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Supervisor: Margareta Nilsson-Lindström

ABSTRACT

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Problem statement: When a home does not naturally present itself to one as a *given*, what chance does one have of *choosing* a home for oneself?

Aim: To investigate the possibility for a rootweak individual of finding a sense of belonging, a sense of rootedness, a home.

Brief description of points of departure and disposition: This thesis has materialized out of personally felt frustration with questions put to me throughout my life regarding my origin and belonging. As a child I shrugged off the questions. As an adult, and as a student of sociology, it is time to go in search of the answers. In doing so I have conducted interviews with three global souls and one of them has conducted an interview with a fourth: me. I have also performed a literature review in the interests of locating the cutting edge of research into this topic.

Conclusions: All the subjects provided personal definitions of home, along the lines of Hobsbawm's *Heim*, whereas none of us were really able to come up with a tangible, culturally collective *Heimat*. My conclusion would therefore have to be that according to Hobsbawms' two-part definition of Home we remain partially homeless. In a world of increasing geographical and cultural complexity and interaction, though, perhaps that definition is coming close to having played out its role and the personal homes that we carry within us and externalise as we go along our way are all that in the end remain to any of us.

Kew words: *home, homelessness, Heim, Heimat, international, cosmopolitan, nomad, rootless, root-weak, outsider*

I would like to dedicate this little work to all exiles, ex-patriates, global nomads, refugees, migrants, itinerants, cosmopolitans, third-culture kids, “no-whereians” & in-betweeners. May we all find our homes on earth.

Marie Clausén

Ottawa, Ontario, 29th April 2004

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I.

IN WHICH THE NARRATOR POSITIONS HERSELF

I sit here surrounded by shelf-fulls of *English House & Garden* magazines and designers' editions of *Architectural Digest* dreaming of a home, a home for me, *my* home, my *perfect* home where I will finally feel like I belong, like the wait and the run are over, where I will no longer feel as if *I still haven't found what I'm looking for*. My notion of home entails a dog or two, rooms lined with books, the air saturated with the scent of flowering plants, lots of comfortable chairs and loungers and sofas in which to read and spend time in cozy chat with the good friends who would drop in for a cup of tea or a glass of wine at the drop of a hat and share a joke or discuss life. In the evenings yellow lamplight and strains of piano music would emanate from the open windows, and in the morning the smell of coffee. It would be left with melancholy regret and returned to with a deep sense of relief, peace and gratitude.

It is an elaborate and poignant dream scenario for someone who doesn't really have a home. Who isn't even quite sure what a home is. Who wouldn't know where to start creating one as there is no natural place for me; there is no particular village or region or nation or culture that calls my name or lays a claim to my loyalty and affinity. In reality the friends that drop by so effortlessly in the scenario live in different countries on different continents. In reality life in the country or in a village would probably not even suit me at all as I would very probably be the only one there who wouldn't be able to trace my lineage back sixteen generations in the local crypt. And the things I've come to like over the years have to be sought in cities around the world; only rarely are they found in the parochial realm of village stores.

All my life I've been asked the question "where are you from?". So far I haven't been successful in coming up with a response that feels true and genuine. What they are really asking is "who are you?", "where do you belong?", "where is your home?". There are naturally a host of simplified answers that will do in administrative situations (stating the nationality of the passport carried is usually satisfactory, e.g.). There are likewise a number of witty responses that serve as diversions from the awkward attention in social situations. But deep down among my weak roots a gnawing feeling persists.

When one is born in one country to parents holding separate nationalities and raised here and there in the world and simply continues wandering around the world because one does not know what else to do...well, where does one belong? The question is valid. Where is home? Does the well-known adage "wherever I hang my

hat...” hold true no matter how temporarily the hat swivels on the peg? Or is one’s ethnicity the determining factor, trussing one up like a helpless victim in unbreakable DNA-coils? And surely a passport is nothing more than a convenience, a piece of documentation with scant and in some cases misleading information about its holder used typically for the purpose of easing cross-border travel? And when you have several and are in the process of choosing between several more for no other reason than for continued *schmerz*-free and *angst*-free access to places where one feels one belongs in a vague sort of way, or at least doesn’t *not* belong...what sense of belonging could gazing down at the little stiff-covered pamphlet in your hand give you other than a reasonably well-founded hope that it will yet again allow you to pass the arbitrary check of the under-educated, over-worked immigration agent.

Lacking a particular place to call home, some rootless or rootweak people may have become attached to another person or persons and chosen to place their feeling of belonging with these individuals wherever they may be. Others may found their notion of home on a childhood memory of a time and place where they felt happy and safe—the memory clutched at and cuddled into threadbareness, and then stitched and remodelled over the years into something quite different from what it once was. Can home be something intangible like a mood or a poem or the mercifully clear and precise language of mathematics? Could it even be that the continued travel and moving in the end become what one feels most at home with?

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Topics for research can arise in many ways. It is comparatively usual for them to materialize out of the everyday, with personal experiences or practical problems acting as the igniting spark. This is the case with my study. Early on when confronted by the question of where I was from it merely served as an irritation to cloud the otherwise fair days of childhood. As I grew and matured I began to put the same question to myself—always failing to give it a resolution that would have satisfied me intellectually as well as emotionally. This study represents an attempt to investigate the problem of finding a sense of belonging, a sense of rootedness, within the framework of a sociological and ethnographic thesis.

AIM

The purpose of this study is to accomplish a true description and sound interpretation of a rootweak individual’s possibility of experiencing “home”. I carry a hope that it will on the one hand give some sense of satisfaction to myself and those of my friends around the world who are searching for, dreaming of, imagining, creating and recreating Home for themselves, and on the other hand enable those who insist on

asking us where we are from to understand how very difficult it is for us to answer that question when we can never be quite sure ourselves.

DELIMITATIONS

I will not stray into the possible underlying reasons for the fact that my friends and I moved around as children and to varying extents remain cultural drifters. In other words I will not be addressing phenomena such as globalism, the world market or the general post-modern rootlessness that follows in the wake of global massmedia, improved transportation and so forth. I will also purposefully neglect to wrestle with conceptual metaphenomena such as culture, ethnicity, nationalism, and transnationalism. The scope of this thesis will not allow for excursions into such brushy conceptual terrain. Also, I am doubtful as to the value of describing personally felt experiences through such metanarratives.

QUESTIONS

The whos, whens and wheres play a subordinate role to the whats, hows and whys in this enquiry.

It all began with my asking myself the question: “*why* do I never feel quite at home anywhere?” That in turn led to the follow-up question: “well, *what* is home anyway?” and “*what* is required for a person to feel at home?” More specifically “*how* on earth could a person such as myself go about finding/creating a home for herself when none presents itself naturally to me?” and “*how* will I even know I’ve found it?”

All these questions have not found their answers within this thesis, but hopefully, if nothing else, they will lead to others asking themselves the same questions. I believe the questions are more important than the answers anyway, the questions indicate interest and curiosity, a desire to know. The answers merely indicate a usually fallible and arrogant belief of having hit upon “the truth”, something which the passage of time usually corrects.

CITATIONS

In citing works I have used the Chicago Manual of Style author-date system, where the author, publication year and page number(s) of the work are given in parenthesis the first time that work is quoted. Subsequent quotes are referenced only by page number. Where another work has been quoted or mentioned in the interrim the first reference back to the previously cited work includes the author and page number(s). The full author-date reference is made again at the first instance in a new chapter.

II.

