



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT / DIPLOMA THESIS

Titel der Diplomarbeit / Title of the Diploma Thesis

„Reimagining Home: The Multimodal Representation of
Potential Homes in Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, *The Lost
Thing* and *Eric*“

verfasst von / submitted by

Barbara Schermann

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2016 / Vienna, 2016

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

A 190 333 344

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Lehramtsstudium UF Deutsch, UF Englisch

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Reichl

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have been part of this journey.

To my supervisor, Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Reichl,

Thank you for introducing me to the fascinating worlds of Shaun Tan and your continuous support, valuable advice and thoughtful guidance during my writing process. I could not have imagined a better advisor and mentor for this project.

To my family,

I am immensely grateful to have all of you standing by my side, cheering me up even in the darkest times. This accomplishment would not have been possible without your unfailing love and support. I am gratefully indebted to my sister Lazy in particular, for her constant encouragement during countless insightful discussions and her willingness to engage in midnight reading sessions.

To my friends,

Thank you for listening to me deliberating over my problems and findings and for offering emotional support when desperately needed.

To Martin,

Thank you for bringing so much joy and happiness to my life. I am forever grateful for your loving patience, cheerful encouragement and unwavering belief in me throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis.

Thank you.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction: The Question of Home	1
2. ‘This question of nomenclature’: Genre(s) and Audience(s) in the Case of Shaun Tan.....	3
2.1. Picturebooks and Crossover Picturebooks	4
2.2. Graphic novels and Comic books.....	7
2.3. Fusion Texts	9
3. Theorising “Home”	12
3.1. Notions of “Home” in Children’s Literature	14
3.1.1. <i>Home as a Setting and Theme: From Safe Haven to Failed Home</i>	14
3.1.2. <i>Home as a Structural Element: The Home/Away/Home Pattern</i>	19
3.1.3. <i>Home in the Context of Migration</i>	24
3.2. Notions of “Home” in Postcolonial Studies and Literature.....	28
4. Potential Homes in Shaun Tan’s <i>The Arrival</i>, <i>The Lost Thing</i> and <i>Eric</i>	35
4.1. Home as a Topographical and Physical Space	36
4.1.1. <i>Homelands: Home Countries and Home Towns</i>	37
4.1.2. <i>Dwellings: Houses, Rooms and Chambers</i>	52
4.1.3. <i>Gardens and Outside Spaces</i>	60
4.2. Home as a Psychodynamic Space: Belonging.....	63
4.3. Home as an Imagined Space: Utopian Thoughts?	78
5. Hitting Home? Conclusion	89
6. Bibliography	92
7. List of Figures.....	99

1. Introduction: The Question of Home

At a time shaped by issues of migration, resettlement and exile due to reasons as diverse as national crises, hunger and war on the one and educational, business and lifestyle choices on the other hand, any conceptualisation of home seems necessarily intricate, vague and ambiguous. The award-winning work of universally acclaimed Australian picturebook artist Shaun Tan is traversed by negotiations of otherness, alienation and belonging. And while his books differ in approach, they all centre on feelings of estrangement in a foreign place and propose diverse and ambiguous resolutions. In 2001, Bradford examined unhomely moments in three postcolonial picturebooks, amongst them Tan's *The Rabbits*, arguing that as narratives involving the displacement of colonised peoples they are shaped by unsettling and transgressing notions of homeliness. Still, concerning his more recent works Tan states that while many of his pictures are quite empty landscapes, "there's also some pleasant resolution here too, they are not unsettling pictures. [...] You could even say, in my case, that it resolves into a feeling of belonging through the simple action of staying still, looking, feeling and thinking" (Tan, "Suburban Odyssey Interview"). Therefore, reacting not only to the reversed perspectives suggested by the three works under scrutiny but also to the author himself, the purpose of this thesis is to explore and trace notions of reconciliation and homeliness in Tan's works.

To be specific, this thesis aims at examining negotiations and reimaginings of "home" in Shaun Tan's famous graphic narrative *The Arrival* and the picturebooks *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*. By adopting both theories from children's literature and postcolonial studies, it explores visual and verbal representations of potential homes in these works and examines how form and content work together to reimagine home. The main objective of this thesis is to demonstrate the intricate multimodal representations of potential homes in the focus texts, which expand over topographical, psychodynamic and imagined aspects and form fantastic, new constructions of home as places, states and imaginaries, reimagining home in surpassing traditional and static ideas of the home. By exploring the multiple reading paths of home in the texts dealing with subjects like migration, otherness and cross-cultural exchange, this thesis attempts at deconstructing binary oppositions of home and abroad.

First, the theoretical angle as well as the choice of analytical instruments from picturebook research and different related genres are argued for by reinforcing Hunter's (15) identification of Shaun Tan as a "narrative artist". The focus texts are (re-)defined as fusion texts (Evans, "Briggs" 51; "New Kid" 239), which combine elements from picturebooks, comics and graphic novels as well as fine arts, filmmaking and photography and are targeted at

readers of any age. Second, the concept of home is theorised by drawing from the current state of research in children's and postcolonial literature. That is, theories about the significance and function of home as a setting and theme, as a structural element and as a pivotal point in children's stories about migration are examined. Furthermore, notions of home in postcolonial studies are briefly outlined by analysing the constructions of home in imperial England and in diaspora, as well as relating home to Homi Bhabha's concepts 'hybridity' and 'Third Space'. Third, three interconnected reading paths of potential homes in Shaun Tan's work are explored. To be specific, home is firstly considered as a topographical space from macro- (the homeland or home country) to microstructure (a pantry cupboard in the case of *Eric*). Secondly, the psychodynamic aspects of home as a structure and process, which are built on dynamic "pattern[s] of inclusion and exclusion" (George 2), are analysed by drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' and the concept of 'othering'. Third, potential homes are finally considered from a utopian perspective, searching for possible points of contact of home and utopia. Throughout this thesis, both visual and verbal text as well as their interplay serve as a basis for analysis and are examined by drawing on a variety of analytical instruments from picturebook and comic book theory as well as literary theory and visual semiotics. While Tan's work has been immensely popular, resulting in various adaptations of his texts such as in the form of a musical puppet theatre, an exhibition, and an Oscar-winning short film, this thesis deals exclusively with the book-format of each of the focus texts.

2. ‘This question of nomenclature’: Genre(s) and Audience(s) in the Case of Shaun Tan

Who do you write and illustrate for? Perhaps the best answer I can give is this: anyone who reads and looks. That is, anyone who is curious, who enjoys strangeness, mystery and oddity, who likes asking questions and using their imagination, and is prepared to devote time and attention accordingly.
(Tan, “Picture Books: Who Are They For?”)

In his essay “The Accidental Graphic Novelist”, Shaun Tan (2) describes that there is a lot of interest in defining and categorising his works, while he is from a personal point of view less interested in what he terms “this question of nomenclature”. Indeed, Tan and his works have been and continue to be in the centre of debate in regard to discussing interrelations of genre conventions and implied audience(s). Even without close examination, readers of Tan’s texts may discover their exceptionality established in terms of unmistakably unique artwork, intriguing design and narrative style as well as remarkable thematic choices. Yet, to say it with Linnet Hunter (10), “at the same time as we laud Tan’s works, we ask ourselves, ‘What are they? Where do they belong?’”. Not only do they feature themes such as belonging, alienation and migration and “[t]here is no attempt to disambiguate or simplify the inexplicability of existence” since “Tan refrains from serving up easy answers” (Johansen 41), they are also informed by a number of other related media, namely photography, fine arts, sequential art (comics and graphic novels) and (silent) film-making (Tan, “Comments on The Arrival”). Hence, Tan could be identified as picturebook writer and picturebook illustrator, author of graphic novels and painter or fine artist and storyteller. Yet, he is not merely one or the other but conflates all these titles and functions in consolidating various drawing styles and techniques of art production, seeking inspiration from diverse sources and handling the entire creative process himself, from concept to the final work. His multimodal texts prove to be as inimitable as they are hybrid, resisting and challenging all efforts of taxonomy. Nevertheless, Tan’s works are often classified and attributed to specific genres and formats, which results in the employment of different approaches toward his work. Therefore, in the following, those genres the works in question are most often ascribed to are introduced, briefly conceptualised and related to *The Lost Thing*, *The Arrival* and *Eric*. Focusing on the presentation of arguments in favour and against specific classification categories, the theoretical approach and choice of analytical instruments employed for the exploration of potential homes in the works under scrutiny is explained and justified.

First, theory and characteristics of the picturebook are examined and aligned with the books in question, particularly in relation to crossover picturebooks as defined by Sandra

Beckett. Second, comic books and graphic novels are considered as options for classification of Tan's works as well, focusing specifically on demarcation lines of these allocations concerning the picturebook genre. Finally, Janet Evan's concept of fusion texts is examined and the theoretical approach of this thesis is explained. As suggested above, every analysis of Tan's work based on genre discussions needs to draw attention to the fact that these deliberations and classifications are by no means definite, ultimate and irrevocable. That is, scholars frequently disagree on subjects such as genre characterisation and allocation, since genres are artificial divisions created for specific purposes. Hence, their dependence on (current) scholarly discussions results in them being both debatable and variable. Albeit the theoretical background of these controversies cannot be analysed and elucidated in full, the issues of classification and genre affiliation nevertheless demand attention, so that the theoretical approach and choice of analytical instruments employed for the exploration of traces of potential homes in the focus texts is argued for in the following.

2.1. Picturebooks and Crossover Picturebooks

While genre discussions evolve around his work, the author-illustrator Tan himself continues to refer to his books primarily as "picture books" (Tan, "Picture Books"). In fact, before publishing *The Arrival* in 2006, Tan was widely acknowledged as a picturebook artist concerned with the production of texts catalogued as children's literature (Dony 87). Yet, as William Moebius ("Picture book" 169) points out, "no keyword in children's literature could be quite as fluid in its application" as the picturebook. The malleability of the term, which can also be designated as a "'supergenre', a vibrant, versatile genre that seems to know no boundaries" (Beckett 316), encompassing a wide variety of texts within the "vast spectrum of interrelationship between the word and picture" (Nikolajeva and Scott 7), might also be the reason for the preferred application to Tan's works.¹ Indeed, in all three works under scrutiny Tan explores the limitless possibilities Barbara Bader (1) speaks of in her classical definition of the picturebook from 1979:

A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and, foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.

¹ The malleability of the picturebook as a genre is also reflected in the different spelling variants of the term. Both the hyphenated "picture-book" as well as the two-word "picture book" are common in the field of picturebook research. However, along the lines of Lewis (xiv) and Nikolajeva and Scott (8) the spelling "picturebook" is adopted in this thesis in order to emphasise "the compound nature of the artefact itself" (Lewis xiv) and to differentiate between picturebooks and books with pictures.

Both *The Lost Thing* and *Eric* thrive on effects drawn from the dynamic relationship of word and image, which also Nikolajeva and Scott (8) carved out as the central characteristic of the picturebook, and excel in their wholeness of creation from dust jackets and blurbs to endpapers. And even though *Eric* was first published in *Tales from Outer Suburbia*, often termed a collection of illustrated short stories (Ling 47), it is nevertheless a true picturebook in that words and pictures are inextricably linked. Unlike an illustrated story, where images are secondary to words and could be removed without changing the meaning of the story (Nikolajeva and Scott 8), *Eric* is a prime example of the picturebook being “a richer experience than just the simple sum of [its] parts” (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 199). Without the counterpoint created by the text-image interaction, the “iconotext” (Hallberg 165) or “synergy” (Sipe 98) of word and images, *Eric* would read as a completely different text. After all, it has also been the only text of the collection to also be published individually in a small hardcover edition, edited with features of new artwork, layout and endpaper design, which will be used for reference in this thesis.

And while *The Arrival* “is the story of an immigrant told through a series of ‘silent’ pencil drawings” (Tan, “Accidental Graphic Novelist” 2), it is certainly not an entirely wordless narrative since it contains, like most wordless picturebooks (Serafini 24), an amount of text not to be underestimated: the title, the author-illustrator’s name, and other peritextual elements like copyright information, dedication, a small blurb, the artist’s note and excerpts of peer reviews. Moreover, most of this information is stylised in a way that contributes to the issue of migration in times long past as does the incomprehensible fictional language contained in the illustrations, which adds to the experience of alienation and otherness the reader is feeling along with the protagonist. Thus, also *The Arrival* follows Bader’s definition (1) in terms of the picturebook as a “total design” as well as “a social, cultural, historical document”.

Yet, Tan’s work also partly defy the classification of what is widely quoted as the picturebook. While Bader in her definition touches on the seemingly boundless possibilities of the picturebook, which is characterised by a unique combination of two levels of communication, namely the visual and the verbal (Nikolajeva and Scott 1), it simultaneously confines the genre in terms of audience. Similarly, Perry Nodelman (vii) in his seminal *Words about Pictures* defines picturebooks as “books intended for young children which communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no texts at all”, although he notes elsewhere that “it is part of the charm of many of the most interesting picture books that they so strangely combine the childlike and the sophisticated – that the viewer they imply is both very learned and very ingenuous” (Nodelman, *Words about*

Pictures 21) and maintains that “[t]his is serious art, and it deserves the respect we give to other forms of serious art” (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* x).

Although large numbers of scholars and readers alike would probably now agree that “[m]any picturebooks are clearly designed for both small children and sophisticated adults, communicating to the dual audience at a variety of levels” (Nikolajeva and Scott 21), this (pre)conception of picturebooks as children’s literature is still present both in the minds of publishers and readers as well as in the scholarly in engagement with the topic. To take a case in point, Nodelman (“Words Claimed” 11) ultimately insists that “[t]he picturebook is [...] the one form of literature invented specifically for audiences of children – and despite recent claims for a growing adult audience for more sophisticated books, the picturebook remains firmly connected to the idea of an implied child-reader/viewer”. Furthermore, *The Arrival* winning “Book of the Year” at the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards “over works by literary heavyweights such as Peter Carey, two-time winner of the Booker Prize” resulted in debates questioning the literary value of a wordless picturebook (Beckett 311).

Yet, on his website, Tan (“Picture Books”) explicitly states that while described as picturebooks, his texts “are not specifically children’s literature and appeal to a general audience”. In his essay “Picture Books: Who Are They For?” he furthermore openly questions the apparent relationship of synonymy of children’s literature and picturebooks. He suggests that it might not be the art form itself posing this condition, but rather cultural conventions, aligned expectations and narrow preconceptions of audience, becoming apparent in marketing and literary discourse.

The simplicity of a picture book in terms of narrative structure, visual appeal and often fable-like brevity might seem to suggest that it is indeed ideally suited to a juvenile readership. It’s about showing and telling, a window for learning to ‘read’ in a broad sense, exploring relationships between words, pictures and the world we experience every day. But is this an activity that ends with childhood, when at some point we are sufficiently qualified to graduate from one medium to another? Simplicity certainly does not exclude sophistication or complexity; we inherently know that the truth is otherwise. (Tan, “Picture Books: Who Are They For?”)

Consequently, Tan does not produce his texts primarily for children, as could be assumed when the term picturebook is used, but asserts that he has no specific audience in mind when creating his books. He argues that “[a]t the end of the day, any work of art finds its own audience, inviting them to make what they will of this or that idea” (Tan, “Picture Books: Who Are They For?”).

