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Homelessness, Displacement and Identity: *Open City* and *Home*

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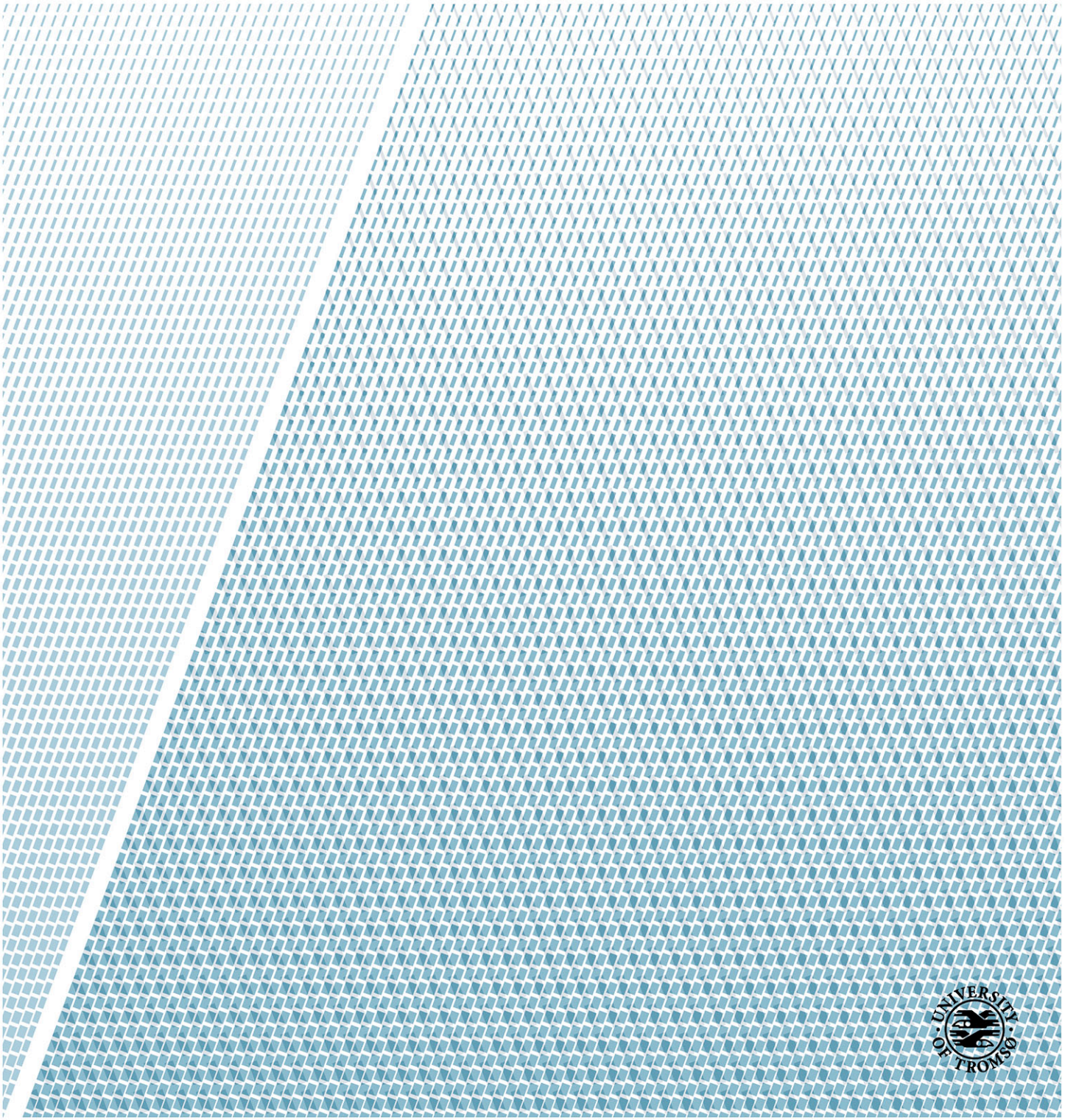

Abstract

This thesis sets out to explore the themes of homelessness, displacement and identity in two contemporary novels: Marilynne Robinson's *Home* (2008) and Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011). My method involves comparing how temporality (time), space/place and its effects on subjectivity work as means to enhance an understanding of a "homeless" or hybrid condition that is evident both in the immensity of a globalised, cosmopolitan setting as well as in the more intimate, provincial and domestic life. The homeless condition I am setting out to explore is not the tragic fate of the exiled, the refugee, expatriate or émigré (although all of these fates are represented in *Open City*). It is not the transcendental homelessness that Georg Lukacs describes. Rather, it is a homelessness that is the result of a mobility increasing rapidly in its scope. I begin by exploring the ways in which the spaces and places inhabited in the two novels, namely New York City and Brussels in *Open City* and the domestic sphere of *Home*, both allow and inhibit the characters' mobility, before moving on to a discussion of how time and memory serve as individual and collective constructions of reality. Finally, I discuss the varying and contrasting portrayals of a hybrid condition in the two novels, and its implications on the characters' subjectivity. By using Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity, unhomeliness and in-between-ness, and Doreen Massey's *For Space* (2005) as frameworks, I posit that although the two post-modern novels diverge both temporally and spatially, they coincide in that they both describe a displacement that is not absolute- it may or may not end.

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Contents

Introduction

Although Marilynne Robinson's *Home* (2008) and Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) were published only a few years apart, the time frames of the two novels are approximately fifty years separate. *Open City* is set in a post 9/11 New York City (and briefly Brussels) and *Home* portrays the quiet rural life in the 1950s in the fictional town of Gilead, Iowa. The setting of the two novels I have chosen to base this thesis on matters, because the setting - where our lives take place and how it affects us and shape our identity is the inspiration behind this thesis. This thesis addresses themes that have been addressed before. The notion of home, the yearning for home, and the journey to get home, have all been recurring themes in literature – the "homecoming" of Odysseus comes to mind. In recent critical theory, the metaphorical notion of home is considered in terms of place of belonging, the movement of peoples, and relocation, which are themes that are often framed in terms of diaspora, exile, or immigration (Steckenbiller 1). Ever since the emergence of postcolonial theory by the end of the 1970s, themes such as homelessness, displacement and identity have increasingly pervaded literary and theoretical discourse. In this thesis, however, I want to explore a displacement and homelessness that is not as absolute - a displacement that occurs not by being banished from your place of belonging, with no prospect of returning home. But rather, a homelessness that can create new ways of life, in the in-between-ness that occurs in that hybrid condition. The two novels I have chosen to investigate both deal with these themes, but in varying ways.

Open City and *Home* both contemplate place, belonging, time, memory and identity. All of these themes, I believe, have much to do with home. However, there is the difference of 'a home' and 'Home'. The first might be considered as a place of residency, a place where you store your belongings, yet, it isn't necessarily a place *of* belonging. Richard Schein provides this definition of belonging:

> There are a number of questions begged in the assumption of belonging: questions of whom, belonging to what, and on whose terms. A short answer suggests that belonging comprises both individuals and social group categories, belonging to a place, to a community, to a citizenry; and the issue underlying each of these is how to relate an

> understanding of the deessentialized individual, whose 'sense of belonging' may be fluid and multiple, with the reality of power relations and power struggles entailed in imposed definitions of belonging which work through ontologically assumed racial, class, gender, and ethnic categories. (qtd. in Steckenbiller 34)

In this thinking, the notion of home might also become fluid and multiple rather than a fixed place where our belonging is firmly established. The novels that I investigate in this thesis both dwell on this fluid notion of home. When discussing sense of belonging it is important also to mention the sense of *not* belonging.

Not being able to return to a place of belonging is "one of the saddest fates"[1], according to Edward Said, and it is certainly a theme extensively written about. Said was perhaps the most prominent theorist in the field of exile and displacement and derived many of his reflections on themes such as being out of place from his own personal experience. It was as a humanist Said defined himself, however, something his later essays indicated.[2] In his essay "Reflections on Exile" published in a collection along with other essays in 2001, Said defined what is often Canonised in literature as 'exile' or 'displacement'. In Said's view, exile could also be considered a metaphorical state, as he writes: "[you] cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation" (qtd. in Steckenbiller 10). Thus, in Said's view the exiled lives in a hopeless in-between state, where it is impossible to go back in space-time. While the painful notion of not belonging, and the premise of not being able to "go back home" is present in both novels discussed in this thesis, not all the characters that I investigate live in a condition of such hopelessness as Said's exiled.

Therefore, I found an example of a softer sense of homelessness as provided by critic James Wood, in his book *The Nearest Thing to Life* (2015). In an effort to explain his own feeling of not quite belonging as an Englishman in the US, he contemplates the voluntary

[1] Edward W. Said's 1993 essay "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals" qtd. in Steinbecker.

[2] In a review of the essay collection "Reflections on Exile" Martha C. Nussbaum notes that Said seemed to show a subtle hopefulness in his later essays, shifting the emphasis from the stoic description of the exiled whereas "the later essays find him stressing, with a very un-Stoic kind of exuberance, possibilities of "generosity, and vision, and overcoming barriers," even suggesting that universal normative principles of justice can link human beings across divisions of nation and group. (NYTimes)

homelessness– a softer emigration- that has increased rapidly in its scope in the past decades, stating: "'not going home' is not exactly the same as 'homelessness'"(93). Said emphasises "the Self's true home" and Wood takes note of the "slightly theological, or perhaps Platonic, sound" of this notion (Wood 93). The tragedy of being banished from your place of belonging, and not being able to return is what Said describes. Wood implies a different sense of not belonging, a "homesickness". He coins the term "secular homelessness", when attempting to identify his own feeling of homelessness and finding it not to be the "singular extremity of the exile", nor that it can claim the "theological prestige of the transcendent"(113, 105). In today's society such a "secular homelsessness" or "homelooseness" that Wood describes is very likely a common condition. The term also gives connotations of being able to call several places home, and in that sense the notion of home in itself becomes fluid and multiple, as Schein suggested in his definition of belonging. Wood goes on to describe exile as: "acute, massive, transformative, but homelooseness, because it moves along its axis of departure and return, can be banal, welcome, necessary, continuous. There is the movement of the provincial to the metropolis, or the journey out of one social class to another" (112-113). The two novels I discuss, although they both show accounts of the exiled as described by Wood. However, for my purposes in this thesis I want to underline the sense of "homelooseness" that Wood describes – a leaving of the home that can create other places of belonging. In this thesis I will move my perspective between the provincial in *Home*, and the metropolis in *Open City*.

Open City follows the narrator, Julius, a half German, half Nigerian young psychiatry resident at Colombia Presbyterian in New York City. The year is 2006, and Julius wanders around a post 9/11 New York, with a perceptive eye. In lieu of elaboration of plot, Julius narrates the city as he goes, and meets people with stories from all over the world. These are mostly the stories of immigrants, but not exclusively. Julius is an intellectual, and on his walks around the city his mind drifts in an unfiltered way as he contemplates literature, composers, art, and most importantly, history. Everywhere he goes, Julius is reminded of the history of the place and of the people that have previously inhabited those places. These contemplations on places and history make him remember his own past in Nigeria, where he lived until he was seventeen. With his Nigerian father being dead, and being estranged with his German mother, Julius travels to Brussels in the hope of locating his grandmother. However, he ends up

walking the streets there as well, equally fixed on its historical layers, and equally attentive to other people's stories. Upon his return to New York he meets an old acquaintance from Nigeria, who later reveals that Julius forced himself on her when they were teenagers in Lagos. Julius seemingly has no memory of this, and continues his detached exploration of the city.

In *Home*, Glory, at thirty-eight, returns to her childhood home in Gilead, Iowa, to take care of her ailing father, Reverend Robert Boughton, the town's Presbyterian minister. Out of all of Glory's siblings, her brother Jack has always been an elusive, troubled soul. When they were young, jack fathered an illegitimate child (now deceased) with a local woman, and subsequently left the town. His absence from Gilead for the past twenty years has caused much sorrow for the family, and the novel is set at the time when Jack returns home. Glory and Jack have different reasons for their return. Besides from taking care of her father, Glory returns home after the dissolution of the engagement with an already married man. Jack returns with the hope of getting approval of his marriage with Della, an African American woman with whom he has a child. Jack never manages to tell his father about Della, and the novel portrays the pain that is the result of the incommunicability between the old Boughton and his Prodigal son. However, it also portrays the pleasure of a newfound bond between Glory and Jack. By the end of the novel, Jack leaves the Boughton home, unable to receive forgiveness from his father.

Teju Cole was born in the United States in 1975 to Nigerian parents, and was raised in Nigeria. He is now a writer, photographer and historian who resides in New York. He has written two novels: *Every Day is for the Thief*, first published in Nigeria in 2007, and *Open City* published in 2011. His collection of essays on literature, photography, arts and politics, called *Known and Strange Things*, was published in the fall of 2016. Cole was also an avid "Twitterer" making use of the social media platform to create a project he called "Small Fates", after the French expression *fait divers*. The expression refers to compressed newspaper articles, conveying unusual, oftentimes bleak news, sometimes with a flare of irony. According to Cole, the fait divers had a long and important history in French literature and influenced many great French writers such as Flaubert, Gide, Camus, Le Clézio and Barthes (TejuCole.com). Cole also points out that the small, yet sensationalist news "tid-bits"

crossed the line from low to high-culture (Tejucole.com). When Cole employs the fait divers on Twitter to divulge unusual news items from Nigeria he has a reason: "This is modernity, and to tell these stories, to give the protagonists of these losses even that little bit of attention, is to honor the fact that they are there, that their life goes on…They are about the small fates of ordinary people…The idea is not to show that Lagos, or Abuja, or Owerri, are worse than New York, or worse than Paris. Rather, it's a modest goal: to show that what happens in the world happens in Nigeria too…(Tejucole.com)."

In an interview with Max Liu for London Review Bookshop in 2012, Cole expresses his surprise at readers' reaction to his protagonist in *Open City*, Julius' cosmopolitan behaviour. Being half German and half Nigerian provides Julius with a complex identity. Yet, this is a reality for a vast number of people today. As Cole goes on to note: "…[Julius'] cosmopolitan reality is something that's not only very close to mine…but it's the reality of almost everyone who's my friend. Almost all my friends are young people who have one foot in the UK or in the western world, and another foot in some other reality, whether it's Africa, or India, or China, or Latin America. And all of whom take themselves as existing absolutely in the present, but being plugged into many other realities. It's just the life we live. And when I have a party or I go to a party of my friends, our world is very much like Julius' world (33.15-34.43)."

Because of *Open* City's widespread global conversation engaged by a highly intellectual protagonist, much of the scholarly work done on Open City investigates how Cole employs cosmopolitanism. Some scholars claim Cole does this to critique a cosmopolitan aesthetic. As Peter Vermeulen writes in "Flights of Memory: Teju Cole's *Open City* and the Limits of Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism": "[the novel] interrogates rather than affirms an aesthetic cosmopolitan program", and suggests that Cole employs the opposite of the cosmopolitan figure of the flâneur- the fugueur- to "expose the limited critical purchase of the imaginative mobility and intercultural curiosity celebrated by cosmopolitan defences of literature and art" (40). Katherine Hallemeier suggests that the novel foregrounds a critique of: "the limits of a literary cosmopolitanism that privileges Anglophone fiction published in New York and London and gesture toward alternative literary cosmopolitanisms notable for their linguistic and geographical diversity, if not their glamour" (239). Bernard Ayo Oniwe, however, argues

that the novel's allegiance be found in the cosmopolitanism espoused by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Christiane Steckenbiller places *Open City* in a discussion of constructing a sense of belonging in the city, and argues that the novel: "envision[s] radically new possibilities for migrants to attach meanings and symbolism to their everyday lived space" (2).

Marilynne Robinson also concerns herself with "the small fates of ordinary people". Born in 1943 in Idaho, USA, Robinson published her first novel, *Housekeeping* in 1980. Anatole Broyard wrote in a review of *Housekeeping* that: "It's as if, in writing it, she broke through the ordinary human condition with all its dissatisfactions, and achieved a kind of transfiguration" (Fay n.pag.). Her second novel, *Gilead*, was not published until 2004. *Gilead*, along with *Home* (2008) and *Lila* (2014) make up a trilogy of books chronicling specific periods in the lives of the Ames' and the Boughtons' in small town Iowa. In addition to these novels, Robinson has also published several works of nonfiction including: "The Givenness of Things", "When I was a Child I Read Books", "Absence of Mind", "The Death of Adam", and "Mother Country".

The topics of her political and philosophical essays are diverse and range from the state of Christianity today, to nuclear pollution. Jane Mulkerrins notes in an interview with Robinson that although she is perceived by many as a religious writer, she is "vehemently non-dogmatic", and insists: "anything that is written compassionately and perceptively probably satisfies every definition of religious, whether a writer intends it to be religious or not" (n. pag.). Robinson considers herself a Calvinist, and her novels do "uphold the basic Christian tenets of tolerance, kindness, and forgiveness…" (Mulkerrins n.pag.). Much of the scholarly work done on Marilynne Robinson's novels evaluate and contextualise them in terms of religion (Andrew Brower Latz, Jennifer L. Holberg, Justin Evans etc.). Andrew Brower Latz examines creation as a central theme in the fiction of Robinson, while Jeffrey Gonzalez considers Robinson's most recent novels to offer an ethical framework "that speak back to neoliberal hegemony and postmodern relativism" (Gonzalez 373). A different approach is made by Laura E. Tanner in "Uncomfortable Furniture: Inhabiting Domestic and Narrative Space in Marilynne Robinson's *Home*". Tanner, by using theories of family, memory, space and narrative, explores how: "Robinson's text unsettles the culturally sanctioned idea of home

as an escape from the contesting ideologies of the larger world even as it reveals the force of our investment in that domestic ideal" (35).