IN WHICH MATTERS OF A METHODOLOGICAL NATURE ARE CONSIDERED

There does not appear to be any general consensus within the academic community on what constitutes a case study. Some emphasize a certain method, others consider the end result to be what defines a case study. The type of questions asked by the researcher is also an indication of what type of investigation is at hand. Those who place special emphasis on the methodological approach point out the importance of an holistic and intense description and analysis of a bounded or limited phenomenon; whereas those who judge the style of the research based on the end product state that case studies result in descriptive stories and interpretative narratives. The type of questions successfully addressed in a case study are why, how, in what way; in other words questions that do not look for quantifiable responses but rather express a desire to get to the bottom of a unique phenomenon.

More than anything case studies constitute contextual interpretations and therefore are eminently suitable when it is desirable not to separate the individual variables, concepts or themes of the enquiry from the larger context in which they naturally form a part. This larger context includes the researcher: it is in fact impossible for the researcher to place herself outside her own research, since the results of the investigation can only in the end be transcribed through the researcher's own experiences in the studied situation.

The realities sketched forth within the course of a case study cannot be said to consist of any absolute, objective truth but rather emerges as a synthesis or function of the researcher's own conception of reality and the ideas presented by the objects of study. Thereof comes the necessity for the narrator to ascertain and describe her own position vis-à-vis the studied as well as its context in order to give the reader a chance to understand which components that have contributed to the conclusions reached.

This thesis meets with the criteria set up for a case study. It is *particularistic* (Merriam 1994, pp.25–26) in that it does not aspire to result in a general view of what being at home somewhere may mean but rather only what it means to the set of individuals represented in this work. It is *descriptive* (pp.26–27) in that the situations leading up to possible cultural homelessness are described to the best of my abilities in prose. It is *heuristic* (p.27) as the life stories herein have never been written down before and therefore constitute a unique and original contribution in and of themselves. Lastly, it is *inductive* (p.27) in nature as my enquiry does not originate in a particular

hypothesis that I intend to test and verify or falsify, but rather in an eagerness to explore new possibilities and reach new insights as I go along.

Since qualitative case studies are particularly good when exploring one's own back garden and are eminently suitable when it comes to getting at subjective factors such as thoughts, feelings and desires I can hardly imagine a more suitable method for the voyage of discovery into the very personal home-consciousnesses of the rootweaker.

My own experiences stand at the centre of this study. By implicitly recognising the impossibility of placing the researcher outside of the field of study the case study provides an invitation to attempting to combine the researcher and the researched: by providing a detailed description of the researcher's position one will have simultaneously accomplished a description of the spotlighted phenomenon.

The case study as method is reminiscent of the artistic philosophy of the impressionists; in either case it is the artist's/researcher's subjective impression of that which is under observation that is conveyed. The aspiration is not photorealism, the image is not one of a common, reproducible, and generalizable reality. Quite the opposite in fact: the idea is to convey a specific, unique and personal impression. When Monet compulsively painted the garden he perceived through his increasingly diseased eyes he never meant those pictures to serve as correct historical documents of the French Garden in the early 20th century. *Au contraire*: his genius lay in lending his own tortured and fascinated perspective to the paintings of his own singular garden.

I have chosen to study the question of where a rootweaker person finds a sense of home and belonging through four individuals, including myself. We all share a certain background, namely that of having moved around internationally from an early age. This sample can therefore be classed as a non-probabilistic goal-oriented selection. It could also be described as an ideal sample in that the individuals have been chosen based on their suitability and not randomly from the population at large.

There are many pitfalls associated with collecting and assembling data for a research project. Many of these are highlighted in books such as "Case Study Research in Education" by Sharan B. Merriam and "Ethnography—Principles in Practice" by Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson. The most critical aspect of a research project is ensuring that the material to be used is accessible, relevant and genuine.

I began my search for relevant literature using the internet and the on-line catalogues of local libraries. I was unable to access the literature available at Lund's university library or any other Swedish university library as inter-continental loans are generally frowned upon and the cost of ordering printed transcripts of books and articles is

prohibitive. I was in other words limited to the material I could find in libraries in Ottawa – luckily that city is blessed with two university libraries in addition to a fairly well-stocked community library. One book was ordered from Amazon.com and another picked up at Akademibokhandeln in Uppsala during a short recreational trip across the Atlantic.

The searchwords entered into the on-line search engines and catalogue searches were generally “home”, “at home”, “homelessness”, “rootlessness”, “international”, “intercultural”, “nomad”, “global”, and combinations thereof.

The main purpose of availing myself of these published sources was to ascertain what had already been done on the topic of various experiences and notions of “home” in order not to repeat what has already been done, as well as to take advantage of any kernels of wisdom already in existence. It was also a matter of great curiosity for me to find out to what degree my own troubled musings on this topic were consonant with other people’s.

Initially I had planned on only having one unit of analysis, namely myself. I was persuaded to include the experiences of others similar to myself in terms of their culturally and geographically fragmented backgrounds. Two of the people that have participated in our conversations on “home” are personal friends of mine; one a childhood friend from the Yokohama International School, and the other a colleague from the International Social Science Programme in Växjö. The third respondent is a new acquaintance whose existence and willingness to participate in this study I was alerted to by my sambo.

This last respondent also agreed to interview me, thus precluding the necessity for me to conduct a purely reflexive interview. However, much of the thesis is reflexive in nature as my position as narrator suffuses this work. An anxious reader may well ask themselves if reflexivity and self-investigation is a sound method. My answer to such doubts is that it is as sound if not more so than inter-personal queries. The question is of course: is it possible to see the conversation that one is part of and the text one writes as part of a discourse? Emerson provides us with the answer in these simple, wise words: “That only can we say which we have lived” (Finch & Elder 2000, p.147).

The truth is that we reflect over ourselves, our lives, our points of view and perspectives more often than we reflect on anything else. And in fact we cannot even view the world outside ourselves other than through our own eyes. And as science at its best is intuitive and representative of the way things are in the world it is only natural for a research project such as this to follow on from nature and show up the reflexions of Self and Other rather than to coyly and unnaturally set about ignoring my

own reflexion in the mirror that this object of study so obviously sets before me. This is by no means a revolutionary approach: it is no different from the grand old man Freud using self-analysis when creating his brand of psycho-therapy, or from what takes place when the anthropologist turns his instruments of analysis on his own culture.

A lot has been said about the disadvantages of subjectivity. Let me here briefly mention some of the advantages: as a researcher I can easily ascertain whether or not the respondent is being truthful, and as a respondent I need not fear that the researcher will misinterpret or misunderstand what I am trying to divulge. This has the potential to result in a fresh and vibrant first-hand account.

This thesis sets its sights on accomplishing a description and interpretation of reality as I find it. It is in other words the internal validity (Merriam, p.177) of the work that concerns me rather than the external validity (p.183) or the possibility of making use of my conclusions with the purpose of generalisation. It would be pointless to attempt generalisations based on units of analysis that have been chosen due to their special suitability for this study. The purpose of a case study is to dig deep, not to seek common denominators for the populus at large. (pp.183-187) That will obviously not preclude individual readers from recognising aspects of themselves in the text. I merely wish to point out that the onus to find that which is applicable to himself sits squarely on the reader's shoulders.

Merriam states that there are no definitive rules as to the appearance of a case study report. (p.203) A guiding principle is that there ought to be some logical consistency between content and disposition. I hope I have achieved that. As the written word provides the only pathway to the findings it is well worth the effort to make the text as readable, gripping and well-crafted as possible. I have done my best to live up to that decree.

III.

IN WHICH LITERATURE ON THE TOPIC OF HOME IS PRESENTED
& REVIEWED

GOD

a place

a memory

a myth

a temps perdu, or a recherche thereof

A VISION, HOPE, DREAM

A computer key

another person

writing, words, art

at best, a transit camp

one more consumer choice?

