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Trans-figurations Transnational Perspectives on Domestic Space

**August Jordan Davis and
Basia Sliwinska**

Thinking about this special issue was initially guided by a poem, first published in 1956, by former US Poet Laureate Elizabeth Bishop, and partially quoted by Susan Sontag to open her collection of essays *Where the Stress Falls* (2001):

Think of the long trip home.
Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?
Where should we be today?
...
Continent, city, country, society:
the choice is never wide and never free.
And here, or there... No. Should we have stayed at home,
wherever that may be?

Elizabeth Bishop, *Questions of Travel*, 1956

This special issue of *Third Text* is dedicated to explorations of transnational perspectives on domestic spaces within women's post-1945 art practice. The selected articles address 'trans-figurations', different forms of thinking about gender and materiality through versatile articulations of place. In her essay 'Questions of Travel', *Nomadic Theory* (2011), Rosi Braidotti proposes that:

Figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, embedded, and embodied positions. They derive from the feminist method of the 'politics of location'

and build it into a discursive strategy.¹

In this work and in *Nomadic Subjects* Braidotti argues, ‘we need to provide... accurate cartographies of the different politics of location for subjects-in-becoming. A figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the self – it’s no metaphor’.² Within her thesis, figurations are affiliated with locations and, as such, become a strategy of resistance to power relations. This enables both a re-configuring of feminist narratives and a re-thinking of subjectivity.

Our work on *trans*-figurations thinks across such figurations as ‘socioeconomic and symbolic locations’ whose mappings contribute to a continued and renewed supple form of feminist critique and politics. It is an extension of the ‘critical cartographies’ called for by art historian Marsha Meskimmon (herself a contributor to this special issue) to navigate through diverse geographical positions and test the concepts marking the limits of feminist art.³ Such parameters and limits drove Meskimmon’s 2011 book *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, in which she negotiates this terrain and explores the concept of the ‘domestic turn’ embodied in art practices which question the transnational and cross-cultural flows in times of globalisation.⁴

The contributions here most certainly chart, in the words of Meskimmon, ‘work that has no intention of staying at home’, and no desire to remain local. Yet home remains a deep anchor to this project. Both of us live in the United Kingdom as guests coming from different geographical locations and searching for ‘home’. Those who contributed articles are also located in different parts of the world. Some of these authors migrated to the UK, and some are in constant transition, questioning their belonging *to* places and spaces. All of us address the concept of ‘home’, with its allure as a natural place of belonging. When conceptualised within the politics of domesticity and the ideologies of nationhood and citizenship, however, it can become a powerful construct enabling

¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*, Columbia University Press, New York and Chichester, 2011, p 13

² Ibid, p 14

³ Marsha Meskimmon, ‘Chronology through Cartography: Mapping 1970s Feminist Art Globally’, in Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed, *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The Museum of Contemporary Art and The MIT Press, Los Angeles, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 2007, pp 322–335, p 325

⁴ Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, p 2

the questioning of the production of space. This special issue activates such thinking about and re-evaluation of home, identity and space in a transnational perspective drawing from feminist discourse and feminist art practice.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME?

The articles assembled here originate from two events we co-convened last year. Our examination of 'home' as a variously charged site was first addressed in a session entitled 'There's no place like home? Women-in-passage: "Home" and migrations in women's art since 1945', which we ran at the annual conference of the Association of Art Historians (AAH) hosted by the Royal College of Art in London in April 2014. Our interest in the concept of home and its association with gendered locations, the politics of domesticity and ideologies of nationhood and citizenship nurtured yet another event, 'Trans-Figurations: Feminism, Art and Global Futures', held at the New Walk Museum and Art Gallery in Leicester in September 2014. It was a joint symposium convened collaboratively by the Sexual Politics Research Group and the Communication, Culture and Citizenship Research Challenge (Loughborough University) and Winchester Centre for Global Futures in Art Design and Media (Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton).