In reaction to Tan and various authors and illustrators denominating picturebooks as a narrative form which “can address any or all age groups” (Beckett 3) and also in response to their works, which in Tan’s case revolve around issues like migration, otherness and belonging and thereby “challenge the limits of what can be written for children” (Johansen 40), children’s and picturebook scholarship intensified their research into picturebooks as an art form beyond age borders. To take a case in point, in the recently published *Crossover Picturebooks: A Genre for All Ages*, succeeding *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives*, Sandra Beckett (13) claims that the picturebook genre is in flux:

In the past, adults were generally seen only as co-readers or mediators of picturebooks, but now they are being recognized as readers in their own right. While this is not an entirely new phenomenon, adults now seem more willing to acknowledge the fact that they buy picturebooks for their own pleasure. [...] The phenomenon of adults reading picturebooks seems to mark the ultimate transgression of the conventional age borders that have been arbitrarily created between children’s books and adult books.

Accordingly, Beckett (16) coins the term crossover picturebooks denoting “multileveled works that are suitable for all ages because they invite different forms of reading, depending on the age and experience of the reader”. Yet, the concept of crossover does not only refer to picturebooks appealing to both children and adult readers alike but also implies that the field of picturebooks currently experiences the blurring of boundaries to other genres such as comics, artists’ books and graphic novels. After all, it is argued that “[t]he picturebook itself is a generic hybrid crossover between text and image, so it is not surprising that it is the source of the greatest generic innovation” (Beckett 9).

It follows, then, that all three works can be described as picturebooks or crossover picturebooks as they are to be perceived as works of art which draw their effects from the interrelationship of verbal and visual text. However, particularly *The Arrival*, which might be classified as a form of the wordless picturebooks or “visually rendered narrative” (Serafini 24), seems to epitomise the increasingly fuzzy and blurred boundaries between the picturebook and other forms of art such as the comic strip or the graphic novel (Beckett 311), which will be addressed in the following section.

2.2. Graphic novels and Comic books

The differentiation between the realm of picturebooks and that of graphic novels and comics sometimes seems as arbitrary as the demarcation of the age boundaries within children’s literature. This becomes particularly obvious when retracing the development process of *The Arrival* up until its marketing process and critical success. In his above-mentioned article aptly named “The Accidental Graphic Novelist”, Tan (2) describes his surprise at winning a French

comic book prize for a text he set out to compose as a classic 32-pages picturebook but which developed into an extensive five-year long process creating a silent narrative of more than 100 pages marketed differently across the world.

In Australia, I had originally pitched my project to a publisher as a picture book, as this was a form very familiar to me as an illustrator. Five years later, it had expanded to 128 pages, lost its text and changed format. French rights were sold to a publisher specializing in *bande dessinée* (drawn strips) – meaning comics or graphic novels – and so my work was welcomed into a different fold, and by a largely adult audience. Somewhere in between, *The Arrival* was marketed in the US as a young adult graphic novel, with praise from such genre luminaries as Jeff Smith (*Bone*), Marjane Satrapi (*Persepolis*), and Art Spiegelman (*Maus*) – which left me quite amazed. I had, rather unwittingly, become a graphic novelist, if only because an authority far higher than myself had said so!

While Tan (“Accidental Graphic Novelist” 2) states that he “had never been entirely able to categorize” his work himself, his books to date have not only been critically appraised in the field of children’s literature, winning awards such as the CBCA Award 2007 in the category “Picture Book of the Year” and the APA Book Design Awards 2007 as the “Best Designed Children's Picture Book”, but also won a range of awards in other categories such as “Young Adult Short Story” at the 2007 Aurealis Awards, “Best Artist” at the World Fantasy Convention 2007 as well as the previously mentioned “Album of the Year” at the Angouleme International Comics Festival France 2008 (*The Arrival Website*).

Indeed, *The Arrival* could also be classified as a comic when applying Scott McCloud’s (*Understanding Comics* 9) definition of comics as “[j]uxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer”. While images in picturebooks as in *Eric*, just like paintings or photos, mostly capture one moment in time and can be related to each other with the help of verbal text (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 158), the alternation of frames or rather panels in *The Arrival* and also to some extent in *The Lost Thing* attest to the sequential nature of the narratives. Particularly in *The Arrival*, the reader is required to mentally piece together the panels arranged on the page and thereby perform what McCloud (*Understanding Comics* 63) considers to be the pivotal element of comics, the act of closure. This “phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (McCloud, *Understanding Comics* 63) or in other words, the reader’s construction of a coherent story out of a sequence of images, also characterises *The Lost Thing*. Furthermore, the format of *The Arrival* and individual double spreads of *The Lost Thing* also correspond to the look of traditional comics on the page which appear “usually printed on paper with boxes of drawings in sequence” (Evans, “New Kid” 236).

As a descendant of the comic, the graphic novel is also a form of sequential art, and equally much disputed in terms of definition as its origin format (Evans, “New Kid” 236). Graphic novels can be defined very broadly in terms of format and publication type as “bound books, fiction and non-fiction, which are created in the comic book format and are issued an ISBN” (Serchay 12) and are generally slightly longer than the typical comic and increasingly deal with challenging as well as controversial subject matters aiming at a wide audience (Evans, “New Kid” 237). It is presumably due to the fact that *The Arrival* fulfils all this criteria that it is “[u]sually classified as a graphic novel, although it turns around the text conventions of the genre by being wordless” (Hunter 11).

Similar to the discussion of the allocation in the category of the picturebook, Tan’s texts also challenge their classification in terms of the comic book and the graphic novel since their hybrid nature defies any definite categorisation and explicit labelling, which is also complicated by the existing disagreement and divergence concerning the definitions of terminology in both fields. Yet, as Salisbury and Styles (44) argue, both the author’s works and his theoretical discussions make for a “contribution to the evolution of the picturebook [which] is immeasurable”. As discussed above in relation to the notion of crossover picturebooks, Tan and his unclassifiable texts seem to be furthering the development of the picturebook in general (Salisbury and Styles 44). Janet Evans takes this scholarly engagement with books which cannot be aligned to the one or the other genre even further by designating the category of fusion texts, which is discussed in the last section of this chapter.

2.3. Fusion texts

As illustrated above, the attempt to confine *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric* into the boundaries even of broadly defined genre conceptions seems to be a strenuous if not impossible task. While all the books certainly share some characteristics with picturebooks in all their varieties as well as comics and graphic novels, they can never be clearly assigned to either one category. The publication of similarly hybrid texts which disrupt the generic boundaries of the picturebook is accounted for by John Foster (74) as a “marriage” of two formats, namely the picturebook and the graphic novel resulting in the idea “graphic picture books”, which combine the “accessibility of the one with the sophistication and depth of meaning of the other”. Following his deliberations, Janet Evans circumstantially analyses this new format in her article “From Comics, Graphic Novels, and Picturebooks to Fusion Texts: A New Kid on the Block!”. In this article, the author renews the claim first developed in reference to renowned picturebook artist Raymond Briggs (Evans, “Briggs”) in asserting that “[a] different kind of book is

emerging, one that exhibits some, but not all, of the characteristics normally thought of as belonging to comics and graphic novels” (Evans, “New Kid” 239). Evans describes these books as “a form of cross breed, hybrid texts”, which epitomise “the evolving multifaceted and multimodal close relation of comics and graphic novels” (Evans, “New Kid” 239). In other words, fusion texts collate the existing features of comics, graphic novels and picturebooks and create “a category that is a synthesis of aspects from all of them” (Evans, “Briggs” 53). Evans goes on to argue that fusion texts require the reader to perform the same “act of aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit”, described by Eisner (2) in relation to the graphic novel.

While Evans (“New Kid” 243) specifically mentions *The Lost Thing* as an example of the fusion text, I would argue that also *The Arrival* and *The Lost Thing* share the characteristics of “challenging and complex multimodal” (Evans, “New Kid” 243) texts. All three works in question can be described as conceptually hybrid, fusing elements of traditional picturebooks with aspects from comics and graphic novels. Moreover, they also incorporate allusions to fine arts, photography and film, which becomes evident not only in the aesthetics of the books but is also mentioned in the Tan’s accounts of his creative process. As such, the shattering and rejection of seemingly stable generic genre labels in the apparent complexity and hybridity both in theme and form at the same time coincide with the content of all three texts. Thus, the phenomenon of crossing over in the case of Tan includes not only the transgression of conventional age borders but also extends to aesthetics and topical concerns in terms of migration, otherness and alienation, as also Dony (87) asserts *The Arrival*.

Clearly, with *The Arrival*, Tan offers a hybrid work that challenges the boundaries of graphic storytelling and defies the conventional labels ‘graphic narrative’, ‘graphic novel’, ‘comics’, ‘children’s literature’ or ‘picture book’. In fact, Tan intensifies the creative dialogue among these various genres in showing that the generic instability of the book ties in with its thematic concerns and formal qualities. As much as the diasporic subject’s identity is characterized by in-betweenness, mobility and unfixity, so too is the book; it crosses over and in so doing, shatters the rigidity of generic and formal categories as well as stresses the inaccuracy of language and labels to capture its nature.

In line with Hunter (10f.), I too would affirm that questions of generic and formal affiliation “resonate like a quizzical echo – as the theme of belonging is a central thematic tenet of all Tan’s stories” and thus suggest that just like Dony (87) argues for *The Arrival*, both *Eric* and *The Lost Thing* feature generic instability as an integral part of their design too, in line with their questioning of oppositions in the negotiation of otherness, belonging and ultimately home. Consequently, following Hunter (15), this thesis deals with Tan as a “narrative artist”, addressing “any or all age groups” (Beckett 3) by creating complex fusion texts which allow

multiple and also divergent reading paths. In order to reflect and recognise Tan's working approach and the hybrid nature of his works, genre classifications are deliberately reduced in this thesis and should always be read against the background outlined above.

In the following, I thus aspire to explore the notions of potential homes in three examples of what might be termed Tan's fusion texts, namely *The Lost Thing*, *Eric* and *The Arrival*. Hence, this thesis is drawing on instruments of analysis from picturebook as well as comic book theory and semiotics, in an attempt to represent the diversity of the focus texts also in the analytical tools. The following chapter provides an interdisciplinary framework for this analysis, by outlining previous scholarly engagement with the notions of "home" within the range of children's and postcolonial literature.

3. Theorising “Home”

The term “home” ranks among the top 1000 most frequently used words in the Oxford English corpus (“Home”). In our everyday lives, home seems to be a concept to make sense to all of us intuitively – and if only to refer to the place we currently live at. Home quite literally appears to be one of the commonplaces of society. And it is only when asked to define it, that we realize the polysemy, complexity and ramifications a term like home inevitably invokes. As it is, the meaning of home extends far beyond the mere dwelling place we live at and is yet hard to capture. The *Oxford English Dictionary* specifies 13 senses for the noun “home” alone, not including countless subsenses, words, compounds or phrases used in combination with home (Reimer, “Introduction” xi). Generally, the search term “home” unites concrete as well as abstract notions. In a physical sense, home is exhibiting “considerable semantic overlap with [the term] house” (“Home”)². That is, it is firstly defined as “[t]he place where a person or animal dwells”, including the actual abode (“[a] landed property; an estate, a manor”) or on a bigger scale also the “collection of dwellings; a village, a town”. Furthermore, this “house or abode” has become a synonym for “the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests” including not only “[t]he family or social unit occupying a house” but also “the furniture or contents of a house”. Besides epitomising the notion of “[t]he domestic setting”, “home” also refers to “[a] person’s own country or native land” or “the country of one’s ancestors”. Thus, the concept of home not only includes the private, domestic sphere of the own dwelling place as well as the social ties of the family but also extends to political meanings of the home country and place of origin. Yet, as Marianne Hundt (131) points out, the specification of home in the OED primarily caters to non-migrants. It is asserted that, home “is represented as relatively static, [while] the social realities for [...] migrants require a more dynamic concept that allows for a discontinuity of ‘ancestral home’, ‘country of origin’ and ‘country of residence’ at different points in an individual’s life” (Hundt 136). In addition, the notion of the “colonial country as cultural home” is found to be missing entirely (Hundt 136). This points towards the fact that home is also a historically constructed term.

On a different note, the usage of “home” without an article or possessive home is also assumed to be historically grown but yet “also [appears] to be connected with the generalized or partly abstract sense, in which home is conceived as a state as well as a place, and is thus construed like youth, wedlock, health, and other such nouns” (“Home”). Thus, “home” in an abstract sense goes beyond “the place where one lives or was brought up” and references “the

² If not stated otherwise, all the following definitions are taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* referenced as “Home” in the in-text citation.

feelings of belonging, comfort, etc., associated with it". Home is also associated with being "[a] refuge, a sanctuary; a place or region to which one naturally belongs or where one feels at ease". In line with the positive connotations attached to the term, is also its sense of "[a] place where something originates, flourishes, [...] the seat, centre, or birthplace of an activity" as well as the notion of "the point which one tries to reach; the goal" in sports and games. Without even delving into detailed examinations of other denotations and connotations of the term, home proves to be a multi-faceted and charged concept with not only spatial and temporal relations, illustrated in such phrases as "go home" (Reimer, "Keywords" 106), but also complicated by social, historical, political and psychological contexts. Rosemary George (2) thus argues that home is an 'auratic' term due to interrelations of the real and the ideal converging in the concept.

Furthermore, Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2) highlight the constructed nature of homes. They define home as a "spatial imaginary", that is "a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across places and scales, and connect places". As such, home, particularly but not only in the form of larger communities and nations, needs to be considered an 'imagined community' as defined by Benedict Anderson. In his seminal work about nationalism, Anderson (6) defines the nation as an "imagined political community" which is "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Similar to the nation, which in some definitions is, of course, included in the conceptualisation of home, home too is inherently defined by its delimitation and sovereignty, as well as being "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7) amongst the subject who define themselves or are defined as being home .

As it is, the concept or rather imaginary of home unfolds as a network of diverse interacting ties: material ties such as dwellings and houses, social ties such as family and friends as well as political, historical and cultural ties possibly complicated by aspects of migration and movement. All of them may again relate to both positive and negative emotions as well as imagined ties accounting for the ideology revolving around the myth and aura of home. Hence, texts dealing with issues of home and belonging open a vast field of meaning-making for literary scholars. Since Tan's books fuse formats predominantly discussed within the realm of children's literature and engage with home as complicated by effects of migration, otherness and cross-cultural exchange, they align with texts produced as part of children's literature and postcolonial literature. Accordingly, in the following, the academic engagement with concepts of home first in children's literature and second in postcolonial literature are outlined in order to serve as a theoretical background for the analytical exploration of notions of home in Tan's *The Lost Thing*, *Eric* and *The Arrival* in chapter 4.

Since such an elusive concept as home is entangled in diverse discourses, as discussed above, the scholarly treatment concerned with ideas of home in both areas proves to be heterogeneous and diverse. It follows, then, that the overview presented below can only ever be cursory and is necessarily incomplete, since doing justice to the work in these fields would be not only be presumptuous but also exceeding the scope of this thesis. In the following, the focus is predominantly on contemporary literature but historical context is provided wherever necessary.

3.1. Notions of “Home” in Children’s Literature

As discussed in detail in chapter 2, Tan can be defined as an artist creating texts without having a specific audience in mind. Accordingly, it might deem inappropriate to follow these deliberations with theoretical approaches towards the concept of home which have been developed by a reading of and application to literature written for children. However, despite or maybe also precisely because of their hybrid nature and format, his works are most often dealt within the umbrella discipline of children’s literature, traditionally concerned with double audiences and occupied with the likewise broad spectrum of picturebook research. In order to explore notions of homeliness and representations of potential “homes” in Shaun Tan’s work, it is therefore nevertheless essential to examine the role and the notions of home as previously investigated by picturebook scholarship. Yet, while repeatedly serving as examples for the exploration of the topic of home, the works of picturebook artists and their treatment of home to date have not been examined separately from other works of children’s literature. It follows, then, that only studies undertaken in the broader scope of children’s literature can be drawn upon and analysed in this chapter.