THAT PLACE ON EARTH ONE IS "DEAREST TO THE GODS IN THE SKY AND TO THE DEAD IN THE
GUDDER(WORLD" - JOHN BERGER

a node from which to access the globe

a house

a place you should not have to get used to

a principal focus of one's concern and control

a safe and still place to leave and return to

A routine set of practices

Stories carried around in one's head

An invented primordial place for which one is perhaps willing to kill and die

The narrative of one's life

A landscape

NOWHERE ELSE

the ties and talismans we carry with

us

Being aware of previous research into the questions one seeks answers to is a decided advantage. Without this awareness one runs the risk of repeating existing studies or focussing on aspects of the problem which later would turn out to be trivial. Reviewing existing literature in one's chosen field opens up possibilities of making an original contribution and that is after all what research is for. Therefore, looking for literature dealing with the questions of feelings of home and homelessness amongst globally rootless people was one of the first things I set about doing. I was unaware of to what extent such material existed at all and whether, if it did, I would be able to get my hands on it.

It proved not to be such an arduous task after all. However, I'd like to point out that there were several books, especially books on homelessness by Swedish 20th century poets, that I would have loved to include in this review but was unable to obtain.

The words and phrases on the preceding page are all examples of definitions of home that I've come across in the literature. My reading made it increasingly clear to me that home is by necessity something deeply personal and that very few people, even relatively stationary individuals, rarely court a simple and traditional concept of home. In fact, it seems that part of maturing can be said to be locating your own unique definition of what being at home in the world means to you. In this chapter I shall give a brief review of some of the main thoughts I've come across in my reading.



The very first text relating to the experience of rootless people that I came across was Simmel's "Der Fremde" (Simmel 1908). His description of this stranger is of someone who is characterised by mobility and objectivity. It is largely a positive description emphasising the advantages of being a stranger such as being freer than others, being capable of examining conditions with less prejudice and of acting outside of parochial custom or precedent. Simmel also touches on one of the curiosities of the condition which is familiar to myself and my interviewees; that of seeing one who is close by as remote and one who is remote as near. This implies locating home in those remote places where those that are near to one's heart reside. Other than that, though, this text really does not address that which concerns me most.



Gordon Mathews has written a book proposing the notion of home in today's world to be nothing more than one more consumer choice. "Global Culture: Individual Identity—Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket" generalises this post-modern condition into a near global state of mind, which runs counter to my search for what makes the notion of home particularly problematic for those with a culturally and geographically complicated background. As something experienced by "everybody"

I find the notion somewhat “back to the future” but I did find many of the individual points that Mathews makes to be quite valid for the group of people I have dedicated this thesis to.

He has interviewed Japanese modern artists, American spiritualists, and Hong Kong Chinese to ask them where home is for them, where they ultimately belong culturally, and the responses he gets are predictably complex and varied. The basic premise of the book is that for modern, educated and world-aware individuals, wherever in the world they reside, cultural belonging or a cultural home is something which has to be consciously chosen. Even if you as a Chinese choose Chineseness it is still a choice that you make from the global supermarket of cultures, not a given necessity. (Mathews 2000, p.152) As Anthony Giddens said “we have no choice but to choose”—choice is not a matter of permission but of necessity, not a matter of liberation but, for many, of *shikata ga nai*. (Japanese for “it can’t be helped”) (p.178).

The vitally important summation Mathews makes is that since a taken-for-granted or given cultural home is precluded from all of us in today’s world, the difference between global souls like the author of this thesis and local souls lies not in whether or not one has a home, but rather in whether one *knows* oneself *not* to have one! The itinerant is simply more aware of her homelessness.



Craig Storti’s book “The Art of Coming Home” primarily deals with the problems associated with returning to one’s original home after a period away. Storti’s subjects are military personnel, missionaries and employees of multinational corporations who had experienced a transfer abroad and then a return “home” marked by a sense of alienation and reverse culture shock. Some of the issues raised do translate well, though, also to those of us who do not necessarily believe that we have a home to return to, as Storti himself admits that “coming home” is in fact a practical impossibility and the phrase nothing more than a figure of speech. The quote that best sums up the wisdom of the book is as follows:

If you came back, you wanted to leave again; if you went away, you longed to come back. Wherever you were, you could hear the call of the homeland, like the note of the herdsman’s horn far away in the hills[...]Your true abiding place was the vision of something very far off, and your soul was like the waves, always restless, forever in motion.

Malcolm Cowley from “Exile’s Return”

(Storti 1997, p.175)



A more specialist angle was taken by Andrew Gurr in his exploration of how the lack of and search for a home on earth affects writers and their works in his book “Writers in Exile—The Identity of Home in Modern Literature” (Gurr 1981). I found Gurr’s book to hold some very valuable insights about the relationship between a perception of cultural homelessness and the propensity to write. The very act of writing has become home for the authors featured in this volume, namely Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and W.H. Auden. All these voluntary exiles found a way of recreating “home” in various ways through their literary works. I have often pictured myself joining the flotillas of dispossessed, multi-lingual pens floating about like so much twinkling debris on the oceans of the world with ultimately nothing but literature to cling to.



The only autobiography in my selection of reference literature is “Leap of Faith” by Queen Noor. She is another example of someone with a confusing root system who has faced the question of where her home might be. Her mother is of Swedish descent, her father of Lebanese origin, she grew up in various locations in the States, went on to work in Australia, Iran and Jordan before marrying the king of Jordan and making Jordan her permanent home. To some extent I feel that the author glosses over the problematique of locating home in a place where she does not (or did not) speak the language and where many of the cultural references were alien and even distasteful to her. Her book is very much a story of how love conquers all, or seems to conquer all and is capable of providing a home for one against all odds. At the beginning of the book when Noor reminisces on her childhood and youth in the States she mentions how the constant moving reinforced her natural reserve. (Noor 2003, p.14) Having to adjust to new schools, new friends, new neighbourhoods made her feel like an outsider looking in—watching, studying, learning... This is something which I find true of all itinerant people—we are all apt to observe. She also mentions a predilection for intellectual topics and an impatience with gossip and small talk—that too is natural for someone who moves around too much to ever be truly in with the local gossip and who finds a comfort in the unchanging laws of physics and mathematics. Apart from her Jordanian home and her home of sorts in intellectual pursuits she states that in becoming a Muslim she “felt a sense of belonging to a larger community” for the first time in her life. (pp.96–97)

I read a deep need to belong between the lines—a need that is met by *choosing* to belong in Jordan and in the islamic community. She would probably have been equally determined to fit in and feel a sense of belonging in any other setting if her life had taken another route. I recognise this propensity of cultural itinerants to latch onto whatever comes their way in life and *make* it their home.



Salman Rushdie is a writer most of whose work in one way or another addresses the question of what it means to be home; of what belonging really entails. I chose to read “Imaginary Homelands”, a collection of essays on the topic, some philosophical, some empirical, some polemical. Rushdie claims that all exiles, emigrants, expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim and to look back “even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt”. (Rushdie 1991, p.10) As we are not capable of reclaiming precisely the things lost we resort to creating fictions, i.e. imaginary homelands of the mind.

