Prefatory Note

This study is driven by an explicitly political agenda: to counter right-wing discourses aimed at monopolizing the meaning of belonging. The success over the years of such discourses among the Swiss electorate has seriously complicated my affection for the land I call home, and though I write from a position of safety and privilege, my – far from traumatic – memories of growing up gay in a heteronormative society have left me not entirely unfamiliar with the feeling of being out of place. This inquiry into the concepts of home and belonging is thus to some extent a deeply personal matter. Nevertheless, I will refrain from using the first-person singular in the remainder of this study, opting for the 'inclusive we' instead. This constitutes an attempt on my part to create a sense of communal endeavor. Should anyone find this stylistic choice alienating or awkward, then this may serve as a salutary reminder of how easily gestures of inclusion can turn into strategies of coercion, even if not intended as such. Fair warning, dear reader? Let us go then, you and I.

Introduction – Theories of Home: Alienation and Belonging in Steven Spielberg's *E. T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*

Abandoned by his loved ones and exiled from home, E. T. is arguably the most famous illegalized alien in motion picture history.[1] At the beginning of Steven Spielberg's film, we see E. T. and others of his kind peacefully exploring their terrestrial surroundings – when suddenly a group of humans appears, aiming to capture the foreign 'invaders.' While the other aliens reach the safety of their spaceship, thus managing to elude their human pursuers, E. T. is left behind, stranded on an unfamiliar planet. In panic, E. T. runs off and hides in a field behind a suburban house, where he is later discovered by a ten-year-old boy named Elliott, whose own home was recently disrupted when the boy's father left his mother, Mary, for a younger woman. Initially, E. T. and Elliott are afraid of each other, yet soon fear is replaced by fascination. Elliott smuggles his new-found friend to the safety of his room, where at one point the boy places his hand on a globe that stands on his desk. Looking at the alien, Elliott explains: "Earth. Home."

In describing earth as home, Elliot's point is evidently not that all humans feel perfectly at home in the world; the boy is not referring to profound feelings of belonging, but simply notes that earth is, for better or worse, the planet we humans inhabit, and where we must try to live our lives. And yet, it would be misleading to suggest that Elliott uses the word *home* merely as a spatial marker, for he is in fact interested in learning more about E. T.'s history. More precisely, Elliott tries to explain the meaning of the word *home* because he wants to find out what kind of being E. T. is: where he comes from, and how he got here (Kath Woodward 48). Home, in other words, also raises questions about origins and the journeys we make, and therefore has a temporal as well as a spatial dimension (Agnes Heller 7; Cecile Sandten and Kathy-Ann Tan 3). Moreover, home involves our relations with others: those with whom we share our places of

1 I would like to thank Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Anja Neukom-Hermann for their comments on the first draft, as well as Sarah Chevalier for her feedback on the final version of this chapter. Some of the arguments presented here are based on my essay "Resisting Governmental Illegalization: Xenophobia and Otherness in Steven Spielberg's *E. T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*."

shelter; those with whom we feel we belong but from whom we may at present be separated; and those with whom we are forced to struggle and engage because we simply have no other place to go (Jan Willem Duyvendak 120). Finally, even if we limit ourselves to the meaning of home as merely a kind of habitat – the place where we happen to reside – the concept's range remains nothing short of astonishing. Home, as we try to explain it to others, can denote small-scale places of shelter – a house, for instance, or a tent – but also neighborhoods, nations, entire planets: "Earth. Home" (Figure 1).[2]