To this end, first, layers of meaning and diverse notions of home as a setting and theme in children’s literature are explored as well as home’s proposed function as a marker of difference between children’s and adult literature is explained. Second, patterns of children’s literature featuring home, such as the widely known home/away/home pattern, are analysed. Third, notions of home as complicated in works by writers outside the cultural and political mainstream are briefly outlined.

3.1.1. Home as a Setting and Theme: From Safe Haven to Failed Home

In 1990, Virginia Wolf (54) attested that in her view, “home is the dominant place in children’s literature”. Perhaps unsurprisingly, children’s books often feature children’s typical venues, such as home, school, campgrounds or beaches (Nodelman and Reimer 192). Yet, particularly home – not only as a setting but even more so as a theme – seems to occupy a pivotal point in

texts written for children. As Melissa Wilson and Kathy Short (130) put it, “children’s literature is rife with the idea of home” and accordingly, the conception of home in children’s literature has received considerable critical attention. The representation of home in children’s literature is frequently outlined as “remain[ing] riddled with cliché and adult ideals” (Alston 69). Home is the first space the child is free to explore (Waddey 13) and commonly assumed and ideally imagined as a warm and welcoming place, satisfying not only the most fundamental physiological needs such as food, shelter and safety but also establishing a conducive environment for the child’s emotional and intellectual development (Reimer, “Introduction” xiii; Reimer, “Keywords” 106; Stott and Francis 223). And while this conception of home as safe haven and refuge from the cold and cruel outside world originates mainly from the Victorian era, when the image of the family home as the epitome of moral standards and measure of social status gained considerable influence, it still continues to exert influence on present-day children’s literature (Alston 70). As Reimer (“Keywords” 106) asserts, “[a] nurturing and safe family home is a primary setting of many texts of children’s literature with kitchens and bedrooms within that dwelling often used metonymically to convey the core emotional qualities associated with home”. In fact, home in children’s literature is often conflated with the physical structures it assumes (Wolf 54). When Toad at the end of *The Wind in the Willows* (1908, by Kenneth Grahame) finally returns to his beloved Toad Hall, when Max finds his supper waiting in his room after his adventures with the Wild Things (*Where the Wild Things Are* 1968, by Maurice Sendak) and whenever Harry (*Harry Potter* series, by Joanne K. Rowling 1997-2007) comes to rest in the Burrow, the dwelling place of the Weasley family which is as cosy as it is magical, the sense that ‘there is no place like home’ like Dorothy contends in the 1939 MGM film of Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* is most fervently invoked (Clausen 143; Nikolajeva, *Mythic* 24; Alston 123).³

Furthermore, homeliness in children’s texts appears to be inextricably linked to maternal nurturance to the point where “the motherless home is something of a contradiction in children’s literature” (Alston 78). As Nikolajeva (*Mythic* 24) remarks, Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868) is a prime example for a children’s texts where “home and security are also associated with the mother, the Progenitrix who supplies [...] love and care”. Alston (78-83) reiterates this

³ Lois Kuznets (254) notes, that scholars tendencies to read home in children’s literature as a “felicitous space” is also informed by ideas of the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. In his influential volume *The Poetics of Space*, designated as a “work of genuine topophilia” (Stilgoe x), Bachelard defines the domestic space and childhood home as “felicitous” (xxxv) and “a space for cheer and intimacy, space that is supposed to condense and defend intimacy” (48). Accordingly, the house as a home is traditionally read as a protected and sheltering place, a site where “the child protagonist is cared for, loved, and disciplined while waiting to become an adult” (Wilson and Short 130).

claim and in a psychoanalytical reading of children's texts contends that "[t]he perfect home as described in children's literature should be cosy, safe and warm with a constant food supply and this can be interpreted as a Freudian desire to return to the womb" (83). Hence, the home in a diverse set of children's texts from *The Wind in the Willows* to *The Hobbit* are read as womb-like retreats (Alston 83-88), where the child is at one with the source of nurturance but ultimately has to leave. In a similar vein, Reimer ("Keywords" 106) finds that homes in the form of "houses are often used as both literal and figurative sites for young people to mother or nurture themselves" as in *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958, by Philippa Pearce) or also *Pippi Longstocking* (1945, by Astrid Lindgren). Of course, home in children's literature is not only "where the mother is" (Alston 78) but also synonymous with the family: "Indeed, home and family here are almost inseparable; the term 'family home' barely needs to be voiced, for home is essentially family" (Alston 69; original emphasis).

Moreover, Alston (70) argues that this idealised image of the home permeating texts for children since the 19th century bears comparison with manifestations of mythologisation as described in Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* (1957 [1972]):

Home is meant to be a sanctuary, a place to retreat to away from the cold outside world, or at least this is how it has been constructed and has therefore been instilled in individuals from the nursery to the nursing home. Part of the definition of home comes from what it is not; most simply it is the antithesis of away, and therefore the word 'home' becomes culturally loaded as it invokes a nostalgia for warmth and comfort. The ideal home, like the family, is so entangled in myth that it has, in a Barthesian sense, become naturalised and consequently, any home that does not conform is classed as unnatural.

That is, the "myth of home" as nurturing and safe proves not to be so much universal truth as it is subject to cultural construction (Wolf 55). The ideal home in children's literature seems to be constructed as the exact opposite of away (Alston 70). Nodelman ("Words Claimed" 19) even purports the view of children's literature being "inherently binary" and "exulting in twoness" and hence is "almost always [featuring] a home and an away, a safe place made secure but constraining by adults and a dangerous but exciting place where children free from adult constraint can have adventures". Moreover, the characterisation of home has also been proposed as a marker for discrimination between children's and adult literature (Clausen; Nodelman and Reimer). To be specific, Christopher Clausen in "Home and Away in Children's Literature" compares the role of home in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and argues that the latter is traditionally appealing to children because of Toad's journey ultimately ending with his return to Toad Hall,

a place he inherently belongs to and learns to appreciate after many vicissitudes, while Huck Finn's departure equals an escape from home which he never regrets. As Clausen (143) puts it:

When home is a privileged place, exempt from the most serious problems of life and civilization – when home is where we ought, on the whole, to stay – we are probably dealing with a story for children. When home is the chief place from which we must escape, either to grow up or (as in Huck's case) to remain innocent, then we are involved in a story for adolescents or adults.

In other words, the attitudes towards home and its role in the narratives' closure are used to determine its status as genuine children's literature (*The Wind in the Willows*) and adult literature (*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*).⁴ Home, according to Clausen (143), is typically a place of desire in children's literature, not a place to discard. Nodelman⁵ ("The Other" 30) suggests that this prevalence of positively connoted images of home as a place of comfort and security in texts written for children is induced by the conditions of their production. That is, children's literature is characterised by adults writing about and for children and thereby exulting power. Hence, authors celebrating the image of the home as cosy and safe in texts for children could be argued to write with an agenda:

By and large, we encourage in children those values and behaviors that make children easier for us to handle: more passive, more docile, more obedient – and thus, more in need of our guidance and more willing to accept the need for it. It's no accident that the vast majority of stories for children share the message that, despite one's dislike of the constraints one feels there, home is still the best, the safest place to be.

Along those lines, Nodelman and Reimer (199ff.) explore the thematic structure of children's literature through the employment of the opposites of home and away. Home, in their point of view, is not only depicted as a mythical ideal but instead they argue that the differing viewpoints towards values such as home and away operative in writing for children produce three main types of children's texts (200). When the primary concern of children's literature is to instruct, adult values are imposed on the child reader. Accordingly, home is portrayed as "a better place to be than the dangerous world outside" in spite of its potential tediousness (200). In contrast, when texts are emphasising what is assumed to be the child's perspective, home is no longer the place to be, but being away from home is depicted as exhilarating autonomy. Finally then, some children's literature represent the opposing values of home and away as

⁴ Yet, Clausen (141) concedes at the beginning of his article that it is "improbable that any single standard can be used to tell us which of the books we deeply admire are 'really' children's books, which adult books [...] and which genuinely ambiguous". Furthermore, Twain's works are regarded as American classics and are popular amongst children and adults. Their status as children's literature has also been controversially discussed in terms of their appropriateness and complexity (Barclay 656f.).

⁵ For a detailed argumentation regarding the adult-centeredness inherent to children's literature, see also Nodelman's *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (2008).

ambivalent. Nodelman and Reimer illustrate the effect of such texts in an endless circle (see fig. 1).

The more ambivalent texts refuse to deny either the excitement of being away or the boredom of being at home. [...] A child or childlike creature, bored by home, wants the excitement of adventure. But since the excitement is dangerous, the child wants the safety of the home – which is boring, and so the child wants the excitement of danger – and so on. (Nodelman and Reimer 201)

Nodelman and Reimer (201) consider these kinds of ambivalent texts (Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*; Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* 1902; or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* 1883) "the most interesting children's literature" since they exhibit "a complex interweaving of adult and childlike concerns", which generates a space of negotiation and growth for the reader.

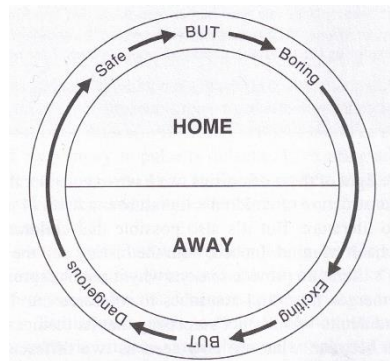


Fig. 1. The home/away/home pattern. (Nodelman and Reimer 201)

Other scholars also point to the fact that home in children's literature is not only portrayed as entirely unproblematic (Wilson and Short 130). Nikolajeva (*Mythic* 25) argues that it is primarily idyllic fiction which presents home as a safe place and states that "[a]s soon as we leave Arcadia, home becomes a problem, not a solution, a place to escape from, not to find sanctuary in". Joel Chaston (211) finds that despite their reputation, L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books (1900-1920) "subtly undercut the message that there is 'no place like home'" by depicting some aspects of homes and houses as physically confining or destructive. More recently, Wilson and Short (134) discover in their analysis of award-winning middle readers such as *Helicopter Man* (by Elizabeth Fensham 2005), that "these stories begin with a failed or absent home, replete with absent or ineffective parents displaying amoral, confusing behaviour". Moreover, Reimer ("Keywords" 108) asserts that recent children's and youth literature is "exploring, and in some cases challenging, the borderlines between the inclusions and exclusions used to build the idea of home in discourses in English". Children's books also deal with failed homes and address topics such as abandonment and homelessness. Yet, as Wolf (65) concludes too, while texts for children acknowledge the constraints inherent to the myth of home in varying degrees and

evidently also portray home as difficult or even dysfunctional, “the possibility that one can be at home in the world” is hardly ever rejected. Instead, a number of scholars (Clausen; Hunt; Reimer and Rusnak; Nodelman and Reimer) point out that children’s literature is characterised by an ultimate pursuit of home which is accounted for in the display of distinct narrative patterns. Thus, the following chapter is concerned with the structural effects resulting from this characteristic feature of children’s literature and examines the role of home in terms of narrative patterns and codes.

3.1.2. *Home as a Structural Element: The Home/Away/Home Pattern*

Academic research in narrative structures of children’s literature emphasises the significance of home in texts written for children. Home is not only the primary setting and point of departure in many children’s texts but frequently also their resolution. In the following, the different investigations of the home/away/home pattern are introduced and connected to their portrayal of home. Finally, other narrative patterns and their implications for the role of home are briefly outlined.

The home/away/home pattern is widely considered the “most common story line in children’s literature” (Nodelman and Reimer 197f.). The generic children’s literature plot consists of a child leaving home, experiencing a series of exciting and sometimes dangerous adventures and safely returning home. Nikolajeva (*New Aesthetic* 79) refers to this characteristic pattern as “the circular journey” and confirms that it “can be traced in practically any children’s text”: “It can be found on different levels and in different shapes anywhere from picturebooks (*Where the Wild Things Are*, 1963) to psychological novel (*Back Home* by Michelle Magorian, 1984)”. Lucy Waddey (13) exemplifies what she terms the “Odyssean pattern” in the many tales by Beatrix Potter and points out that “they reveal Beatrix Potter’s keen understanding of a child’s two-sided attitude toward exploration, the love of adventure and need of security” expressed in the character’s joyous home-coming after many vicissitudes. And Reimer (“Introduction” xiii) even finds this prevalent pattern of children leaving home to seek adventure but then returning to it in the end responsible for theorists’ usage of the term “home” “to describe the full narrative closure of conventional texts for children, a sense analogous to its use in the language of games and computers”. In the analysis of narrative structure, home as a structural element in children’s texts thus reveals the ambiguity also suggested in the section above: Home appears to be as rebarbative as it is appealing, while yet often favoured in the end.

Indeed, Nodelman and Reimer (239) indicate that “children’s literature typically stages a conflict between the values of ‘home’ and ‘away’”. Both Stott and Francis (223) and Nodelman and Reimer (192) argue that children’s literature features a diverse group of settings besides the typical dwelling place of the childhood home such as “farmyards and castles, medieval forests and contemporary inner-city slums” (Nodelman and Reimer 192) but characteristically assigns to them qualities of ‘home’ or ‘not-home’ and go on to explain the implications this classification has on the narrative structure of the text. ‘Home’, for Stott and Francis (223) comprises not only the space but also the state where the child’s physical and emotional needs are satisfied and he or she is also able to appreciate it, while ‘not home’ designates when this is not the case. Depending on the attitudes attached to either of them at the beginning of the text, the story evolves in a different way. Thus, the portrayal of home in children’s texts is inextricably linked to their narrative structure.

In their analysis of the three picturebooks, namely *Arrow to the Sun* (1974, by Gerald McDermott), *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963, by Maurice Sendak) and *Very Last First Time* (1986, by Jan Andrew), Stott and Francis (224) also attest that “[v]ery often, the action of the story is directed by the character’s feelings toward the setting and traces character growth and conflict as the leading character proceeds from a setting which is ‘not home’ to one which is ‘home’”. It is found that if it is mainly the attitudes towards the dwelling place which determine its status as ‘not home’ at the beginning, the story follows the outlined home/away/home pattern. As Nodelman and Reimer (197) put it, “characters in texts of children’s fiction tend to learn the value of home by losing it and then finding it again”. To take a case in point, Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* starts out with Max battling against the confinements of his home by making “mischief of one kind or another” (Sendak np) and being sent to his room. Stott and Francis (226) argue that through his adventures as the king of the Wild Things Max achieves “growth, release, and a sense of potency” allowing him to come to terms with home on his return. However, another pattern dependant on the identification of home is also detected. If the narrative onset is not satisfying the emotional and physical needs of the child and is consequently designated as ‘not home’, the narrative very likely assumes a linear structure (Stott and Francis 228). Yet again, the resolution is reached through the characters arriving at ‘home’:

While the initial phases of the story may, once again, explore the character’s motivation for leaving the original environment, the crucial focus is on what happens to her or him along the way to move her or him forward to the place which is ‘home’. Often the character faces progressively more difficult challenges during the journey. The final destination, then, should be considered not only in terms of whether it is a more suitable

place for the character, but also in term of how worthy the character is of this new place. (Stott and Francis 228)

Stott and Francis find this to be true for the protagonists in Joseph Jacob's *The Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1890), Hans Christian Andersen's *Thumbelina* (1835) and Marcia Brown's *Dick Whittington and His Cat* (1988). In all of these children's texts, closure is achieved through the characters finally arriving at the 'home' they have proven to be worthy of. In both patterns the narrative resolution is thus achieved with returning to or arriving at home.