He also argues that the past can be said to be a country from which we have all emigrated; that this constitutes a loss common to all humanity. This loss is simply made more concrete to the exile through the physical fact of discontinuity, of the fact that the present is taking place in a different place from the past. (p.12)



“Migrants of Identity—Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement” is an anthropological look at alternative views of the notion of home in today’s world. This book turned out to be one of my most useful sources. It presents a whole spectrum of definitions of home from the traditional “safe and still place to return to” (Rappport and Dawson 1998, p.6) to the reactionary “place for which one is perhaps willing to kill and die” (p.7) to a more modern and flexible “personal space of identification and relations” (p.225). Victor Borge when asked whether he considered moving home to Denmark exclaimed “Home? But I am in my home all the time, its walls are just very far apart!” (p.225)

This book addresses the problem of defining home in such an intensely personal way that it in many ways ceases to be viable as a sociological concept. Home can and must encompass cultural norms as well as individual fantasies (p.8). Far too often cultural itinerants flee the idea that they are essentially homeless and end up defining home the only way they can: as a purely personal experience. Hobsbawm illustrates this by using the German words “*Heim*” and “*Heimat*”: *Heim* is an essentially private and individual routine, fantasy, memory, longing or presence, whereas *Heimat* is an attempt publicly and collectively to impose home as a social fact and a cultural norm to which some must belong and from which others must be excluded. (pp.8–9) The *Heimat* is by necessity missing from a rootweaker individual’s concept of home—*Heim* is what we have to pin our donkey-tail hopes on. The only way we can create a semblance of a more collective *Heimat* is ironically by choosing to locate an aspect of home in our shared narratives of homelessness! (p.235)



The write-up for Michael Jackson’s “At Home in the World” led me to expect much. Rather than the more general insights I was hoping for it turned out to be a very

personal odyssey into the Australian bushlands. Jackson is a traditional anthropologist who decides to spend some time living amongst the Aborigines and molding himself to their ways of life before returning to his own rather different life and having his book published. I found it interesting to realise how some of the ancient Aboriginal attitudes towards the concept of home are remarkably similar to those of modern-day itinerants such as myself.

In the Aboriginal language “home” is a verb, not a noun (Jackson 1995, p.6); it is something which happens. Fittingly they do not believe that the meaning of home can be found in the substantive though it may find expression in substantive things like land, house, family. Experientially home is being-at-home-in-the-world. (p.154) To be at home in the world is to experience a complete consonance between one’s own body and the body of the earth, between self and other. The other can be a landscape, a loved one, or an action. (p.110) There is a belief in the Aboriginal community that each person is an incarnation of a landscape, something which is beautifully mirrored in Ingmar Bergman’s words on settling down as an old man on the island of Gotland: “I don’t really know what happened. If one wished to be solemn it could be said that I had found my landscape, my real home”. (p.50)

In the end home is not a place that is given but an experience born of what one manages to make of what is given and, as Jackson wisely reminds us all, the work is always before us. (p.155)



Gabriela Melinescu’s novel “Hemma utomlands” was a delightful read, while being decidedly disappointing from the perspective of my thesis. The main point she makes of relevance to my project is that “den som har två hemländer har inget” (transl. “he who has two homelands has none”) (Melinescu 2003, p.110). A more optimistic conclusion would be that he has two, and which it is to be depends largely on the criteria we choose to define home for ourselves and of course also on what mood we’re in when we draw our conclusions. Most of Melinescu’s novel takes place in her Stockholm apartment where she struggles with a debilitating cold and the dread of an old friend’s imminent death, and in the eerie atmosphere of a falsely cheerful Bukarest where her painful memories of the past find nothing to feed on. It is no surprise then that she takes a grim view of the prospects of belonging anywhere.



Marc Augé’s book “Non-Places—Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity” is reminiscent of Mathew’s in that both deal with somewhat futuristic scenarios which as yet only exist as micro-phenomena. I found both to be fascinating. They gave me a sense of my dilemma in locating a definite place to call home as one which will afflict an increasing number of people in the future and consequently as an issue which

ought to employ an increasing number of sociologists, ethnographers and anthropologists in the near future. These books made me see my study as a frontier piece of research.

Augé focusses on the culturally homeless person who is at home only in the non-space of airplanes, airports and highways. As anthropology is the study of “the other” we who constitute these strangers among you should be considered a prime study, even though sociology has traditionally defined culture as being something which is localised in space. (Augé 1995, p.34) Augé’s view of travel is that it constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape which prevents the traveller from being fully present in it. There is typically a break between the spectator-traveller and the space of the landscape contemplated making for sensations of solitude and melancholy pleasure. (pp.84–86)

This detachment from real space is something which I recognise in myself as part of the syndrome of being homeless and rootweak. Even when not travelling, one’s surrounding is hardly ever viewed as much more than a fiction.



Pico Iyer is a remarkable man leading a remarkable life and writing about it in remarkably poignant and poetic prose. He has written several books on the topic of internationalism; the one I chose to read is titled “The Global Soul—Jetlag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home”. Iyer describes himself as having an Indian face, an English accent, an American alien card and living in Japan. (Iyer 2000, p.10) He has coined the term “global soul” (p.19) for himself and others like him who cannot strictly speaking be termed exiles, expatriates, refugees, or nomads. The label “cosmopolitan” would perhaps come close as it denotes someone who does not really identify with any of the places he has lived. (p.136) Iyer adds that a true cosmopolitan after all is not someone who has travelled a lot so much as someone who can appreciate what it feels like to be Other. (p.210)

The fact that everywhere could be home to some extent, and not home to some degree (p.259), breeds a certain lack of accountability in the global soul: you can claim or deny attachment to any of your potential homes when you choose (p.21). Forming a sense of commitment is hard without a sense of community. The blessings associated with being unaffiliated is that almost everywhere is more or less strange so nearly everywhere allows one to keep alive a sense of wonder and detachment (p.24), much like a child wandering through Narnia. One is also enabled to live a little above parochialisms, (p.24) a sensation that most of us global souls view with relief and gratitude.

Iyer quotes Simone Weil: “To be rooted is perhaps the most most important and least recognised need of the human soul” (p.28). This is the second time I come across this quote—Mathews uses that same quote (Mathews, pp.193–94). Iyer uses this quote to demonstrate the temptation to try to lay anchor anywhere *just to have a home*. This brings Queen Noor to mind (and a couple of my interview subjects as you shall see).

Iyer presents a series of conversations with people more or less like himself all around the world. As he says, talk in the modern city is so often about home and belonging; simple questions that bring not so simple answers. (Iyer, p.168) One man he meets at dinner tells him he dreams in Swedish, English and Italian though only his Italian dreams are in black and white. (p.12) Another asks him straight out “what happened to home?”. The only home he knew had come in two unexpected moments of stillness while traveling through rural Ireland. (p.15) Yet another acquaintance claims to feel increasingly at home only in big cities as they have become places where people of different backgrounds tend to congregate (p.106), or as someone else puts it “they are full of other people who don’t belong—my closest relations” (p.165).

Much like for Augé there is also a tendency to view airports, airplanes, hotels and the heart of cosmopolitan cities as “enchanted limbos” (p.41)—something which I and all of my interviewees strongly agree with.

The apt conclusion of “The Global Soul...” is that increasingly nowadays a sense of home can emerge only from within (p.282) if it can be said to exist at all.



The spring 1991 issue of *Social Research* (58:1) was dedicated to explorations of the concept of home. Some of the contributors were John Hollander, Joseph Rykwert, Eric Hobsbawm, Breyten Breytenbach, George Kateb, and Mary Douglas. The questions they ask themselves and the answers they come up with are by now familiar to me and seem to hold little that is new. It just serves to further consolidate my perception that I am one among many people asking these questions and searching for credible answers to them.

I have been pleasantly surprised by the burgeoning literature in this field and interested to note that with very few exceptions they have all come about in the last decade.

IV.

IN WHICH THE NARRATOR & HER FRIENDS QUIZ ONE ANOTHER

As Dylan Edgar enters the coffee shop I recognise him immediately from the description he has provided me in the e-mail exchange that preceded our first meeting. As he himself had put it “he was difficult to miss” at 6’5” with a blond crop and dark-rimmed glasses. Equipped with coffees, we launch headfirst into our conversation on home and/or homelessness. An hour has initially been set aside for our talk but the topic turns out to be the key to a veritable Pandora’s Box of half-forgotten tales and half-remembered thoughts and emotions. We don’t wrap it up until almost three hours later by which time I have almost lost my voice.