The purpose of my thesis is to explore the themes of homelessness, displacement and identity in *Open City* and *Home*. My method will involve exploring how temporality/memory, space/place and it's effects on subjectivity work as means to enhance an understanding of a "homeless" or hybrid condition that is evident both in the immensity of a globalised, cosmopolitan setting in *Open City* as well as in the more provincial and domestic life explored in *Home*. Both *Open City* and *Home* deal extensively with time and space. In both novels the past and the present oscillate, and memories are connected to places, but in varying ways. The two novels' titles alone are place-bound, *Open City*, perhaps being less apparent. The title could speak of New York City, Brussels, or, since it lacks the definite article *the*, it could imply Julius' wish (or demand) for the city simply to open up to him. Perhaps Julius is an open city by himself? *Home* is more specific of what place it refers to, yet home represents different things for Glory, Jack and Rev Boughton. In this sense home is a fluid and multiple notion in both novels.

It would not be arbitrary to say that this condition of "secular homelessness" that Wood describes is a result of a vast increase in the movement and relocation of people. It is important to consider that technology and economy, or globalisation as we call it, play a part in *why* and *where* people choose to relocate. In their introduction to *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2009) Barney Warf and Santa Arias mention that: "Far from annihilating the importance of space, globalization has increased it (5)." According to Warf and Arias space became increasingly more subordinate to time in modern consciousness in the nineteenth century, and it was: "a phenomenon that reflected the enormous time-space compression of the industrial revolution; intellectually, this phenomenon was manifested through the lens of historicism, a despatialized consciousness in which geography figured weakly or not at all…" (2). Warf and Arias are not the only ones making this claim, as it is the common notion in the works of human geographers Edward Soja, Doreen Massey, and Jonathan Cresswell as well as Marxist thinkers such as Harvey and Jameson (Steckenbiller 7). In his works, Edward Soja: "repeatedly and emphatically insisted that the spatial could not be subordinated to time or the social. Thus, he maintains that social theory should rest on the

triangular foundations of time, space, and social structure, each of which contingently structures and is structured by the others (Warf and Arias 4). As Warf and Arias point out, this essentially relates back to Kant who saw the two dimensions to be of equal significance (4). Furthermore, in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974)[3] he makes the observation that: "Not so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea evoked simply that of an empty area. In scholarly use it was generally accompanied by some such epithet as 'Euclidean', 'isotropic', or 'infinite', and the general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical one. To speak of 'social space', therefore, would have sounded strange" (1). Although it was David Harvey who coined the term "time-space compression" which indicates the disappearance of space, he was also the one who formulated that: "space was not given but socially constructed, constantly producing and reproducing means of production, power structures, and social relations, in conjunction with a shift in new landscapes and new geographies as a result of globalization and the international division of labor…" thus putting space into the conversation in critical theory (Steckenbiller 7). Another theorist championing the conceptualisation of space was Frederic Jameson, who: "describes the late 1980s as a shifting from a vertical/temporal to a horizontal/spatial outlook on modern life suggesting that instead of the imperative to "always historicize!" put forward in his 1982 *The political Unconscious*, the imperative of *Postmodernism* (1990) is to "always spatialize…" (Steckenbiller 7). Jameson's view of this shift from vertical to horizontal is to "characterise the movement from the modern to the postmodern", according to Doreen Massey (77). Massey argues that in Jameson's reading of "*post*modernity" where "everything is space" one in actuality ends up with "space as stasis, as equated with depthlessness" (Massey 78). Massey points out a direction of discussing space, that moves away from the modern view (one temporality, no space), yet also doesn't concur with the postmodern view (all space, no time). In her view, and useful to this thesis, time and space are intertwined as: "entanglements and configurations of multiple trajectories, multiple histories" (Massey 148).

Thus, for my purposes, the most compelling way to approach space is provided by Doreen Massey and her book *For Space* (2005), where she puts forward three propositions for how we can consider space. She proposes: "*First*, that we recognise space as the product of

[3] English translation first published in 1991.

interrelations; as constituted through interactions…*Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity…*Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction…" (9)[4]. These propositions will contribute to my discussion of space in *Open City*. The first two propositions will conceptualise the production of space that occurs when a multiplicity of trajectories intersect. In *Open City* such interactions constantly occur as Julius encounters interlocutors of various backgrounds. The third proposition where space is always under construction will inform the constant layering of space with history that Julius does. Together these propositions will illuminate the discussion of how space is produced in the lived-in spaces in New York City and Brussels.

Finding a useful framework for the conceptualisation of time in *Home* has proved more difficult. In my research I have not had the benefit or the burden of having an extensive scholarship to draw on with either novel, and I have not been able to find an equivalent to the conceptualisation of time and space in *Open City*. However, Alexander Greer Hartwiger's "The Postcolonial Flâneur: *Open City* and the Urban Palimpsest", makes use of the term "unhomely" – a concept introduced by Homi Bhabha in "The World and the Home" (1992) – to stress the point that: "*Open City* challenges readers to distinguish between those who have the cultural and economic capital to be at home in the world and those who, in Homi Bhabha's terms, are unhomely" (11). The concept of the "unhomely" is, according to John McLeod, a term Bhabha borrows from Freud's writings on the *Unheimlich*, which translates into the "unhomely" or "uncanny" (McLeod 254). In Freud's use of the term it denotes an uncanny experience that can occur when: "something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when something that has previously been concealed or forgotten disturbingly returns" (McLeod 254). For Bhabha, the experience of the uncanny occurs when: "the disruption of received totalising narratives of individual and group identity made possible at the 'border' can be described as an 'uncanny' moment, where all those forgotten in the construction of, say, national groups return to disturb and haunt such holistic ways of thinking" (McLeod 254). McLeod further makes the point that this experience of the uncanny brings with it trauma and anxiety (McLeod 254). In *Open City* such an unhomely presence can be found in the stories of the interlocutors that Julius encounters, as well as the

[4] I will discuss these three propositions in greater detail in chapter two.

places he seeks or wanders in which Julius is explicitly aware of the histories – or haunting – of those who are "written out and erased" (McLeod 254). Furthermore, Hartwiger points out in "Strangers in/to the World: The Unhomely in Chris Abani's *Graceland*" (2014), that although Bhabha's essay was published more than twenty years ago, we can "continue to revise this characterization, moving from the exclusively postcolonial circumstances to an updated experience highlighted by living in a global, hyper-capitalist world that has not only compressed time and space but also commodified it to such a degree that antipodal geographical points seem to appear congruent" (235). For the purpose of this thesis, I will put forward that "this seemingly indefinable experience" also be revised and contextualised in terms of the local, the familial, and the domestic sphere (Hartwiger 235). Therefore, as a means of conceptualising time in *Home*, I will apply Bhabha's term of the unhomely to explicate the disruption Jack's absence causes the community as well as the Boughton family.

Bhabha also gives much consideration to the concept of space. In his *The Location of Culture* (1994) he argues his views on identity and subjectivity, and moves away from notions of fixed binary oppositions, and "class" or "gender" as the primary conceptual and organizational categories (*LoC* 2). He points to the more varied subject positions such as "race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation", which are now an integral part of the discussion of identity in "modern times" (*LoC* 2). However, Bhabha urges us to think "*beyond* narratives of originary and initial subjectivities", instead we should: "focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (*LoC* 2 my italics). These spaces are what Bhabha terms as "Third Spaces of Enunciation". The term indicates the ambiguous space that arises when two cultures or individuals interact and create a space where "newness" occurs, thus the term's use of "Third Space". These spaces are "in-between spaces" that "provide us with the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (*LoC* 2). Thus, these liminal spaces can be spaces of resolve and of antagonism, and therefore they are spaces in which new hybrid forms of knowledge occur when subjects of cultural hybridities overlap.

I open the first chapter of my thesis by exploring how the spaces and places inhabited in the two novels, namely New York City and Brussels in *Open City* and the domestic sphere of *Home*, both allow and inhibit the characters' mobility. I begin this chapter by introducing Doreen Massey's three propositions on how to consider space, that are useful in order to get an understanding of how Julius takes part in the production of space in the cities he inhabits. By doing so I will explore if the perspective of the literary figure of the *flâneur* will illuminate this understanding with a particular emphasis on spatial configuration. The city is a palimpsest in *Open City*, and I will explore how this applies to Julius as well. Furthermore, in conjunction with Julius' travel to Brussels, I will discuss the way in which globalisation has increased mobility, yet also inhibits mobility. The second part of this chapter will explore how Jack and Glory's mobility is both hindered and helped in the home. The return home is restrictive to both of them, apart from the house itself, their own personal failures are the main reason for their return, and the cultural stigmas they represent in the pious community of Gilead inhibits their daily mobility. On a bigger scale, their return home hinders their mobility in life. Jack could live with his wife, and Glory could further have pursued her career as a teacher. However, their individual and collaborative projects inside and outside of the home prove to be liberating and gratifying, and I will explore how it allows them to develop a shared sense of belonging.

Chapter two focuses the ways in which time and memory serve as individual and collective constructions of reality. In *Open City*, the spaces Julius seeks out are significantly connected with historical events, and can be likened to an "excavation of history"- an excavation of New York City, Brussels, and the world. Furthermore, Julius is repeatedly approached by various people from all over the world who relay their stories to him. We are presented with Julius' reality – as a psychiatry intern, who is extremely knowledgeable about history, literature, and music among other things – and we are also presented with the reality of these interlocutors (realities that are diametrically opposite from his own) that he frequently encounters. These "uncanny voices of memory" as Homi Bhabha would put it, I consider to contribute to the "doubleness" of the novel- a doubling of world history with Julius' personal history, where different versions of realities are layered on top of each other; where past and present oscillate, and the "haunting" of previous histories – the unhomely – is countered by Julius'

detachedness. In this chapter I want to explore how Julius goes about life – as we all do – knowing, and being interested in the histories and fates of other people. However, Julius also sometimes chooses to retract, to forget, and to not engage, which is a common trait to most people. This, I argue, is not only a confrontation on how we choose to present ourselves as human beings, but also how we, particularly in the west, choose to omit certain stories from our collective consciousness, The second part of this chapter considers how Glory, Jack and Reverend Boughton's realities are construed by memories of the past. The sentimental nostalgia of Rev Boughton is not exactly one his children share. While her father tries to recreate the past. In Glory's mind, by returning to her childhood home, she realises that one cannot, in fact simply "go back home", because the home of her childhood is no longer there. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how Jack's absence from the home, periodically in his childhood, and for the past twenty years, acts as a disruption for the family. Thus, "the unhomely" is also a haunting presence in the Boughton home.

The aim of chapter three is twofold. Firstly, I will consider the hybridised places of Gilead and the Boughton home. I will explore in what way the two places are implicating cultural norms upon their inhabitants, and how it affects Reverend Boughton, Glory and Jack in the present. I will consider how Reverend Boughton's now lives as a hybrid between his own generation and the generation of his children who now have returned to his life. I will then discuss how Jack seeks a third space where is able to employ discursive strategies in the theologically centred language of his childhood in order to communicate his questions to his father. Furthermore, I will explore how Glory negotiates the struggle of having to fit her present life and onto the home of her childhood. Then I examine Julius hybrid identity to see if they instil in him a sense of belonging. I will explore the encounter between Julius and Farouq, and see if his subjectivity is expressed differently in Brussels that in New York. Secondly, by way of introducing Julius and Farouq as adhering to different cosmopolitan ideals, I will explore how it affects their encounter.

Chapter One: Space/Place

Unlike time, it seems, you can see space spread out around you. Time is either past or to come or so minutely instantaneously *now* that it is impossible to grasp. Space, on the other hand, is *there.*
-Doreen Massey, *For Space*

Open City begins fast-paced, with the run-on sentence: "And so when I began to go on evening walks last fall, I found Morningside Heights an easy place from which to set out into the city" (Cole 3). The sentence gives associations to the act of walking itself, with a brisk, yet, at-ease tone. In fact, the whole first paragraph of the novel is a description of how to get from one place to another, connecting different well-known landmarks of New York City, and calculations on how much time it would take to get there. In this way Julius finds that: "New York City worked itself into my life at walking pace" (Cole 3). *Home* starts out with a similar urgency and the utterance of Reverend Boughton: "Home to stay, Glory. Yes!"(Robinson 3). The utterance gives an implication of Glory's welcome return home, and that she is expected to stay for a long period of time. However, considering Glory's immediate reaction ("her heart sank") to her father's phrase, it is safe to say that she is not too pleased with this prospect. The next few paragraphs describe the house that she has come home to; the house her father speaks of like "an old wife", and whose appearance Glory feels is both "austere and pretentious" (Robinson 3-4). The initial portrayal of the house is a place that has been worn out by time or is somehow out-dated, with archaic furniture that doesn't fit in with the rest. While Julius takes in the city through walking, thereby incorporating it into his identity and making it a home, in his travel to Brussels he performs the same act of walking and interacting with other people- subsequently, Julius is at home in the world. Initially, Jack and, perhaps more so, Glory, it would seem are suppressed and inhibited by the place they should call home. However, their individual and collaborative projects inside and outside of the domestic sphere prove to be liberating and gratifying, and allows them to develop a shared sense of belonging. I will set out with a broad perspective, describing the cities inhabited in *Open City* and how they are integrated as parts of Julius and works as his means his mobility.

I will then explore how the domestic sphere of *Home* both inhibits Jack's and (mainly) Glory's freedom, as well as providing a solution to a more mobile existence.

Space/Place

So far, space and place have been used here, as it often is, interchangeably. Christiane Steckenbiller does, however, offer a distinction or nuance between the two terms: "Spatiality as a more general term is derived from space and the adjective spatial, and refers to everything relating to the conditions and implications of space (and place) at large. Space, on the other hand, denotes a larger geographical area such as a region, a city or a specific district, or suburb; whereas place tends to be located not necessarily on a smaller yet on a more personal scale signifying a specific moment or point of intersections within greater spatial relations such as a specific neighbourhood, street corner, building, or a bench in a park – as it is personally meaningful to individuals" (Steckenbiller 26). In *Open City*, the city-space is intertwined with Julius' consciousness, he does not pay very much attention to domestic features of any kind, and the details of his apartment are unmentioned. However, he describes the city in great detail. Everything from the historical significance of buildings to the wildlife in parks, and architectural details on underground subway stations are perceptively noticed and reflected upon by Julius. A visit to Penn Station can result in the story of a man fleeing from Haiti to the United States, and a walk that leads him to Trinity Church sparks ruminations on the whale sightings of the Dutch West India Company, which also foregrounds Julius' literariness: "About two hundred years later, when a young man from the Fort Orange area came down the Hudson and settled in Manhattan, he decided he would write his magnum opus on an albino Leviathan. The author, a sometime parishioner of Trinity Church, called his book *The* Whale; the subtitle, *Moby*-Dick, was added only after the first publication" (Cole 51). The perspective varies from the global to the local- from space to place. Marilynne Robinson's choice to portray a fictional town of Gilead in *Home* indicates less emphasis on the outside world. The home in *Home* can certainly be considered as a place that is personally meaningful, but perhaps not for everyone there. In Steckenbiller's definition one could argue that Jack views Gilead and the Boughton home more objectively, as space, as opposed to the rest of his family who seem to view the town and the home in a more personal way, as place. However, Jack has returned home for a reason, something that requires that he

finds the home meaningful in some way. Therefore, the town of Gilead and the Boughton home can be considered places, as they constitute places of meaning to individuals and are points of intersections.

Doreen Massey puts forward three propositions of how to think about space:

> *First*, that we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. […] *Second*, that we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the multiplicity in the sense of a contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. […] *Third*, that we recognise space as always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far (Massey 9).

In the following I will use these propositions to ground Julius' movement through the spaces and places he inhabits in New York City and Brussels. The same propositions will be used to explore the domestic sphere where Jack, Glory and Reverend Boughton dwell.

The Flâneur

In her review of *Open City*, Claire Messud compares Julius to Baudelaire's flâneur: "Cole's enterprise is not in itself new – it has a long literary history, stretching back at least to Baudelaire – but its American setting is novel, not least because it presumes that New York, like Paris, London, or Berlin, has sufficient history, sufficient sedimentation, to warrant an almost archaeological approach" (n.pag, Messud). Julius certainly shares the wanderlust and

perceptive nature of Baudelaire's flâneur[5]. The most effective way for Julius to get around is by walking. The freedom of not having to rely on any form of transportation contributes to an unrestrained wandering and exploration of the city. From what started out as simply short, daily walks have evolved and "steadily lengthened, taking me farther and farther afield each time" (Cole 3). The purpose of these walks is not simply to get from A to B, but are almost as a way of meditating, for Julius. He is relieved from the stress of the workplace, and takes the city in as he goes. The workplace doesn't "leave" him in some sense, as he has a detached and clinical way of observing people and places. Walking is initially how Julius incorporates New York into his identity. While he doesn't habitually seek out the same places that he especially dwell in, his way of expressing his identity is seeking out places that pertain to his interests and tastes, such as record shops, museums, concert halls etc. However, by way of walking to and from such places, he often, perhaps unintentionally, also finds himself in quite random places too. This wandering habit was also the nature of the Baudelairean *flâneur.* However, as Doreen St. Félix points out, Baudelaire's stroller was French and white. He was: "A figure of Enlightenment who walked around because rationalism demanded an understanding of the world" (n.pag, St.Félix). Because of this, Baudelaire's *flâneur* had the ability to move around freely (and aimlessly) with no one taking notice of him. As St. Félix goes on to imply this is not the prerogative of the black *flâneur*, because *he* will always be the one who is observed. To some extent this is true for Julius as when he attends a concert in Carnegie Hall:

> I am used to it, but it never ceases to surprise me how easy it is to leave the hybridity of the city, and enter into all-white spaces, the homogeneity of which, as far as I can tell, causes no discomfort to the whites in them. The only thing odd, to some of them, is seeing me, young and black, in my seat or at the concession stand. At times, standing in line for the bathroom during intermission, I get looks that make me feel like Ota Benga, the Mbuti man who was put on display in the Monkey House at the Bronx Zoo in 1906. I weary of such thoughts, but I am habituated to them (Cole 251-252).

