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Book Review: Reimagining Home in the 21st Century by Justine Lloyd & Ellie Vasta

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Lloyd, Justine, and Ellie Vasta, eds. *Reimagining Home in the 21st Century*, Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2017. xii + 246 pages. Hardcover, \$135.00.

Editors Justine Lloyd and Ellie Vasta have collected together articles concerning the social and political meaning of home from a variety of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. This anthology spans a variety of topics that center around the concept of home: “Who can and cannot speak in the name of home? Who has the power to define and regulate visions of home that exclude and deny others? Where are the visions of home that recognize rather than close off difference and diversity? Where is home practiced and by whom?” (p. 5). In an era of mass migration and echoes of colonialism, the definition of home reveals much about what a society values and how people make meaning of transcontinental lives. Refreshingly, many of the articles concentrate on Australia, an often-overlooked geography in the English-language dialogue about migration. The articles range from densely theoretical, to specific ethnography to, autoethnographical self-reflection.

The first two sections are organized around the theoretical contributions of classical sociologists (the figure of “the stranger” as articulated by Georg Simmel in 1950, and “dwelling” as first discussed by Martin Heidegger in 1971 in his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking” and revived by John Urry in 2000). The latter half eschew a specific theoretical perspective, instead relying on the well-known categories of “publicness” and “materiality” while the authors still return to the leitmotifs of “the stranger” and “dwelling.”

The articles offer useful insights into how home-making practices reflect social structures. Yet, while the desire for a cross-discipline dialogue is commendable, the collection feels disjointed due to the varying levels of theoretical engagement. For example, the chapters that bookend the project seem incompatible. Norbert Ebert’s “Reflections on home and identity in late modernity” (p. 21-35) is a protracted sociological examination of precarity and normativity while Sian Supski’s offering, “Kitchen as home: Shifting meanings” (p.224-237), is a reflexive meditation on the meaning of that space, informed by conversations with women who have also designed their food preparation spaces. Both were thought provoking, but did not seem to belong in the same volume. That being said, as part of the goal of this collection is to “unsettle home” (p. 6), the diverse approaches offer articles from various vantage points that could be accessible to a number of different types of social scientists. Urban planners might choose to focus on Ann Deslandes and Justine Humphry’s “Staying in place: Meanings, practices and the regulation of publicness in Sydney’s Martin Place” and Sarah Redshaw’s “Mobile my spaces: Home in cars, working vehicles and contrasting dwelling for backpackers in campervans and homeless car sleepers” to expand their understanding of the cultural meanings of public space. Anthropologists will enjoy the classical methodology of Yasmine’s Musharbash’s “‘Country’, ‘community’ and ‘growth town’: Three spatio-temporal snapshots of Warlpiri experiences of home” and Martina Giuffrè’s “The transnational matrifocal home among Cape Verdean migrant women: The case of the Santo Antão island”. Policymakers could benefit from a close reading of Adam Stebbing’s “Without house or home? Understanding homelessness as dwelling” to explore why and how definitions in policies impact people’s lived experiences. Unfortunately, by having a little something for every audience, it does not feel as if the entire book is directed towards any particular end.

Furthermore, the theoretical focus, when overt, feels dated as authors return again and again to Simmel and Heidegger. Several chapters, including those by Ellie Vasta; Ilaria Vanni Accarigi; and Aleksandra Ålund, Carl-Ulrik Schierup and Lisa King; capture the postmodern juxtaposition of studying a creature that has always migrated but whose migration patterns have

shifted dramatically in response to global systems. Humans, with and without houses, have always made homes. Understanding these behaviors and the beliefs which structure them offer a time-tested window into a society's values, which are never static. Despite its drawbacks, I would recommend this book as a way to begin discussing what it means to be "at home" in a world where technology and trade are exponentially increasing the density of networks.

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