Our AAH session's title started from the words, 'There's no place like home', followed by a question mark; transfiguring Dorothy's famously emphatic declaration (in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, by L Frank Baum, 1899), on returning to her family's Kansas farmhouse following her exotic travels in the Land of Oz, into a more uncertain proposition. Perhaps there literally is no-place like home; perhaps *home* is utopic. Such uncertainties and questions form the basis for our inquiries within the work constituted by these events and culminating in this special issue. Home is an affective space, generally associated with a sense of security and familiarity. Anthropologists Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga observed that:

Exactly when humans began to construct shelters and conceive of them as 'home' is impossible to tell. The tendency for the same group of individuals to return repeatedly to a favored spot for activities

such as food sharing dates back probably to the earliest ancestral species of our genus, *Homo habilis* (Potts, 1984, 1988). It was *habilis*' descendant *Homo erectus* who likely mastered the use of fire more than a million years ago, thereby transforming the habituation of a space into a place of habitation.⁵

Regardless of whether an individual's lived experience of this place of habitation is affectively positive or not, home is, nonetheless, where one's identity is shaped in myriad ways in relation to other people. Home is where, as Gaston Bachelard wrote, 'We take root, day after day, in a "corner of the world"'. For our house is our corner of the world.'⁶ Important moments in our lives are marked by the changing status of home. We 'leave home' or 'move home' and this means going *towards* something else, in search of a new place, and of other ways, of belonging and being safe.

MIGRANCY

Migrations across the globe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have often meant a 'moving home' tinged with insecurity. The upheaval, turmoil, and trauma associated particularly with migrations due to war, as well as economic migrations, can mean re-conceiving even what type or shape of home might await the migrant and migrant-as-refugee, let alone whether the new 'homeland' will be welcoming and hospitable or offer only hostility and anger.⁷ In recent weeks, this has been thrown sharply into relief with the on-going refugee crisis within the EU, and the myriad responses differing member countries have demonstrated. The initially 'open arms' policy Germany displayed earlier in September 2015, had turned by mid-September into an abrupt suspension of Schengen arrangements, returning to national border controls between Germany and Austria.⁸ Developments continue daily as we write.

Even less volatile relocations might see new homemakers met, at best, with ambivalence from

⁵ 'Introduction', in Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, eds, *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 1999, p 1

⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Maria Jolas, trans, Beacon Press, Boston, 1994, p 4

⁷ For consideration of the ways in which terminological distinctions over refugees and migrants have been politically and divisively deployed, see John Harris, 'This refugee crisis was a test for David Cameron. He's flunked it', *The Guardian*, 3 September 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/03/refugee-crisis-test-david-cameron>

⁸ Ian Traynor, 'Germany border crackdown deals blow to Schengen system', *The Guardian*, 13 September 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/13/germany-border-crackdown-deals-blow-to-schengen-system>

their new locale. But as Iain Chambers wrote convincingly, migrancy can offer ‘another sense of “home”, of being in the world. It means to conceive of dwelling as a mobile habitat’.⁹ For those of us ‘always in transit’, the state of migrancy ‘calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation’.¹⁰ Without such practices, home, from a space affiliated with homeliness, can elide into types of homelessness.

At the other end of the spectrum, from the home-loss, we confront the house-bound, where home has functioned as both a literal locus for women and, by extension, as a metaphor for feminine space: a space both of nurturing and care-taking, and often of confinement. These are only some of the associations that come to mind when thinking of home. It is a shifting and rich notion with many attached meanings and metaphors, ‘an image that moves us at an unimaginable [poetic] depth’.¹¹ What binds them together is the spatial dimension of home as *here* and/or *there*, or perhaps *in-between*. It is guided by the overarching politics of belonging through the different embodiments marking being at home, or of a state of becoming *at home* (perhaps, most importantly, with oneself).

TJ Demos’s *The Migrant Image* (2013) proposes a positive position for certain migrants to inhabit ‘the ‘double consciousness’ – in Paul Gilroy’s phrasing that takes up W E B Du Bois’ concept – that is bestowed upon those who experience living elsewhere. This ‘double perspective’ (in Said’s words describing exile), or this ‘double frame’ (in Homi K Bhabha’s characterisation of migration) results from the bicultural knowledge produced by living in a foreign environment, generating in its positive expression a sensitivity toward difference (that of cultures, places and communities), and a new-found appreciation of the cultural character of one’s origins, when looking back from the migrant’s awry vantage.