Dylan is in his early thirties but has, like so many of us global nomads, lived a life which could easily fill a shelf-full of autobiographies. Although we have never laid eyes on each other prior to this encounter it is in some ways as if we know each other already as the conversation flows, ripples and babbles on like a friendly but unstoppable brook. And of course, we do know each other in a way—we have encountered each other millions of times in the person sitting next to us in the airplane, at the flight gate, in the hallways of international schools, at embassy receptions, seamen’s churches and hotel lobbies around the world. We have learned to be quick to reach out and connect as it will all have to be done before the next departure, transfer, evacuation...

I am given a summarised account of his story: he was born in Montréal to Canadian parents but moved four times in the first few years of his life, finding home(s) in the Ontario towns of Waterloo, Newmarket and Kitchener. That was just the beginning, or not even that, but merely a preamble to the real beginning of the boy’s adventure tale that was to follow shortly. When he was six years old his parents, ex-hippies of a sort, decided to move abroad—“let’s go to Africa”—and handpicked Tchad with the help of some issues of *National Geographic*. So having sold their house and belongings they took off for Africa with four suitcases and two young sons (Dylan has a two and a half year younger brother). The *coup d’état* of 1979 forced their evacuation with the help of the French Foreign Legion not long thereafter, and so began the seemingly endless odyssey from country to country in Western and Northwestern Africa while Dylan’s father pursued contracts in the fields of oil, roads and foreign aid and his family tried to stay one step ahead of the volatile political situations. Dylan’s childhood memories run the gamut of emotions from fear and anxiety to great happiness and a sense of adventure and excitement. And perhaps most surprisingly he also remembers feeling as if he belonged.

When asked directly where “home” is for him now, he responds without any hesitation: “Africa”. Although he’s lived in Ottawa for nigh on ten years, he doesn’t consider it to be home, but rather the place where he is currently residing. He arrived back in North America from Africa at the age of nineteen to encounter his first real culture shock. The initial move to Africa hadn’t produced a culture shock mainly because he was so young, (although he does remember having felt displaced at that point) and the subsequent moves within Africa hadn’t either as there were a sufficient number of common denominators for it to still feel more or less like “home”. But when he found himself at a university in New Brunswick he learned the lesson of what it feels like to be Other—an outsider.

As I am frantically trying to keep up with the narrative two words begin to stand out in my scribbles: survivor and chameleon. Those two words somehow tie the multi-tentacled tale together, they are the words that describe who Dylan is, what his life has made him, how he relates to the world. Knowing that gives me a hint that his experience of the notion of home is probably double-layered. A survivor and chameleon will always make sure that he belongs, fits in, is at home, and is seen to be at home. But it is equally obvious that the mere fact that he has the chameleon instinct tells me that he isn’t really truly, deeply and naturally at home anywhere or the chameleon act wouldn’t be necessary there for the sense of belonging to happen. Perhaps since being the chameleon is who he is, he is confined to reacting to and interacting with his environment the way a chameleon does, before even getting to know whether or not that adaptation for survival would have been necessary.

“A sense of peace” is how Dylan chooses to define the notion of home. Stepping off the plane into the heat and chaos of a Moroccan airport a few years ago he experienced this sense of peace, he was at one with the sensation of heat on his neck—he felt as if he’d come home. Almost immediately he follows this description up by pointing out that a shift has taken place since the birth of his son a few months ago—the sense of peace hitherto only experienced in connection with Africa is now something he gets from being close to his son as well. So with that shift the notion of home may also have shifted from primarily being a place in the world to being something experienced in the proximity of another person.

Part of feeling at home comes from a sense of belonging, which is something that others extend to you as well as something that you feel towards these others. In Africa Dylan is recognised as *”un des africains”*. I believe that we unconsciously reveal our affiliations when we apply the terms “we” and “they”. In the case of this gangly, blond African he applies the pronoun “we” to Africans in general as well as to his family unit of wife and child. While Canadians may well extend their fellowship to him and

include him as “one of us” he rejects this inclusion by repeatedly referring to Canadians as “they” and “them”.

Dylan comes across as an easy-going fellow who doesn't let the world and its circumstances bother him. Phrases like “it's not an issue for me” and “it doesn't bother me” crop up every now and then during our vast-ranging talk. I have the feeling that although he is intrigued by my thesis and the questions I put to him it would not have occurred to him to make a similar investigation. Possibly his life has in some ways been too fragmented (with fourteen moves in the first nineteen years of his life) and, in parts, traumatic for it to be something that he can healthfully think about other than in terms of acceptance of what is and what was. He is a well-adjusted person and if some of his less-than-savoury experiences have left him a neurotic side he hides it well behind a big, easy smile.

Dylan is not in search of home; being homeless is not something he is particularly troubled by. Home is in many ways not a lost sock you hope to find in the next place you look, but rather something that happens to you. Home happens to Dylan when he holds his child and when the heat of Africa makes his hair stand on end.

I read out Simone Weil's quote “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul” and ask him for his comments. He thinks—then says that he would have agreed with the statement ten years ago, but no longer. He thinks some more, then adds that it's not really necessary for roots to be embedded, they can be unearthed, wrapped in canvas bags and moved to another place where they can again be planted. The result is a somewhat stunted but viable tree. That's Dylan—stunted at 6'5”!

[Since our two interviews Dylan Edgar and his wife have discussed moving abroad. It would seem that my thesis may have helped stir the nomadic blood of a respondent back to life!]



Erlend Kjellstad picks up on the fourth or fifth ring. I am making a trans-Atlantic telephone call to his mobile to ask him where home is for him. We knew each other twenty-four years ago when we both attended Yokohama International School in Japan but haven't spoken since we were both nine years old. His accent can best be described as mid-Atlantic, more American than English, with an ever so faint hint of Norwegian in the background. His voice is soft, but he speaks rapidly and insistently, frequently punctuating his sentences with “do you see what I mean?” and “does that make sense?”.

Much like with Dylan I get the feeling early on that he is in some ways bursting to tell his story. The lives of these two men have been sufficiently unusual to render them strangers to the vast majority of people they have ever come across. To speak and be understood is therefore a boon to them. I make a mental note: we international people are real talkers—we'll just keep talking until someone stops us. I do not believe that this is the case only as a result of our obsession with ourselves and our lives. I think talking has become a way for us to establish connections, make friends, plant roots (however temporarily), and as we have never lived under the illusion that there is a lifetime in which to make that connection but rather an hour, a day or a very few years at most, there is some urgency in connecting as quickly as possible.

As the conversation proceeds I gradually realise how European I feel compared to Erlend's more American sensibilities—it strikes me as funny considering I am telephoning from North America whereas he is chatting to me about his home and life in London. It's as if the telephone wires had gotten into a twist and a muddle.

I'm treated to a rapid and dizzying account of places he's lived: Oslo up to the age of five, followed by stints of around two or three years each in Holland, Japan, Kuwait, Virginia, New York, Yale, London, and Boston. London, New York, Japan and Norway recur several times in the list and those are probably the places to which he feels more of an attachment than to any of the others. He mentions returning to Norway every year to spend some time on his mother's farm and visit with a favourite aunt and other relatives. This Norwegian grounding gave him what he tellingly calls the "illusion of being Norwegian" which he hung on to for a number of years. Until it finally cracked under the pressure of always finding himself disappointed with the Norway he found in Norway as opposed to the Norway that he carried around in his own mind. The first realization of Norway not really being his home occurred during one of his stints in New York, where he at the time was determined to stay. He says he felt quite American for a while, and I believe him as I can still detect an American ethos in much of what he says.

Having lived in London for four years he now feels that city is more and more becoming home for him. His time there has nudged forth the realization that his definition of home is more likely than not based on relationships. So home is a place where you have genuine friends with whom you can be yourself.