Besides identifying the home/away/home pattern as the basic narrative structure of many children's texts, Nodelman and Reimer (198) also maintain that the climax in stories where protagonists are initially not provided with a stable home often exists of "[t]he discovery of a secure home in which one is free to be childlike". Furthermore, a reversal in the sequence of childhood is identified for both texts ending on a return to home and texts featuring a discovery of a new home. While children in their development typically undergo a maturation process, these stories lead children from maturity to innocence: "They show children who first must experience and cope with the difficulties of life on their own, and are then rewarded with a secure home life where others will look after them." (Nodelman and Reimer 198). Nodelman and Reimer (198) thus conclude that the most common story line in children's texts is rather a home/away/new home pattern than it is a home/away/home pattern, since they depict "a move away from the familiar experience of home through new experiences that lead to a new and better understanding of what both home and oneself are and should be".

Aside from the above-mentioned "Odyssean pattern" which corresponds to the well-established home/away/home pattern, Waddey also suggests two other patterns involving the use of home in children's literature. In the "Oedipal pattern" (Waddey 13f.), home operates both as a setting and theme and "can be distressingly complex" (Waddey 14):

In these plots, home is the beginning, middle, and end, an objective reality, a place where important things happen, unromanticised by distance. [...] The characters in these books do not long nostalgically for home; they are there, coping with irascible parents, intrusive or dependent siblings, divorce, or death. (Waddey 13)

This pattern obviously represents a stark contrast to the "There and Back Again" (Nikolajeva, *Mythic* 25) plotline, where home is shown in an exceedingly good light. Amongst others, Waddey (14) names *M. C. Higgins, the Great* (by Virginia Hamilton, 1974) and *Mom, the Wolfman and Me* (by Norma Klein, 1972) as examples for the "Oedipal pattern". The third and last pattern Waddey (14) proposes is the "Promethean pattern", echoing the fact that homes and houses may also act as "externalized projections of the inner self" (Dewan 7). In books

promoting this plot structure, the home the characters ultimately create for themselves functions as their alter ego and symbolises the psychic growth involved in its creation such as in *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (by Scott O'Dell, 1960) or *Secret Garden* (by Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1911) (Waddey 14).

However, while the substantially attested home/away/home pattern long dominated academic scholarship of narrative structures in children's literature, academic engagement with contemporary children's literature sees the emergence of new patterns in the offing. As Waddey (14) notes in her clearly historically-contingent article of 1983, "[t]here are some books, however, in which home is defined only negatively, by what isn't there". Moreover, in 1996, Nikolajeva (*New Aesthetic* 80ff.) describes the code shift from circular to a modification of the linear journey, denoting plotlines resolved neither in the traditional home-coming nor in the discovery of home but employing "open endings". She considers this transition as "one of the most interesting features of modern children's literature" (Nikolajeva *New Aesthetic*, 82) since it does not provide ready-made simple answers but instead generates questions, albeit it "demands a good deal of courage for a child to accept the absence of the return home that offers the protagonist security" (Nikolajeva, *New Aesthetic* 81).

At the turn of the century, Eliza Dresang (232) relates this upcoming change to the digital revolution, stating that "just as some digital hypertext has no apparent resolution, even though the text may be moving towards some end or multiplicity of ends, so handheld books can lack closure too". On a related note, Wilson and Short observe a new pattern, called the "postmodern metaplot" in award-winning middle readers published from 2002 to 2008. Drawing on postmodern childhood studies, they find that the portrayal of the child protagonists and the constructions of home in their focus texts seemingly question the mythology of childhood and home described above (Wilson and Short 142). Accordingly, in the pattern they detect, the child is no longer leaving the home and upon recognising its value returns to it, but instead, he or she is abandoned and struggles to construct a new home in a postmodern world full of uncertainties and indefinites. That is, there is no traditional home where the child's needs are fulfilled and cared of, "[c]hildren in these stories can't go home again because their home isn't where they want to dwell. Home isn't a place of refuge or comfort." (Wilson and Short 134). Instead, they "must set out to make sense of the past in order to construct a better home, a place of their own creation" (134), replacing failed parents and unstable dwellings. Yet, "in the end, the hope that is the hallmark of children's literature prevails" (142) and the child is able to provide homeliness and thus attains the conditions for a happy-ending.

In their analysis of Canadian novels awarded literary prizes from 1975 and 1995, Reimer and Anne Rusnak argue that forty percent of these texts follow the pattern of a child being displaced of their original home by adults but ultimately succeeding at claiming a new home in a previously unknown space after overcoming a range of difficulties on their way. In other words, in this pattern, “the child characters move away from home into an ‘away’ setting, and eventually choose to make the ‘away’ home” (Reimer and Rusnak 21). While this choice first seems to result in a tenuous position, the character is depicted as powerful with regards to the transformation of the place formerly marked as not-home (Reimer and Rusnak 23). In her article “Homing and Unhoming: The Ideological Work of Canadian Children’s Literature”, Reimer, then, explicates how this claiming of a new home is achieved by characters refusing the state of homelessness and favouring affiliative relations over filiative linkages. That is, characters often create home only by stretching the definition of what it includes; home is no longer synonymous with family but is achieved by the bonds of friendship (Reimer, “Homing” 8).

On a different note, Reimer (“Homeless”) finds that in a number of recent award-winning Canadian children’s texts published after the millennium, characters are “mobile child subjects” (exiles, refugees, runaways, street kids and travellers) and remain homeless at the end of the narrative. Characters in these novels neither start out from home nor do they create one but instead never find home (Reimer, “Homeless”). Yet, not all novels end on a hopeless note, but some even reconcile homelessness and a happy-ending. It is concluded that these works voice concerns raised by globalisation and the resulting shifting borders and point to “a deep anxiety [...] about a social, economic, and cultural system under stress or struggling to find a new formation” (Reimer, “Homeless”).

Thus, recent research result suggest that the narrative patterns structured around home currently undergo processes of modification, variation and transformation. In the light of the increasing complexity of the globalised world, the domination of the home/away/home pattern in children’s literature seems to cease to some extent and give way to other plotlines questioning the stability and security of home. Neil Besner (228) remarks in his afterword to *Home Words: Discourses of Children’s Literature in Canada*, “there is no assurance that the home-away-home pattern discerned in some writing for children is either generalizable or secure” and consequently raises awareness that home needs to be considered in different terms when considering the shift away from what is assumed as the normalcy of the social majority in some children’s text. The previously mentioned collection is the result of one of the very few academic projects concerned with the implications of issues such as aboriginality and

multiculturalism on the conception of home in recent children's literature. The (re-)formulations of home in this anthology will thus serve as a basis for the following section.

3.1.3. *Home in the Context of Migration*

Nodelman and Reimer (202) also note that home in children's narratives should not or even cannot be considered solely in structuralist terms by focusing on the binary opposites of home and away and the values attached to them. They concede that there is the danger of detected patterns amounting to "a self-fulfilling prophecy": "We may see these oppositions in texts simply because we look for them and expect to find them" (202). In a letter to them, Wolf then proposes to refrain from analysing children's literature in terms of reductive dichotomies in favour of exploring "the continuum – [...] the many places one may be between these opposing poles" (Wolf qtd. in Nodelman and Reimer 202). Therefore, any analysis of this subject should preferably pay close attention to the many different nuances of home. This concern is also inherent to children's literature dealing with home as complicated by subjects such as migration and displacement. The political, societal and individual implications of the concept of home reveal their culturally constructed nature when confronted with the fictional realities of characters from exilic and diasporic communities. In these books, home might be discontinuous or even suspended for characters who are designated as the cultural "other" in their place of residence and whose dwelling places no longer conflate with ideas of the ancestral familial home. After all, the concept of home is, according to Rosemary George (2), a form of "establishing difference" built on "a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions".

Some of the ten essays originating from a multi-year research collaboration and collected by Mavis Reimer in the above-mentioned anthology *Home Words* make for a significant contribution in this field, albeit predominantly focusing on works of Canadian writers for children. In the following, the most significant findings concerning home in the context of migration in *Home Words* are outlined in order to give an overview to this diverse research field.

In the first essay, Reimer is concerned with modifications of home in typical Canadian writing for children. She finds that Canadian children's literature frequently centres on mobile subjects and that "the geographical and psychological separation of 'home' and 'away' typically is represented as impossible, since 'home' and 'not-home' are enacted on the same place" (Reimer, "Homing" 2). Taking the award-winning *Shadow in Hawthorne Bay* (by Janet Lunn, 1986) as a prime example, Reimer finds that this Canadian classic promotes the possibility of home-making in a new land by rejecting homelessness through an "exclusion of exilic energy"

(Reimer, “Homing” 5). In the book, home means finding a family which comprises “an assortment of people linked by their shared commitments to ideas, practices, and values” (Reimer, “Homing” 1). Before the protagonist is able to claim Canada and her friends as a new home, she must bid farewell to the possibility to return to Ireland and recognise her new relationships as family. Yet, Reimer (“Homeless”) also considers home in some more recent Canadian children’s texts, detecting that they frequently deal with the possibility of homelessness. Moreover, recent Canadian children’s fiction not only represents not having a home as an option but in fact include “happy endings – or, at least, narrative closure – for characters who remained homeless at the end of their stories”. And while Reimer (“Homeless”) explicates this notion with regards to three explicitly non-migratory subjects, this realisation raises questions of homelessness and migration in children’s texts.

In another interesting article, Louise Saldanha (131) states that “non-whites [...] are typically taken, in Canada, to represent ‘away’”. She goes on to explain that although the official state of Canada credits itself with the policy of multiculturalism “[they] are often then left experiencing Canada as ‘away’, a place of non-belonging, a place not-home” (Saldanha 131). In her reading of Canadian children’s texts written by authors of colour, Saldanha finds that authors negotiate this hegemonic discourse in various ways. In the picturebook *Molly, Sue ... and Someone New* (by Atia Lokhat, 1994), otherness is neutralised under the cover of multiculturalism: “Jessica, as the unnamed ‘someone new’ of the book’s title, finds ‘home’ in multicultural Canada, but it is one acquired by posing no real challenge to current racial and cultural arrangements” (Saldanha 133). Other books are found to represent a sense of being at home in-between, depicting stories which do not focus on cultural or racial difference but “characterize their protagonists as living lives multiply situated [...]” through the use of “racialized names, histories, food, and other such markers underlin[ing] the racial and cultural specificities of the ‘heroes’ and their story” (Saldanha 135). Still other texts are shown to transgress conventional notions of home and away. In *Crabs for Dinner* (by Adwoa Badoe, 1995) and *Lights for Gita* (by Rachna Gilmore, 1994) “‘away’ intermingles at ‘home’ as an intrinsic actual or remembered presence, and ‘Canada’ is imagined as an expansive and generative space able to hold ‘here’ and ‘there’ as interactive and dynamic processes of homecoming” (Saldanha 135). Yet, it is still the private homes which represent home and away as intersecting, while the political, national home of the state evades any transfiguration (Saldanha 137f.). Few texts, then, disclose “the potential there is to belong in Canada truly, differently” (Saldanha 139). *A Group of One* (by Rachna Gilmore, 2001) and *Coloured Pictures* (by Himani Bannerji, 1991) are read as depicting ways of overcoming boundaries by

leading the fictional Canadian society to a recognition of away as part of home (Saldanha 138ff.).

Nodelman, in his essay with the telling title “At Home on Native Land: A Non-Aboriginal Canadian Scholar Discusses Aboriginality and Property in Canadian Double-Focalized Novels for Young Adults”, considers the enmeshment of home with issues of Aboriginality, appropriation and property claims of land. Along the lines of Saldanha, his reading and re-reading of texts about Aboriginality written by non-Aboriginal authors against the grain of superficial multiculturalism raises the question of this field having “co-opted and promulgated a distorted vision of Aboriginality for its own non-Aboriginal purposes” (Nodelman, “Native Land” 110). That is, the three double-focalised novels under scrutiny are suggested to either include characters which have learned to be Aboriginal or which reject Aboriginality “as counter-productive, along with all other adherences to the cultural forces that divide us from each other” (Nodelman, “Native Land” 115). In each case, the line of events and argumentation promoted in the young-adult narratives serves to underpin non-white property claims of land and conversely denies Aboriginal land claims. Conscious of his own “position of consecration” (Nodelman, “Native Land” 107) and the risk of his article “serv[ing] no purpose other than to sustain the very structures of power [it] hoped to critique and to weaken” (Nodelman, “Native Land” 127), Nodelman certainly succeeds in raising awareness for ideologies of home and nativity underlying children’s texts.

Doris Wolf and Paul DePasquale, too, engage with issues of Aboriginality in Canadian children’s narratives. To be specific, the scholars employ “a reading strategy that teases out the protest from the overlying idyllic images drawn largely from tradition” (Wolf and DePasquale 102) to picturebooks telling fictional stories about Aboriginal children in a contemporary setting. Regarding the issue of home, they find that the frequent depictions of Aboriginal community and family as passing on Aboriginal traditions to the protagonists of the picturebooks work to “intervene in and disrupt the very social apparatus that helped destroy Aboriginal communities – the bourgeois patriarchal family” (Wolf and DePasquale 95). It is noted that European colonisers imposing the naturalised image of patriarchist families as the norm on Aboriginal peoples leads to the establishment of residential schools, foster care and reservations – atrocities which “destroyed the traditional functioning of communities and roles of elders” and lead to a steep rise in social, financial and health issues. Against the colonial and neo-colonial background of involuntary Aboriginal nomadism due to violent expropriation, Wolf and DePasquale (99) claim that home is often not depicted as a physical structure but

rather as access to land and resources in order to “make explicit the traditional reliance of many Aboriginal peoples on a large homeland for their sustenance”.

Clare Bradford, then, performs a comparative reading of two widely-known national children’s literature classics, *Anne of Green Gables* (by Lucy Maud Montgomery, 1908) and *Seven Little Australians* (by Ethel Turner, 1894), as well as two contemporary youth novels, each equally written by a Canadian and Australian author. Specifically, she examines “the extent to which ‘a privileged position within the national space’ is figured through the homes and the homely places” (Bradford, “Homely Imaginary” 178). Following the postcolonial concept outlined in Ghassan Hage’s *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, she finds that all four novels under scrutiny construct home as nationhood, shaped by inclusions of whiteness and conformity to colonial legacy and by marginalisation of anything else (Bradford, “Homely Imaginary” 179). It is argued that the “homely nations of Canada and Australia have more in common than their histories as British colonies” (Bradford, “Homely Imaginary” 192). All four narratives undertake a colonial configuration of the home and consider home as nationhood, constructing women as belonging to the domestic sphere.