Here, Julius acknowledges that when he seeks out certain places, where heterogeneity and multiplicity is lacking, he is the one who is observed. Although claiming to being used to it,

[5] Baudelaire's *flâneur* was later introduced to academia by Walter Benjamin, who saw the urban spectator as a way of analysing the modern condition.

Julius does compare the scrutiny he experiences to the sad and disturbing fate of Ota Benga, a young Congolese man, kidnapped and brought to the most cosmopolitan city in America to be displayed along with monkeys, four decades after the end of slavery (Newkirk n.pag.). While Julius mostly experiences the multiplicity of the city, where people from all over America and all over the world intersect, he still sometimes suddenly find himself in places where the one-sided-ness of society, "white-spaces" as he calls them, still prevail, and this surprises him. At the concert hall Julius is seemingly aware of the history of that place in a way the others may not be. The multi-layered way of seeing space that Julius does, he does consistently throughout the novel. Everywhere he goes he sees historical analogies; he sees hybridity, but he is also acutely aware of homogeneity. In this way, Julius always sees space as under construction, yet he doesn't forget the sediments that space is continually constructed *on*.

Doreen Massy finds the figure of the *flâneur* somewhat problematic when considering spatiality. She quotes John Lechte who brings up the question of chance and undecidability of space and the role of the *flâneur* in the post-modern city: "The *flâneur's* trajectory leads nowhere and comes from nowhere. It is a trajectory without fixed spatial co-ordinates; there is, in short, no reference point from which to make predictions about the *flâneur's* future. For the *flâneur* is an entity without past or future, without identity: an entity of contingency and indeterminacy" (qtd. in Massey 115). In Massey's view, the *flâneur* and chance alone are insufficient to "capture the city", and that "such images catch only hold of one side of things, and there is more to space than this" (Massey 116). Moreover, Massey finds that Lechte's conversation predominantly only brings up: "a generalised vocabulary of contingency, unpredictability, chance effects and indeterminacy", that is "not exactly what is at issue in the notion of the chance of space" (Massey 116). What *is* at issue, according to Massey is:

> The chance of space lies within the constant formation of spatial configurations, those complex mixtures of pre-planned spatiality and happenstance […]. It is in the happenstance juxtaposition, in the unforeseen tearing apart, in the internal irruption, in the impossibility of closure, in the finding of yourself next door to alterity, in precisely that possibility of being surprised […] that the chance of space is to be found. The surprise of space (Massey 116).

The surprise of space that Massey urges can be drawn back again to the passage from Carnegie Hall. Julius feels the other concert-goers' surprise at seeing him *there*. And while the other people probably don't view Julius as an animal in the Zoo, they are surprised because their expectation of such a spatial configuration (Mahler concert in Carnegie Hall) would not indicate his presence there. The juxtaposition of the Zoo and Carnegie Hall is surprising in itself, and Julius clearly draws this analogy to underline the undignified feeling of being scrutinized. Moreover, the role of the *flâneur* that Lechte and Massey refer to has changed in recent years. Alexander Greer Hartwiger gives an account of the development of the postcolonial *flâneur* in "The Postcolonial Flâneur: *Open City* and the Urban Palimpsest" (2016), and finds that his role as a mere impartial spectator has evolved.

The perspective offered by the postcolonial *flâneur* is the move from totalizing spectator to a more critical view that recognizes the: "complex flows of capital and people" (Hartwiger 5). For Julius as a postcolonial *flâneur* the surprise of space is not important because his gaze is constantly drawn to the: "…dominant narratives that have come to define New York as well as witnessing and reclaiming the occluded and buried pasts that have also been the key component in the development of the city as a hub for global capitalism" (Hartwiger 5). Hartwiger notes, that in Simon Gikandi's view of the postcolonial *flâneur*, his position of privilege is a central component (6). This leaves the critical observer with an inside/outside perspective that allows him to draw, simultaneously, from each side of that historical moment (colonialism). This applies to Julius, then, in that he is both a part of the intellectual scene of New York City, yet he also knows something different. He knows his own Nigerian past (although that was also quite privileged), but more importantly, he sees the forgotten histories of peoples from all over the world. These stories are not the stories of privileged people, but they have also, as Hartwiger points out, contributed to the city's present state as "hub of global capitalism" (5).

While Julius' strolls often take him to places and spaces that might seem coincidental and random, the people that approach him often choose to make contact out of some familiarity, which is not by chance. These interactions extract him out of the observer role and engage him to be part of the city, and subsequently, the world. On one of his walks during "the day's last light" a couple of what appears to Julius to be men in their early twenties acknowledge

him as they pass him by. They talk amongst themselves and Julius takes notice of their profanities, but quickly forgets about it, and ponders the solidarity that connects him to people of African and African-American descent:

> There had earlier been, it occurred to me, only the most tenuous of connections between us, looks on a street corner by strangers, a gesture of mutual respect based on our being young, black, male; based, in other words, on our being "brothers." These glances were exchanged between black men all over the city every minute of the day, a quick solidarity worked into the weave of each man's mundane pursuits, a nod or smile or quick greeting. It was a little way of saying, I know something of what life is like for you out there. They had passed by me now, and were for some reason reluctant to repeat that fleeting gesture (Cole 212).

He realises that he isn't in any mortal danger, as the two men attack him. However, he is *surprised,* just as he was later surprised at finding himself in such a homogenised environment at Carnegie Hall. This breaks Julius away from the traditional role of the *flâneur* whose role is that of the spectator, whereas, here, Julius is physically brought into confrontation by his two attackers. He is drawn into the action of the city, both voluntarily, by walking, and somewhat involuntary by being confronted with people.

City-space

New York City and Brussels are both what we might call "Open Cities". Brussels is at the centre of European trade, with the Schengen agreement, resulting in a passport-less crossing of the borders between 26 European countries, and being the seat of the headquarters of the EU and NATO, it is a city that represents mobility on a global scale. New York City has had an influx of immigrants ever since the 1840s, first from Germany and Ireland, then from Southern and Eastern Europe. In 1965, The Hart-Cellar Immigration and Nationality Act made it possible for immigrants from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America to come to the United States (A+E Networks, n.pag.). Today, more than one third of the eight million people living in the five boroughs of New York are born outside of the United States (A+E

Networks, n.pag.). Massey's description of London could apply to both Brussels and New York City: "The trajectories of capital, just as much of ethnicity, come into collision here. […] The City's trajectory is massive and (even allowing for acknowledged weaknesses and vulnerabilities) forceful. It is also a trajectory which is outwardlooking; its gaze sweeps the planet" (Massey 155). Steckenbiller further notes that Massey provides a way of understanding "city-space" as: "[…] a process, as a larger set of relations and intersecting trajectories that produce while at the same time being a product of the city. The city is embedded in but also actively reaches out to other spaces across the globe" (31). Each person Julius meets represents a trajectory that is a product of the city, but is also a product of the cities that they left behind. Through intersecting and co-existing contemporaneously they produce the lived-in spaces of New York City and Brussels.

These intersecting trajectories where space is produced are not static. Time and space are intertwined and while new spaces are created, they are always fluid and traces of past trajectories are not erased. While walking along the waterline on South End, Julius reflects on the generations that have passed through there before him:

> Each one of those past moments was present now as a trace. From where I stood, the Statue of Liberty was fluorescent green fleck against the sky, and beyond her sat Ellis Island, the focus of so many myths; but it had been built too late for those early Africans – who weren't immigrants in any case – and it had been closed too soon to mean anything to later Africans like Kenneth, or the cabdriver, or me.
> Ellis Island was a symbol mostly for European refugees. Blacks, "we blacks," had known rougher ports of entry: this, I could admit to myself now that my mood was less impatient, was what the cabdriver had meant. This was the acknowledgement he wanted, in his brusque fashion, from every "brother" he met (Cole 54-55).

This represents another trajectory, of a movement of people, before the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. "The story of the world cannot be told (nor its geography elaborated) as the story of the West alone […] spatialisation of social theory and political thinking can force into the imagination a fuller recognition of the simultaneous

coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell. The imagination of globalisation as a historical queue does not recognise the simultaneous coexistence of other histories with characteristics that are distinct (which does not imply unconnected) and futures which potentially may be so too" (Massey 11). Open City deals with multiculturalism, but also kind of mocks the term, because it is inherently just about how Julius is living his life as a man who happens to be half Nigerian and half German, living in New York City. Farouq talks about this when he discusses his meeting with the American school: "It is impossible, and it is arrogant, to think that the present reality of Western countries is the culminating point of human history. The principal had been talking in all these terms – melting pot, salad bowl, multiculturalism – but I rejected all these terms" (Cole 114). What Farouq is interested in, what he calls his "deeper project" is how people can live together on a large scale.

Remembering Massey's three propositions for understanding space, the first two consider space as a product of interrelations and for that to be there must also be multiplicity. This does not imply that they constitute "the relations of a coherent, closed system […]" (Massey 11). Space, on Massey's reading, is never "that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else" (Massey 11-12). Space is "always under construction" and "a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practises which have to be carried out" and "always in the process of being made" (Massey 9). In New York City, Julius wanders through landmark places and more obscure places. His interests bring him to visit art exhibitions, history museums, concerts, record shops and parks, among others.
On one such walk he finds himself at the place where the World Trade Center buildings were located, which he now sees as "a great empty space" (Cole 52). He further ponders the histories of the people that once inhabited that very space:

> This was not the first erasure on the site. Before the towers had gone up, there had been a bustling network of little streets traversing this part of town. Robinson Street, Laurens Street, College Place: all of them had been obliterated in the 1960s to make way for the World Trade Center buildings, and all were forgotten now. Gone, too, was the old Washington Market, the active piers, the fishwives, the Christian Syrian enclave that was established here in the late 1800s. The Syrians, the Lebanese, and other people

> from the Levant had been pushed across the river to Brooklyn, where they'd set down roots on Atlantic Avenue and in Brooklyn Heights. And, before that? (Cole 58-59).

Julius further observes that "the site was a palimpsest, as was all the city, written, erased, rewritten" (Cole 59). Massey points to the fact that time is often thought about as interior, as a product of (human) experience, and that space, in contrast is considered material: "it is the landscape outside the window, the surface of the earth, a given" (Massey 117). She mentions the artist Clive van den Berg, who through art events aimed to "disrupt the complacent surface of white South Africa with reminders of the history on which it is based" (Massey 117). The metaphor of the city as a palimpsest suggests that Julius views the "great empty space" of the site, as well as the entire space of the city, as having multiple levels of meaning. In a way, by layering space with history, Julius punctures that smooth surface by which we imagine space. In many ways, Julius himself is like a palimpsest, in that his own past becomes apparent layer after layer. Some of these layers have been erased, and Julius, one can say, tries to re-write them in his own story.

Mobility

When addressing the situation of a globalised society, the Internet is often mentioned as the main thing that connects people around the world. However, as James Wood argues: "The 'great movement of peoples that was to take place in the second half of the twentieth century' that V.S. Naipaul spoke of in *The Enigma of Arrivals* was, as Naipaul put it, 'a movement between all the continents'. It could no longer be confined to a single paradigm (post-colonialism, internationalism, globalism, world literature). The jet engine has probably had a greater impact than the Internet" (Wood 105). He goes on to mention that this liberty of being able to physically shift location and travel all over the world was unbeknownst to émigrés such as Nabokov and Dovlatov. This resonates in the words of Farouq:

> You see, people like Ben Jelloun have the life of a writer in exile, and this gives them a certain – here Farouq paused, struggling to find the right word – it gives them a certain *poeticity*, can I say this, in the eyes of the West. To be a writer in exile is a great thing. But what is exile now, when everyone goes and comes freely? (Cole 104)

As Julius travels from New York City to Brussels, he describes the quick exchange of booking the travel: " The days I had accumulated were too many to make a hotel, or even a hostel, a reasonable option, and so I went online, and found a short-term flat rental in a central district of the city. […] I exchanged a few emails with a woman named Mayken, and once the matter of housing was settled, I bought a ticket for departure the following weekend" (Cole 86). This shows the kind of swift interaction, with private housing and booking travels online, which greatly contributes to peoples' mobility today. Julius is able to adjust his travel to fit *his* purposes, which initially is to find his grandmother. Julius' memories of Nigeria are evoked by his interactions with the city and its inhabitants. His memories of his family, his *roots*, are remembered through the *routes* he walks and travels.

However, Julius' feeble attempt at finding his grandmother is relegated to the background. As he walks the streets of Brussels, the city's hostile environment limits his mobility. Several incidents of racism and nationalism, has thrown a shadow over the global hub. The anti-immigration view is in stark contrast to the fifteenth-century Ghent, as Julius muses: "…[when] Jan Van Eyck depicted himself in a large red turban in the 1430s, he had testified to the multiculturalism of fifteenth-century Ghent, that the stranger was nothing unusual" (Cole 106). The multiculturalism displayed in that moment, seems to Julius to be long gone from the society of Brussels. In New York his appearance at certain homogenised places (attending a concert in Carnegie Hall for instance) would attract looks of surprise at seeing *him* there. However, in Brussels the looming racism makes Julius feel that there are places where he cannot move or go because here: "…the stranger had remained strange" (Cole 106). This limits Julius' mobility in that he changes his walking routes so as to not provoke attention to himself. He decides to avoid certain "all-white" spaces, where his presence is "unwanted". This is the paradox of the global state, to Julius. The freedom to move across borders, that globalisation allows, is the very thing that makes people protective of those national borders, and hostility and monolithic identities progresses, thus again limiting mobility.

Domestic sphere

Massey's arguments can contribute to our notions of city-space, as she points to the vastness in the multiplicity of various trajectories that "coexist" in the city. She does, however, point out that: "(…) multiplicity, antagonisms and contrasting temporalities are the stuff of all places" (Massey 159). Massey's argument is helpful to consider here, as the perspective narrows down from the city-space to the domestic sphere. As Siobhan Phillips observes in her review of *Home*: " Marilynne Robinson's first novel, *Housekeeping* [1981], ends with two women setting their family house on fire and then lighting out for a life of transience that seems almost otherworldly. Robinson's third and newest novel, *Home*, begins with a woman returning to her birthplace in middle age and accepting once again its familiar existence" (Phillips 158). I would argue, that Glory experiences her transient moment, precisely *in* the home.

Glory's rather reluctant homecoming is palpable, as her prospects involve taking care of her ailing father, and consequently, perhaps death. Her prospects are interrupted, however, as Phillips further observes, by the return of her troubled brother, who disrupts her, and her father's worlds. The confined space of the home is often paralleled with the narrative itself. The narration is used sparingly and the novel is not exactly plot-driven. Laura E. Tanner points out the difference in narrative strategies of Robinson's previous novels: "The lush descriptions of *Housekeeping* and the luminous accounts of perception in *Gilead* give way to the dim setting and unembellished dialogue of *Home*..." and goes on to quote reviewer Malcom Jones who observes: "Samuel Beckett couldn't have made it much sparer: three characters…who talk, talk, talk for more than 300 pages and say pretty much the same things over and over. Almost all the action is contained in the kitchen, the garden and the barn of an old house in the little fictional town of Gilead, Iowa" (Tanner 43). While these are choice word, it is true that the plot evolves slowly with few and far between dramatic build-ups. But they are there, and *where* "the action is contained" and *what* "talk" they repeat, matter. For how else are we to understand Glory's feelings of repetitious days, confined in her childhood home, or Jack's tedious wait for letters from his wife? Tanner suggests that Glory "remains trapped within her role as keeper of a symbolic home which she alone must literally inhabit, [and that] the novel disrupts the story she painstakingly constructs to expose the unworkable

fixtures of domestic life" (Tanner 35). These "unworkable fixtures" I suggest are what contributes to Glory's freedom.

We have thought about travelling "across space", and understood it in terms of our trajectory "joining up" with another's (Massey 122). But what happens exactly when we return home? Our notion of home is often so entangled with memories of our pasts, enhancing our emotional connection to a place, that it might seem as if time is static there. The home is where you keep your things and a place you return to. It is where you perhaps cohabit with other people, who welcome you home as you return. Home is a familiar and a familial place. Conventionally the home is located in a house that contains, and includes the things in the home, but it also excludes people and/or things. Phillips argues that: "In *Home*, home embodies the "powerful thing" that Jack needs, a force that will allow his reform: a familiar, caressing welcome that disregards merit" (Phillips 160). The "powerful thing" that Jack needs, according to Phillips, is family. Glory has (had) other expectations of family life. Her prospect of having to care for her father seems daunting, however, it proves to be (a task) less so in Jack's company:

> Jack stood up. "Yes," he said, "well. There's still a little bit of daylight. I'd better go make myself useful, hadn't I. Earn my bread in the sweat of my brow, as they say." He stopped by the door and stood there, watching her. After a long moment he said, "I know I should leave this town. But I can't leave yet."
>
> "Sit down, Jack. No one wants you to leave. Papa doesn't, and I don't."
>
> He said, "Well, that's good of you. Good of you to say."
>
> "Not really. I appreciate the company." She laughed. "All my life I've wanted to talk with you. It's the curse of the little sister, I suppose. I knew it would be hard. That was always clear enough."
>
> He shrugged. "I'm glad to know I'm living up to expectations." (Robinson 127)

Glory envisions herself scolding Jack for arriving days later than he initially promised. She has stocked the refrigerator and the pantry with foods her father thinks Jack might like, and prepared several meals for his arrival. When he does show up, however, the anger she has

nurtured for weeks over Jack's evasive behaviour diminish. In a way, his irresponsibility is also something familiar, and causes Glory to act towards him as she has always done. Their conversation swiftly turns to old familiar domestic concerns: their father who has awaited Jack for weeks in the appropriate attire, is now "caught" off guard in his nightshirt – at noon, no less, they should have lunch, and then they should get some rest, and "I'll help papa shave, and then I'll bring you the razor. The cups are where they always were, and the spoons" (Robinson 32). The word "lunch" lingers with Jack. Perhaps it is a word he hasn't taken into his mouth for all these twenty years he's been gone, or perhaps it just sums up the ordinariness of the home-life he has now returned to. The word "supper" has a similar effect on him, later in the novel, when Glory tries to convince him to have supper at Ames' house: "There it is. My lifelong exile from the ordinary world. I have to learn the customs. And somehow persuade myself that they pertain to me" (Robinson 210).