Our contributors explore issues of cosmopolitanism and transnational belonging from different perspectives, often guided by their own migration and movement. They encourage versatile iterations of the concept of home, its positionality with and against domicile spaces, but also

⁹ Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, p 4

¹⁰ Ibid, p 5

¹¹ Bachelard, p 6

(a)cross-disciplinary theories and concepts emerging predominantly in feminist writings. The inquiries included in this issue into material and cultural products of women's art practice offer rich understandings of cultural production beyond, across, and traversing borders. As Chandra Mohanty emphasises 'our most expansive and inclusive visions of feminism need to be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them'.¹²

EMPLACEMENT

We all live in a place and all places are related to everywhere else. The *here* and/or *there*, and *wherever* or *everywhere*, raised in the poem inspiring this special issue, emphasises the resonance between spaces and places, and raises complexities of locations. *Here* and *there* differentiates between spaces and draws a line between what is present, accessible and immediately available (here) and what exists somewhere else, sometimes beyond reach, sometimes requiring access, permission, or sometimes being restricted to some groups (there). The here and there is divided by an invisible border, which often marginalises experiences of women and their active participation in the shaping of space. Women, across cultures, are believed to be the makers of home and if home is narrowed down to private, closed spaces, they are thus excluded from public, heavily gendered locations. Broader understandings of 'home' and its emplacement within a politics of embodiment enable a fuller participation in the community and gendered locations of the public space.

Such a politics demands we plot the co-ordinates of the production of space as a *practice*. The critical concept of the production of space derives in the first instance from the foundational text of the same name by Henri Lefebvre, where he offered the landmark statement: '(Social) space is a (social) product.'¹³ As Victor Burgin explained in his *In/Different Spaces*:

The most fundamental project of Lefebvre's book [*The Production of Space*] is to reject the conception of space as 'a container without content', an abstract mathematical/geometrical continuum,

¹² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina and London, 2003, p 2

¹³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans, Blackwell, Malden, Massachusetts, Oxford, and Carlton, Victoria, 1991, p 26

independent of human subjectivity and agency. As his homage to Lefebvre implies, Soja's work continues Lefebvre's project of theorizing space not as a Kantian a priori but as a product of human *practice*.¹⁴

Indeed, in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Edward Soja echoed Lefebvre insisting the

generative source for a materialist interpretation of spatiality is the recognition that spatiality is socially produced and, like society itself, exists in both substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and as a set of relations between individuals and groups, an 'embodiment' and medium of social life itself.¹⁵

Establishing the move away from what Meskimmon called 'an uncritical chronology'¹⁶ towards 'a critical cartography',¹⁷ Soja advocated developing a

critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life, a practical theoretical consciousness that sees the lifeworld of being creatively located not only in the making of history but also in the construction of human geographies, the social production of space and the restless formation and reformation of geographical landscapes: social being actively emplaced in space *and* time in an explicitly historical *and* geographical contextualization.¹⁸

This critical sensibility underpins the contributions throughout this special issue. The emplacement within a politics of embodiment mentioned above does not stop at the front door of the home. Obviously it extends to how we live in our bodies. Our locatedness within body resonates with our body in place(s) and our being in (or out of) place. Thinking *through* the body addresses social production of space *and* of corporeality, and offers new freedoms to women who refuse to accept patriarchal and bipolar organisations of space. Migrations from and to, and *across* places encourage

¹⁴ Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1996, pp 26–27

¹⁵ Edward W Soja, 'Reassertions: Towards a Spatialized Ontology', in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, London and New York, 1989, pp 118–137, p 120

¹⁶ Meskimmon, 'Chronology through Cartography', op cit, p 324

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Edward W Soja, 'History: Geography: Modernity', in *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, op cit, pp 10–42, p 11

spatial investigations of lived experiences, which are the foundation of re-negotiating the here and there and the in-between.