To sum up, the analysis of homely constructions in texts written for children serves to highlight the various ideologies (re)produced in and also by these literary works. Below the surface of the celebration and myth, home proves to be a site of contestation, as particularly emphasised in the articles discussed in this section. Regarding the overt representations and the ideal it is gauged against, Alston’s conclusion that “children’s literature is forever trapped in adult-oriented nostalgia” (Alston 73) seems to hold true for the portrayal of home in the majority of children’s texts. Yet, beneath the surface of children’s literature’s “saccharine way” (Alston 73) of dealing with issues of home, a complex field of ideological entanglements is about to be opened up by scholars. Texts dealing with issues of home in colonial and migratory contexts prove to be particularly intricate and ambivalent in their formulations of home, when alluding to colonial will and neo-colonial claims as well as multiculturalism. This is why questions of home and not-home raised in these fields of children’s literature emerge as a research desideratum. In addressing the continuum opening up between home and away in Shaun Tan’s work, insights might be gained from the well-established academic engagement with postcolonial literature for adults. As a basis for examining images of potential home in relation to issues of migration, otherness and cross-cultural exchange, the following section seeks to provide a brief overview of notions of home in postcolonial literature.

3.2. Notions of “Home” in Postcolonial Studies and Literature

Postcolonial studies are defined as an “interdisciplinary field of perspectives, theories and methods that deal with the non-material dimensions of colonial rule” and, more importantly in this context, offer instruments for a “deconstruction of colonial discourses and thought patterns that continue to exert an influence up to the present” (Fischer-Tiné 1). Hence, they are also concerned with the patterns that constitute home for both individuals and the society they live in. As such, home in postcolonial literature is as least as charged and ambivalent as a concept as it is in children’s literature. In their engagement with the repercussions of colonialism, postcolonial studies are primarily concerned with home in terms of dislocation, fragmentation and alienation resulting from exile, diaspora and migration. While definitions of these conditions may vary and overlap (Lindholm, Schulz, and Hammer 9), the problematisation of home as a concept is central to all of them. In the following, various postcolonial perspectives on the subject of home are outlined. First, a definition of postcolonial studies and postcolonial literature is established and the construction of England as imperial home and mother country is examined. Second, the postcolonial concept of diaspora is introduced in order to explicate the repercussions of essentialism in the creation of homes. Finally, ways of thinking about home beyond naturalisation are explained, such as Homi Bhabha’s concepts of ‘hybridity’ and ‘Third Space’.

When adopting postcolonial theory as a critical lens for analysing Anglophone colonial and postcolonial texts, which are arising “out of experiences which result from contact with the British empire” (C. O’Reilly 6), some form of engagement with the topic of home appears indispensable. After all, as a profoundly diasporic movement (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 61), colonialism itself is inherently bound up with dislocation and displacement. The process of colonisation has seen millions disperse and settle in regions around the world (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 61), inevitably resulting in the complication of the concept of home, which is otherwise frequently taken for granted (Trinh 13). Every temporary or permanent settlement in a country or nation-state previously not identified as home, necessarily entails a form of contestation and re-evaluation of home, not only for people experiencing migration but also for generations to come.

As mentioned above, regardless of conceptualisation, home seems to be delineated predominantly by way of contrast. As George (4) states, “[h]omes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered ‘not home’, with the foreign, with distance”. Acknowledging Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘imagined communities’, as

explained above, the conceptualisations of home in postcolonial studies is not only individually contested but even more so in political terms. Referencing American imperialism, Amy Kaplan (1) explains that “[t]he idea of the nation as home [...] is inextricable from the political, economic, and cultural movements of empire, movements that both erect and unsettle the ever-shifting boundaries between the domestic and the foreign, between ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’”. The discursive practices of the British Empire, which shall be used as the main point of reference in this chapter, may serve as a prime example of the ambivalence arising from the attempt to regulate, determine and fixate the homely. In the British colonial discourse, England was conceptualised as mother country and home “in opposition to ‘The Empire’ which belongs to the English but which is not England” (George 4). In this regard, the colonial discourse thus constructed the colonised subject as ‘other’ located on the periphery, maintaining the boundary to the colonising power situated in metropolitan centres (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 123). Accordingly, a border is established between the centre and home of the colonial power as a cosy, safe site of familiarity as opposed to the foreign colonies abroad.

However, the work of the British Empire has not only seen people leaving Britain and colonising and settling in different areas of the world, but also colonised people immigrating to Britain, often under constraint (McLeod 205). As such, the colonial discourse of home proves to be highly ambivalent. Colonised people are discursively situated as the ‘other’, designating the foreign and thus the non-home, while simultaneously and ambiguously being conceptually tied to the British Empire and forced to recognise England as their colonial home. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (156; original emphasis) emphasise, it is striking that “*both* these processes of ‘othering’ occur at the same time, the colonial subject being both a ‘child’ of empire and a primitive and degraded subject of imperial discourse”. Colonisation thus irrevocably challenges naturalised assumptions about home, disrupting the correlations between home and nation it actually attempts to forge.

On the basis of this imperialistic discourse seem to be essentialist notions of home as a space reserved for insiders, who have original claim to the land they inhabit. Avtar Brah (197) argues that the postcolonial concept of diaspora “offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins” when examining the notion of home for migrants, such as from the colonies to the mother country Britain. As a term originally denoting the “idea of dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland, to two or more foreign destinations” (Cohen 2) and referring exclusively to the Jewish experience (Cohen 1), diaspora is now applied to a range of different mobile conditions (Lindholm Schulz and Hammer 8). But as with all diasporic experiences, also the imperial diaspora generated by the British colonial power is “something ‘more’ than an ‘ethnic

minority' resulting from migration" (Lindholm Schulz and Hammer 9). That is, for the concept of diaspora to be applicable, a specific conception of home needs to be present. Three of nine common features of diaspora listed by Cohen (17), concern the issue of home. As such, diaspora is commonly characterised by "a collective memory and myth about the homeland" (Cohen 17). Diasporic communities typically idealise their real or imagined ancestral home and collectively commit to "its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation" (Cohen 17). Along these lines, the collective formation of a return movement to the original homeland is common in diasporas, although "many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland" (Cohen 17). In other words, home in diasporic communities is essentially marked as a matter of away. Home is somewhere else than the current place of settlement and diasporic communities thus are inherently united in their collective aspirations to and longing for home. This maintenance of communities and creation of homes away from home also differentiates diaspora from exile, which typically signifies individual experiences (Clifford 308).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, immigrant fiction in general is commonly associated with "themes of loss, painful homelessness and the less-than-whole subject who longs for assimilation into a national culture" (George 8) or, in the case of diasporic communities, for the return to the original homeland. British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie (10) describes the yearning for the abandoned home resulting in the creation of what he calls "imaginary homelands." Rushdie, who was born in India but educated in Britain (E. O'Reilly) finds that "writers in [his] position [...] are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt" (Rushdie 10). Yet, he concedes that this retrospect is bound to result in fictionalisations of home:

[I]f we [himself and writers in his position] do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the minds."

It follows, then, that postcolonial notions of home prove to be not only complicated by the factor of absence but also of time. This view of home as a spatio-temporally removed place corresponds to what Halleh Ghorashi (133) terms the exilic approach to home. In this view, home signifies a physical structure, which has to be claimed, while yet this action is unavailable to exiles: "In this way, understanding homeland suggests a rift both in time and space between the past, 'there' and the present 'here'."

Yet, Ghorashi (133) suggests a distinction between this exilic view of home and the diasporic understanding of home as a “domain where the past and the present are mediated through present choices and networks”. In this conceptualisation, home is not a physical space but rather “a constructed space in the present”, a “position in life” which is created through “contacts, memories, and activities” (Ghorashi 133). Unlike the exilic approach to home characterised by national borders, the diasporic approach draws on transnational visions of home. Home is thus not a matter of place but rather a matter of ‘imagined community’. George (200) finds that throughout immigration fiction, identities relate only in theory to an actual geographical location. This genre is however characterised by its treatment of home as “a fiction that one can move beyond or recreate at will” (George 200).

As such, it seems that postcolonial engagement with home highlights the implications and ramifications of home, otherwise too often left unspoken. Rethinking and developing the relation of home and diasporic identity, Brah (192) assumes home both to be a “mythic place in the diasporic imagination” and “the lived experience of a locality”. Similarly to Salman Rushdie (10), who speaks of the exiled writer creating imaginary homelands, or in his case “Indias of the minds”, Brah (192) notes that in diaspora home is “is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’”. The migrant can never return to the place he or she has left. Time has passed and changed both the actual site and the memories of it. Thus, a conjuring of home must necessarily be incomplete and fragmentary and an actual visiting of the exact place in time remains impossible. However, Brah (192) also acknowledges “the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture” as a marker for home, arguing that these imaginations of home depend on processes of inclusion and exclusion. In this she aligns with George (6), who explains that the act of imagination of home is as political as imagining a nation and ultimately a display of hegemonic power.

Introducing a new strand of argumentation, however, Brah (197) goes on to argue that it is not so much the desire for a homeland but rather a homing desire, which characterises diasporic communities. Addressing the intersection of political, cultural and individual, psychological factors interacting in the (re)negotiation of home, Brah suggests a distinction between declaring a place home and feeling at home. While “[i]t is quite possible to feel at home in a place [...] the experience of social exclusion may inhibit public proclamations of the place as home”, Brah (193) explains. She argues that subjectivities in diaspora are not per se rootless but rather the lived experience of multi-locationality demonstrates the evident plurality of the process of identity formation. As such, “[t]he *concept* of diaspora signals these processes of *multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries*” (Brah 197;

original emphasis). Similarly to Cohen (17), who describes living in the host country as a “possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life [...] with a tolerance for pluralism” despite the fact that the relationship of diasporic communities with their host countries is described as “troubled”, Brah, too, imagines home not as a singular attachment to one nation state. She considers the “double, triple, or multi-placedness of ‘home’” not to be synonymous with feeling homeless (Brah 194). Instead, reconfigurations and articulations of locationality make way for other ways of (re)imagining home, which can be individually articulated (Brah 193) and certainly differ for subsequent migrant generations (Brah 194).

Indeed, the question of the nature of home continues to exert considerable influence up to the post-imperial present. Susheila Nasta (1; original emphasis) characterises the notion of England as both colonial power and motherly nation as continually deceiving:

For the notion of ‘home’, with all the political, ideological and symbolic baggage that it still implies, was one which formed an integral part of the naturalized rhetoric of Britain as Empire and has lingered on in the nationalistic grammar of Britain as a post-imperial nation. The seductive power of ‘home’, both as a force for authority *over* and as continuing domestic metaphor for maintaining a means of authority *within*, figures most forcefully perhaps in the widely held image of England as colonial ‘motherland’, an illusory haven which both beckoned and betrayed many of Britain’s imperial subjects before and after Independence. The maternal embrace promised by that image was never, of course, forthcoming.

Britain’s multicultural population structure dates back to centuries ago and since the end of the Second World War many peoples from formerly colonised countries arrived in Britain (McLeod 205f.). Even more so, Britain has long adopted official multicultural policies, acknowledging its (post)colonial legacy. Yet, Brah (3) too, notes that still “[i]n Britain, racialized discourses of the ‘nation’ continue to construct people of African descent and Asian descent, as well as certain other groups, as being outside the nation”. Literary reflections of this often violent refusal to join the ‘imagined community’ of Britain are equally numerous and heterogeneous. In his reading of British-Pakistani writer Hanif Kureishi’s autobiographical essay *The Rainbow Sign* (1991), John McLeod (213) traces the imperial discourse in the racist abuse the author had to face. He states that “Kureishi’s identity was [...] fictionalised by others as an outsider who belonged to a land overseas, despite the fact that Kureishi was born, like his mother, in Britain”. As such, he is “not readily permitted to ‘belong’ to Britain like his classmates” due to his looks.

More recently, the highly acclaimed memoir *Red Dust Road* (2010) by Black British writer Jackie Kay illustrates how the persistent refusal of her being a part of the ‘imagined community’ of Scotland is affecting her struggle to identify home. On several accounts, Kay,

who was born and grew up as an adopted child in Scotland and has a Scottish accent, is denied the right to declare Scotland as her homeland, while also being referred to as white in Nigeria while visiting her birthfather. As Chris Weedon claims “[i]f racism in Britain makes questions of identity and belonging difficult for many black writers, being of ‘mixed race’ or of ‘mixed heritage’ is perhaps even more problematic” (91). Traditional views of home and belonging based on “clearly-defined, static notions of being ‘in place’, firmly rooted in a community or a particular geographical location” fail to accommodate these experiences of living “in-between” (McLeod 214). As Rushdie (15) expresses in “Imaginary Homelands”: “Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools.”

Thus, no matter what generation – migrancy results in a redefinition of home for all (post)colonial subjects, including also the so-called host society. While home seems to be a problematic concept in postcolonial literature, the reconsideration of this subject results in individual rewritings of home, often mapping out unknown territory. Drawing on Paul Gilroy, McLeod (215) suggests reconsidering home not as roots, as being deeply engrained in place, but rather as routes. While the displaced status of the migrant may certainly cause irritation in terms of feeling homesick and out of place, McLeod (214) argues that it is exactly this position of the migrant writer that allows for revealing all representations of the world as necessarily fragmentary, partial and incomplete. Knowing that “in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional”, as Edward Said (185) writes, migrancy results in idiosyncratic awareness and reflection. As such, it is also possible that “the space of the ‘in-between’ becomes re-thought as a place of immense creativity and possibility” (McLeod 215). In lieu of rootedness and fixity, belonging is in this case conceptualised as transnational routes, which entail both imaginative and physical contact with different people and places.

In challenging essentialist understandings of home, which frequently allude to nationalist discourses in referring to the idea that there is “an ultimate and unbreakable bond between people, state and territory” (Lindholm, Schulz, and Hammer 14), a constructivist notion of home and belonging emerges. This point of view is also reflected in the work of one of the leading contemporary postcolonial theorists, Homi Bhabha. In his seminal work *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha studies the mechanisms of transcultural identity formation. With his concept of ‘hybridisation’ he coins the notion of mixed races not merely as a mixture of both already existing cultural identities but forming a whole new and distinct individual identity (McLeod 219). He understands hybridisation as a process of negotiation, interaction and amalgamation of cultures. When “the borders between home and world become confused”

(Bhabha 10) in displacement, the location of culture and identity formation “requires a sense of the new” (Bhabha 13). Distinctly spatial both geographically and metaphorically (Sarkowsky 323), Bhabha envisions a space for these interactions, negotiations and transformations of cultures, which is “neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but something else besides” (Bhabha 28). This ‘Third Space’ is a place where identity is thought anew and is yet always in flux.

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity and fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (Bhabha 55)

Assuming with Bhabha that cultures and identities are never fixed, pure and finished and that inclusions and exclusions of home are established on the basis of constantly evolving markers of identity (George 9), the meaning of home changes dramatically. While home is commonly constructed as the icon of stability and fixity, postcolonial conceptions of home see all that overturned. Home might also be imagined as a third space of negotiation, a transnational matrix of relations, which is subject to modification, alteration and change.

Thus, while displacement and rootlessness can certainly be considered key features of postcolonial literature (C. O’Reilly 11), the academic engagement with texts classified as such is inevitably involved in a re-evaluation of conceptions of home. The fact that traditional (pre)conceptions of home may appear problematic in the context of migrancy reveals underlying essentialist claims and worldviews of nation, state, community and identity. When home appears discontinuous, fragmented or even lost in migrant literature at one point, this might also give rise to substantial modification and change of the concept itself. After all, as Said (147) contends, “[e]xiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience”. Postcolonial rewritings of home thus no longer subsume home as the antithesis of away and the opposite of movement and change. Home in postcolonial literature is a contested imagined space, with relational ties transcending individual attributions in the here and now. Postcolonial engagement with home provides theories and tools for examining the inherently fragmented and discontinuous nature of this concept, disclosing interpretations and negotiations necessarily involved in its construction.