At this juncture Erlend starts thinking out loud as his thoughts come tumbling out one upon the other: really, home is somewhere you always go back to...(no)...it is where you get to know yourself...(or rather)...it is simply wherever you are. Very probably all of the above apply. All of the above have to apply, anything that a

rootweak global soul chooses in the moment will have to apply because there isn't anything given to fall back on. We make it up as we go along.

Generally speaking Erlend projects a very positive feeling about his life's experiences and the way they have modelled him. He says he feels lucky to have had so many grand adventures, to have attended all the best schools, been invited to all the best parties, done all the best drugs, and so forth. When I ask him whether he would rather describe himself as being at home everywhere or nowhere, he evades the question. It leads me to conclude that perhaps "nowhere" lies closer to the truth, but I could of course be wrong. Really, life to him is just an adventure, and any new place he is likely to end up in is just going to be another chapter of the adventure story.

He rounds off the interview by proclaiming that to him this whole question of home is really irrelevant. For him it is the pursuit of happiness that matters. If he feels happy—and he feels happiest sitting in the dappled shade of a tree—all is well.

[Erlend Kjellstad plans to buy a house either in London or Gloucestershire and settle there.]



Anna Silversten sends me her responses via e-mail as soon as she's returned to France from visiting with her younger brother in Australia. Anna and I got to know each other in our early twenties when we both attended the International Social Science Programme at a university in southern Sweden. We quickly became friends the way people with international backgrounds frequently do, each instinctively recognising a kindred world wanderer in the other. There were also obvious differences in our backgrounds and personalities, but somehow our shared identity as outsiders bound us irrevocably together.

We have had occasion to discuss the issue of where we feel at home several times during the time we've known one another. So for us this is by no means a new topic and the responses she provides me with do not astonish me. Most recently we touched on our alternative notions of home in February when we met up briefly in Stockholm—I had come across from Canada and she had come up from France—a rare and precious opportunity for us to meet face to face. On that occasion she told me how alien she was feeling and how that was a painful reminder of how she had never been made to feel entirely at home or at ease in Sweden. She is harsh in her criticisms of Sweden—something I suspect to be the result of dashed expectations of a place that was perhaps in her mind supposed to be Home. She doesn't complain as bitterly about not having felt a sense of belonging in former Zaïre, e.g.—I believe that to be because she never harboured an expectation that she would be at home there.

She has drawn up a list for me of places she's lived. She was born in Zaïre to Swedish missionary parents. After a year she was taken to Sweden where she spent the next two years. Then it was back to Zaïre for another two-year stint at a mission called Semendua. At the age of five she left the mission and attended school in Sweden for seven years. A twelve-year-old Anna then shuttled back to her parents' African mission. Her teenage years were basically spent in two-year segments shuttling back and forth between Sweden and Zaïre. At sixteen she attended an American boarding school in Kinshasa for a couple of years after which she left for Springfield, Ohio. Another year later she was back in Sweden, first Stockholm, then Kolbäck, then Växjö where she ran into me. This was followed by a few six-month stints here and there in Sweden as well as back to Springfield before leaving for France. She has now been there for ten years ("Help! Have I lived in France that long?!").

I now ask her if she feels at home. She says "yes" and goes on to explain: for her being at home entails belonging to a group of people, a context, wherein she feels comfortable and is accepted for who she is without having to fit into a particular mold. A context where she feels safe. To be homeless is the opposite, to be an outsider, to be lonely in the sense of not having a group to belong to, not having a place where one can be oneself. In a follow-up discussion Anna's thoughts take her further: in some ways she's never felt truly at home in any society, so those contexts in which she feels *more* at home are those where her outsidership is a non-issue, where her minority status is accepted, and she is allowed to be different without being excluded.

I ask her if one can feel at home somewhere where people are constantly asking where you are from, and where your answer furthermore indicates another place (Sweden) than the one where you reside (France). Her response is wonderful and very reminiscent of Pico Iyer's at-homeness in Japan: it is perhaps *precisely* in a place like that and *only* in a place like that where she can feel at home. She is not expected to be French and not expected to belong in France; her obvious outsidership gives her the freedom to be different. In Sweden on the other hand she does have the expectation of being Swedish placed on her. And while she is a Swedish national, and shares many of the Swedish values and norms (her love for nature, her tendency to follow rules, e.g.), she also feels so much more than just Swedish and not quite Swedish enough in many respects. She is Swedish, yet Sweden does not give her the space to be the *different* Swede that she is.

Home for Anna is also her personal trinity of God, husband and daughter. She mentions the well-known adage "home is where your heart is". Her faith in God entails the deepest dimension of home for her; provides her with the most basic sense of security. If she were to lose her faith she would also lose her home.

One of the questions that I've also asked both Dylan and Erlend is which of the following statements rings more true to them: "I am at home everywhere" or "I am at home nowhere". Anna responds that the first statement comes closer to the truth in her case. She motivates her reply by pointing out that her faith in God provides her with the basic security platform that gives her the courage and steadiness to begin life all over again in a different place and to make herself feel somewhat at home pretty much anywhere.

A fragmented and complicated childhood does not easily give way to an uncomplicated and unified adult experience other than by a conscious and determined effort to make it such. I believe Anna is making that effort.



And now it is the turn of the narrator to step out of her gray gown of invisibility and assume centre stage for a while. She will now add her own story to those of her friends. A final facet of the prism has to be cut in order for it to reflect and refract a rich and comprehensive spectrum of reality.

My new friend and fellow internationalist Dylan conducts the interview in the same coffeeshop my interviews of him took place. (This time, though, we are both bothered by the relentless spring sun beating down on us through the window and end up moving to another table halfway through the interview.)

Pen poised he asks for my history of international moves and I begin at the beginning: I was born in Turku, Finland to one Swedish and one Finnish parent. At the age of three my family moved to Norsborg on the outskirts of the Swedish capital of Stockholm. We didn't stay long, though, as my father began working for an American shipping company and was transferred to La Baule on the Atlantic coast of France. I had attended L'école Maternelle in Stockholm so the change to the nursery school in La Baule was not a significant stretch for me. The first verse I ever recited was in French. And the first person I ever thought of as a friend was a blonde German boy named Martin who was just as much of an outsider as I was. During part of this French sojourn my mother remained in Scandinavia to give birth to my brother, a situation which in some ways created a sensation of a family internationally adrift.

The next move, a year or so later, was to Nagasaki, Japan. Here I was initially enrolled in a Japanese school and attempted to make friends with and play with the Japanese children on our street. This resulted in my first experience of openly being branded a *gaijin*, a foreigner. I did in spite of this succeed in making some friends, but was acutely aware of being different. Dylan feels that it was probably the unavoidable situation of being a blue-eyed *gaijin* in Japan that eventually taught me to embrace the feeling of being different, special, and that has resulted in an ongoing need to be

different from everybody else and stand out in a crowd. I think he may well be right. Another year later a six-year old me was enrolled in the Yokohama International School with fellow students from England, Taiwan, Japan, Bahrain, Norway, Hawaii, India, Germany, and so forth. I attended grades 1–4 at this school, the longest consecutive experience of any kind that I had had up to that point.

My fifth move was back to Sweden and took place as a result of a serious accident that had happened to my father. We were sent “home” on an ambulance flight, something which I typically experienced as exciting and as something which yet again served to distinguish my family and I as “special”. I also had fond memory-fragments of Sweden (mainly of some wooden rocking horses in a park in Stockholm that turned out to have been removed years earlier) and didn’t mind the unexpected move. My parents felt very differently. They felt banished from their chosen life in Japan and sent back to Sweden to serve a sentence of sorts in a place which others perceived to be “home” for our family, but which it in so many ways wasn’t.