For old Reverend Boughton the house embodies "the general blessedness of his life", ever since his wife died he speaks of the house "as an old wife, beautiful for every comfort it had offered, every grace, through all the long years" (Robinson 3). To him, the house represents a life lived, a home full of memories and nostalgia. As Jack returns, his father is aware of his haggard appearance, but finds solace in the fact that "at least, you're home". (Robinson --) He tries to re-enact the things they used to do together as a family, gathering his children around a game of monopoly or checkers, trying to get Glory and Jack to participate. His is a project of re-enactment of nostalgic memories, to bring the past to the here and now, and that this will bring resolution to his son's problems and Glory will have a home "to stay" in. However, as Massey argues: "you can't go back in space-time. To think that you can is to deprive others of their ongoing independent stories" (Massey 124). Reverend Boughton has kept his land as it once was and refused to sell of part of his property to build a road the town would need as it increased in size:

> Most families had long since torn down their outbuildings and sold off their pastures. Smaller houses in later styles had sprung up between them in sufficient numbers to make the old houses look increasingly out of place. The houses of Gilead had once stood on small farmsteads with garden patches and berry patches and henhouses, with woodsheds, rabbit hutches, and barns for the cow or two, the horse or two. These were

> simply the things life required. It was the automobile that changed that, her father said. People didn't provide for themselves the way they once did. It was a loss – there was nothing like chicken droppings to make flowers thrive (Robinson 8).

While Reverend Boughton has kept his property as it once was, he still acknowledges that there is change. In fact, it is happening in his very neighbourhood. He has built a porch as a place for socializing, thus the walls of his home exclude as well as include. To him the home is the place of familial bliss, and the land (space) outside is "the battlefield" (Robinson 9). Perhaps the sustaining of the house that Glory performs is in recognition of her fathers' efforts to do the same: "It seemed sometimes as if her father must have meant to preserve all this memory, this sheer power of sameness, so that when they came home, or when Jack came home, there would be no need to say anything. In terms of the place, they would all always have known everything" (Robinson 98). Reverend Boughton wants to keep everything the same, because the place encompasses his "time". Old Boughton is a man of tradition, and it is a tradition his children are no longer a part of – their present life doesn't fit physically on top of their childhood home. The sameness in the Boughton home is mirrored in Glory's later musing of the "sameness" of Gilead. In this thinking, both the Boughton home and the town of Gilead, represents a sameness that Jack and Glory is no longer part of.

For Glory, even though the house reminds her of nostalgic memories of childhood, she realises that they are of times past, and "being home made her remember" (Robinson 18). Massey argues that: "…you can never simply 'go back', to home or to anywhere else. When you get 'there' the place will have moved on just as you yourself will have changed" (Massey 124). As Glory returns to Gilead she takes notice of this fact:

> The town seemed different to her, now that she had returned there to live. She was thoroughly used to Gilead as the subject and scene of nostalgic memory. How all the brothers and sisters except Jack had loved to come home, and how ready they always were to leave again. How dear the old place and the old stories were to them, and how far abroad they had scattered. The past was a fine thing, in its place (Robinson 7-8).

Here, Glory sees that although she used to view her home as the "subject" and the "scene" of emotional connectedness, she and her siblings are now located elsewhere and "scattered". Jack is the only one of the siblings not taking part in the joyousness of returning home, perhaps he views the home objectively, and Glory has more of a subjective notion of home. This passage further proves that Glory's view of the town and her home is different to her now that she is older, and views it from a perspective of the past. In a way, she compresses time and space by implying that time can be conflated with place, as if the Boughton home itself only exists in the past.

It is true that much of the action is set inside the house or on the surrounding Boughton property. The kitchen is where Glory, but also Jack, spends much time, either cooking or doing dishes – ordinary domestic chores. However, contrary to what some critics have alluded, the housekeeping Glory performs is not merely contributing to her confined existence. Tanner argues that: "For the Boughtons, then, holding onto the house of memory comes at the expense of agreeing to inhabit an overly cluttered and purely representational landscape. The dining room table Glory sets for Jack's arrival is covered in dust by the time they sit down to it; descriptions of food in the novel emphasize the discarded and uneaten" (Tanner 40). While this is true of Jack's welcome home dinner, cooking and food also has a redemptive and conciliatory effect in their home, and is therefore not simply "representational". As Glory reflects:

> How to announce the return of comfort and well-being except by cooking something fragrant. That is what their mother always did. After every calamity of any significance she would fill the atmosphere of the house with the smell of cinnamon rolls or brownies, or with chicken and dumplings, and it would mean, This house has a soul that loves us all, no matter what. It would mean peace if they had fought and amnesty if they had been in trouble. It had meant, You can come down to dinner now, and no one will say a thing to bother you, unless you have forgotten to wash your hands (Robinson 263).

Here, food represents the comfort of home. The making of food and the prospect of eating food, often turn into collaborative efforts between Jack and Glory, or it gives a reason to

meet. As when Jack wishes to get invited for supper by Ames in hopes of reconciliation. Moreover, Glory tries to emulate her mother's dumplings when Jack is at his lowest spirits, both realising that dumplings were never actually any good to begin with. Tanner's argument that the Boughton home is an "overly cluttered" house that Jack and Glory are forced to hold onto as mere representation of family, lose its some of its validity. For towards the end of the novel we see a breaking up of such notions:

> Jack served the chicken and the dumplings with some of the wry decorum of former days, but quietly, calmly, the old suspense gone now. The dumplings were tacky on the outside and doughy on the inside, but that just might be how they are, she thought. How they have always been. Her father said, "Excellent", and ate half of one.
>
> Jack said, "There's really nothing like a good dumpling."
>
> "Except a bad one," she said.
>
> He laughed. "True, they are pretty similar." Then he looked at her. "Ah, tears." (Robinson 292).

Their tone is playful, yet, relaxed. It shows that they are now - after meeting up again after all these years - getting to know each other in a different way, even though the setting is the old and the familiar. Glory's memories of the Sunday Sabbath where she and her siblings were, indeed, as Tanner suggests, confined in their small spaces: "The children restless in their church clothes, the dresses and jackets and shoes that child after child stepped into, out of, put on, took off, as his or her turn came. Too large and then too small, but never comfortable" (Robinson 39). Sitting around the table they try to make their physical space smaller: "…keeping their elbows to themselves, not swinging their legs…" (Robinson 39) Glory's memories of "the lived experience of home" might seem "constrained and performative" (Tanner 42). However, the paragraph shows that the family dynamic is different from what it was before, and this is because Jack and Glory's trajectories intersect at *this* particular moment. Doreen Massey writes: " You can't hold places still. What you *can* do is meet up with others, catch up with where another's history has got to 'now', but where that 'now' (more rigorously, that 'here and now', that *hic et nunc*) is itself constituted by nothing more than – precisely – that meeting up (again) (Massey 125).

Two things negotiate Jack and Glory's estrangement and confinement, respectively, and ultimately allow them to develop a shared sense of belonging. First, their common interest and pleasure of reinvigorating and performing physical labour in the garden, second, the car that has been locked up, key-in-ignition, for years. Early on after returning home, Glory found that although the "evenings were long", the hours she worked in the garden "passed pleasantly" (Robinson 19). As Jack joins their household, he takes an interest in her botanical project:

> In the afternoon she went out to work in the garden. She had planted peas and pole beans and tomatoes and squash and spinach. Rabbits were a problem, and groundhogs. Still, the futility of it all was not yet absolute. She would have had to ask someone to put up some sort of fence, and that would involve talking to someone, which she preferred not to do.
>
> And after a few minutes there was Jack, standing in the sunlight at the edge of the garden, smoking a cigarette. He said, "I thought maybe you could put me to work out here."
>
> "Sure. I mean, you can put yourself to work. There's so much that needs to be done. Well, you can see that. Mama had iris beds right up the hill –"
>
> "I know," he said. "I used to live here." (Robinson 61).

In fixing up the garden, Glory is able to build something, almost from scratch, which in turn increases her wellbeing and self worth. It enables her to keep *out* what she doesn't want *inside* her domestic sphere. By constructing her own space, she relieves the confining space of the house. In this way, Glory is able to rework the home to fit her needs in the present. This entails excluding the sameness that she feels in the town of Gilead. However, this will also require her to reach out to other people, which she acknowledges will put her out of her comfort zone. She will be able to raise crops of vegetables and flowers of *her* choosing. Subsequently sustaining her self with food she likes. The garden is also a project of change for Jack, as Glory reflects:

> He used to live here, and he knew how things were done. It had somehow never seemed to her that the place had his attention, or it seemed he was attentive to strategies of

> evasion and places of concealment, never to the skills of ordinary, dutiful choring that made up most of every life, and was so much the worth and pride of that life, by local reckoning. But he spaded between the rows of irises and he was businesslike about it, too. He had rolled up his sleeves (Robinson 63).

The "dutiful choring" that is so much a part of the ordinariness of life, is perhaps something Glory values, after all. Jack's participating in the garden labour, is of course seen through Glory, thereby, even though Jack is eager in his work, claiming: "I'm feeling useful…Productive. That's good for morale. So is the tan", Glory remains uneasy of his "hectic outbursts of purposefulness" (Robinson 202). Still, the garden ensures a joint project for the two of them that also contributes to establishing a closer relationship: "More often, as the days went by, Jack sought her out to talk with her, and when the talk drifted into silence, sometimes he would smile at her as if to say, You and I, of all people, here, of all places, killing time for lack of anything else to do with it" (Robinson 88).

The other project Jack preoccupies himself with is his father's old DeSoto. The car represents something new to the Boughton household. It is a form of mobility they never had growing up. Now Glory and Jack can go anywhere they should wish. Jack could drive and see his wife, and Glory would be able to have more freedom in her present and future life. The car enables them to take their father on outings, and to see his dear friend, Ames. The excitement the DeSoto produces in both Glory and her father makes Jack's project quite the accomplishment:

> He leaned on his cane and gazed appraisingly at the DeSoto. "Yes. It's a fine-looking car. I knew I must be saving it for some reason." He chuckled. There was barely a restrained glee about him, as though he felt he had done something, or had done nothing, to excellent effect. "I had offers for it, you know. Several of them. Yes." He regarded the gleaming DeSoto with something warmer than pride of ownership. "And now, look what you have done with it! Jack, this is wonderful!" (Robinson 169).

Jack's reaction to the praise, however, is much like when he first returned home. It is as if he views himself from the outside, not allowing himself the kind welcome nor the praise. Jack

cannot take pleasure in the car, and makes Glory drive the last stretch home. As sensed through Glory once again, Jack fears having to face people in town who might know things from his past, and Glory is determined not to let that happen. The car could have been a useful way for Jack to take control of his life, but ends up being what nearly kills him. Glory is less troubled by the prospect of the car, and makes more use of it. The "newness" that the car represents for the Boughton home, interestingly heals some of the rupture between Jack and his father. In this way the car also symbolises connectivity in relation to the communicability between Jack, Glory and their father. However, when the mobility of the car instigates anxiety for Jack, as it keeps him in contact with Gilead. His history of thieving, alcoholism and drifting, has surely put a stigma on Jack, which is why he feels so uncomfortable with the prospect of returning to Gilead.

Glory's connection with the outside world is limited. Tanner suggests that: "Occasional references to newspaper and television accounts of a larger world in the text only emphasize the location of characters and readers in a circumscribed domestic arena" (Tanner 44). While this is true for Glory, I suggest that this is not a result of her confined setting, rather it is Glory's project to rework the sphere of domesticity that enables her to produce a new space, that she can inhabit in the present and in the future. However torn she is on the subject:

> Gilead, dreaming out its curse of sameness, somnolence. How could anyone want to live here? […] In College all of them had studied the putative effects of deracination, which were angst and anomie, those dull horrors of the modern world. They had been examined on the subject, had rehearsed bleak and portentous philosophies in term papers, and they had done it with the earnest suspension of doubt that afflicts the highly educable. And their return to the *pays natal*, where the same old willows swept the same ragged lawns, where the same old prairie arose and bloomed as negligence permitted. Home. What kinder place could there be on earth, and why did it seem to them all as exile? (Robinson 294).

James Wood proposes that this passage implies that: "…the return [home] is never the balm it promises to be, for home is too personal, too remembered, too disappointing. Eden is exile, not heaven" (*The Fun Stuff* 169). This is certainly true for Jack, who sees no other resort than

to leave home, again. For Glory, however, towards the end of the novel, the horror she initially expresses over the prospect of inheriting her childhood home, reduces as Jack's eyes linger over the out-dated furniture and knick-knacks. As Jack gives plenty of reasons and permission to sell, Glory confirms that she "…really couldn't do that" (Robinson 312). And as Della arrive with Jack's son, it is clear that Glory fully intends to, indeed, stay. The tension between the joys of domestic, rural life and Glory's expressed feelings of wanting to leave the familiar dullness of Gilead throughout the novel culminates in Glory's encounter with Della and her son. For the first time Glory envisions herself living in the house as an old woman, picturing the little boy retracing the steps of his relatives, and ponders: "…if all that saving and keeping their father had done was providence indeed, and new love would transform all the old love and make its relics wonderful" (Robinson 337). By transforming the old love the Boughton home had provided for them, Glory is able to "reclaim" her own lived space, and thus, her own story. As Tanner notes, Glory's focalization as third person shifts to a first person account, as Glory ponders her future in Gilead, thereby reclaiming her own narrative.

Chapter Two: Memories of Home

> Memory is the raw material of history.
> - Jacques Le Goff, *History & Memory*

Both *Open City* and *Home* deal extensively with the juxtaposition of the present and the past. The first person narrator of *Open City*, Julius, divulges into his own past as well as encountering people relaying their stories of their past to him. As a novel that is set in a post-9/11 New York City, its historical grounding is firmly established. Some critics have pointed to the dissociative and almost disinterested way Julius acts towards people and their stories. Julius' own memories, the reader might find, are quite selective, something that manifests near the end of the novel. As opposed to *Open City*, *Home* might not seem as anchored in, or as abundant with references, to historical and geographical settings. The Boughton's reside in the town of Gilead, Iowa, in the mid-1950s. Moreover, the geographical setting of a Midwest town relying on agriculture and religion is a far cry from the worldly encounters of *Open City*. Time seems to stand still in Gilead: Glory and her father are waiting for Jack to come home (several times), and Jack is waiting for letters from Della. There are, however, certain events that disclose issues of that particular point in time. The problematic situation of Jack's relationship and child with Della, an African-American woman as well as racial segregation preventing them from being legally married, provides a historical and insight in to the politics of the racial tension that existed in the U.S. at that time.

In *Open City* Julius' individual memories of his own past alternate with the historical, and collective memory of the world. However, while the historical facts that run through his mind as he passes by different places are detailed and myriad, his memory of his own past is fragmented in a way that disrupts Julius' conception of reality. Meanwhile, in *Home*, the Boughton home is a patriarchal space, where the hierarchies are established, and with cultural expectations for everyone there. However, upon her return home, Glory finds that these expectations, and the limits of the home, prove difficult to adhere to in her and Jack's present life. Julius, Glory and Jack all take part in some remembrance. The difference is that Julius goes out in to the world to remember, whereas Glory and Jack return home. I argue here that

the condition of unhomeliness as espoused by Homi Bhabha can be located in both novels, but to different ends. In *Open City*, the unhomely presence in the city by the histories of "unwanted" people that seem to haunt the places and people he interacts with is "uncannily doubled" with Julius' own "unwanted" memories and the selective representation of himself *to* himself. In *Home,* Jack's absence throughout the years has been a cause for concern and disruption. The unhomely moment, according to Bhabha: "relates the traumatic ambivalences of personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (*LoC* 15). Upon his return, Jack's struggles with an existential homelessness results in such an "unhomely moment" when Jack tries to commit suicide in the barn. As Glory's world undoubtedly shrinks upon arriving home, Jack's return and the subsequent confusion of the borders between the world and the home, ultimately expands her world enormously. Thus, Julius, Glory, and Jack all live in "in-between" spaces, in the liminal space between the world and the home.

Constructions of Reality and Self

It has to be pointed out that Julius' life is one of privilege. His move from Lagos to New York City was not because of some desperate situation, but perhaps out of the same reason why so many choose to start "anew" there – it is the city of "perpetual new beginnings". In New York, he has an interesting psychiatry residency at Columbia Presbyterian. Julius is well educated and very well versed in the worlds of history, art, literature, and classical music, and his perceptive nature is open, it seems, to everything and everyone. Julius' perceptive nature, along with his intellectual and global interests has left many scholars to identify him as a cosmopolitan.[6]Thus, Julius' nomadic behaviour arises out of a voluntary position. All of these characterisations bring us to believe that Julius is a reliable person and narrator. A person with such a wide, and detailed knowledge of human history, a person who works as a *psychiatrist*, must undoubtedly be trustworthy? As the reader (and Julius) is soon aware of, this is not true for him. While Julius is not aware of his own unreliability throughout the novel, the small "lapses", when he realises this, can be considered "uncanny moments". These moments disrupts Julius' present.

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6 Pieter Vermeulen, Katherine Hallmeier, Bernard Ayo Oniwe and Alexander Greer Hartwiger, although their analyses of Julius differ, all agree that Julius is somehow affiliated with cosmopolitanism.