4. Potential Homes in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master— that's all.'

(Carroll 96)

In view of the theoretical considerations regarding the concept of home in children's literature and postcolonial studies, it appears that the persistent reference to home in literature arises not merely from its status as a fundamental human need but rather from its mutability. Contrary to popular assumptions, home is nowhere near a simple, unitary concept. In fact, the engagement with this concept proves its depth in the entanglement and fallacies of topics as diverse as ontological development, identity and nation. Following Blunt and Dowling (2), home in this thesis is thus primarily assumed to be a relational concept, in that it is defined by relations individuals as well as communities establish in order to negotiate place and identity. As such, studying home in Shaun Tan's work means studying the potential relations of characters to their surroundings. These spaces are thereby constructed of physical, topographical as well as psychodynamic, imagined structures. In order to emphasise both the relationality of homes as defined by insiders as well as outsiders and their ensuing transformation ability, the analysis designates *potential* homes. Along the lines of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), this thesis seeks to trace what *is chosen to mean* 'home' in the three works in question. Through careful examination of words, images and their interaction, the *many different meanings* of potential homes are analysed along three main axes, moving from concrete manifestations to abstract notions. First, potential homes are studied as topographical locations, beginning with the most expansive definition of home – the nation state and home country – to dwellings, houses, gardens and finally rooms and chambers. Second, the psychodynamic aspects of potential homes are explored as the focus moves to modes of belonging exhibited as above-mentioned patterns of inclusions and exclusions in the text (George 2). Drawing on Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' and the concept of 'othering', the effect of migration and relocation on potential homes is investigated. Finally, potential homes are probed as (re)imagined spaces, exhibiting utopian qualities that could be argued to amount to a rewriting of home beyond nationalist tendencies, celebrating hybridity and multiculturalism and forming what Bhabha termed a 'Third space' of negotiation. Of course, this sectioning is highly artificial due to all aspects of home and their respective analysis and interpretation being interconnected and interdependent. However, this organisation is

maintained throughout the thesis in order to ensure both the focus and the clarity of the analysis. Yet, cross-connections are established when appearing both sensible and conducive for the interpretation. After all, this work is an attempt to shed light on the entanglements of home in three of Tan's works, instead of defining, in the words of Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master" (Carroll 96).

Following Reimer and her colleagues (*Home Words* xi), I have thus deliberately chosen not to proceed from a prescribed definition of home. Due to the conceptual hybridity and the diversity exercised in the representation of such an elusive, slippery concept as "home", applying the methods of examination of "home" previously used in children's literature seems not to do the subject justice. Instead of determining the narrative structure of the books by examining the construction of home from the unhomely experience of migration to the establishment of home-like structures, this thesis presents an attempt at "studying the languages of home in use in literary texts, and by trying to articulate the rules, beliefs, and values governing these uses" (Reimer xii) in *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*. Accounting for the hybrid qualities of the texts, both visuals and text are considered by drawing on a variety of analytical instruments from picturebook theory, comic book theory and semiotics as well as literary perspectives. In order to compare and contrast constructions of different layers of potential homes in three very different fusion texts by the same author, this thesis is structured thematically instead of devoting a separate chapter to each book. Considering the intricate nature of a concept such as home against the background of the sheer abundance of both verbal and visual text the three texts offer, this thesis cannot provide an in-depth analysis of each work. Instead, this thesis aims at examining multiple reading paths of home in all three works, focusing on similarities and differences between them and analysing selected individual spreads.

4.1. Home as a Topographical and Physical Space

Tan (*Sketches*, 10) states that he has "always been attracted to stories about characters who find themselves lost, displaced, in an unfamiliar world, or experiencing some other troubled sense of belonging". Indeed, in both *The Arrival* and *The Lost Thing* as well as in *Eric*, the plot revolves around the negotiation of home and foreign between the protagonists and the settings they find themselves in. *The Arrival* depicts the protagonist's struggle for a new beginning in an unnamed land. In *The Lost Thing*, a boy finds a thing that does not belong at the beach and Eric is a foreign exchange student seeking answers about the home of his host family.

Yet, the books differ tremendously in their approaches towards the settings conventionally assumed as “home”. While the 128-pages long *The Arrival* spends page after silent page on long shots of land- and cityscape, inviting the reader to delve into strange worlds, as does the *The Lost Thing*, homeland and setting seem to play only a secondary role in *Eric*. Homely settings are predominantly established in the visual pictorial in *The Lost Thing* and, of course, in the near-silent *The Arrival*, while *Eric* also uses paratextual and textual cues to imply a rather generic setting. It follows, then, that this chapter more than the others reflects the vast difference in page-length of the works under scrutiny.

In the following, home as a topographical and physical space is examined by moving from the largest (home country and home city) to the smallest (rooms and chambers) homely settings. While the analysis draws from the whole of the works as an entity of art, some particularly significant spreads will be analysed in detail. Following Nikolajeva and Scott (61), homely settings are assumed to provide not merely a sense of time and place in a text but have several other functions in relation to genre expectations, mood, plot development or characterisation. Hence, the sections below investigate not only how potential homes are topographically and physically constructed but also what functions place and space assume in the narrative.

As mentioned, thematics of home traverse all aspects of Shaun Tan’s work far beyond the main narrative, but are yet rarely explicated and elude final categorisation. In other words, while there seem to be settings marked as homely to narrators or protagonists, the whole design of the three works – from the synergy created by words and images itself to paratextual features and intertextual references – works to disrupt straightforward conclusions. Asking about the topographical location of home thus not only produces a variety of responses in relation to the different characters, but also raises various questions concerning the meaning attributed to these spaces. Thus, the following examination of potentially homely topographical locations in the three works under scrutiny provides no finality in interpretation. Rather, for the purpose of this chapter, the topographical and material aspects of the boy’s cityscape in *The Lost Thing*, the host family’s home in *Eric* and the two different homelands in *The Arrival* are examined as potential homes, while chapters 4.2. and 4.3. explore other reading paths of the homely.

4.1.1. *Homelands: Home Countries and Home Towns*

The Lost Thing and *The Arrival* are highly invested in their settings by nature. From cover to cover, *The Lost Thing* is presented as an artefact from another world. That is, all paratextual information, including front and back matter, endpapers and even the design surrounding the

bar code of the ISBN are crafted by the author and stylised as part of the work. The authorisation by the “Federal Department of Information” on the opening recto and the comment of an inspector of the “Federal Department of Censorship” on the back cover (declaring the book “safe for public consumption” due to it being “[i]nconsequential” and thus presenting “[n]o perceptible threat to the order of day to day existence”) serve as a first introduction to a dystopian world ruled by numbers and regulations. Along the same lines, *The Arrival* features an impressive cover design, establishing a worn old family photo album motif continued throughout the whole book (Yang). Yet again, Tan’s juxtaposition of a photorealistic human figure and a surrealistic animal crossing between tadpole and dog on the front cover signal the reader that he or she is about to enter an otherworldly realm of magical landscapes and fantastic creatures. Home is set in an alternative, secondary world in both *The Lost Thing* and *The Arrival* and hence the two books are just as much about place as they are about story lines.

In contrast, *Eric* features only an implied secondary world (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 36) in that the eponymous protagonist “is doubtlessly a creature from a secondary world – but a world that is not portrayed in the text” (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 39). Instead, *Eric* is set in a mundane, ordinary place recognisable as the generic suburbs. As a consequence, the book is not filled with pages of long shots introducing the reader to wondrous alternative worlds but uses (para)textual clues and background setting to provide some information on the homeland of Eric’s host family. In the following, the construction of homelands in all three works is analysed, focusing on the question how topography and the material aspects of home work at establishing or undermining the rules and ideologies that govern home. Due to page limitations, the examination of homelands in *The Lost Thing* and *The Arrival* pays particular attention to establishing shots (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2; Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 4; chapter II opening 6 and 11)⁶ besides providing a general overview.

The Lost Thing uses predominantly verbal clues to designate the imaginary, strange setting as familiar and home. The first-person narrator⁷ tells a story that “happened a few summers ago, one rather ordinary day by the beach” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 1). It is there he finds a red kettle-shaped tentacle tin creature which is described as “looking out of place” with a “sad, lost sort of look” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2). Embedded in a frame narrative alluding

⁶ For referencing pages in *The Arrival*, I indicate the chapter and the number of the opening. Opening numbers start at 1 at the beginning of each chapter. The cloud formation indicating the passage of time on the steam ship travelling to a foreign country are referenced i.e. as chapter II opening 3.

⁷ The narrator appears to be unnamed in the main narrative. Yet, paratextual clues in the form of a postcard on the back cover identify him as “Shaun” (Rudd 135). In line with the artist remarking that he constructed this character as a version of himself as a teenager (Tan, “Lost and Found” 2), this thesis refers to the main protagonist of *The Lost Thing* as “the boy” or “Shaun”.

to oral fairy tale traditions with a dystopian twist (“So you want to hear a story? Well, I used to know a whole lot of pretty interesting ones.”) (Do Rozario 26f.), the protagonist’s story unfolds in a setting designated as “usual”, “ordinary” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 1) and “home” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 6) to the boy. It is these casual remarks that make Tan’s retro-futuristic cityscape appear even more gloomy and dystopic. Alongside the boy and the lost thing, the plotline navigates the reader through urban areas swamped with machinery, ductwork and uniformity, in search for a place where the lost thing belongs. Pasted upon collages of snippets of old physics and engineering textbooks (Tan, “Intimate Distance”) are mostly rectangular pictures in various sizes, showing a city that boxes its inhabitants just as much. This plethora of seemingly random strips and scraps of paper crammed with facts and figures describing all kinds of electro mechanical apparatuses form the substrate of a homeland where “everything [is] fully explained, clear and functional” and “all meaning [is] predefined” (Tan, “Intimate Distance”).

Accordingly, the city’s residents are “[t]oo busy doing other stuff” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 15) and more than once fail to even notice the lost thing. Similarly, the reader might feel that the “many-framed organization of the page” where even the words of the narrative are written onto small cut-outs of paper “conveys a feeling of confusion and of loss” (Scott, “Frames” 109). Just like this world’s inhabitants have lost their desire or even their ability to perceive what lies beyond the ready-made bits of information they are spoon-fed through signage and media (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 59), the reader, too, struggles with this “vast sea of information [which] swallows the valuable and the irrelevant without discernment” (Scott, “Frames” 109).

Echoing the technocratic style of the figures, graphs, charts and calculations provided in the gutter and frame, the industrial metropolis appears as an enormous tank towering over the bay. Countless rusty hydraulic lines wind through the concrete mass of bleak, windowless buildings and debouch in seemingly random places, releasing their fumes. Against this monumental backdrop, reminiscent of Charles Sheeler’s photographs of American Industrial Scenes (Mallan 7), the city dwellers are rendered almost insignificant. The city’s anachronistic steam-engined, gear-wheeled mechanics visible in nearly every picture are evocative of steam-punk design (Stephens, “Postmodernism” 94), emphasised also by the assemblage of yellowed, old background material. Along the same lines, the colouring scheme is inarguably geared to shade variations of rust: from the deep reddish brown of the pipes, to the sickly yellow-green sky and the acidic blue rims of the sea all colours bespeak decay. As Lien Devos (21) notes, the design of the city is certainly resonating with futurism’s obsession with the industrial

metropolis, yet the water stains on the concrete and the rust on the myriad of pipes and ductworks indicate a glory that is long past. There is no brightness to be found in this dull sepia-toned world and the more towards the centre and towards their initial target, the grey building housing the “Federal Department of Odds & Ends”, the pair comes, the more monochromatic it gets. Tan (Ling 45) remarks that “[t]he world of *The Lost Thing* is very muted, because it’s a place where people have essentially lost their imagination, and every aspect of life is industrialized and departmentalized”.

In keeping with the over-technocratic theme, the city also almost completely lacks fauna and flora. The animal life is restricted to few domestic animals (a cat in the boy’s living room, a dog kept on a leash on the street), that is to say animals that are the result of subordination and control. Neither in the sea nor in the air or at land is there any animal life; it seems as if any animals potentially outside the human’s sphere of influence are captive: the boy’s mother is reading a newspaper with the headline “Flamingo recaptured”. Similarly, plant life seems to have been eradicated as well, since there are no signs of trees, bushes or even grass. It is only the single, geometrical concrete flower in a vase at the boy’s house, which bears any resemblance to a formerly intact eco-system. Instead of palm trees, there are now trees of plumbing looming over the beach. Moreover, the homely world of the boy is pervaded with signs and signifiers with unclear or obscure meaning: “Do not” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 1), “Homogenous Equations” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2), “You are here” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 4). In both images and borders, road sign clutter like this seems to be diluting significant information. This futile overregulation can also be noticed on the pavement and walls: This world is charted ad infinitum with contradictory signposts, road marking and similar demarcations in any corner. These instances of what Nikolajeva and Scott (73) term “intraiconic text” take “the verbal cacophony [...] of today’s life, the constant intrusion of advertising into our senses, and the clutter and distraction of our experiential relationship with the world around us” (Nikolajeva and Scott 74f.) to extremes.

Somewhat ambiguously, the city itself is on the one hand contained within the enormous city walls but on the other hand stretches wide and far (in the suburbs where there are seemingly endless rows of identical detached housing) and high (as its towers of steam work loom high in the sky). The city caption “MORE” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2), can thus be read as the capitalist motto pervading this society (Mayrhofer and Reichl 21). Indeed, the boy’s unhomey hometown at some point even appears like an animated surveillance system with gearwheels even visible through the bars of the sewer grate: Its piping system weaves through the whole city, invading every house, traffic lights look like CCTV cameras, and some buildings resemble

watchtowers.⁸ Yet, “MORE” also signifies dystopian excrescence, designating Shaun’s homeland as a futuristic alternate society where the power of numbers has long escaped human control. “MORE” thus designates the city as dystopia, drawing a highly exaggerated picture of society.

Reading the hometown of the boy as a metaphor for the motherly, as Alston (78) suggests, it would correspond to what C.G. Jung has termed the “nefaste” (“devouring”, my translation) mother (Jung, *Archetypen* 90). In his fundamental work about the collective unconscious, Jung defines several symbolic images with a universal character, which he denotes “archetypes”. Like any other archetype, the mother archetype can typify both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the mother archetype represents “maternal solicitude and sympathy” and signifies “all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility”. Yet, on the other hand the mother archetype also conveys notions of darkness and secrecy, and “may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate” (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 82). Jung even refers to evil symbols of this particular archetype and states that witches, dragons or “any devouring and entwining animal, such as a large fish or serpent” may symbolize the terrible mother (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 81f.). “MORE”, then, may also refer to the never-ending appetite of a city that is the opposite of the nourishing, birth-giving mother. Like a visual rendering of a metaphorical snake, the all-consuming metropolis always gobbles up more land and more people. The gloomy and smoke-laden atmosphere stretches to the outskirts of the town, where urban sprawl is occupying any free land and the ideology of classification, allocation and obliteration of difference controls every aspect of people’s lives.