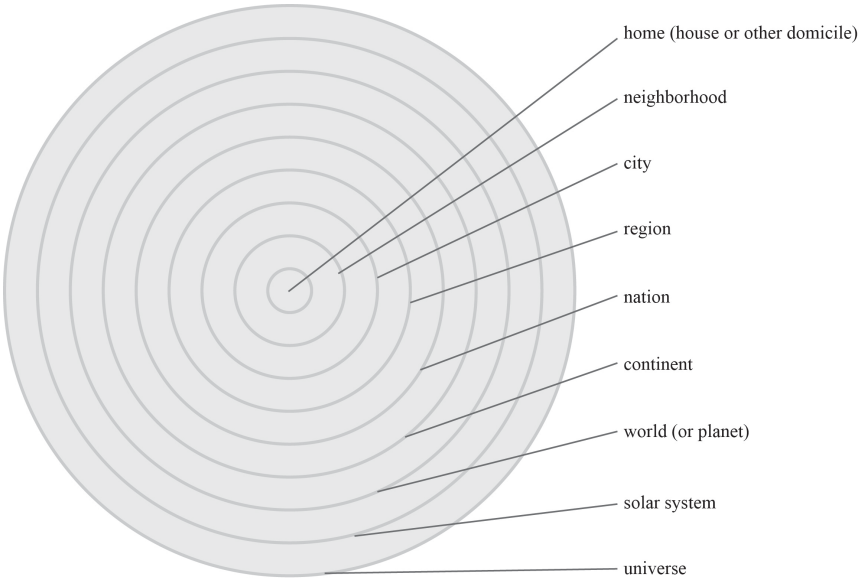

Figure 1: The idea of home ranges across various scales (diagram adapted from Fox 19).

This conceptual range is far from a critical disadvantage. Rather, home is a powerful tool for literary and cultural analysis precisely because it is a multi-scalar and open concept that allows us effortlessly to relate our smallest and most intimate concerns to matters of truly global importance. Indeed, it is by focusing on the manifold dimensions of home – as a place of residence or shelter; as a network of given as well as of chosen relationships; as a repository

2 The diagram simplifies matters, of course. For example, it is possible to have more than one home (e.g. the apartment where one lives and the house of one's parents, where one grew up). For some of us, the diagram would thus have to have more than one center.

of both individual and collective ideals (Alyson Blunt and Robyn Dowling 100; Fox 6); as a story of origins, waypoints, and destinations; or as a site of violence and exclusion (Rose Marangoly George 9; Sandten and Tan 8) – that we can develop critical questions, especially in situations where the term's multiple meanings are difficult, or indeed impossible, to reconcile. As a theoretical concept, in short, home allows us to explore a dialectic movement of alienation and belonging that, in turn, is able to generate extraordinary passion, in all the senses of that word: desire and yearning; fervor, agony, and rage; but also feelings very much like love.

Fictions of Home: Theoretical Framework

The core theoretical assumption of this study is that fictions are home-making practices, and we will soon examine this idea more closely. It may be helpful, however, first to say a word or two about the way in which this chapter is structured, as well as to comment on the general trajectory of this study. If, for instance, this first subsection is entitled "Theoretical *Framework*," then this is because the ideas developed here will not be discussed explicitly in the main chapters of this study. Instead, they constitute a way of framing the overall argument, and will accordingly be revisited in the concluding chapter. In addition, the discussion of *E. T.* in the remainder of this introduction is not intended to develop a comprehensive reading of Spielberg's film. Rather, the aims of the discussion are:

(a) to introduce key ideas and concepts relating to home and belonging, as they have been proposed by various theoretical schools;
(b) to exemplify the interpretive power of these concepts by applying them to Spielberg's film;
(c) to indicate, roughly, which of these ideas and concepts are central to which of the six main chapters of this study.

We will also examine briefly the choice of primary texts, as well as some important caveats regarding the scope of the overall argument. The introductory chapter does not, however, summarize the findings of the six main chapters; these will, instead, be presented in the conclusion.

If, in this chapter and the ones that follow, the argument will often have a meandering quality, then this is a matter of conscious choice, for in order to 'get' home – in the sense of understanding it – we must be willing to travel wide and far: to explore its connections to the wider world, as well as its complex internal relations. Home-making thus requires a degree of patience, and the style of the argument is to some extent meant to reflect this fact. At the same time, being

patient is not the same as tolerating aimlessness or boredom, so that a plea for the former ought not to be misconstrued as an appeal for the latter.