I attended the International School of Stockholm for a year before being transferred to a Swedish school. That change of schooling systems was a bigger culture shock than the geographical move from Japan to Sweden had been. Sweden was “just another place” to me and place didn’t matter much anyway. I felt detached from everything going on around me, more so than ever before. Dylan notes my detachment at several different points during our conversation and wonders if it could be traced back to the eleven-year old Marie rejecting her suddenly homogeneous environment as having nothing to do with her while relying on her outsider-ship as the magic ship that would one day—*soon*—sail away with her again.

Much like for Anna Sweden is perhaps one of the places most likely to qualify as my “home” from an objective point of view. After all, I am part ethnic Swede, I carry a Swedish passport, I’ve spent a lot of time in Sweden throughout my life, returning to our cottage in the north almost every summer while growing up. However, much like Anna again, I too have found Sweden in some way to be the most confusing of places as the expectations on it to function as home have been that much higher than for any other place in the world, and the disappointments as a result that much more poignantly felt.

During my years in international schools I had learned to answer the in that milieu ever-present question of where I was from by saying that I was “half-Swedish and half-Finnish”. That had become my mantra, although I really felt a great deal more international than that with my obviously American turns of phrase and Japanese mannerisms. In Sweden I grew to learn that my Finnish heritage would become the target of certain Swedish prejudicial notions of all things Finnish. These notions had

nothing to do with me, so once again I detached myself, this time from a real part of myself.

Sweden was also the place where I grew up, where my father died, and where the magic somehow cracked and peeled away from my life. Viewed from the ruins of my dissolving and deeply traumatised family the earlier portions of my life took on an almost mythical shimmer. I was a fish that had been plucked from the beautiful green waters of an aquarium where I had been swimming with bejewelled fish from all over the world and was now in the process of ending up an unglamorous fishstick on a plate. I had to get back into the aquarium to survive.

I left for a stint as au-pair and nanny in Eastbourne and London. In spite of often feeling both lonely and alienated I was firmly in favour of viewing the whole experience as an adventure. Besides, it was a welcome breath of air after the stifling grief and mundane life that I had come to associate with Sweden. I remember walking along in the spring sunshine by Marble Arch looking at the double-decker buses and hackney carriages so familiar to me from many childhood visits to England and feeling a faint breeze from that childhood which made my heart soar high.

At twenty I was a student on the International Social Science Programme at Växjö. It was the only international programme of its kind in Sweden with several courses taught in English and reading materials in Swedish, Norwegian, and English. Here Dylan has made a note of my use of the words “us” and “them”—he claims I refer to Swedes (and all other nationalities) as “them” and that there isn’t really an “us” in my speech at all other than once or twice in reference to other people with international backgrounds.

After a year and a bit in Göteborg I left Sweden for England once again, this time to pursue a master’s degree in International Relations at the University of Reading. Once again I was surrounded by people from all over the world and felt a familiar exhilaration. Towards the end of the programme, though, a realization hit me with full force: I was the only one who was essentially homeless. Everyone else was continuously “going home” for Christmas, for Diwali, to eventually return home for good after graduation. At this point in the interview I offer up my first definition of home as “somewhere to go back to” and consequently as something which I did not have. I had no choice but to secure a post-course means of survival in England, which would mean either getting a job or continuing on with my studies. I did both.

Since then I’ve lived in London, Canterbury, London again and now Ottawa—with my sambo who is the first person I’ve come into contact with both willing and able to move with me from place to place. Other relationships have reached a natural end when it’s

been time for me to move on. In Canterbury I “played house” springcleaning windows, weeding the little garden, cutting rosebuds for the breakfast table, and even cooking a meal or two. That phase quickly lost its charm, though, in spite of the hundred-year-old sweetpeas by the garden fence...

My first couple of years in Canada were sanctioned by tourist visas renewed every six months in wait for my status as “permanent resident” to come through. I enjoyed my long-term status as “tourist” while the fact that I could not leave the country for fear of not having my visa renewed upon my reentry into Canada was desperately stressful for someone for whom moving and travelling are essentially compulsive. While the long-sought-for status of resident eased my predicament and allowed me free movement once more, I decry the label of “permanent resident” and favour my Swedish passport to my Canadian resident-card for identification purposes.

In speaking with me Dylan notes that my restlessness and need to move and to not be tied down to one place is apparent. It becomes obvious in the way I associate staying put with death. I have this silly feeling that as long as I keep moving there will always be one more move between myself and the ultimate *rendez-vous*...

IN WHICH PATTERNS ARE TRACED & CONCLUSIONS ESSAYED

In qualitative case studies theories are created through induction rather than being used as a deductive point of departure as when pursuing quantitative enquiries (Merriam 1994, p.33). However, as far as I understand pure induction must be an impossibility as all basic assumptions and previous knowledge contribute to and influence each stage in the research process. The *Weltanschauung* of the mind behind the study cannot be separated from the study itself, merely made apparent to the reader to the degree that it is apparent to the author herself. And as theory, concisely put, is no more than that perspective from which we view the world and through which we form our understanding of so-called reality, all research must be more or less deductive in nature.

The main difference between induction and deduction as I see it is the degree of formality of the theoretical foundation on which the study stands. A deductive approach is based on a formal theory with fixed variables while an inductive attitude means being aware of one's general predisposition and predeterminations while being prepared to have these continually developed and reformulated as the work proceeds. By not tying oneself down to any particular variables decided on in advance, it is possible to come closer to a viable and critical interpretation of the studied situations rather than run the risk of reaching a conclusion that can do no more than to repudiate the principles initially proposed.

Theory development is played at throughout the entire data collection phase. (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p.205; Merriam, p.136) When a certain amount of data has been accumulated a pattern hopefully begins to emerge. This pattern serves to make the gathered information in some way meaningful and may enable relationships between variables to become apparent. When this happens it becomes important to remind oneself to retain an openness and flexibility in the emerging pattern theory and not prematurely rely on its explanatory potential. It is precisely this fluidity that gives pattern theory its greatest positive distinction.

It is this continual interplay between analysis and data collection that methodologically distinguishes a qualitative case study. Partly this analysis takes place on an intuitive level in connection with the gradual discerning of theoretical patterns in the accumulating material. It is also, however, important to take a more systematic approach at this stage of the thesis and ask oneself to what extent the information gleaned addresses and satisfies the questions one would like answered and, ultimately, to what degree it provides pertinent and original insights.

The occasional case study may consist entirely of a descriptive narrative of the studied phenomenon, but in order for the point of the account to become outstanding to both writer and reader it is necessary to take the time to collate and reflect on the results. This task is most expediently achieved by revisiting the original presentation of the subject of enquiry (in chapter one) and comparing the various findings (in chapters three and four) with it. If the material panned forth turns out to be relevant as well as reasonably comprehensive (in both senses of the word) one ought to be able to haul oneself out of Miles & Huberman's "empirical bog" to a higher (and drier) conceptual ground (Merriam, p.152).

The appropriate level of abstraction depends on the scope and clarity of the study. I've already mentioned the purely descriptive case study. A higher level of abstraction entails developing conceptual categories or themes. Ascending the ladder of abstraction we arrive at a level where these categories are linked together and used to create hypotheses and the highest level of abstraction entails the actual genesis of a major theory. Let me at this point remind myself and the reader that a healthy degree of realism and humility regarding the aspired-to level of abstraction is vital for the integrity of the study.

I make no claim on major theory with this piece of research—nor on hypothesis creation. As I stated in chapter two, this thesis is concerned more with internal than external validity. Generalization is not my intent. I will, however, shine a torch at what concepts and themes this study has unearthed, curious to see if the unearthed bits and pieces *might* form part of a cohesive abstract artefact.