PERSPECTIVES

Such re-negotiations are configured throughout the articles and perspectives included in this special issue. We commence with Marion Arnold and Marsha Meskimmon's article entitled 'Making Oneself at Home: A Dialogue on Women, Culture, Belonging and Denizenship'. This poetical conversation journeys across the travels and (re)locations of Arnold and Meskimmon, asking what it means in our states of uprootedness to make oneself at home, locating, in lieu of citizenships, the 'becoming denizen' that such a position can entail. This dialogue does not trade merely in poetics or metaphors but in what Braidotti identifies as 'social locations'.¹⁹ Meskimmon's address of women's identity made literally multiple in the navigations of registry offices and passport bureaucracies reinforces Braidotti's point: 'Having no passport or having too many of them is neither equivalent nor is it merely metaphorical... These are highly specific geopolitical and historical locations – it's history tattooed on your body.'²⁰

In Arnold's case, such a tattoo proves a palimpsest of lives transfigured by multiple migrations over generations and criss-crossing the globe, pursuing 'the desire for a *place* to call home', or, as Iain Chambers dubbed it, 'a form of picking a quarrel with where you come from'.²¹ It is a quarrel Arnold shares with Irma Stern and Bertha Everard, two South African women artists and their 'domicile-culture tension' marking the love for the cultural centres of Europe but also the longing for the African landscape. This is what Meskimmon names 'the narrative of home... [as] a practice of "homing", of "uprooting/regrounding"... [whereby] we produce multiple, mutable and transformative identifications – mobile, global homes'.

¹⁹ Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, op cit, p 14: 'Being nomadic, homeless, a migrant, an exile, a refugee, a tourist, a rape-in-war victim, an itinerant migrant, an illegal immigrant, an expatriate, a mail-order bride, a foreign caretaker of the young or the elderly of the economically developed world, a global venture financial expert, a humanitarian relief worker in the UN global system, a citizen of a country that no longer exists... these are no metaphors, but social locations.'

²⁰ Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, op cit, p 14

²¹ Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, op cit, p 2

Addressing processes of naturalisation in making oneself at home in a new country, Meskimmon observes the emphasis that is put upon difference and one's place of origin, passing or arrival, pointing towards narratives of hosting and hospitality. In a recent letter to the *London Review of Books*, University of Sydney Professor Helen Irving reinforced such difference and its heightened state of precarity in the relatively recent past. The stakes for women marrying citizens of countries other than their own, even well into the twentieth century, were those of risking their own denaturalisation and possible statelessness.²² As Braidotti rightly asserts, these are not metaphorical/metaphysical speculations but real social co-ordinates; mapping our bodies, regulating our movements and confinements. Facing such regimes of policing citizenship, Meskimmon and Arnold offer us 'the denizen as a becoming-figuration for thinking citizenship, the arts, feminism and global ethics/politics differently'.

In the next article "“Seeing through”: Migration, home-making and friendship in Lourdes Castro's work of the 1960s and 1970s' by Giulia Lamoni we find the longitude of friendship ('an affective cartography') traced across the map of Portuguese artist Lourdes Castro's navigations of certain home-makings (or, perhaps, the making of [the makings of] home[s]) in her art practices and in the Paris and Madeira of her dwellings. Lamoni explores Castro's 'articulation of specific spatial relations provoked by transparency', and her later experiments with its dance with opacity in shadow theatres. It is a perspective on Castro's work aimed at investigating into the making and un-making of home in the context of migration, dislocation and cross-cultural exchanges. Within

²² Helen Irving, 'Is he Vietnamese?', Letters, *London Review of Books*, vol 37, no 14, 16 July 2015. Online: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n14/letters#letter2> : 'Between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, Britain, like virtually every other country in the world, stripped (birthright) citizenship from women who married foreign men. The practice, which operated under British law from 1870 to 1949, applied without exception or discretion, and affected probably millions of women. While denaturalization was not styled as a "penalty" (although many women experienced it as such), foreign marriage was represented as a type of dis allegiance or, at least, a transfer of allegiance. The assumption was that an "out-marrying" woman would acquire the citizenship of her husband, but no inquiry was made into whether or not this happened. Increasingly, statelessness among married women was the result. In the 1920s, the international community became concerned about escalating marital statelessness. It was a central topic at the League of Nations codification of laws conference in 1930, which produced The Hague Convention on Nationality, a section of which proscribed marital denaturalization in cases where it led to statelessness. Marital denaturalization, however, was not otherwise internationally repudiated until the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in 1957. The effect of citizenship-stripping, rendering women aliens in their own country and making them vulnerable to the uncertain laws of other countries was often drastic. Its history illustrates not only Hannah Arendt's "right to have rights" aphorism, but her observation that loss of citizenship means "the loss of home and political status... identical with expulsion from humanity altogether."'