The key ideas formulated in the remainder of this introductory chapter can be summarized in the form of seven partly overlapping precepts:

1. Even in a secular analysis of home, we must bear in mind the foundational, metaphysical dimension of questions of belonging. This means to consider, among other things, religious beliefs and motifs (such as the idea of a transcendental home) as well as agnostic or atheist accounts of existential angst or trauma (in the sense of a not-being-at-home in the world).
2. References to other texts (especially canonical ones), as well as to established generic traditions, can be understood as home-making practices because they add a dimension of familiarity to an unfamiliar text. However, at the same time, we need to analyze carefully the precise way in which these intertextual references relate (a) to the text in which they occur, and (b) to each other, as this may alert us to important intertextual entanglements, which in fact serve to defamiliarize and critique the tradition.
3. Familiarity, predictability, and a sense of control are essential features of homely homes; they arise, among other things, from habitual practices and ritual actions, and they constitute 'energy-saving devices' that allow humans to focus their limited mental and physical resources on tasks of their choice (rather than having to expend all their energy on the challenges of everyday life). However, too much familiarity can constitute an obstacle to understanding and (self-)knowledge, which is why alienation effects and defamiliarizing practices are necessary tools for critical inquiry (whether deployed in works of art or by critics, scholars, and other analysts).
4. It is by no means a coincidence that the terms *community* and *communication* are so similar to each other, as communication is central to the establishment and maintenance of a sense of home. One factor that facilitates successful communication is a shared cognitive background (established, for instance, through shared experiences), while another crucial factor is the distribution of communicative resources. As this distribution is unequal, some will find it easier than others to establish and maintain a sense of home (e.g. in the case of diasporic communities).
5. Psychoanalysis provides us with powerful concepts for analyzing home – both through Freud's notion of the uncanny and, more generally, through complex techniques of decoding that allow us to unearth the unconscious

forces that shape personal as well as collective identities, and which influence the very form of works of art.

6. Even the supposedly private home is a site that is permeated by relations of power, and we must always take into account the political forces that help to shape the home (as well as the individual and collective identities associated with that home). These forces include:
   (a) the marginalization of others on the basis of race or ethnicity;
   (b) cultural discourses about ideal homes – including the construction of 'normal' as opposed to 'deviant' forms of desire – and how they are diffused through various media, even in the home itself;
   (c) the gendering of domestic space and how it relates to structures of domination (e.g. patriarchy as a social system);
   (d) class relations (e.g. the production of social stratification through economic inequality, and how it appears in, and sustains or undermines, particular types of home).
7. Any critical analysis of home must focus not only on the content or ingredients of home, but also on their formal arrangement. Indeed, the core theoretical assumption of this study is formal in nature: that the concepts of fiction and home are structurally akin to each other because they involve the same form of fictionalizing negotiation between the two realms of the real and the imaginary. One implication of this assumption is that a better understanding of fiction also contributes to our understanding of home and belonging.

Evidently, each of the subsequent chapters constitutes an attempt to follow these precepts, and they may be judged accordingly.

Two caveats, however, are in order. First, the fact that this study covers only texts from between 1850 and 2000 means that all claims and findings must be treated with due caution when applied to earlier periods. Second, the six primary texts discussed in the main chapters do not constitute anything like a representative sample of fictions of home. One simple reason for this is the sheer number of texts that explicitly make home and belonging their theme. A quick search on Amazon.com, for instance, yields 16,944 titles in the category "Literature & Fiction" that feature the word *home* in their titles, and this is of course only the proverbial tip of the iceberg, as the theme of belonging can easily be central to a novel that does not announce this fact in its title.[3] At the same time, the principle of selection for the primary texts used in this study is not entirely random:

3 The search was performed on August 2, 2017.

three of the texts are English (*The Mill on the Floss*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Union Street*), while the other three are American (*Moby-Dick*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *The Virgin Suicides*); three of the texts were written by men (Herman Melville, William Faulker, and Jeffrey Eugenides), while the other three were written by women (George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Pat Barker); and the texts date, roughly, to the beginning, the middle, and the end of the period covered in this study (i.e. 1851 and 1860; 1925 and 1936; 1982 and 1993). There is thus at least some socio-historical breadth to the corpus, though serious limits remain (e.g. all the English authors are women, whereas all the American authors are men; all six authors are white). At the same time, one aim of the six readings presented in the main chapters is to open up each of the primary texts to a wider range of themes, and thus hopefully to make it easier for readers from various backgrounds to discover, perhaps in unsuspected places, a little piece of that place called home.