A master in the art of pastiche, Tan seamlessly integrates several iconic Australian and American paintings into his narrative (Beckett 154), all of which again underscore feelings of alienation and isolation evoked by the modernist urban landscapes. Art aficionados will for one immediately identify the allusion to “Cahill Expressway” (1962) by famous Australian painter Jeffrey Smart pasted upon the front cover. With his surrealistic, capitalistic revision of art history, Tan lays the cornerstone of his critical dystopia right on the cover of *The Lost Thing*. In the original painting, Smart places a small, lone one-armed figure in the midst of the drab and grey cityscape surrounding Sydney’s eyesore motorway. The fact that the corpulent man is almost swallowed by the darkness of the tunnel behind him emphasises the disproportion of

⁸ Rudd (143) mentions George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* (1985) as possible dystopian architexts for *The Lost Thing*.

man against the concrete masses of urban (mis-)planning. Where with Smart there is a war memorial with soldiers pointing to a glorious future lying beyond the horizon, Tan places a man in a suit and briefcase with a monitor head leading the city's inhabitants on the "right" track. As Dudek ("Desiring Perception" 61) remarks, Tan's fine art allusions "create a palimpsest, whose layered meanings serve as a criticism of capitalism, technology, heroism, industry, militarism, and regulation". This critical agenda is even more visible in his rendering of John Brack's famous painting "Collins St., 5 p.m." (1955), originally featuring the after-work hustle of business people on a street in Melbourne. Tan's version eerily echoes the meshing gear wheels in the background with rows of robot-like business people mechanically wandering down the street after a long workday. Yet, his characters do not only look "even worse for wear" (Dudek, "Desiring Perception" 60), but are also unified in their failed perception: the big red pot lost thing is shown trudging along entirely unnoticed.

However, Tan also manages to "make a home for the lost thing in an artistic landscape, national and international", as Mayrhofer and Reichl (17) phrase it. It is the odd pairing of the boy and the lost thing, which builds a small community against the backdrop of this desolate futuristic home state. Though unbeknownst to the city dwellers, their presence in Tan's rendering of iconic images populates and enlivens originally isolated spaces. Even more so, Mallan (8) reads the placement of the lost thing and the boy into alienating cityscapes as a sign of resistance, stating that "[c]ompanionship provides a counterpoint to the text's sense of obsolescence, lack of interpersonal communication, and uninspired and dispassionate citizens". This results in a juxtaposition of the unhomely and alienating and the homely and familiar which permeates the whole work. Like two sides of the coin, it seems as if the presence of the lost thing throughout the hometown of the boy sheds light to the fact that home as a place to be is perpetually present even in the most unhomely environments. Furthermore, this negotiation of home is not restricted to a certain time or place. The diverse other intertextual references to painters such as Edward Hopper (Beckett 154), Hieronymus Bosch or Salvador Dali (Mallan 6) make it impossible to locate the setting of the picturebook but instead, "Tan turns the whole experience of not having and looking for a place in society into a time- and placeless experience" (Mayrhofer and Reichl 18f.).

The journey for a place where the lost thing belongs starts at the city beach and leads the odd pair deeper and deeper into the city. As the setting of their first encounter, the establishing shot of the beach is particularly significant in establishing the scenery and initiating contact and thus deserves special attention (see fig. 2). Dudek ("Dogboys" 11f.), who reads the lost thing itself as a racialised 'other' exposing homogenised body politics, argues that its initial

beached position is an allusion to Australia's history with migrants. Along with the boy's descriptions of the lost thing, this location establishes the lost thing as a racialised minority (Dudek, "Dogboys" 12). On a more general level, however, Dudek ("Dogboys" 12) also points out that their first encounter takes place between centre and margin. As such, the topography of their meeting place might not only indicate the lost thing's inbetween position manifested by its spatial position regarding the hometown of the boy but also points towards the potential hybridity and change the lost thing might bring about. If we assume the boy to be at home in this city, the location occupied by the lost thing emphasises also the potential for change waiting at the city gates. While the urban fortress occupies more than half of the picture and appears even more gigantic and invincible through the view from below, the friendly red creature at the shore, positioned in the golden ratio of the picture, might be able to pull this world off its hinges. At least, it draws both the attention of protagonist and readers to the peculiar among the familiar, challenging the ideology of the boy's hometown.

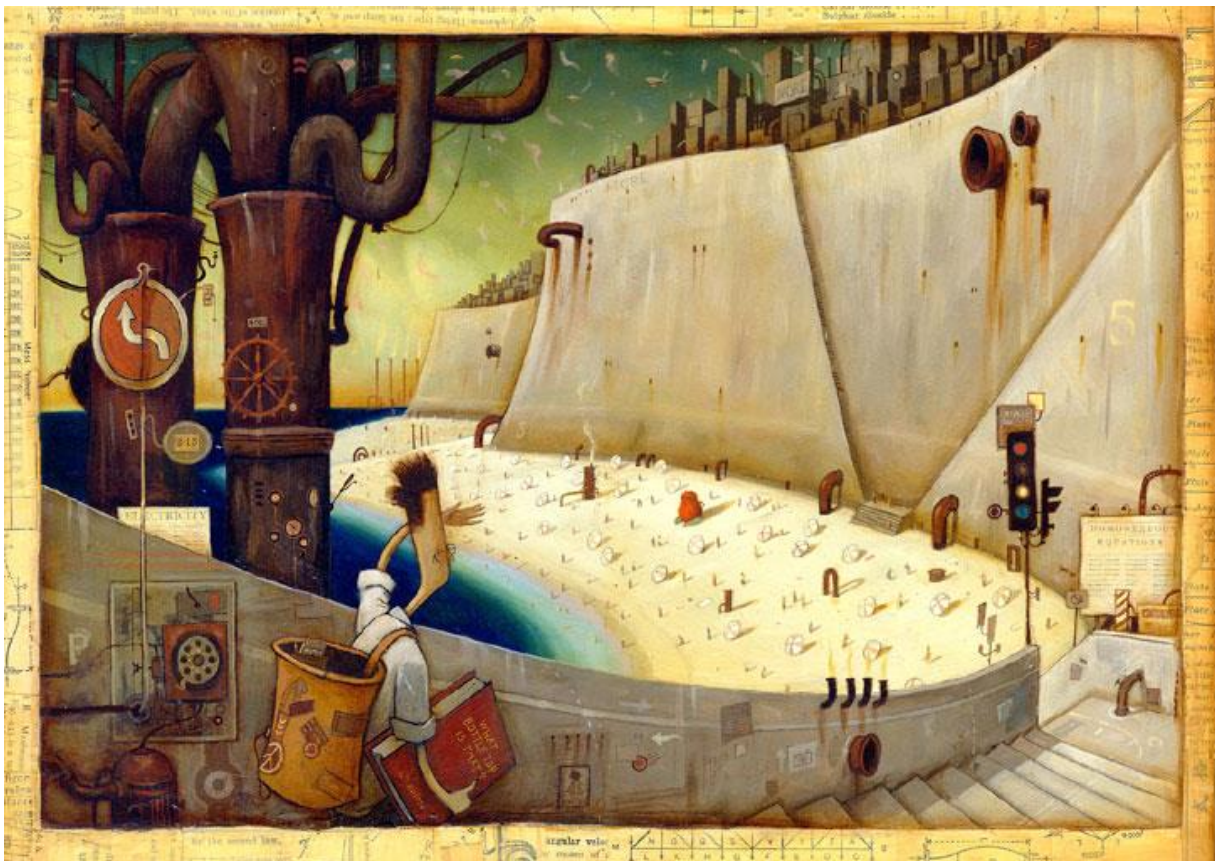


Fig. 2. The beach. (Tan, Shaun. *'The beach'* signed edition of 300. 29 May 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/prints%20previews/LT%20beach.html>>.

Furthermore, the beach represents a threshold for readers and protagonists alike: it designates the transition from introductory frame story to main narrative and constitutes the city limits within the narrative. In the first opening, the reader is confronted with a long shot of a

moss-green cable tram adorned with a variety of signs and pipes. Inside, amidst several people in black business suits and hats, the casually dressed narrator and protagonist is holding onto a strap. The next double spread shows four horizontally aligned pictures shot from inside the tram, through the window frames, looking at the city flashing by. A sense of confinement is achieved both by the smallness of the panels and the many framed vision (Eisner 89). Directly addressing the reader, the narrator sets out to tell a story, which is neither “so funny you’d laugh yourself unconscious” nor “so terrible you’d never want to repeat them” because he “can’t remember any of those” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2). Instead, he starts telling the story of when he “found that lost thing” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2) in retrospect. On the next double spread, a full total of the beach appears over two pages, with several smaller pictures and text boxes above and besides. Shaun is shown at the left margin of the image with his hand positioned above his eyes, as if inviting the reader to look carefully as well. As McCloud (*Making Comics* 165) argues for comics in general, this kind of “off-center choice of frame” foregrounds the setting instead of the character in it and allows readers to let their eyes wander. He states that “[b]y not ‘blocking us at the door’, an off-center figure, facing away from the reader, can invite us to follow it more fully into a scene” (McCloud, *Making Comics* 165). The beach is thus the first location presented fully to the reader, establishing the city’s overpowering status as well as the easily overlooked potential for change outside the city gates.

Along these lines, the beach is finally the place where Shaun, who usually keeps his eyes on the ground to find another bottle top for his collection, is suddenly able to look up and notice what is commonly overlooked by others. In the words of Rudd (136), it is at the beach where he is able to break with the “introspective, misplaced focus of his society, where most of the population walks around eyes downcast”. Dudek (“Desiring Perception” 59ff.) impressively argues that Tan paints a world blinded by technocratic uniformity, where all citizens either have closed eyes or wear some form of glasses. Significantly enough, Shaun perceives difference only on the outskirts of the city, a place far enough from the city’s overwhelming ability to cloud the vision of their citizens and a place for possible contact with otherworldly creatures. On their journey for a place where the lost thing belongs, they come to search for a place other than the city and it is the creature from the outside which ultimately leads Shaun to find such a place where he least expected it.

The beach is thus aligned with another place on the periphery of the city, which at first seems to conform to the city’s drab uniformity and strictly efficient organisation: the suburbs. After asking around for information about the lost thing at the beach in vain, Shaun takes it to the only named person in the main narrative (Rudd 137), his friend Pete, who lives in “Greater

Suburbia” (Tan, *Lost Thing* back cover). Contrary to preconceived notions of the suburbs as a place of conservatism combined with deadly dullness of endless rows of the same old detached housing, suburbia proves to be home for a character standing out in the crowd. On the verbal level, Pete is described quite plainly as someone who “has an opinion on just about everything” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 5). Yet, on the visual level, Pete’s portrayal reveals several unique features. Rudd (137) considers it notable that Pete is presented within a circular frame instead of the rectangular or square frames Tan employs for the vast majority of images in the story. Citing Nodelman (*Words About Pictures* 127), he suggests that the choice of framing device favours the accommodation of rounded shapes over the rigidity of squares. Through placing the character’s verbatim “cool” next to the medium close up of the character, Tan also affords indirect characterisation. In contrast to the business people in the city, Pete is not only portrayed as dressing casually and colourfully, but also as pursuing a creative profession. Standing in front of brush and easel, Pete can easily be identified as an abstract painter and artist and thus stands in stark contrast to the world of calculations and regulations around him. As both Rudd (137) and Dudek (“Desiring Perception” 64) point out, Pete is shown cleaning his sunglasses suggesting that he has not yet succumbed to the blinker ideology the city’s government promotes. Moreover, Dudek (“Desiring Perception” 64) links both Pete’s physicality and philosophy to the utopian space established later in the story, where the lost thing finds a potential home. Reading Pete as an agent of change, facilitating the lost thing’s movement to a potential home (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 60), she argues that the squiggly brush strokes Tan employs to design utopia are first established in connection to the character of Pete.

Oddly enough, Tan creates a home for Pete just among the most homogenous and ruled dwelling places imaginable. The fact that artistic Pete is shown to inhabit one of the seemingly hundreds of identical houses in “Greater Suburbia” suggests that there is more to this non-place than what might be visible at first. In foreshadowing the boy and the lost thing finding a potential utopian home for the thing deep in the belly of the city, Pete subverts the city’s ideology of containment and stability from a similarly surprising subdued space. Amidst conformism, Pete proves his ability to think outside the box and develop ideas which run against the grain of the society’s utilitarian philosophy. The spatial positioning of the characters in this scenario indicates this as well: Instead of discussing the lost thing’s ownership inside, Pete, Shaun and the lost thing are shown sitting on the roof of Pete’s house. Like on the beach, the city fails to contain both their bodies and their ideas. Accordingly, it is in this unusual, unshackled position that Pete introduces a similarly curious train of thought, namely that the thing might not come from anywhere or belong to anyone but is “just plain lost” (Tan, *Lost*

Thing opening 5). It follows then, that at the rims of a city that tries to contain all, some form of resistance is able to seep in. It is the periphery where the city's exhaust gases and industrial fumes dissipate and the fog of numbers and regulations clouding the minds of the city dwellers seems to clear.

Growing up at Hillarys, a coastal suburb in Perth, Western Australia, himself, Shaun Tan seems to be fascinated by the ambiguity of suburban life. The peripheral suburbia full of fantastic possibilities hidden behind the indifference and homogenisation of inhabitants and housing alike is also the setting of *Eric*. Albeit this picturebook neither explicitly shows nor mentions the homeland or hometown of the narrator, which the foreign exchange students Eric visits, the original form of publication provides an insight into the narrative setting. *Eric* (2010) was first published as part of Tan's illustrated short story collection *Tales from Outer Suburbia* (2008), which is concerned with "the contrast between the mundane and extraordinary" surfacing in Australian suburbs and creating an "amusing or unsettling, and potentially thought-provoking" (Tan, "Comments on Tales from Outer Suburbia") effect.

Suburbia thus also seems to be the home of Eric's host family. Furthermore, the stylised title page and publishing information at the back of the stand-alone version suggest an Australian context. These pages show parts of a slightly wrinkled envelope with the title and author on it. While the front page holds two rather exotic and extraordinary postage stamps, the page in the back shows an Australian 2 cent stamp with the picture of Eric. This stylising implies a possible penpalship preceding Eric's visit.

The home of the narrator seems to be a generic Suburban family home located in an ordinary Australian city. With the narrating I providing information about his home only in passing and the images providing a very limited scope due to their focus on the tiny magical protagonist, the topographical specifications of the narrator's home retreat into the background. In fact, it seems as if the view of home is deliberately restricted, creating a (Western) commonplace home, that many can relate to. Readers learn that the host family lives in a city ("I had planned for us to go on a number of weekly excursions together, as I was determined to show our visitor the best places in the city and its surrounds." Tan, *Eric* opening 9), which the images depict as big enough to comprise a zoo (Tan, *Eric* opening 10), a casino and a cinema (Tan, *Eric* opening 12). The narrator and his family inhabit a house in this city, including a spare room for guests and a kitchen pantry (Tan, *Eric* opening 3). In case of the homeland, the images mostly visually expand and enhance the text (Nikolajeva and Scott 12). Most striking,

however, is the way the narrative works at creating this home in contrast to the eponymous Eric, which will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.

Like *The Lost Thing*, *The Arrival*, is (at least partly) set in a secondary world. The first traces of an alternative setting can be found in the establishing shot of the (initial) homeland of the protagonist (Tan, *The Arrival* chapter I opening 4). While the very first photorealistic sepia-toned panels display nothing out of the ordinary in depicting the home of a nuclear family and preparations for the father's departure in the minutest details, the long shot of their home city proves to be different. When the family "venture[s] into a threatening macrocosm" (Johnston 431) as tiny figures near the lower image frame, giant spikey black dragon tails snake through otherwise deserted streets and cast shadows on the rows of houses. Without words or explicit imagery, the homeland of the protagonist and his family is hence presented as haunted by a faceless force of terror. Given that Tan (*Sketches* 5) describes himself as devoted to the idea of indirect representation, this visualisation could be argued to be not so much a painting of a city in the clutches of dragons but an abstract illustration of an unknown threat. Moreover, Johnston (431) notes that the last image of the first chapter questions modality and phenomenology of perception. After mother and daughter bid the father farewell at the train station, they are left to wander alone in the gloomy streets. In this image, the shadowy tails hovering over the city appear at once far above, hazy and vague and could be interpreted as trails of smoke just as well (Johnston 431).