In Bhabha's understanding, to be unhomed is not to be equated to being homeless: "It has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations" ("The World" 141). Julius often finds himself in situations where people make contact with him. In a way, he must give off some kind of openness so that people easily open up to *him*. This is, however, quite paradoxical since we can often find Julius' response as less interested. When visiting a detention centre in Queens, Julius is told the harrowing story of Saidu, a Liberian refugee who fears deportation out of the States. Saidu, in telling the story clearly considers Julius as trustworthy and talks freely about his ordeals, and he even invites him back to visit. Julius coolly divulges: "I said I would, but never did" (Cole 70). His concern is whether he comes across as the attentive listener to his girlfriend at the time: "I told the story to Nadège on our way back into Manhattan that day. Perhaps she fell in love with the idea of myself that I presented in that story. I was the listener, the compassionate African who paid attention to the details of someone else's life and struggle. I had fallen in love with that idea myself" (Cole 70). This idea of himself as the compassionate listener is countered throughout the novel, as Julius repeatedly let it be known that he doesn't want people to lay claims on him. Although he knows how to be social, and how he is *supposed* to act to given situations, in his mind he sometimes negates these notions, which adds to his detachedness, as when he realises that his neighbour's wife has passed away. He ponders if it was before or after his neighbour had complained about loud music from his apartment: "Eventually I satisfied myself that it was before, and not after, his wife's death. I felt a certain sense of relief at this, which was taken over almost immediately by shame. But even that feeling subsided; much too quickly, now that I think of it" (Cole 21). Thus, Julius is fairly honest about *how* he wants to be perceived, yet, in reality he cannot always meet his own expectations.

The fragmented, discontinuous chronology of the novel mirrors Julius' own consciousness it seems. For while people don't normally think out thoughts one after the other in a linear, chronological way, Julius' mind, at times, seems more fragmented than what is usual. He constantly dwells on the issue of time, sometimes compressing it with space: "the past, if there is such a thing, is mostly empty space" (Cole 155), other times solidifying it: "time was elastic", "time's shape was restored" (Cole 74, 231). But most significantly, Julius *layers*

time. Stories of people are layered with history, time is layered with space, information about streets, art, literature, commerce and unhomely peoples overlap. The unfolding of all these narratives also seems to expose Julius to his own layered Self. Furthermore, in his review in The New Yorker of *Open City*, James Wood points out the fragmentary style with which we are presented Julius' world: "…though people speak and occasionally converse, this speech is not marked by quotation marks, dashes, or paragraph breaks and is formally indistinguishable from the narrator's own language" (n.pag.). To Bhabha "… 'the present' …in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced" (*LoC* 6). The stories that are relayed to Julius – stories that in themselves are fragmented and discontinuous – are repetitive throughout the novel, and are subsequently temporal overlaps that displaces Julius' present. His attention is given not only to the tragic fates of refugees, but to animals and wildlife, an elderly friend, a Caribbean homosexual, a Moroccan immigrant, a Belgian doctor are among the many people Julius interact with – many of them in the margins of official history, many of them are not – but all of these different trajectories overlap with Julius' at some specific moment in time.

One example of the overlapping of stories is when Julius attends a photography exhibit on Martin Munkácsi, and engages in conversation with an elderly man who left Berlin for New York in 1937. Julius notes the man's slow articulation, as if he was "entering a memory" and as he speaks Julius silently remarks the "lightness" of which he speaks of his boyhood: "almost as if he were talking about something else, something less frightening, something less littered with disaster" (Cole 153). The conversation makes Julius contemplate his own German heritage, yet, he chooses not to divulge this fact about himself: "I did not tell him that my mother and my oma had been there, too, as refugees near the end of the war and afterward, and that I was myself, in a distant sense, also a Berliner" (Cole 153). As Julius moves through the exhibition he is suddenly taken aback, of shock almost, by an image of Hitler and Goebbels:

> I happened to be looking at this picture at the same time a young couple was. I stood to the left of it, and they to the right. They were Hasidic Jews. I had no reasonable access to what being there, in that gallery, might mean for them; the undiluted hatred I felt for the subjects of the photo was, in the couple, transmuted into what? What is stronger than hate? I did not know, and could not ask. I needed to move away, immediately,

> needed to rest my eyes elsewhere and be absent from this silent encounter into which I had inadvertently barged (Cole 154).

Julius is so disturbed by this scene that he leaves the museum, and returns home. As he leaves he passes the old Berliner and contemplates: "His long-saved story of *illustrirte* had found the time and place for its airing: unimaginable how many small stories people all over this city carried around with them. It was only then that I noted that Munkácsi, the photographer of the so-called *Day of Potsdam*, into whose camera one seemingly ordinary moment in Berlin in 1933 was secreted away for future viewers, was himself Jewish" (Cole 155). Here, the stasis of the photograph, capturing and holding still a moment of history, echoes the previous musing of Julius: "Why did I feel suddenly that they were visiting from the other side of time?" (Cole 55). As Cole connects these fragmented stories and memories directly to Julius' physical and emotional well-being, he further implies that there is "a haunting" of an unhomely presence in Julius' life.

Similarly to "entering" the memory of the old Berliner, Julius remembers a scene from his childhood in Nigeria, when, following the death of his father, his mother decides to: "take [him] with her into her memories" (Cole 79). As she speaks about her past in Germany, her German pronunciation of "Julianna" and "Julia" makes her seem "even stranger" to Julius (Cole 79). He has always felt an estrangement to his mother, and as she speaks, his mind wanders on to other things. Upon reflecting on their conversation years later, when Julius "became interested in these things for [his] own sake", he surmises that his oma must have been raped by a Red Army soldier at the end of World War II (Cole 80). For his mother, the unhomely moment of the confusion of borders between the private and the public is when the grief of her husband is displaced onto that "primal grief" – when the atrocities of world history enters the domestic realm – that has been lying under the surface all of her life, and together the two pains make "a continuity" (Cole 80). Yet, he continues to confuse our conception of time when he states: "The afternoon was time taken out of time" (Cole 81). It seems as though, when Julius remembers or relives unpleasant memories he abstracts them, and pulls them out of time itself. In this way it is as if those experiences never happened. As if they were a dream. However, Julius later contemplates how we: "experience *life* as a continuity, and only after it falls away, after it becomes the past do we see its discontinuities"

(Cole 155). This suggests that only in hindsight can we see life as it really is. In that way one can see the mistakes that have been made – its discontinuities. This applies to Julius' life and to the history of the world. Although Julius views his conversation with his mother in a more informed way in retrospect, it does not reconcile them in any way. While acknowledging that he himself is a "continuation of" what happened to his oma, he is still removed from those memories, and thus his own origin (Cole 80). Julius includes the past, yet he also excludes what he does not want to engage with, whether it is other people's stories or his own past. He is neither outside or inside – he is in-between.

The unhomely presence that eschews Julius' representation of his own life seems to present itself when he encounters Moji, and Julius makes use of the word "apparition" to describe her sudden appearance. The same designation was used by the Liberian refugee, Saidu, to describe when what he thought was a snake actually revealed itself to be an exercise book and: "The memory of that apparition remained…because he often wondered, then and later, if it meant something for his future" (Cole 66). Moji's reappearance will mean something to Julius' future, but only in retrospect do we (and him) realise this. Again, the novels fragmented form represent Julius' equally fragmented mind. However, there is a "stirring" of an unhomely presence that is noticed by Julius as well as the reader. Just as Julius divulges that his memories of his past in Nigeria are: "a secure version of the past that [he] had been constructing since 1992", he is also confounded by "another, *irruptive*, sense of things past" (Cole 156 emphasis mine). Julius' musing on the: "reencounter, in the present, of something or someone long forgotten, some part of myself I had relegated to childhood and to Africa", almost echoes Bhabha's notion of an unhomely presence (Cole 156). Moreover, according to John McLeod: "this uncanny disruption brings with it trauma and anxiety. It serves as a reminder that exclusive, exclusionary systems of meaning are forever haunted by those who are written out and erased" (254). Thus, Julius' "secure" construction of his past is now rendered unsecure, because of his erasure of Moji from his mind. After the encounter, Julius suffers a temporary memory loss, as he forgets his ATM card's PIN number. A seemingly banal incident, something most people have done, yet, Julius laments over several days (and a whole chapter) over this inexplicable lapse in his memory. Just when the incident creeps to the back of his mind, it comes forward again in full effect:

> I had forgotten about the incident, but then it had become fresh again, and this time more heavily, and this time without witnesses or any official record. The strange feeling was harder to dispel, the memory of standing alone, standing in Wall Street, my memory gone, a pathetic old-young man padding about in the grip of some nervousness, while all around me the smart set made deals, talked on cellphones, and adjusted their cuff links. I recalled having seen a police officer from whose holster an automatic shone, and how I'd been taken with an odd sort of envy of that weapon, of its total lack of ambiguity, of its promise of danger. I imagined I had forgotten not just that number but all numbers, as well as all names, and why I was even there on Wall Street in the first place (Cole 166).

Here, Julius clearly experiences extreme anxiety, an anxiety that doesn't correspond with the situation of having forgotten your PIN number. However, the ATM card represents Julius' freedom. He had relied on it exclusively on his trip to Brussels. Bhabha asks: "Can historical time be thought outside fictional space, or do they lie uncannily beside each other? Does the passage of power turn the agent of history into a stranger, a double-agent living between the lines?" ("The World" 143). The lapse in his memory after encountering Moji, as well as his anxiety following their meeting, might serve as a foreshadowing of the trauma of remembering having raped Moji when they were teenagers in Nigeria. The novel doesn't reveal this fact until near the end of the novel. It might imply that Julius is hiding things about himself *from* himself. However, it is with Julius as narrator that his story is constructed, and in this moment in particular, his role as "double agent" might be revealed.

In a passage before his attendance at the party where Moji relays her trauma, Julius reflects on what James Wood calls testaments of a "selfish normality" and an "ordinary solipsism" (The New Yorker n.pag.). Here, Julius as Pieter Vermeulen notes might seem to have finally "found himself" (Vermeulen 52):

> Each person must, on some level, take himself as the calibration point for normalcy, must assume that the room of his own mind is not, cannot be, entirely opaque to him. Perhaps this is what we mean by sanity: that, whatever our self-admitted eccentricities might be, we are not the villains of our own stories. In fact, it is quite the contrary: we

> play, and only play, the hero, and in the swirl of other people's stories, insofar as those stories concern us at all, we are never less than heroic (Cole 243).

To my mind this passage further solidifies the notion that by having Julius as narrator of his own story, the way he represents himself may not be truthful. Again we see that in the lapses where Julius either remembers something disturbing from his past – or even if it is just a "stirring" of an unhomely presence – Julius realises that he is not the hero of his own stories, and subsequently loses his sanity, even if it is only for a brief moment.

The confusions that Julius' experiences between time and space are not only connected to people, but also to sites of significant historical and symbolical meaning. For instance, as Julius walks near the site of ground zero, he remembers a tourist asking him: "how to get to 9/11: not the site of the events of 9/11 but to 9/11 itself, the date petrified into broken stones" (Cole 54). Alexander Greer Hartwiger proposes in "The Postcolonial Flâneur: *Open City* and the Urban Palimpsest" (2016), that: "Much like a composer, Julius harmonizes the seemingly random juxtaposition of events, […] into a thematic whole about movement and migration of both the cosmopolitan elite and the unhomely in an era of globalization" (4). An explicit example of this would be the juxtaposition of Christmas shoppers with the sight of what appears to Julius to be "the body of a lynched man" hanging from a tree (Cole 74-75). Again, Julius blurs the borders of time: " Time became elastic and voices cut out of the past into the present, the heart of the city was gripped by what seemed to be a commotion from an earlier time" (Cole 74). Hartwiger employs the instance when Julius thoughts about Brewster's painting are interrupted by the cab driver to argue that: "This contrast between the deep connection with the art and the resistance toward claims of affiliation suggests a problematic configuration of cosmopolitanism in which intellectually one can be a citizen of the world, but the practical matter of finding points of contact with others becomes a challenge" (13). Moreover, it is significant to point out that in this scene, Julius forgets his own home address:

> I got in the car and immediately the driver said, Where? I must have looked lost. I tried to remember my home address. My folded umbrella pooled its water on the mat, and I thought of Brewster's portrait of the deaf teenager Sarah prince at the pianoforte, an instrument that neither artist nor sitter would have heard: the quietest piano in the

> world. I imagined her running her hand along the keys but refusing to press down on them. When my address filtered its way back to me, I gave it to the cabdriver and said to him: So, how are you doing, my brother? (Cole 40).

To my mind, this contrast seems to signify Julius' liminal position between two worlds, that of at once being at home in the world and still feel the unhomely presence that exists as a haunting everywhere he looks and goes, and this causes a displacement that disturbs Julius' sense of Self. To answer Bhabha's previous question: in this novel "historical time" cannot be thought outside fictional space. The unhomely presence that Julius sees in the spaces he goes is the presence of the human atrocities that happened in those places, thus, his own time "lies uncannily" beside historical time. Furthermore, to Bhabha, "in the stirrings of the unhomely": "The home does not remain the domain of domestic life, nor does the world simply become its social or historical counterpart", rather it is in the confusion of the border of the private and the public; where they become a part of each other, "forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" ("The World" 141). Not only does Julius not feel at home with his mother in Nigeria, he does not have a sense of a "domestic sphere" in New York City either. The accounts of Julius' home life are sparse in the novel, and are almost exclusively connected to sleep and dreams. In Bahbah's meaning the home and the world are not counterparts, so the city is not acting as a character of its own, playing the counterpart to Julius. In a way, we can se by the way Julius incorporates the city and it's history into his own subjectivity, that the border between the private and the public becomes "confused", and this disorients his perception of reality.

Furthermore, Julius is locked out of two places heavily weighted with symbolical meaning, namely Trinity Church and Carnegie Hall. On one of his walks, Julius winds up at the Trinity Church, and finds the front gate locked. The old historical church, that has housed so many lost fates through history and given sanctuary to those in need, lock Julius out giving him "no place in which to pray (Cole 51). As he searches for an entrance he wanders through the churchyard, where he notices the: "white headstones, black ones, a few monuments, among which Alexander Hamilton's was prominent: THE PATRIOT OF INCORRUPTIBLE INTEGRITY, THE SOLDIER OF APPROVED VALOR, THE STATESMAN OF CONSUMMATE WISDOM, WHOSE TALENTS AND VIRTUE WILL BE ADMIRED"

(Cole 49). He goes on to note the many women: "…from those few centuries since the Europeans had come up the Hudson and settled on this island, women named Eliza, Elizabeth and Elisabeth" (Cole 49). This graveyard stands in stark contrast to the African burial ground he later visits where only a tiny spot has been set aside for a memorial site. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the burial ground had encompassed six acres, but now most of the site was "…under office buildings, shops, streets, diners, pharmacies, all the endless hum of quotidian commerce and government" (Cole 220). At the burial ground Julius contemplates how the site was built over and forgotten by the city, and as the spot is closed off for renovation, he has: "…no purchase on who these people were whose corpses, between the 1690s and 1795, had been laid to rest beneath my feet" (Cole 220). Significantly, Julius still knows a multitude of facts about how these people might have died, and by which customs they have been buried in, or were allowed to practice outside the city walls. Julius seems to remember what New York City has forgotten. This is how Julius (and the novel) in his own narrative story, criticizes our collective memory's recognition of some peoples fates while omitting, or as in this case, building over, others. In a way, this re-creation of the past that Julius performs is what Bhabha urges: "…the critic must attempt to fully realise, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present" (LoC 12). However, Julius does not *do* anything to call action for all these unrepresented and unremembered pasts, he just acknowledges that they happened. He doesn't go and demand bigger and more elaborate memorial sites for these "unwanted" stories. However, they are "written" in his consciousness, and so they are remembered in his story.

In contrast to his habitual wanderings that take him to seemingly random places, Julius purposefully purchases a ticket to go see a concert at Carnegie Hall. Mahler's music seems especially compelling to Julius as he notes that his music transcends characterisations such as black, white, old or young, and wonders if it is particularly human at all. The crowd at Carnegie Hall is homogenous, as Julius points out, and he feels observed and displaced. However, in the last movement, Julius is deeply moved by its elegiac sentiment, and detects the deep concentration and: "the hundreds of private thoughts, of the people in the auditorium with [him]" (Cole 253). In, contrast to the scrutiny he felt by the other people before the concert, the classical, mournful music of Mahler creates a sense of "fellow feeling" between Julius and the other people in the audience. This connectedness is heightened by an almost

spiritual experience, when an old woman stands up and as if "summoned", and as if "leaving into death" walks down the aisle (Cole 253). As the woman moves, she is the image of an angel. Her white hair resembles a halo as the woman walks with her arm raised as if being led by someone, and this makes Julius think, again, of his oma; as if it were him who escorted her "out into the darkness" (Cole 253). The spiritual and human connectedness Julius feels in "the glow" of that final movement comes to an abrupt end, as the next scene begins with the panic of being locked out.

As opposed to the incident at Trinity Church, Julius has now locked *himself* out of Carnegie Hall. While feeling displaced at first, the connection that formed through Mahler's music allowed for a moment of elation between all the concertgoers. These people are now on their way home, "oblivious to [his] plight", as Julius is stuck on the fire escape, "locked out on the unlit side of Carnegie Hall" (Cole 255). This might symbolise Julius constant dissonance and detachment with which he meets people. Julius "locks" himself out of conversations with people and from an affiliation with anybody else. Julius is now in the shadows (metaphorically and literally) and the connectedness he felt before is replaced with a: "solitude of rare purity" (Cole 255). He is effectively "seeing inwardness from the outside" ("The World 150). Surprisingly, this solitude, while looking at the starry sky, allows Julius to contemplate the past, and conversely, the future:

> Wonderful stars, a distant cloud of fireflies: but I felt in my body what my eyes could not grasp, which was that their true nature was the persisting visual echo of something that was already in the past…But in the darks spaces between the dead, shining stars were stars I could not see, stars that still existed, and were giving out light that hadn't reached me yet, stars now living and giving out light but present to me only as blank interstices. Their light would arrive on earth eventually, long after I and my whole generation and the generation after me had slipped out of time, perhaps long after the human race itself was extinguished. To look directly into those dark spaces was to have a direct glimpse of the future (Cole 256).