The fact that home is such a fundamental and complex concept also means that it would be difficult to provide a comprehensive overview of the previous critical literature on the topic. Fortunately, this is also to some extent unnecessary, as Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's study *Home* (2006) constitutes an excellent survey of key concepts and debates (with a particular focus on the fields of geography, sociology, and anthropology, but by no means limited to them). Moreover, it is difficult to think of a more concise definition of home than the one suggested by Blunt and Dowling, who contend that home is "a *spatial imaginary*: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places" (2; original emphasis). Home, for Blunt and Dowling, is thus neither purely imaginary nor entirely reducible to the places and contexts that form the concept's material basis.[4] Crucially, the phrases "variable" and "related to context" in Blunt and Dowling's definition also hint at the temporal dimen-

4 Elisabeth Bronfen uses a slightly different term in the subtitle of her study *Home in Hollywood: The Imaginary Geography of Cinema* (2004), but the terminological reversal – 'imaginary geography' vs. 'spatial imaginary' – arguably signals a difference in emphasis rather than a fundamental disagreement about the components that must enter the equation.

sion of home noted earlier (highlighted as well by Sandten and Tan 3).[5] To render this aspect more explicit, we ought perhaps to amend their formula and say that *home is a spatiotemporal imaginary*.[6]

The dual quality of home as simultaneously extending into the realm of the imaginary and into spatiotemporal reality, in turn, constitutes the main reason why analyzing fiction can contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of home as such. In *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (1991), Wolfang Iser rejects the conventional binary opposition between fiction and reality, positing instead that we ought to envisage a triadic relationship between the real, the fictive, and the imaginary. According to Iser, a fictional text necessarily incorporates aspects of lived reality, but at the same time it is never reducible to this referential dimension. Instead, the act of fictionalizing also involves components and effects

5 Other texts will be discussed throughout, but it may be useful to provide a list of the most important recent studies available in English here: Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958); Witbold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1986); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987); Rose Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1996); Raffaella Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture, 1500–1800* (1999); David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility, and Identity* (2000); Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (2002); Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (2005); Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (2010); Jan Willem Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Western Europe and the United States* (2011); John Hill, *At Home in the World: Sounds and Symmetries of Belonging* (2010); Judith Flanders, *The Making of Home* (2014); Imogen Racz, *Art and the Home: Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday* (2015); Michael Allen Fox, *Home* (2016); Thomas Barrie, *House and Home: Cultural Contexts, Ontological Roles* (2017). In addition, there are many shorter contributions, the most thought-provoking of which include: Doreen Massey, "A Place Called Home?" (1992); Mary Douglas, "The Idea of Home" (1993); Orlando Patterson, "Slavery, Alienation, and the Female Discovery of Personal Freedom" (1993); Agnes Heller, "Where Are We at Home?" (1995); John Durham Peters, "Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon" (1999); Douglas A. Marshall, "Behavior, Belonging, and Belief: A Theory of Ritual Practice" (2002); Nicholas Howe, Introduction to *Home and Homelessness in the Medieval and Renaissance World* (2004); Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework" (2010); Cecile Sandten and Kathy-Ann Tan, "Home: Concepts, Constructions, Contexts" (2016). See also David A. Ellison, *Home* (2009) and Klaus Stierstorfer, *Constructions of Home* (2010).

