute space when probing into the conceptual and cartographic mappings of cultural and racial differences (see, for instance, Sara Ahmed's inquiry into the spatial formations of Orientalism in *Queer Phenomenology* 13, 112–14).
- 3 Separated from Turkey by less than two kilometers of sea, Samos, like other Greek islands in the north Aegean Sea, has been since 2015 an entry point into Europe for thousands of illegal migrants and asylum seekers who survived a perilous journey at sea (Perlson). The art project was especially designed to complicate populist representations of migrants dominant in the European press and public debates in the middle of the immigration crisis by creating a space for alternative aesthetic and political responses to an issue as socially and politically divisive as that of contemporary migrancy.
- 4 "The limitation of women's mobility," writes Doreen Massey, "in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover the two things—the limitation on mobility in space, the attempted consignment/confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other—have been crucially related" (179).
- 5 "Rhizome" and "nomad" are terms originating in the influential philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari that has helped us think about our connection to land, culture, and politics in distinctly mobile terms. See, especially, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).
- 6 Aihwa Ong's analysis of "the disjunctures between nations and moral economies [which] create conditions that foster neo-slavery for some foreign maids" in Southeast Asia is pertinent here and revealing (161).
- 7 According to Parvati Raghuram, Filipina transnational migrant women are inscribed into the nationalist project both as care workers whose remittances help alleviate the state's foreign debt and as household members assigned the primary role of preserving ties across nation-states by maintaining social relations and caring across borders (193).

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