These "dark spaces" where Julius sees both the past and the future, and he is in-between, displaced in the present. The people's stories and the history of places that Julius interact with

can be understood as: "moment[s] of transit…where time and space cross, to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (*LoC* 2). However, Julius never seems to *include* as much as he excludes. His attentiveness to the stories of people who are long gone – "dead stars" – excludes the people trying to reach him in the present. It appears to be a fact that he isn't quite aware of himself. However, in the passage above it might seem as though this is beginning to dawn on him, in that he understands that there is "something" that hasn't reached him yet.

Past and present: Inhabiting the Margins of the Home

Bhabha states that: "Although "the unhomely" is a paradigmatic post-colonial experience, it has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions" ("The World" 142). Therefore, an "unhomely presence" can also be conceivable within the walls of the Boughton home. As previously mentioned, time seems to stand still in Gilead. The long wait for Jack to come home, the repetitive nature of the conversation between Jack and Glory, complies with the slow unfolding of Jack's past, and what it is that troubles him now, in the present. Bhabha recalls Michel de Certeau's suggestion that: "…beginnings require an "originary non-place," something "unspoken" which then produces a chronology of events," therefore in Babha's conception: "beginnings can […] be the narrative limits of the knowable, the margins of the meaningful" ("The World" 146). Although the "originary non-place" in *Home* is not as "spiteful" as 124 in *Beloved*, the novel Bhabha draws his notion of "the unhomely" from, the home that Glory returns to is symbolic of the great grief the family has suffered: "Why should this staunch and upright house seem to her so abandoned? So heartbroken?" (Robinson 4).

Ever since childhood, Jack has been the most elusive of the eight Boughton kids. The performative acts of familiy life were adhered to by Glory and all her siblings, except Jack: "Her good, kind, and jovial siblings were good, kind, and jovial consciously and visibly. Even as children they had been good in fact, but also in order to be seen as good. There was something disturbingly like hypocrisy about it all, though it was meant only to compensate for Jack, who was so conspicuously not good as to cast a shadow over their household"

(Robinson 7). Here, the looming shadow that Jack casts over their household, already in the first few pages signals Jack's removal and absence from it, where only the darkness of his absence remains. The need by the other children to compensate, that Glory remembers as "something *disturbingly* hypocritical", for Jack's absence indicates that they sense that this is not normal behaviour, and that contributes to the unhomely "stirring" in the home.

In the present, with all the troubles facing them in St. Lois, Jack wants to take his African American wife and child home to Gilead. The reason for his return is to ask for acceptance, and as Charles Petersen concludes, Reverend Boughton and Ames' influence in the community of Gilead would provide the protection that they could not receive in St. Lois, where "cohabitation laws broke the family apart" (n+1 n.pag.). Jack's absence through the years has undoubtedly affected Glory the most, who has tried to mend his indiscretions in the past. As Jack fathered a child out of wedlock, Glory does not understand the family's and Jack's unwillingness to rejoice in such good news. In hindsight, Glory understands her naivety, yet still incredulous to her father's hard words concerning the baby. However, with a remaining naivety, she ponders how: "[…] in those days their lives were lived so publicly, it had seemed to her they might as well just acknowledge what everyone would have known in any case" (Robinson 18), not realising that that is exactly the reason for her family's misery. This public presence in their life might be something Glory sees as a thing of the past, or does not fathom the meaning of, but to her father and to Jack, "the public" controls their lives.

Jack's struggles to fit the part of an obeying son in his father's patriarchal hierarchy, challenges his father's "limits of conventional knowledge", and as a result, Jack's return figures as a "disruptive 'unhomely' presence that cannot be articulated through existing patterns of representation" (McLeod 254). The real reason for Jack to come back to Gilead, is then relegated to the question of forgiveness. Glory and Jack have been raised in a Christian household, where norms for social behaviour were expected to be followed. Expectations of how to dress, that one should go to church, and how to act, must have been firmly implemented throughout their childhood. These are expectations brought out of *where* and *when* they grew up, and it has brought society's rules into their home. Therefore, the Boughton kids have always lived with the public "in the home". In this way "the unhomely"

might mean different things for Reverend Boughton and his children. Their unhomely presence might be said to be the cultural hegemony they have lived under their whole life.

For Glory, the return home has disrupted her life as a schoolteacher in Des Moines. She has broken up with an unfaithful fiancé, and she keeps waking up at night thinking: "What have I done with my life? What has become of it? It is as if I had a dream of adult life and woke up from it, still here in my parents' house" (Robinson 20). She stops paying attention to the news, and reads only obscure novels she has read before, so as to avoid thinking about her life. Glory's world has undoubtedly enclosed on itself, since her return to Gilead. Nevertheless, Glory and Old Boughton settle into "a tolerable life of its kind", where housekeeping, reading and the occasional chess game occupy their time.

Upon receiving the letter from Jack, informing them of his return, Glory and Reverend Boughton are disrupted out of their complacent existence. The following weeks as they expect Jack's return were: "weeks of trouble and disruption, dealing with the old man's anticipation and anxiety, and then his disappointment, every one of which made him restless and sleepless and cross" (Robinson 29). The unhomely presence that constituted Jack's absence all these years has caused a problematic relationship between Jack and the Boughton's. This unsettled "stirring" continues on after Jack has crossed the threshold into the Boughton home, and he continues to disappear at night. Glory laments:

> All those years ago her father had said, "I'm afraid we might lose him." And here he is again, leaving the house for an hour, and by the end of it the old man is too anxious to sit still and she is prowling in his room, intruding on his privacy – when if it was one thing on earth she was eager to concede to him or to anyone it was privacy! It was amazing. Her whole life long that house was either where Jack might not be or where he was not. Why did he leave? Where did he gone? Those questions had hung in the air for twenty years while everyone tried to ignore them, had tried to act as if their own lives were of sufficient interest to distract them from the fact that few letters came […] that their father seemed bent under the weight of an anxiety only time increased. (Robinson 68)

As Peterson observes: “Nowhere is Robinson’s method for making use of history more apparent than when she recalls a scene from moments past when the Boughton children, in a fit of impiety, trampled a family field planted by their radical neighbours, whom the children jokingly call Mr. and Mrs. Trotsky” (n.pag.). As the children are ushered to apologise to the Trotskys’, Jack joins them “as if penance must always include him” (Robinson 11). Mrs. Trotsky scolds them and lashes out at Jack: “I know who you are. The boy thief, the boy drunkard! While your father tells the people how to live! He deserves you!” (Robinson 12). As Glory thinks back on the incident, the field of alfalfa and Luke subsequently calling them Mr. and Mrs. Trotsky was, in fact, a political statement, that she was too young to understand at the time. However, as she went to college and understood “what the old stories meant”, that in fact, “they were really the stirring and smoldering of old fires that had burned furiously elsewhere”, and “It pleased her to think that Gilead was part of the world she read about” (Robinson 9). The Trotsky’s represent a radical side to Gilead, and they are a “newness” that Glory wasn’t able to recognise as a child, having grown up in the “sameness” of Gilead. for Reverend Boughton their presence might be said to be unhomely, as they do not conform with his culture, and “invade” on his land.

As Bhabha explains: “the discourse of ‘the social’ […] finds its means of representation in a kind of *unconsciousness* that obscures the immediacy of meaning, darkens the public event with an “unhomely” glow. There is, I want to hazard, an incommunicability that shapes the public moment; a psychic obscurity that is informative for public memory” (TWTH 143). In *Home* the few historical references are mostly political. There are mentions of presidential election candidates, books on Marxism, and an imminent, although not much spoken of, sense of racial tension. Even the baseball games Jack and Old Boughton watch on television has a connection to the segregation and Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s. Jack’s complex family situation is further complicated by pressures, not only from society, but also from his family, namely his father. Reverend Boughton is of the older generation and he has his views of how the world should be. He is part of the generation that “saved everything”; he opposes selling his land to give way to a more modern way of life; he vows that he has “nothing against the coloured people”, but feels that “they’re going to have to improve themselves… if they want to be accepted” (Robinson 156). While Old Boughton states that he is interested in

what is going on in the world, Jack is personally inflicted by the incidents reported on the news. In St. Louis, Jack is not able to live as a family with Della, an African American woman with whom he has a son, because of the miscegenation law that criminalised interracial marriages. This is, however, not the only reason for them not being together. Jack's elusive behaviour has gotten him on the wrong side of Della's father, who he suspects is the one sending his letters back. When Jack exclaims "Jesus Christ" at the sight of the discrimination happening in the South, his father becomes indignant. The utterance implies to Reverend Boughton that his son is emotional towards this problem, and leads to a further probing of Jack and his friends:

> "So you know some coloured people, there in St. Louis?"
> "Yes. They've been very kind to me."
> His father regarded him. "Your mother and I brought you children up to be at ease in any company. Any respectable company. So you could have the benefit of good friends. Because people judge you by your associations. I know it sounds harsh, but it's the truth."
> Jack smiled. "Yes, sir, believe me, I know what it is to be judged by my associations."
> "You could help yourself by finding a better class of friends."
> "I have made a considerable effort in that direction. But my associations have made it very difficult" (Robinson 156-57).

By the exchange between father and son it is clear that Reverend Boughton believes he has instilled in his children a set of values that he expects them to live by. These are expectations Jack has tried to follow with "considerable efforts", but his reputation seems to precede him, both in the town of Gilead and in his own family. The incommunicability between Reverend Boughton and Jack is clearly seen in the passage. When Jack utters "Jesus Christ!" it is merely an expression to him, but to his father it is clearly blasphemy. Now that he is back in Gilead, he is revisited by those same alienating feelings he had twenty years ago. The expectations he couldn't meet back then are still the root of his problems now that he is "…home again in Iowa, the shining star of radicalism" (Robinson 210). While this utterance may be taken as Jack's ironic view of Gilead as not as progressive in terms of politics or

compared to other places he has been, he is still uneasy to mingle with the townspeople, which for instance is why he gets so nervous when they take a drive in the DeSoto. The pressure of having to face people in town if the car breaks down is too much for him. That would mean that Gilead also has implemented expectations that Jack is aware he cannot meet. Moreover, Jack asks Glory if the church knows he has returned, to which Glory replies that they do, "they wont come by, though" (Robinson 48). In this moment Jack wants to make sure that the border between the world and the home isn't confused, all the while being the one who brings the "world" into the home.

The truly uncanny moment for Jack and Glory occurs when Glory finds Jack in the DeSoto where he has tried to take his own life. The reason for his return, to find a reconcilable place to build a home with his family, proves impossible, and Jack gives up. Gilead is not "large" enough, or progressive enough to approve of Jack's interracial marriage. His initial want of approval is now turned in to an asking of forgiveness, a forgiveness that he does not receive from his father. To Glory, this is the "shock of the unhomely moment":

> "Oh dear Lord! Oh dear Lord in heaven!" she said […]"I have to sit down." She could hear herself sobbing, and she couldn't get her breath. She leaned against the car with her arms folded and resting on the roof and wept, so hard that she could only give herself over to it, though it kept her even from thinking what to do next. Jack hovered unsteadily at a distance from her, full of drunken regret (Robinson 254)

The "haunting" of the unhomely has finally culminated to so much anxiety that Jack tried to kill himself. This is the unhomely moment for Glory, too, in that Jack's affiliation with the "otherness" that is Della, has caused him to bring the unhomely into their home.

As Jack and Old Boughton, he sees no other possibility but to leave. A few days after he has left, Della and her son arrive in Gilead. Glory, who has always been supportive of Jack's relationship reflects on the sorrow that Jack has gone, and will not see his wife and child he has so longed for. However, as Della looks around the garden and front porch, Glory remarks that it is as if it's familiar to her, as if Jack has "left her a message" (Robinson 334). She even smiles in recognition of Glory's tears, as Jack must have told her about that sentimental streak

with Glory. When Della and Robert are gone, Glory sits down and reflects on how meeting Della has made her know Jack more:

> Della was Jack's wife, she said so herself, and it made all the difference. Della had looked at the world of his old life tenderly, all the particulars there to confirm themselves, proof of his truthfulness, which always did need proof. I used to live here, I wasn't always gone, I was usually closer to home than he thought I was. So Jack had said, and how could he have seemed so estranged to them? And how cruel it was that he loved the place anyway […] I used to wish I lived here, he said. That I could walk in the door like the rest of you (Robinson 337).

Thus, Della proves that Jack was not just "a haunting" that simply disturbed their domestic sphere. However, this might have been the unhomely moment for Reverend Boughton. For old Boughton, the confusion between the border of the public and the home, one could say, would be the arrival of Della and her son, bringing their "otherness", into his private sphere. In this way, the notion of the public and the notion of the home are different for Reverend Boughton, and his children. The reason for this is temporal – Reverend Boughton is simply from another time, an older generation, and he brings with him this generation, this notion of time to the present. For Glory, however, Della and her son signify a "newness that is not part of the continuum of past and present.

Chapter three: The Self and the Home

"I wanted to find the line that connected me to my own part in these stories"
-Teju Cole, *Open City*

"You must forgive in order to understand. Until you forgive, you defend yourself against the possibility of understanding"
-Marilynne Robinson, *Home*

Does our identity has something to do with where we come from, our Home? This rather obvious question can be complicated if we interrogate what constitutes a home. Is it where we are born; where we grow up; where our parents were born, or grew up? Is the home merely place-bound? Or has it more to do with culture? If one in five people are in migration in the world today[7], then there is a vast majority of the world's population who have multiple places they could call home. This is a reality for more and more people. As we have seen thus far, the home can be viewed as geographical space, as country, as city etc. In a narrower sense, home is often conceived as the place where we keep our belongings, our things, and where we cohabitate with other people, perhaps our family. All of these spaces and places are in themselves embedded in time, in that our memories are connected to specific geographical sites of belonging. What I have previously discussed is how temporality and spatiality contribute to, and affect the characters' subjectivity. In this chapter I will further explore how these notions help create a hybrid condition for the characters in *Open City* and *Home*. In doing so, the concept of hybridity that will be employed is that of Homi K. Bhabha. Even though Julius embodies the detached and displaced feelings shared with him by numerous people, with their own stories of displacement in the world, he also vocalizes his *own* need to belong. He is constantly engaged by other peoples' stories, yet, ultimately, he is alone. For Glory and Jack who do have a home in the conventional sense, the feeling of not belonging, of being displaced *in* the home, substantiate the antagonism in the novel. However, how they negotiate this feeling of displacement differs.

[7] Number retrieved from "Art and Ideas", BBC Radio 3, Oct. 22, 2015.

Although displacement can be seen as a disruptive, and rootless feeling of existence, it does not mean that this is something entirely negative[8], it can also contribute to a sense of belonging in several places at once. This contributes to our notion of belonging and home as something fluid and multiple. While the characters in both novels all dwell on their solitude, they also make claims that they want it to end. Julius expresses: "I wanted to find the line that connected me to my own part in these stories" (Cole 59). Jack tries to negotiate his own feeling of displacement by returning to the theological practices of his childhood. Glory, in the midst of lamenting the loss of her own imagined family and home, ultimately sees the possibility of making the Boughton home *her own* home when Della and her son arrive in Gilead by the end of the novel.

In Bhabha's collection of essays, *The Location of Culture* (1994), the text "Signs Taken for Wonders", introduced the concept of hybridity. Bhabha explains his own hybrid origin: "Growing up in Bombay as a middle-class Parsi – a member of a small Zoroastrian-Persian minority in a predominantly Hindu and Muslim context – I never imagined that I could live elsewhere. Years later, I ask myself what it would be like to live without the unresolved tensions between cultures and countries that have become the narrative of my life, and the defining characteristics of my work" (*LoC* x). Like Edward Said, Bhabha's background and the "unresolved tensions" he grew up under became the sole focus and area of study in his professional life. In terms of identity as a field of study within post-colonialism, Bhabha presents an opposed variety of ambivalences against the "fixity" of Said's conceptualisations (Easthope 341).

The Third Space

Bhabha longs for what he calls a liminal space that acts as an interstitial passage between "fixed identifications" which ultimately "opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5). These fixed identifications he contests are the notions of an essential, and thereby a fixed identity. The in-between space that comes into fruition between these binary opposites is what Bhabha calls

[8] The notion of writers who delve into their own sense of displacement to enhance their creative efforts is mentioned by theorists such as Edward Said in "Reflections on Exile" and Salman Rushdie in "Imaginary Homelands". In Said's essay he recounts how James Joyce intentionally alienated himself from his native homeland, Ireland, to achieve a "homeless" condition, as a means to "give force to his artistic vocation" (Said 182).

the "Third Space of enunciation". While this space is mostly talked about in terms of colonizer versus colonized, Bhabha argues that: "…all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation…" (Bhabha 54-55). New York City, Brussels and Lagos are examples of such hybridised places in *Open City*. However, the town of Gilead and, significantly, the Boughton home can also be places where such cultural hybridity occurs.

With the town of Gilead, Robinson draws connections from the abolitionist movement from which such towns emerged as "a kind of garrison for militants fighting the spread of slavery in Kansas", to the civil rights movement in the mid-50s (Scott n.pag.). As Jack returns to the town, he realises that he can never bring his wife and child there without the support of his father and John Ames. In St. Louis, Jack is unable to cohabit with his wife because of miscegenation laws, laws that don't officially exist in Iowa. Thus, much of Jack's worry and contemplation involve how to appear as a new and improved version of himself to the people of Gilead. The town, in its complacency seems to have relented, and forgotten its progressive history, which is not explicitly expressed, but only in Jack's ironic musing "Iowa, the shining star of radicalism", and Glory's sorrowful reflection on the town "dreaming out its curse of sameness, somnolence", do we get the sense of this (Robinson 219, 293). Glory is well aware of the restrictive cultural identity of Gilead: "…complacency was consistent with the customs and manners of Presbyterian Gilead and was therefore assumed to be justified in every case. Christian charity demanded no less, after all. Among the denominations of Gilead, charity on this point was not granted by all and to all in principle, but in practice good manners were usually adhered to, and in general the right to complacency was conceded on every side" (Robinson 116). For Glory and Jack, the town represents a homogenous culture that rests firmly on a tradition that seems to exclude difference, and that is a tradition neither of them is able to fit with their life in the present.