6 While it may seem tempting to replace the adjective *spatiotemporal* with the term *chronotope* – which Bakhtin defines as "time space" and which he coined to express "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in the literature" ("Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" 84) – I refrain from doing so because the term, in Bakhtin, applies specifically to artistic representation, whereas the definition of home provided here is intended to cover non-fictional uses of the term *home* as well.

that do not form part of the represented reality, and which must therefore stem from some other source. Iser suggests that this other source is the imaginary, and in his view the act of fictionalizing constitutes the creative force that negotiates between the imaginary and the real. More precisely, the act of fictionalizing 'de-realizes' the real by relating it to the imaginary, just as it gathers or 'concretizes' the free-floating impulses of the imaginary into a comprehensible shape or *Gestalt* (*The Fictive and the Imaginary* 1–4).[7] The fictive, in short, is the result of a dialectical confrontation between the real and the imaginary, and as such it is precariously poised between these different realms.

Considering that fiction's precarious negotiation between the two poles of the real and the imaginary also applies to the concept of home, we may now propose that home is itself very similar to fiction: not in the sense of being 'untrue' or simply opposed to the real, but in the sense that any particular idea of home is the result of a fictionalizing act that intermingles the real with the imaginary (and vice versa).[8] Fictions of home are therefore not merely narratives that happen to thematize the dialectic of alienation and belonging; they are also, as fictions, structurally akin to the mental processes that allow for the construction and maintenance of home in the first place. More specifically – as Franco Moretti suggests in *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1983) – fictional texts constitute formal *compromises* between the real and the imaginary, and as such they train us "without our being aware of it for an unending task of mediation and

7 In the German original, the key passage runs: "Das Oppositionsverhältnis von Fiktion und Wirklichkeit würde die Diskussion des Fiktiven im Text um seine entscheidende Dimension verkürzen; denn offensichtlich gibt es im fiktionalen Text sehr viel Realität, die nicht nur eine solche sozialer Wirklichkeit sein muss, sondern ebenso eine der Gefühle und Empfindungen sein kann. Diese gewiss unterschiedlichen Realitäten sind ihrerseits keine Fiktionen, und sie werden auch nicht zu solchen, nur weil sie in die Darstellung fiktionaler Texte eingehen. […] Bezieht sich also der fiktionale Text auf Wirklichkeit, ohne sich in deren Bezeichnung zu erschöpfen, so ist die Wiederholung ein Akt des Fingierens, durch den Zwecke zum Vorschein kommen, die der wiederholten Wirklichkeit nicht eignen. Ist Fingieren aus der wiederholten Realität nicht ableitbar, dann bringt sich in ihm ein Imaginäres zur Geltung, das mit der im Text wiederkehrenden Realität zusammengeschlossen wird. So gewinnt der Akt des Fingierens seine Eigentümlichkeit dadurch, dass er die Wiederkehr lebensweltlicher Realität im Text bewirkt und gerade in solcher Wiederholung das Imaginäre in eine Gestalt zieht, wodurch sich die wiederkehrende Realität zum Zeichen und das Imaginäre zur Vorstellbarkeit des dadurch Bezeichneten aufheben" (*Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre* 20).

8 Arguing from a Jungian perspective, John Hill makes a rather similar claim about home: "As a symbol it mediates between outer reality and inner truth" (5).

conciliation" (40).[9] Fictions themselves, that is to say, are best understood as symbolical home-making practices, in the broadly Marxist sense that they invent "imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 64).[10] Conversely, if fictions are imaginary attempts to reach formal compromises between real-life contradictions, then this implies that one important task for literary critics is to unearth the problems that fictions attempt to solve (i.e. to 'unpack' the conflicting forces that led to the fictional compromise in the first place).[11]

And yet, even though home is structurally akin to fiction, the concepts differ in two important respects, the first of which has to do with different types of truth claims. The question of truth in fiction is, of course, a thorny issue (e.g. Eagleton, *The Event of Literature* 106–166; Lamarque 220–254), but for our purposes it will suffice to say that fictional texts involve three basic truth claims:

(a) claims about what is true within the fictional world or with regard to the fictional text (i.e. *intra-fictional* truth claims);
(b) claims about the adequate representation of types of real-world phenomena, or kinds of real-world experiences (i.e. *generalizing* truth claims);
(c) claims about the correspondence between, on the one hand, information provided in the fiction, and, on the other, a particular state of things in the real world (i.e. truth claims of *one-to-one correspondence*).