Lamoni's reading, home is transfigured beyond 'domestic space or geographical location' to become 'the shaping of temporary alliances and connections based on affect but also on common practices, collaborations and shared interests'.

The expansion of common practices and of what constitutes 'the ties that bind', the affective and elective affinities that co-ordinate kinship and hospitality – those gatekeepers of belonging – is what is at stake in Basia Sliwinska's article 'Transnational Embodied Belonging within "Edge Habitats"'. Sliwinska proffers the image of the biodiversity of ecotones and edge habitats as a productive map for considering transnational belonging in Europe today. Starting from a personal account of how her Polish identity is plotted and positioned officially, Sliwinska illustrates the point Nicholas Mirzoeff establishes in his new book *How to See the World* (2015). That 'one world' does not mean it is equally available to all. Moving country for personal or political reasons is often very difficult, and partly depends on your passport'.²³ With our concrete bodies more restricted than abstract capital flows, Mirzoeff confirms what Sliwinska dissects in the artworks of Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska and artist Nada Prlja, from Bosnia and Herzegovina: 'There is globalization in theory, which is smooth and easy. And there is the uneven, difficult and time-consuming experience of globalization in practice.'²⁴ Sliwinska explores 'how women artists negotiate new ways of belonging between and within home, homeland and hostland'.

Kinship of a different kind, and its complicated relationship to a particular homeland, is the terrain mapped within Tal Dekel's article, 'Welcome Home: Immigrant Ethiopian Women Artists in Israel and Questions of Citizenship and Belonging'. Dekel considers the role of artists in Israel who are Jewish Ethiopian women immigrants, exploring in the process how the borders of identity within 'the ethno-national state of Israel' is policed and navigated. The work of artists Tegist Ron-Yoseph, Esti Almo Wexler, Gudai Bitaulin-Erez and Zawdito Yosef is plotted across the coordinates of citizenship, religion, nationhood, and the place of birth and/versus the (presumed) place of belonging. Within this cartography of claims over belonging, Dekel addresses the various

²³ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World*, Pelican Books, London and New York, 2015, p 10

²⁴ Ibid

discriminations these artists' works depict. As Dekel herself recognises, these works complicate further already-complex situations of belonging and identity, of variously policed exclusion zones within these contested territories.

Further unpacking the experience of migrant women artists, Kim Tao charts the triangulation of home, homeland and hostland in her article 'Homelands Lost and Found: Migrant Women's Art at the Australian National Maritime Museum'. Exploring the work of Australian artists Gina Sinozich, Sue Saxon and Anne Zahalka, Tao addresses the migrant experience and how (multi-generational) memories of homes left behind, along with stories of making homes anew, can become a dwelling place themselves. Considering Mieke Bal's ideas on 'narrative memories', Tao unpacks the affective, traumatic and therapeutic dimensions of these artworks composed of multiple layers of 'material culture', of which memories are but one (less concrete) part. Much as Joanna Rajkowska's *Born in Berlin* (2012– ongoing) and *Letter to Rosa* (2011–2012, as examined in Sliwinska's article) does through the use of her pregnant body in those artworks, Sue Saxon, in the work discussed by Tao, 'who was pregnant with her first child during the creation of *Displaced Persons* (2003), inscribes her body into a number of the works in a visceral embodiment of family history and memory'.

This writing of the embodied subject into the space of contemporary art, no matter how divided that subject or that space, continues explicitly in Maria Photiou's article, 'Be/come Closer to Home: Narratives of Contested Lands in the Visual Practices of Katerina Attalidou and Alexandra Handal'. Taking the divided cities of Nicosia (Cyprus) and Jerusalem (Palestine) as the spaces explored, Photiou, as with Sliwinska, is preoccupied with borders and the quality and means of their crossings. Examining the multiple and hybrid identities of Greek-Cypriot artist Katerina Attalidou, and of Alexandra Handal (Palestinian artist born in Haiti and living between the USA and Palestine), Photiou offers a portrait of displacements and how situations of exile map possibilities of return through navigating the configurations of house, home and homeland.