Jack's struggle is the struggle of *identification*. He has always been on the outside of the home, and now he finds himself outside of his home and his family with Della. He realises: "I knew I would need help. I thought the old gent might help me, but I didn't realize – that he was so old" (Robinson 219). Old Boughton now lives as a hybrid between his own generation, and the generation of his children who have returned to his life. Reverend

Boughton was himself the son of a strict Presbyterian minister, and has lived his life adhering to the cultural expectations that entailed. As history moves forward, though, he is now dealing with issues of deep personal and political matter, issues that he has trouble grasping, and this causes much misunderstanding and pain between old Boughton and his son. He undoubtedly longs for an "enunciative process", as he constantly tries to understand "the inaccessible strangeness" of Jack, but he only manages to alienate him further. For instance, he seems to think that the reason for Jack's elusive behaviour and apologetic nature stems from when he abandoned a girl pregnant with his child. He laments the fact that he did not babtise the child, or her mother. This is not what is on Jack's mind at the present, but further adds to and complicates expectations Jack cannot meet. Thus, old Boughton epitomizes the "…traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference", whereas his son represents "…new cultural demands, meanings, [and] strategies in the political present…" (*LoC* 51).

Furthermore, the Boughton home rests upon a patriarchal foundation. This is underlined by Glory' housekeeping, as well as by the formal way Jack addresses his father as "Sir". Rowan Williams notes Jack's incapability of using the language of a "natural" familial relationship in "Native Speakers: Identity, Grace and Homecoming" (2011): "Jack cannot use the "script" of unselfconscious family intimacy; but equally it is clear that – as his sister recognizes – this script is presented to him both as an obligation and also as conditional on behaving appropriately" (10). Although his father invites Jack to be less formal towards him, other times when Jack is particularly disappointing or mysterious, the old Boughton chastise his son for using such terms:

> "Nobody deserves anything, good or bad. It's all grace. If you accepted that, you might be able to relax a little."
> Jack said, "Somehow I have never felt that grace was intended for me, particularly."
> His father said, "Oh, nonsense! That is just nonsense!" He closed his eyes and withdrew his hand. Then he said, "I was cross again."
> Jack laughed. "Don't worry about it. Dad."
> After a moment the old man said, "Don't call me that."
> "Sorry."

"I don't like it at all. Dad. It sounds ridiculous. It's not even a word."
"I'll never say it again." (Robinson 283).

Furthermore, and as Williams also notes, Jack's use of language is often read as ironic, challenging or offensive to old Boughton and John Ames. Jack never intends this tone, and is very apologetic when his intent is taken that way. Yet it is somehow his way to further distance himself - through an ironic distance. When Jack says to his father that he "didn't deserve to speak to [him]" the way his other siblings did, it is because of the fact that – as, again Glory understands: "that all of them were native to their life as he would never be" (Robinson 324, 259).

As Bhabha writes: "The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition…" (Bhabha 51-52). Jack seeks answers from his father and from Ames. The questions that he asks are in the theologically centred, origin-based language of his childhood that he cannot seem to fit with the current problems of his life. However, his "spiritual homelessness" is only reinforced by the problematic relationships he has with Ames and his father. Jack attempts to negotiate their culture by looking for a third space where "the discursive conditions of enunciation" can help him answer such questions. By doing so he understands that his language must comprise of the terminology the two ministers comprehend. Thus, Jack in "signifying the present" seeks a language that is "translated in the name of tradition" (*LoC* 52). However, this results in a painful conversation between them:

Jack smiled. He said very softly, "I really am a sinful man. Granting your terms." He shrugged. "Granting my terms."

Boughton waved this off, a gesture that discouraged elaboration. There was a long silence. Then he said, "Nonsense. That has nothing to do with it."

"And I don't know why I am. There's no pleasure in it. For me, at least. Not much, anyway."

Boughton covered his face with his hands.

Ames said, "I think your father is tired."

But Jack continued, very softly, "I'm the amateur here. If I had your history with the question I'd be sick of it, too, no doubt. Well I do have a history with it. I've wondered from time to time if I might be an instance of predestination. A sort of proof. If I may not experience predestination in my own person. That would be interesting, if the consequences were not so painful. For other people. If it did not seem as though I spread a contagion of some kind. Of misfortune. Is that possible?"

Ames said, "No. That isn't possible. Not at all."

"No," his father said. "It just isn't." (Robinson 234-235).

Jack's discursive strategies do not seem to resolve his problems. Neither do they ease the tensions in the relationships with his father and Ames. From their perspective, Jack, who knows his Scripture by heart, and who was both baptized and confirmed, should feel at home in the Church rather than alienated by it. They are puzzled by his questions, and perhaps a little uneasy with of the bluntness with which Jack asks them. It is not until Lila, of an "unknowable" background[9] herself, asks the question of salvation, that the two older men seem to relent in their agitation. Jack and Lila seem to have these thoughts in common, and she is able to direct Ames and Old Boughton to the question Jack wants to deliberate. Old Boughton proclaims that he has, in fact, "…worried a long time about how the mystery of predestination cold be reconciled with the mystery of salvation" (Robinson 237). Yet, he has no conclusion to the problem and neither does Ames. Lila, however, provides the words Jack wants to hear: "A person can change. Everything can change" (Robinson 238). The question then becomes: how is Lila able to, perhaps not embrace, but negotiate the language and cultural statements of Ames and Reverend Boughton, and inhabit the town of Gilead, when Jack by no means can?

Rowan Williams illuminates this question: "[Lila] retains the capacity to question the attitudes of those who are too much at home with themselves or their world […] she is able, as Jack is generally not, to give voice to the possibility of change. She is able to *speak,* where

[9] Not much is divulged about Lila's background in *Home*. In their conversation about predestination and salvation, Ames is: "reminded of all the unknowable life his wife had lived and would live without him" (Robinson 237). In the novel *Lila* (2014), however, we learn that she was abandoned on the stairs of a migrant workhouse somewhere in the Midwest (Johnson, n.pag).

Jack's paralysing awareness of the offence he may give leaves him silent" (9). Williams suggests that the reason for this might be that Ames is able to better negotiate the "otherness" of Lila, than old Boughton is with Jack. While this reason is plausible, it doesn't really explain why Ames isn't able to fully comprehend or help Jack with his issues, or try to help Jack negotiate them with Reverend Boughton. Again, the reasoning falls back on Jack's lack of communicability. Williams points to the fact that Lila can speak of these things because she isn't met with the "sameness" that Jack sees in Gilead. In her ability to vocalise her difference and ask the questions that seems to be quieted, she contributes to the blending of cultures in the otherwise complacent town of Gilead. There isn't "sameness" to Jack's identity, rather, there is "doubleness", because of his role as a constant outsider and his affiliation with "otherness" in his marriage with Della (Williams 10). Jack's upbringing in a pious, Christian household, has never seemed to coincide with Jack's identity. He knows the Bible backwards, but is unable to fit that scripture on to his experience in the world.

Glory had envisioned for herself an entirely different future. She has a master's degree and was a teacher, a good one at that. The Boughton home is in effect weighing her down with its archaic furniture and overly cluttered space. The cultural expectations are present for Glory as well. Ever since she was a little girl, she has been told that she "take[s] things too much to heart" and is teased by how easy she takes to tears (Robinson 15). Her sense of being ranked in her family as well as by society has also been implied since childhood:

> She used to ask herself, What more could I wish? But she always distrusted that question, because she knew that there were limits to her experience that precluded her knowing what there was to be wished […] She seemed always to have known that, to their father's mind, the world's great work was the business of men, of gentle, serious men well versed in Scripture and eloquent at prayer, or, in any case, ordained in some reasonably respectable denomination. They were the stewards of ultimate things. Women were creatures of second rank, however pious, however beloved, however honoured. This was not a thing her father would ever say to her…But she knew how things were before she was told (Robinson 20-1).

With the ending of her engagement to a married man, Glory's return to Gilead is felt as a failure. The pressures of being a woman of a certain age, in a small town in 1956, with sisters all married with children, does contribute to her feeling like "a lonely schoolgirl at thirty-eight" (Robinson 259). However, Glory thinks of others before herself, and it is only sometimes that she lets herself slip into the fantasy of her own children. It is this ability that makes her able to best understand Jack's loneliness. As mentioned earlier, her contemplation of Gilead's "sameness" echoes Jack's view of the rural town.

However, Glory is the one who foresees that political change will happen, as she contemplates a future where Jack's son will return to Gilead. As we have seen, Glory now makes her *own* home in the Boughton home, by working around the property and in the house. Although she sometimes tries to recreate the sense of the home of her childhood, for instance by cooking her mother's old recipes, the dynamic of those moments has changed, and Glory realises that one cannot simply go back home, because that place has changed. Williams points out: "…the person who "inhabits" with integrity the place where they find themselves, in such a way as to make it possible for other to inhabit it in peaceable company with them is always the person who is aware of a possibility of an alien yet recognizable judgement being passed, aware of the stranger already sensed in the Self's territory" (13). While I believe Williams is referring to Lila here, to my mind this applies to Glory as well. Glory makes the Boughton home habitable for Jack, for the time that he stays there. She is constantly aware of his need for his own space and understands his "otherness" better than anyone else in the family. She is able to console Jack when he leaves by saying that she is not going to change a thing, because she knows that there is a possibility of change. Thus, Glory, who is now more able to inhabit the place of her past, can also envision its future:

> He will be curious about this place, though his curiosity will not override his good manners. He will talk to me a little while, too shy to tell me why he has come, and then he will thank me and leave, walking backward a few steps, thinking, Yes, the barn is till there, yes, the lilacs, even the pot of petunias. This was my father's house. And I will think, He is young. He cannot know that my whole life has come down to this moment.
>
> That he has answered his father's prayers.
>
> The Lord is wonderful. (Robinson 338-9)

When Jack's son comes home he will have answered his father's prayers, for it means that people, and more importantly, society, can indeed, change. As Glory vows not to change any of the interior or exterior of the house, it proves that Glory realises that it is the *people* inside of the place that need to change. In this way, although it is not possible in her present life, she foresees a future where her home will give rise to a "third space of enunciation"

Hybridity in the Open City

In *Open City*, Julius' hybrid identity is a blending of European and African culture. This brings with it its own implications as Cole clearly wanted to address: "Julius is half German and half Nigerian, he lost one parent quite young, he's estranged from the other and he is a psychiatrist, and he lives in New York. That's all you need to be alienated, you know? That will do your head in, you know?" [10] He goes on to emphasise that most protagonists who suffer alienation usually draw sympathy from, or is relatable to the reader, something Cole was trying to avoid. Julius is named after his German mother, with whom he is estranged. Moreover, Julius explains his mother's adjustment to her American identity when she had: "…extricated herself from Germany and run off to the United States; Julianna Müller had become Julianne Miller" (Cole 78). He has his own qualms with his two names, the one being European and the other African:

> The name Julius linked me to another place and was, with my passport and skin color, one of the intensifiers of my sense of being different, of being set apart, in Nigeria. I had a Yoruba middle name, Olatubosun, which I never used. That name surprised me a little each time I saw it on my passport or birth certificate, like something that belonged to someone else but had been long held in my keeping. Being Julius in everyday life thus confirmed me in my not being fully Nigerian (Cole 78).

With his own cultural and ethnical hybridity established, Julius now finds himself in New York City, where a multitude of people share his experience of "not being fully" this or that.

[10] Interview of Teju Cole, London Review Bookshop, August 30 2012.

Even though Julius is reminded of a myriad of cultural histories on his walks through New York City, sometimes they are his own. By being connected to several cultures, Julius sees figures of Yoruban mythology in a swarm of bees on his way to Ninety-second Street, and considers himself as a Berliner at a photography exhibit. More importantly his hybridity allows Julius to notice difference in other people and places from his own perspective as different. As he does this, he is therefore able to think about the history of people that many do not bestow a thought to. John McLeod points out: "…because subjectivity is discursively produced, it is possible for it to be remade and remodelled in new and innovative ways…Rethinking identity is not a solipsistic activity but is bound up in a group identity, group formation and group hostilities" (McLeod 252). However, Julius is inherently solipsistic throughout the novel. He sometimes uses language as a means to construct a "bond" with others, such as the African taxi driver whom he greets: "So, how are you doing, my brother?" (Cole 40). Yet, he doesn't like people laying cultural claims on *him*. Sometimes Julius "detaches" from his Nigerian roots, such as when the postal worker recites him poetry of black resistance because he believes it will have special meaning to Julius. However, Julius does not feel a connection to the message of the poem and swears to never use that post office again. Other times he might withhold his German roots. Notably in his conversation with Dr. Maillotte, Julius thinks for a second that he might tell her that German is his second language, but resigns: "…I didn't want to get into the intricacies of the story" (Cole 142). It seems as though no one gets an insight into Julius' story. However, since Julius' cosmopolitanism claims that one is at home in the world, claims of various national identities would come in the way of such a borderless existence. Accordingly, when he encounters and enters into dialogue with countless people with varying backgrounds, it is almost always with a dissonance, and almost never as: "…an agent of change, deploying received knowledge in the present and transforming it as a consequence…" (McLeod 253). While Julius might *act* as active agent, by travelling and walking around the city – which does trigger memories of his past in Nigeria, and seemingly makes him search for his Oma – it doesn't seem to "bear upon his life at present" (McLeod 253). In Brussels, Julius seems, if only for a moment, to break away from his solipsistic pattern that can be seen throughout the book.

On his travel to Brussels Julius seems far more relaxed in his encounters with others than in New York, where people are constantly laying claim on him. Julius encounters Farouq, a

Moroccan immigrant who works at the Internet café Julius visits. To my mind the encounter with Farouq is the only time we se Julius' subjectivity "discursively produced". In his review of *Open City*, James Wood characterises Farouq and Julius as "alter-egos": "Cole has Julius pulsate, in contradictory directions, sometimes toward Farouq, in fellow feeling, and sometimes away from him, never really settling in one position" (The New Yorker n.pag.). Julius and Farouq are opposites in many ways. While Farouq is radical and champions his beliefs and causes in an outspoken manner, Julius declares that he is "distrustful of causes" (Cole 198). The disappointment of Brussels, and Europe in general, for not being the "open" space welcoming difference that he anticipated, only instils in Farouq a desire to know why this is so, and how it can improve (Oniwe 56). Thus, in Farouq, Cole portrays a displacement where: "Out of a spirit of resistance and forbearance emerges the minoritarian will to live, to *make*…" (*LoC* xx). In a superficial reading, one might say that the observing flâneurism of Julius is countered by Farouq's idealism. While these differences are true of Julius and Farouq, in alignment with Wood's argument I would argue that the two characters be considered doubles. They are not simply taking the stance as the "informed bystander" and the "political realist who acts largely on the grounds of enlightened self-interest" (*LoC* xxi). I argue here that Cole's project is not to polarize, but to portray an encounter between two people who share their immigrant experience, however different those experiences are. What is significant in the encounter with Julius and Farouq is not that they are in some way diametrically opposite, nor are they essentially the same. Rather it is that small border of difference between them that I want to explore in the following. I will do so by exploring how Julius' affiliation with what can be called the cosmopolitan elite encounters Farouq's more vernacular form of cosmopolitanism. First I want to give a brief account of cosmopolitanism

Brussels: the Open City?

Many of the issues concerning globalisation as discussed in chapter two; for example how economic, political and cultural relations are now viewed on a global scale, and an increasing movement of peoples across borders, have caused a sense that the nation-state is declining as a sovereign entity (McLeod 304). In the interaction of globalism and postcolonialism, new paths have been made to represent a view of the world today. One of these paths takes the name cosmopolitanism and arises out of a call to: "…theorise new democratic forms of

politics, dissidence and ethics that are required in a globalised world where cultures are interacting more and more and where the experience of cultural difference – in the media, at work, on the street, on the move – is becoming the norm and not the novelty of everyday life. A new globalised world requires new ways of thinking and acting ethically" (McLeod 309). Bhabha distinguishes between two forms of cosmopolitan thinking, the one being a global cosmopolitanism, and the other he calls a vernacular cosmopolitanism:

> There is a kind of global cosmopolitanism, widely influential now, that configures the planet as a concentric world of national societies extending to global villages. It is a cosmopolitanism of relative prosperity and privilege founded on ideas of progress that are complicit with neo-liberal forms of governance, and free-market forces of competition. […] Global cosmopolitanism of this sort readily celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery, as long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies. […] There is, however, another cosmopolitanism […] that emerges from the world of migrant boarding-houses and the habitations of national and diasporic minorities […] a vernacular cosmopolitanism which measures global progress from the minoritarian perspective (*LoC* xiv-xvi).

This "minoritarian perspective" that Bhabha discusses here is one where its claims to freedom and equality are marked by "a right to difference in equality" (*LoC* xvii). However, Bhabha's notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism is less rooted in an "affirmation or authentication of origins and 'identities', and more to do with political practices and ethical choices" (*LoC* xvii). McLeod notes that the term cosmopolitanism, although it is true that it has previously been used pejoratively: "to bear witness to an elite class of the affluent and internationally mobile" now "it is more and more coming to name an ethical situation in which, as Kwame Anthony Appiah suggests, we acknowledge both our general obligation to others unlike ourselves and recognise the legitimacy of specific people's differences" (McLeod 309-10). Pnin Werbner notes that there are a multitude of different cosmopolitanisms, where the vernacular cosmopolitanism is especially hard to define. The term is an oxymoron, Werbner states, in that it combines: "contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment" (7). Opposite to vernacular cosmopolitanism we can identify a "patriotic" cosmopolitanism as espoused by Martha C. Nussbaum, and a "rooted" cosmopolitanism

championed by Kwame Anthony Appiah (Werbner 7). These would, however, not resonate with Bhabha's notion because the thought of "a borderless cosmopolitan community" does not comply with "the millions of refugees and migrants fleeing from violence and poverty" (Werbner 11). Werbner asks: "In what sense does cosmopolitanism need to be grounded in an open, experimental, inclusive, normative consciousness of the world, which calls for perpetual "peace" and the end of cultural intolerance and hostility? Such a consciousness would need to include elements of self-doubt and reflexivity, an awareness of the existence and equal validity of other cultural practises and values" (11). To my mind, Julius holds such a consciousness. While there are elements of self-doubt and reflexivity in Julius, this is not always the case though, as his ability to be self-reflexive is sometimes obstructed by his fragmented memory. However, his awareness and how he juxtaposes histories from a multitude of viewpoints in equal measure, shows that Julius is conscious of himself in the world.