Crucially, these three truth claims differ with regard to the grounds on which they can be contested. In the case of intra-fictional truth claims (e.g. 'In Shake-

9 If Elisabeth Bronfen asserts that "a knowledge of the uncanniness of existence haunts all attempts at devising protective fictions that will allow us to make sense of the contradictions and contingencies of reality," then she is in effect expressing the same idea, albeit in a psychoanalytic rather than a Marxist idiom. After all, the phrase "unending task" in Moretti's formulation signals that he, too, regards the formal compromise effected by any fictional text as inherently precarious and unstable.

10 Perhaps it is this idea of fiction as a home-making practice that Martin Heidegger has in mind when he claims, in "… Poetically Man Dwells …" (1951), that "poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling" (213), defining poetry as a way of "measuring" (219): "This is why poetic images are imaginings in a distinctive sense: not mere fancies and illusions but imaginings that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar" (223). The German original runs: "Darum sind die dichterischen Bilder Ein-Bildungen in einem ausgezeichneten Sinne: nicht bloße Phantasien und Illusionen, sondern Ein-Bildungen als erblickbare Einschlüsse des Fremden in den Anblick des Vertrauten" ("… dichterisch wohnet der Mensch …" 195). Robert Mugerauer succintly sums up Heidegger's view: "The poet attempts to find a true home by wandering out into the foreign" (119).

11 For a brief account of the intellectual lineage that defines fiction as an imaginary solution of real-life contradictions see Haslett (67).

speare's play *Hamlet*, the protragonist marries Ophelia'), the information provided in the fictional text itself forms the only basis on which we may accept or reject such a claim ('No, the text makes it very clear that Hamlet and Ophelia never get married'). In the case of generalizing truth claims, by contrast (e.g. 'Jane Austen is right when she writes: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife"'; *Pride and Prejudice* 5), we must refer to evidence pertaining to the real world when formulating a counter-argument ('What about men who are attracted to other men?').[12] In the case of fictional truth claims of one-to-one correspondence, finally (e.g. 'In 1991, Zurich was the capital of Switzerland'), readers are free to take note of divergences between the fictional world and real life ('In fact it was Berne'), but as it is essential to the game of fiction that constraints on truth claims of one-to-one correspondence be playfully suspended, such divergences do not constitutes lies, or even inaccuracies. Instead, counterfactuals in fiction prompt a series of interpretive questions: What is the function of these divergences within the fictional text? Do they contribute to or detract from the text's aesthetic and rhetorical effectiveness? And is it morally justifiably to 'play around' with the particular facts in question? Even in the case of fiction, in short, truth claims of one-to-one correspondence remain open to critical debate, but they cannot be challenged directly on the basis of their divergence from fact – and this is what distinguishes the fictional compromise between the real and the imaginary from the structurally analogous compromise of home as a spatiotemporal imaginary. In the case of truth claims about home, constraints on one-to-one correspondence remain in full force, and it is therefore legitimate to challenge any divergences of this kind directly ('No, Dietikon is *not* your home because you have no relation to that place and in fact don't even know where it is').

If these different rules for how to challenge truth claims provide us with one criterion theoretically to distinguish the concept of home from that of fiction, then the second criterion pertains to these concepts' respective degrees of closure. In the case of fiction, the compromise between the real and the imaginary is necessarily expressed in a definite shape (i.e. a finished product, such as a written text or a film). By contrast, home as a spatiotemporal imaginary remains, for the most part, implicit, or is expressed piecemeal, either by individuals or by

12 As Lamarque rightly notes, literary truth "is not always to be found spelt out explicitly in literary works," which means that readers are often "called upon to construct their own generalizations" (236). Accordingly, the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* is used here as a simplified example, for the sake of the argument. In the context of Jane Austen's novel, it should, of course, not necessarily be taken at face value.