The transfiguration of the displacement of women into the domestic space of the home lies at the

heart of August Jordan Davis' article: 'Reading the Strange Case of the Woman-as-Appliance: On Transfigurations, Cyborgs, Domestic Labour, and the Megamachine'. Exploring the 'doctrine of separate spheres' that regulated women into domestic service, Davis takes on the figure of the housewife to map the configuration of the 'woman-as-appliance'. Via examination of artworks by British artist Richard Hamilton and American artist Martha Rosler, in particular, Davis charts the 'woman-as-appliance':

... as the barred subject *par excellence*, as the megamachine of domestic labour (through an adaptive appropriation from Lewis Mumford), and lastly (by way of McKenzie Wark's revival of Donna Haraway) in her cyborgic transfigurations.

This embodied relationship between the woman in the home and her appliances is the subject of Madeleine Newman and Leonie O'Dwyer's case study: 'Home Furnishings: Revisiting the Interior Spaces of Helen Chadwick's "Living Kitchen"'. Mapping through the archive the components of this installation performance from the late 1970s, Newman and O'Dwyer reconfigure Chadwick's group work where women and costume appliances were wedded in a 'Sculptural couture':

Retracing the creative processes and material forms of *In the Kitchen* highlights the complexities imbued in the multifaceted conflation of the human body, machine and architectural space, and of woman and home.

Tracing the techniques of body²⁵ of the housewife as built-in appliance,²⁶ following the contours of the fine distinctions regarding Ideal Home Exhibitions and appliance showrooms versus actual domestic spaces, Newman and O'Dwyer situate Chadwick's work of 'Kitchen-Lib' within its nuanced context of challenging women's identifications across (and beyond) domestic spaces.

Identifications across and beyond domestic spaces and expected female gender performances,

²⁵ Marcel Mauss, 'Techniques of the Body', in Margaret Lock and Judith Farquhar, eds, *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2007, pp 50–68

²⁶ In a related vein, see also: Susan E Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 40, No 2, 2005, pp 289–316, especially pp 305–306 on the move to a built-in kitchen and 'the way the arrangement of the kitchen impacted directly on the body of the housewife', p 305

along with challenging the previous cartographies and chronologies of what counts as feminist art figurations, provide the ground for Kathy Battista's article 'New Feminist Positions: Disrupting a White Feminist Canon'. Drawing upon the work of four young non-white American artists working today: Audrey Chan, Narcissister, Kalup Linzy, and Martín Gutierrez, Battista explores their:

... use [of] identity, role playing, and masquerade to enact a contemporary incarnation of feminism... Each of these artists tells a personal story of migration and assimilation into American culture. And their personal histories, rooted in the domestic and matriarchal line of influence, come across in their work.

The *trans*-figurations these artists employ often startle with their audacious and humorous appropriations and mutations of positions, identities and situations co-opted and adapted from their feminist predecessors: from Audrey Chan's engagement with Judy Chicago, *Practicing Judyism*; to Narcissister's *Every Woman*, a reverse strip-tease that borders on a magic show assisted by the figure of Adrian Piper. The transfiguring of borders materialises in these four artists' practices through their performances, particularly their manifold performances of female identity: 'Through the construction of a female identity, they examine notions of race, class and heteronormativity.'

This special issue addresses the complexities of 'home'. Home is where the self is shaped and where our identity becomes formed (or, perhaps, trans-figured) in relation to space and in the space of relations. In Akiko Busch's words,

There are times when the very idea of home seems an impossible proposition. There are other times when our homes express infinite possibilities, when they reflect exactly who we are and what we might be.²⁷

Contributors to this special issue unfix the concept of home while charting its different perspectives and iterations. Through theory- and practice-led lenses they espy the possibility and the

²⁷ Akiko Busch, *Geography of Home: Writings on Where We Live*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1999, p 14

impossibility of home, the limitations and opportunities enabled by domicile spaces, and the versatile processes of homing. The different perspectives are bound by a sense of community and a desire for belonging. Home is where the self is enabled and empowered and it does not necessarily connote a specific place: it may well be that most special *no-place*, home as utopia. There literally may be no-place like home. From the place where one hopes to be most at one's self, to the place where one can feel most trapped/entrapped, home can be that inside of which one resides, or that which resides within us: a space we carry with(in) us as we move forward, widening and transfiguring our geographies of freedom.