As the novel divulges, Brussels was declared an "open city" during World War II. This brings with it connotations of openness as positive, as in an openness to people, but it also reveals – considering the circumstances with when this was declared – that the city was under siege and in order to end it, they had to, in effect, accept the presence of an intrusive other. To Cole's own mind, this is the "double-consciousness" of openness[11]. Julius finds, however, that Brussels is not as open as one might expect, and his first account of this is through Mayken, the lady he rents a room with. In their conversation she gives him an account of "the original idea of Brussels", which was that it was supposed to be equally Flemish and Walloon (Cole 95). To her irritation, it seems, it is not like that today, as she gives the numbers of the city's cultural blend: "…ninety-five percent Walloon and other French speakers, one percent Flemish, and four percent Arab and African. She laughed, but quickly added: These are real numbers. And the French are lazy, she said, they hate working and are envious of the Flemish. I'll tell you this in case you don't hear it from anyone else" (Cole 95-6). This harsh dividing up of people and Mayken's snide remarks stand in stark contrast to the memories returning to him now of his previous visits to Brussels and: "How ideal it had all seemed back then" (Cole 96). The memory of his previous visit, where the inside of his hotel was: "…a glimpse of impressive sophistication and wealth, that first experience of Europe" (Cole 97), is

[11] Interview with Teju Cole on Radio Open Source, 2011. Accessed August 31, 2016.

closer to the image of Brussels as cosmopolitan than the unfiltered racism Mayken expresses. Mayken, as an inhabitant of the town epitomized as a cosmopolitan ideal does not, then, adhere to the cosmopolitan ideal of pluralism.

Other, and more sinister events also disillusion Julius from the expectation of Brussels as inherently open. Earlier that year a young Flemish boy was killed at the Gare Centrale by two teenage boys who tried to steal his MP3 player. The police, and more importantly, the media, went with the false assumption that the two killers were Arab. It turned out that the boys were in fact Polish, but the backlash of hatred and racial prejudice had already festered. Even more discrepant with cosmopolitan humanistic ideals, as Bernard Ayo Oniwe points out, was the fact that no one in the crowd helped the teenage boy, making the Bishops lament: "a society so indifferent that everyone around had refused to help a dying boy" (47). Julius takes note of one journalist in particular, who in a blog post raged that: "…Belgian society was fed up with "murdering, thieving, raping Vikings from North Africa"" (Cole 98-9). More, and equally shocking stories run through Julius' mind as he walks around the city. Political parties now benefit from people's "simmering, barely contained fear" (Cole 106), and Julius notes that "There [is] a palpable psychological pressure in the city" (Cole 98). Farouq is especially disillusioned by Brussels, and with Europe itself. Like Julius, Farouq envisioned a Brussels free movement of people and ideas, a place where he could study and find output for his difference in the company of others, with their own unique difference. However, Farouq was disappointed: "…when I was young, Europe was a dream. Not just a dream, it was the dream: it represented freedom of thought. […] But I have been disappointed. Europe only looks free. The dream was an apparition" (Cole 122). The city stands out, in contrast to Julius' experiences in New York, as harbouring sinister anti-immigrant views.

Farouq and Julius: Vernacular Cosmopolitans

In his first encounter with Farouq, Julius is almost taken aback by his own "aggressive" friendliness towards the man who manages the local Internet and telephone shop. His usual familial "how are you doing, my brother", that he seems to use on and off in New York, is usually deployed by Julius as a false sense of familiarity. In Julius' mind, this kind of "bond"

is expected of him from his fellow Africans, but as we have learned so far, Julius does not usually embrace such comradeship. One reason for this, as we have seen, is that when people lay claims on his identity they force upon him a sense of belonging, or where he *should* belong, and these are claims that Julius cannot reconcile with as he identifies more with the cosmopolitan ideal of being at home in the world. Thus, Julius surprises himself for having shown his affinity for Farouq in this sudden and apparent manner. One reason for his sudden friendly "aggression", as he calls it, might be the open and fluid place where he meets Farouq in. The Internet and telephone shop is inherently a communicative place, where people – with their own unique hybrid identities and difference – from all over the world come in order to make contact with someone. Farouq's shop could in this sense give rise to a Third Space of Enunciation, where Farouq, who is fluent in several different languages, is able to communicate with many of these people. For instance, as Katherine Hallemeier also points out, Julius first communicates "in broken French" with Farouq and it is only when the conversation turns to English that they become friends (245). Moreover, Farouq acts as the translator between Julius and Khalil.

Farouq's disappointment of the homogenous and monolithic place that Brussels turned out to be, he has now managed to overturn, by way of working at the Internet shop. For this is where he has found his third space, where difference and heterogeneity exists. It is here that Julius first encounters Farouq, and it is also the place that enables them to continue their conversation days later. Additionally, the shop clearly will help his personal project to understand how people can live together in a larger place, such as Brussels. As Farouq says: "It happens here, on this small scale, in this shop, and I want to understand how it can happen on a bigger scale"(Cole 113). Farouq's project can be viewed as an example of Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism. Although he is not quite sure of what form the project will take yet, his thoughts about it mirrors Bhabha's notion that: "Minoritarian affiliations or solidarities arise in response to the failures and limits of democratic representation, creating new modes of agency, new strategies of recognition, new forms of political and symbolic representation…" (*LoC* xvii-xviii). Although Farouq has a broken image of Brussels as a cosmopolitan, and "free" city, he is not discouraged and does not give up on his project. Instead he: "works *towards* the shared goals of democratic rule" to get an understanding of how things can get better (*LoC* xviii). In this sense, Farouq envisions the Internet shop as a

model for the kind of society he thinks that Brussels should be, and for that to happen "the right to equality of difference" must be acknowledged and lauded as an integral part of that society.

Julius' own literary cosmopolitanism might seem softer, and more passive, compared to Farouq's strong will to make a change in the world. His surprise of finding a person of Farouq's "seething intelligence" in a place like the Internet shop further undermines ideals of cosmopolitan curiosity (Cole 129). As does the literary rebuke Julius gets by Farouq when he mentions that he recently finished a book by the Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jalloun. Farouq proclaims that Jalloun writes: "…stories that has have an oriental element in them…" and that "…his writing is mythmaking…[not] connected to people's real lives" (Cole 102-3). Jalloun is not a man of the people, then, in Farouq's eyes. Julius simply nods as Farouq makes his point and makes a soft-spoken argument that a recent book of Jalloun's surely speaks of everyday life. Farouq's rebuke, along with his impressive multilingualism and interest for critical theory, both interests Julius and exposes him to his own limited cosmopolitanism.

Furthermore, a few days after their initial encounter, Julius seeks the Internet shop again. This time, Farouq is busy talking to someone else, and it occurs to Julius that: "…even if he had been alone, I wouldn't have wanted to talk" (Cole 107). Stirred, by what he sees as a hostile environment in Brussels, where a "monolithic identity" is prevalent – although he is on the other side of the political spectrum – he sees the same type of radicalism in Farouq, for "…he, too, [is] in the grip of rage and rhetoric" (Cole 107). In Julius' mind the bearers of such a rage don't realise themselves how "cheap" and "futile" such anger is (Cole 106). However, Julius further interrogates cosmopolitan ideals when he contemplates ethical values versus taking action: "It seemed as if the only way this lure of violence could be avoided was by having no causes, by being magnificently isolated from all loyalties. But was that not an ethical lapse graver than rage itself?" (Cole 107). While Farouq does not support violence, as Julius will later understand, he admires Malcom X rather than Martin Luther King because he: "recognized that difference contains its own value, and that the struggle must be to advance that value" (Cole 105). As we already know, Julius is distrustful of causes, and, thus, he interrogates his own cosmopolitan ethics as an understanding conversationalist as opposed to engaging in political causes, as Farouq, the vernacular cosmopolitan does.

Several scholars introduce the concept of cosmopolitanism both when discussing the aestheticism of the novel and Julius' values. However, scholars such as Pieter Vermeulen and Katherine Hallemeier argue that Cole's novel ultimately rejects a traditional literary cosmopolitan ideal. Vermeulen argues, that *Open City*: "…exposes the limited critical purchase of the imaginative mobility and intercultural curiosity celebrated by cosmopolitan defences of literature and art" (40). In this thesis I have also seen evidence of this claim. Although Julius is able to travel and to walk around, he also avoids places where his presence might seem provoking to others, as witnessed in Brussels. This limitation to his mobility negates the image of the literary cosmopolitan's ability to move freely across space. Julius' curiosity, as we have seen, is also lacking. His detached personality hinders any *real* connection with other people, and this further denies the cosmopolitan ideal of a curiousness that instigates conversation, because – with the exception of Farouq – other people always make contact with *him*.

Katherine Hallemeier argues that *Open City*: "…value[s] a cosmopolitan literariness that neither hails from the intellectual cosmopolitan elite nor takes the dispossessed cosmopolitan for its subject." (239). I suggest that the cosmopolitan ideal the novel supports is that of a vernacular cosmopolitanism. Bhabha argues that globalization must always begin in the home, meaning that when we consider globalization it: "…requires that we first evaluate how globalizing nations deal with 'the difference within' – the problems of diversity and redistribution at the local level, and the rights and representations of minorities in the regional domain" (*LoC* xv). This is a concern I believe *Open City* negotiates throughout. Julius is aware of the people that have lived in the spaces he moves. The novel criticises our collective "forgetfulness", in that we celebrate some stories of historical importance, we chose to forget other, and equally important, stories. Bhabha urges us to think: "What is the status of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, or the Muslims in India in the midst of the transformational myths and realities of global connectivity?" (*LoC* xv). To my mind this is exactly what *Open City* urges us to do. Julius reflects on these stories of origin, seemingly forgotten by a global world occupied by free-market forces, technological innovation and connectivity.

His own inability of connectivity relegates him to live, as we have seen, in a disjointed, displaced, in-between state. This too resonates with Bhabha's form of vernacular cosmopolitanism, because by placing himself at the intersections (and in the interstices) of these "starting points of other national and international histories and geographies", Julius "re-envisions" history and culture (*LoC* xx). This historical and cultural re-envisioning is how Bhabha believes we can achieve "our own national or communal identity" (*LoC* xx). It is through Farouq that Julius comes closer to this understanding.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the concepts of space, time and identity in *Open City* and *Home*. The main aim of my research has been to explore how these concepts have contributed, in various ways, to the displacement, homelessness and subjectivity of characters in the two novels. Secondly, the homelessness I have explored in the novels is not a result of being banished from the place of belonging. It is not a transcendental homelessness in the veins of Georg Lukacs or Edward Said. Although it overlaps with a tragic homelessness at times, the condition I have explored here is one where the sense of belonging to the home has been "loosened". As I have seen, this condition is portrayed differently in the two novels.

In the first chapter, I looked at how space and its configurations both inhibited and allowed the characters' mobility. In *Open City* Julius' mobility is mainly portrayed through his walks around the city. The perceptive walker is a known literary figure, and introduced by Baudelaire as the *flâneur*. While Julius shares many aspects of this character, Baudelaire's *flâneur* was a figure of Enlightenment was a privileged white man, and Julius is noticed by his surroundings in a way that Baudelaire's *flâneur* was not. Doreen Massey believes the figure of *the flâneur* is insufficient in the representation of space, because such a figure only catches one side of things, and in her view there is more to space than this. However, as I have seen, the recent exploration of a postcolonial *flâneur* has given rise to an ability to explore space from different perspectives. The city space is what I have explored in *Open City*, namely New York City and Brussels. By employing Massey's propositions for how we can look at space, I have showed that Julius and the people he meets represent individual trajectories that are a product of New York City, but also a product of the places that they left behind, and together, as they intersect, they produce the lived-in space of New York City (and Brussels). Furthermore I have seen that the layering of space with history that Julius does proves that space is not static. Time and space are intertwined, and while new places are created, they are always fluid and traces of past trajectories are not erased. Julius' ability to see these past trajectories is what makes him at home in the world. Massey's notion of spatial configuration and the expectations we have to certain spaces illuminates the limited mobility Julius experiences in Brussels. As a result of the hostility towards immigrants, Arabs and

Africans especially, Julius conscious of abstaining from going to certain places, and this inhibits his mobility. Whereas Julius personifies the cosmopolitan idea of being "at home in the world", I have seen here that even in a globalised world there are limitations to that freedom.

The second part of this chapter explored the infliction of the limitation Glory and Jack experience in their father's home. However, one might see their individual and collaborative projects inside and outside of the domestic sphere as an effort to make the home of their childhood more concurrent with their life in the present. As I have seen, the domestic sphere in many ways inhibits Jack and Glory's freedom. The house in many ways represents a painful past for Glory and Jack. While their father seems to emulate the past by re-enacting old traditions and dwelling in nostalgic memories, Jack and Glory cannot simply go back in time, because the place of nostalgic memory will have changed. By doing so, I argue that Reverend Boughton deprives Glory and Jack of their ongoing, independent stories. However, as I have shown, their collaborative efforts to rework the home allow them (although intermittently) to develop a shared sense of belonging, as well as providing a solution to a more mobile existence. By working in the garden and fixing the car, Jack and Glory produce a new space that is different from the home of their past, and they are able to do this because their trajectories intersect at *that* particular moment in time.

In the second chapter of this thesis I explored how time and memory serve as individual and collective constructions of reality. In *Open City* Julius' memories of his own past are layered with the historical past of the United States, but also extend to the historical past of the world. I explored how the repetitive way in which the novel introduces stories of Julius' interlocutors and history of geographical sites displaces Julius' present. These stories, I found, represent "uncanny voices of memory", that contribute to the doubleness of the novel in that the way Julius represents himself *to* himself reflects the way certain stories are not included in the collective consciousness. The novel presents us with a view of the past that dislocates the present, and I argued that this makes Julius understand that there are things in his future that haven't reached him yet. Thus, I conclude that Julius does indeed inhabit an in-between space.

Furthermore, in the second part of this chapter, I considered the varying ways Glory, Jack and Reverend Boughton construct their realities. I argued that the Boughton home be viewed as a patriarchal space, where the cultural expectations do no longer fit with Glory and Jack's present life. By employing Bhabha's notion of "the unhomely", I found that Jack's absence throughout the years had disrupted their family dynamic. The culture that Reverend Boughton inhabits clashes with the present culture in which his children inhabit, and this creates incommunicability between them. Because he is married to an African American woman, in the midst of the civil right movement, I argued that the border between the public and the home becomes confused when Jack returns home. However, I also considered how the religious culture that Glory and Jack grew up in is also a representation of the public in the home, in that their behaviour is affected because the public is always watching them. However, as Della and Jack's child arrive in Gilead this proves (to Glory at least) that Jack was not simply a haunting absence. I conclude that their presence signifies a "newness" that is not part of the continuum of past and present.

In the third chapter I further explored how time and space contributed to the characters' subjectivity. In *Home*, Gilead stands out as a complacent, homogenous town, where the sameness isolates Jack and Glory. Reverend Boughton lives as a hybrid between his own generation and the younger generation of his children who have entered his life again. I explored how this generation gap causes misunderstanding and alienation between Reverend Boughton and Jack. I argued that Jack tries to find a third space of enunciation by employing the theology centred, origin-based language that his father might respond to. However, it is Lila who seems to be most perceptive to Jack's questions. Lila's hybrid identity is more equipped to negotiate between the Jack's world, and the world of Reverend Boughton and John Ames, and she is able to voice Jack's questions to his father, as well as providing the answer that "people can change". As Jack finds that the Boughton home and the town of Gilead cannot act as the home he had hoped, I argue that Glory, by envisioning her nephew's return to Gilead in the future, sees the opportunity for the Boughton home to give rise to a third space of enunciation in the future.

In *Open City*, Julius' hybrid identity as half Nigerian, half German is firmly established. However, I argued that he does not seem to identify with these labels all of the time, which

contributes to the cosmopolitan ideal of being at home in the world. I proposed that it is in his encounter with Farouq, that Julius' subjectivity is "discursively produced". By viewing Julius and Farouq as doubles, I saw that what has been claimed by several to be an elitist literary cosmopolitanism in Julius, also contain elements of a vernacular cosmopolitanism that Farouq champions. This means that by placing himself at the intersections of national and transnational histories that Julius does, leaves him anxious of who he is, and where he belongs. In the end, I argue that the novel ultimately rejects a cosmopolitan aesthetic, as many scholars also have proclaimed, but that in doing so, the novel adopts a vernacular cosmopolitanism that urges us to think about the past as we enter the future.

Although the two novels I have investigated diverge both temporally and spatially, they both describe the fluid notion of home that I wanted to explore. Places change as time passes, and static notions or expectations of a particular place, such as the home, become insufficient. In both novels the implications of this can be seen on each character. For Julius, his displaced present allows him to understand that there is no controlling the things yet to come. This enables him to continue moving forward. Jack and Glory have both returned home with expectations of what the home should mean for them in the present. When these expectations are not met, Jack leaves, perhaps in search of a place that can provide the sense of belonging that Gilead and the Boughton home cannot. Whereas Glory is able to understand that her notion of the home of her childhood is no longer there, she subsequently reworks the notion of home in order to make it a place of belonging, perhaps not in her present, but certainly in her future.

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