I started off with certain preconceptions, the main one being that the localisation of home is a problematic, and in some cases impossible, task for a rootweaker, itinerant individual. This notion was based on my own experience and I expected to find that I shared this gnawing feeling of quasi-homelessness with my fellow internationalists.

The conversations proved my expectations partially wrong. Dylan admits to feeling homeless but is not concerned by that feeling and is not in search of home. Erlend takes an ambiguous stance: his degree of belonging depends largely on his own ability to come up with suitably fluid definitions of what it means to be at home, and ultimately he rejects the importance attached to the notion of belonging. Anna claims to feel at home, but her replies, kept firmly brief and simple, indicate a hidden, subcutaneous feeling of embattlement. I do feel homeless and am somewhat troubled by it as evidenced by this thesis.

These differences can perhaps be accounted for, at least in part. While we have all moved around from a very early age, our biographies also display significant degrees of variation. The most crucial one may be that my sense of homelessness is as much *inherited* as it is *acquired* through an itinerant lifestyle. I am the only one of the featured internationalists to have parents from different countries and who thereby from the beginning perceived that my family as a whole could never be entirely at home anywhere. I think we can here hazard the notion that what sets me apart from the others may be at the centre of the acute feeling of homelessness that seems to be mine and mine alone.

In the interests of further research in this field I would encourage a series of interviews with people who have mixed ethnic backgrounds in addition to a life of international moves—that may prove homelessness to be an even more widespread and profound experience.



Our definitions of home vary, but have one element in common: when proffered they all lean towards being personal definitions of a personal home, a *Heim*, and lack a clear collective, public dimension, a *Heimat*. (Hobsbawm in *Social Research* 58:1, p.67) Dylan defines home as a sense of peace, Erlend as a place where he has established genuine connections with other people, Anna as a sense of belonging-without-belonging so to speak, and I have come to realize that I think of it mainly as somewhere to return to.

Our definitions play an obvious part in whether or not we perceive ourselves to be at home. My definition is perhaps most static by implying a place; comes closest to describing a *Heimat*; and is of a more sociological nature in addressing the need for a particular societal, geographical and cultural dimension to home rather than the more psychological definitions of the other subjects. As such it most easily leads to the conclusion that I am indeed homeless as there isn't really at this stage of my life anywhere for me to naturally return to. The easiest way to sidestep a conclusion that tends toward homelessness is, of course, to make suitable alterations to one's definition of home—I could do this by learning to think of my real home as being in academic pursuit or in my poetry, e.g., and thus have conveniently created a home that I can carry with me everywhere. However, while I realize the importance for geographically homeless people to be able to create for themselves more personal and mobile notions of home I do also feel that in some ways these definitions are just gilded debris to hang onto after the shipwreck—clearly you are at sea, but you allow your little raft to blind you with its bright promise of safe passage through the ragged, lonely waters.

In this way Simone Weil must have had a point in remarking that “to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul” (Iyer 2000, p.28). Why else would so many go to such lengths to find, create and re-create these listing little rafts, rather than submit to their homelessness?



Our individual fantasies of home and belonging and having the option of belonging-without-belonging and opting out of and laying claim to homes (or not) as we please is at odds with the social responsibility of encompassing cultural norms. It is an unalienable fact that we have a degree of freedom and fluidity in the way we perceive the world around us that a more culturally bound individual would have great difficulty ever achieving.

This is one of the patterns that I have traced throughout the literature and also in the responses given by my fellow internationalists. The element of choice is possibly the widest and most colourful weft in our weave of patterns. The notion of a *chosen* home as opposed to a *given* one is one which appears in most of my sources. Mathews talks about home being nothing more in the end than yet another choice that we make from the global cultural supermarket, Giddens says we have no choice but to choose, the Aboriginal definition of home is not what one is given but rather what one makes with what one is given, what one *chooses* to make it. And this is a choice that is not made once and for all, but rather one that is made and remade over and over. In other words, as we change and our circumstances change, and the world around us changes, we make new choices. Erlend’s early idea of home was the Norway he carried around with him in his head. A subsequent choice was New York. His current choice falls on London. A future choice may well be something else. Re-plantable roots (to use Dylan’s metaphor) are characteristic of many rootweak individuals.

The reason we are not only able to choose, but have no choice but to choose, the reason our choices are not simply “a matter of permission but of necessity” (Mathews 2000, p.178) may be connected to the fact that we are choosing a *Heim*, not a *Heimat*. *Heim*, a unique creation crystallized out of one’s personal life circumstances at a certain point in time, is naturally changeable. *Heimat*, by contrast, cannot be chosen by the individual but is a given in the sense that others, i.e. the pertinent collective or their representatives, confer it upon the individual. *Heimat* signifies the collective dimension of belonging; the dimension that is absent from the homes of the rootweak. Anna feels that Swedes as a collective have chosen not to include her in their *Heimat* and that there is nothing she can do about that other than continue to create and recreate her own personal and subjective *Heim*.

Then of course there is the question of to what degree any *Heimat* can be said to exist as a relevant entity to anybody. Most of what makes up a *Heimat* are collective myths that serve to bind the people within it together, but they are just that: myths. In clinging to the particularism that is *Heimat* there is refusal of the reality of today's world of movement and fluidity. In that sense placing more weight on the *Heim* aspect of home is a healthy alternative that takes greater account of our contemporary reality.



The outsider (Simmel's *der Fremde*) is another weft in my weave. As we cannot help but be outsiders in pretty much whatever setting we choose, the question of how at home we feel ought in some way to be connected to how comfortable we are with our own outsidership. The chameleon response is one which I would say is an indication that there is a degree of discomfort in being different from those around you. The accents and speech patterns of Erlend and myself shift as we move from continent to continent, Dylan naturally and unconsciously adopts the reigning norms of personal space in African and North American culture, Anna has acquired a taste for French wine and has drowned her loner character in the whirlpool of French family life—we all make conscious and unconscious changes and adaptations to the way we interact with the company we're in. As long as that adaptation is felt to be necessary we cannot be said to be entirely at home, because home should not be something one has to get used to or adapt to. (Storti 1997, p.22)

In real terms there may be very little difference in the way Dylan, Erlend, Anna and I make our way through the world. The differences lie in our perceptions. Some of us feel ourselves at home nowhere, others everywhere, some problematize and philosophize over this, others shrug it off. To sum up, the similarities lie in the element of *choice* that we automatically make use of when shoe-horning our way into new homes and new homelessnesses around the world, and the focus on the *personal* as opposed to public dimensions of both home and homelessness. None of us would take kindly to someone else deciding where we are supposed to feel at home or homeless—it is for us, and us alone, to decide. The differences amount to to what degree we acknowledge the various facets of home and homelessness in our lives and those differences could have as much to do with personality discrepancies as anything else. I believe it would be inopportune to make much of this and attempt any generalizations based on a few conversations between no more than four people.

My intention has merely been to present a candid view of what the notions of home and homelessness can mean to us whose root systems are somewhat more entangled and less viable than those of many others. I believe I have accomplished that. I sign off for now in the hope of having sown more intriguing questions than I have reaped definitive answers.



In order for anyone to feel at home in today's world we have to take care to define home in such a way that it is possible to arrive at that feeling. But the arrival, if it ever comes about at all, will be one of happy serendipity, not the result of a methodical search or hardy pursuit. The problem with the pursuit of happiness as sanctioned and encouraged by the American constitution is that happiness is something which by its very nature will never emerge as a result of being pursued. The same could very well be said of Home. It may well happen to us when we least expect it to.

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CONVERSATIONS

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- Erlend Kjellstad, 1st April 2004 (on the telephone & via e-mail)
- Anna Silversten, 13th & 23th April 2004 (via e-mail)