In any case, the choice of colour, drawing style, position and frame dramatically implicate horror and fear, emphasising that "[p]ersonal lives are obviously being irrevocably disrupted by external events" (Johnston 431), leading the father to leave for another country. While the rest of the book mostly features "pencil work tinted in subtle shades of brown and grey from pale peat to misty mauve" (Hunter 15), the colouring of the image is kept in gradations of black and white. Moreover, the value of the shades used for the tentacles is visibly lower than that in the pictures of the family home before, emphasising the darkness and precariousness of the scene. Nodelman (*Words about Pictures* 161) states that disconnected lines in picturebooks signify "a lack of order" and "create a sense of unsettled chaos". Indeed, it seems that when these serpentine arms infest the streets, the shading of the housing blocks appears noticeably patchy and unintegrated due to the pencil strokes being erratic and unordered. To be specific, both shading and hatching look as if executed in a rush, following no order or control and hence reflect the anxiety and terror the portentous tails of an anonymous force bring about. Furthermore, the bleak houses and abandoned streets stand in sharp contrast to the homely scenes shown inside (see 4.1.2. for a detailed examination of inside spaces). The

family appears like a little island in rough sea, with no connection to anyone else and a storm brewing. There is no casual strolling on the streets anymore as in *The Lost Thing* or *Eric* since the (initial) homeland in *The Arrival* offers no security to its inhabitants; terror reigns the streets.

As mentioned above, the tiny formation is situated on the rim of a double spread, portraying them as small, weak and helpless against the gigantic tails. They are positioned quite low on the picture, with the tails dominating most of the image space above them, indicating that this menacing situation occupies equally much space in their lives. Drawing on semioticians Kress and Van Leeuwen, Johnston (431) introduces the term “vectorial fragility” for the way the family moves about the page. She argues that “there is a sense of darkness and urgency, even push and descent, as the ominous dragon-like tail appears to hover above” the family who ventures “in the vector across and down the page” (Johnston 433). Yet, the fact that the family moves from left to right suggests that they are still moving forward according to Western conventions (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 163).⁹ Kress and Van Leeuwen (186f.) correlate left-hand and right-hand elements of pictures to the linguistic principle of ‘the Given’ and ‘the New’. They argue that when the horizontal axis of an image is emphasised by the placement of image components both right and left of the centre, the left-hand side is associated with familiarity, while the right-hand is associated with the unknown and signifies new, uncertain ideas still to be mediated (Kress and Van Leeuwen 187). Hence, the image composition causes the reader to focus on the elements positioned on the right (Kress and Van Leeuwen 187). The family processing from left to right in *The Arrival* thus visually indicates their movement towards uncharted territory where an uncertain fate awaits them. The picture visually references what is not portrayed, emphasising the unknown future and drawing the attention of the viewer to the following adventures in a new land.

This new, “nameless land” (Tan, *Sketches*) is first introduced in chapter II (see fig. 3). After a long steam ship journey, the protagonist and his fellow travellers arrive at a harbour bearing a striking resemblance to New York Harbour with its famous Statue of Liberty (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 6) (Devos 20). Instead of the torch-bearing Libertas, two giant stone figures shaking hands welcome the immigrants to the city and radiate hospitality and benevolence (Devos 20). The fact that they are situated on boats themselves and that one of them carries a suitcase links them to the new arrivals (Devos 20). Furthermore, they are also

⁹ It is generally acknowledged that audiences learn to decode direction in images in accordance with the language they know best (Schwarcz 30). Hence, based on cultural conventions, Western readers read panels and also pages from the left to the right and from the top to the bottom (Eisner 41; Nikolajeva and Scott 148f.; Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 163). It follows, then, that also the passage of time as well as the relationship between cause and effect are anticipated to arise corresponding to the direction of reading, with for example “time conventionally pass[ing] from left to right” (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 163).

represented with birds, signifying migration, as well as eggs and bowls of food denoting nurture (Verstappen, “Tan”). Thus, it seems as if the new land is not only welcoming towards strangers but also provides its inhabitants with everything they need. Yet, as Devos (20) puts it, “this ideal of hospitality is not always lived by, as the rather dehumanizing scenes following the man’s arrival show.” Indeed, the protagonist has to endure a degrading procedure upon arrival, queuing up in a large registry room inspired by the ‘Great Hall’ at Ellis Island at the turn of the century (Tan, *Sketches* 12) for health examination and interrogation. It is also in this immigration screening process that the man first encounters the strange and unfamiliar language of this new country and catches a glimpse into the fantastic world awaiting him behind the doors of the entrance hall.



Fig. 3. The new country. (Tan, Shaun. ‘*The new country*’ signed edition of 500. 29 May 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/prints%20previews/A%20new%20country.html>>.)

In order to put the reader into the shoes of an immigrant, Tan “has minted such a new reality that our words can only approximate its particulars” (Mukherjee 48). In view of this alternative universe being “equally unfamiliar to readers of any age or background” (Tan, “Comments on *The Arrival*”), this “bedazzling strangeness” (Dudek, “Bedazzling” 92) certainly does not fail to awake feelings of both alienation and amazement on the part of the reader. As Hunter (14) puts it, the protagonist is

travel[ing] to a new country where everything is strange, wondrous, and inexplicable. We are as confused and delighted as the arrivals by the size and intricacy of this carnival

world. Escher-like birds, their dart wings folded paper-straight, fly in mathematically precise flocks above a city of curved plate surfaces, geometrically decorated cones and clocks with flower-like cogs on their faces. And we, the readers, are as bemused as the travellers who have no language to explain what they see.

The employment of countless detailed panoramic views of the new land in the absence of (intelligible) words “allow [...] readers to step off the twin conveyor belts of plot and dialogue [...] to let their eyes wander and explore [the] world, instead of viewing it as nothing more than a passing backdrop”, as McCloud notes for comics in general (*Making Comics* 165). Moreover, the silent narrative offers “no guidance as to how the images might be interpreted” (Tan, “Comments on *The Arrival*”). Instead, the number of panels and their environmental detail are as poignant as they are overwhelming and thus mirror the feelings of “a newly arrived immigrant experiencing both culture shock and optimism” (Tan, *Sketches* 20). Even the drawing style, “deftly forming shapes through gradated tone, obviating the need for darker outlines and softening expressions”, and sepia-toned colouring “add to the feeling of sensual overload experienced by the arrival” (Hunter 15) and the reader alike.

The first double spread establishing shot of the city (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 11), shows a vast, intricate urban network. The city, which bears similarity to Fritz Lang’s expressionist silent film *Metropolis* (1927) (Höppner 150), appears to be teeming with “bubbling smoke” and “swirling highways” (Yang), signifying on the large what must be the bustling activity of the small, barely visible inhabitants. Tan (*Sketches* 20) states that coral reefs served as an inspiration for the organisation of his “new-world metropolis”. Indeed, in its “density of structure, diversity of life and sense of spatial freedom” (Tan, *Sketches* 20) the city shares significant qualities with reefs and certainly appears as fascinating and compelling as these otherworldly aquatic realms. On the recto, a giant bird-like statue, keeps its watch over this surrealistic cityscape. Its body and wings are finely engraved with strange patterns and symbols and it holds an egg in its hands. Like the stone figures towering over the harbour, this statue symbolises “flight and fertility” and reasserts the significance of this “avian theme” throughout this bewildering magical metropolis (Tan, *Sketches* 24). Indeed, it is the “unstated premise” of the city that every inhabitant is a former immigrant (Tan, *Sketches* 29), who has built a nest in this fertile town just like migratory birds would do. Similar to *The Lost Thing*, Tan also uses intertextual references to contextualise *The Arrival* and thereby facilitates reader identification (Boatright 470f., Höppner 145). Throughout the book, historical photographs of New York and Ellis Island as well as iconic Australian paintings such as “Coming South” by Tom Roberts (1886) (Tan, *Arrival* “Artist’s Note”) are used as “anchor points for the visual narrative” (Tan, *Sketches* 12), relating the story line to the diverse migration history unfolding

at turn of the 20th century. As such, Tan uses images of the “Great Hall” or entrance hall in Ellis Island to indicate this process. Along these lines, Yang reads the city as a fantastical rendering of New York’s historically ethnic neighbourhoods. Clearly this city – just like its non fictional counterpart – is not only shaped by immigrants but is defined by them.

Emphasising both wonder and forlornness, the protagonist is represented as a small entity in this seemingly endless surrealistic landscape. Yet, the new city stands in sharp contrast to his native land. Instead of the dark menacing hometown, the organic curving shapes of this urban area appear soft and smooth and the golden-brown shimmer lends them a warm, welcoming look. Where the old city with its windowless buildings and dark shadows looming over the family appeared gloomy and physically confining, the new country “convey[s] a utopian sense of illuminated open space and freedom” (Tan, *Sketches* 19). The design is as spacious as the details are lavish. Like all other “pencil chiascuros” of the new country, this one, too, is “rendered with particular attentiveness to backgrounds” (Rhoades et al. 311), which appear both wonderful and incomprehensible. The city is composed of multi-level buildings, streets and pathways intersecting variously and extending across the whole page and thus resemble the various layers of meanings of a language which neither the protagonist nor the reader is yet able to decipher. Only later in the book, knowledge of the city’s airborne transportation system, where passengers travel by balloon (Tan, *Arrival* chapter 2 opening 12) and by air ship (Tan, *Arrival* chapter III opening 2), clarifies the need for such “‘stepped’ urban planning, and the scattering of beacons and other elements throughout the landscape” (Tan, *Sketches* 20).

Sharing the protagonist’s alienation, all other aspects of life in the new country appear equally strange and unfamiliar to the (Western) reader. In “a surgical rearrangement of Roman letters and numbers, using scissors and tape” (Tan, *Sketches* 31), Tan even created a fictional language for this fantastic country. This method of working is also evident in the overall design of the strange new world. Analogous to the creation of an “unknown alphabet from fragments of the known” (Tan, *Sketches* 30), the cityscape is composed of common city elements: buildings and highways, factories and statues, billboards and trees. Yet while the particulars look familiar, their new configuration lends this land a completely novel, surrealist look, enhancing migratory feelings of estrangement, alienation and heightened perception. As Tan formulates in his essay “Originality and Creativity”, “[w]hat is original is not the ideas themselves, but the way they are put together”. In hope of “striking the right balance between the weird and familiar” (Tan, *Sketches* 32), Tan does not draw from a wild mix of all sorts of fantastical elements but grounds his universe on renderings of specific shapes, forms and ideas.

To take a case in point, he devised pages over pages of animal drawings, establishing his own eco-system where all creatures “seem biologically related to each other, borrowing from a common vocabulary of lines and patterns” (Tan, *Sketches* 32). Along these lines, he pays particular attention to creating “a similarity between man-made objects and the plants and animals of the ‘new country’, as if designers here have taken their cue from nature” (Tan, *Sketches* 39).

It follows, then, that specific patterns and symbols can not only be found in the city’s fauna and flora but also reoccur in its design. Counterpointing the darkness and threat immanent in the protagonist’s homeland, the new country does not only appear friendlier through careful accentuation of light in the natural exterior but also features the sun as a beacon of light in its construction. In a sequence shortly after the protagonist is granted access to the city, he finds that the meticulously drawn faraway land does not tell the time like he and Western readers are used to (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 14). Instead of using mechanical clocks, the inhabitants of the new country rely on sundials to indicate time. The fact that the stylised rayed sundials differ fundamentally from the timekeeping instruments used in the protagonist’s homeland beautifully illustrates that life proceeds at a different pace in the new land. Moreover, the mandala-like solar patterns appearing all over the city echo the peculiar ecosystem and hence suggest that the city is fashioned in harmony with nature. Tan (*Sketches* 44) states that “a gum leaf, a poppy seed-pod and a butterfly wing” he found in his backyard served as a main source of inspiration for this design, which he refers to as the “radial pattern of the blossoming tree”. Featuring “in architecture, on clocks, animal wings and documents”, it seems to have its source in the “floating, protozoan objects” which appear all over the city and possibly symbolises “life, energy and fertility” (Tan, *Sketches* 44). Indeed, a few panels after the protagonist is introduced to the sundials, he quizzically inspects these luminous seeds. Upon his touch, he is surprised to find them blown away as fast as they appeared. As curious and magical as weather phenomena such as aurora borealis, these later return in a scene of “enlightenment” as “huge luminous entities drifting over hills, showering the landscape in a ‘rainfall’ of light” (Tan, *Sketches* 46) in an image capturing the strange, celestial beauty of this land (Tan, *Arrival* chapter IV opening 11).

4.1.2. *Dwellings: Houses, Rooms and Chambers*

In *The Lost Thing*, the term “home” is used only twice in the actual narrative and both times refers to the house Shaun and his parents occupy. After deliberating with Pete on the lost thing’s ownership, the boy states that “[t]here was nothing left to do but take the thing home with

[him]” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 6). The image underneath this caption shows the boy and the thing heading home with a wall signifying “Keep out” behind them. Although the arrangement on the double spread would suggest otherwise, with the verso depicting their way home and the recto portraying the home, the odd pair still wanders off to the left. On the one hand, this conspicuous choice of direction could be argued to be conforming to the well-established convention of direction regarding return journeys. Consistent with Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (186f.) notions of ‘the Given’ corresponding to the left-hand side of a picture and ‘the New’ corresponding to the right-hand side, Nodelman (*Words about Pictures*, 164) claims that the return journey of a character in a picturebook is always to the left. Moreover, he finds “not simply that one always moves to the right but that one voyages away from home to the right and returns to the left” (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 164). Accordingly, Shaun takes the lost thing home to the left, returning to his point of origin. On the other hand, considering that forward movement usually advances to the right (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 164), this movement against the grain and direction of reading could also suggest a kind of regression and setback for the new friends. To take a case in point, Nodelman connects the notion of impeded progress to characters frequently moving to the left (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 164). Furthermore, this is also the only image where Shaun has to tag along the lost thing by grabbing one of the little bell strings attached to his tentacles. Along with the ominous “Keep out” at the back and two squiggly arrows pointing in the opposite direction, the movement towards home indeed bodes ill.

On the recto, then, Shaun and the lost thing are sitting in the living room alongside Shaun’s parents. The images of outside spaces on the next page suggest that the family lives in a similar suburban detached house as Shaun’s friend Pete does. Due to its size, the lost thing is only partly visible in the background but easily occupies a third of the image space with his large red kettle-shaped body and enormous tentacles. Yet, both the bespectacled parents and Shaun are facing away from the thing and appear to be watching TV or reading the newspaper. Even though the lost thing is situated right behind the parents’ geometrical fauteuils, it is literally eclipsed and marginalised: The nuclear family is gathered around the mechanical TV apparatus and the lost thing is ostracised at the back. Although hardly believable, also the text from the point of view of focaliser Shaun reads, “My parents didn’t really notice it at first.” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 6). It follows, then, that the homely microcosm of the boy constitutes no exception from the “mainstream ideology [which] operates to erase, or at least not to see, radical difference” (Dudek, “Dogboys” 13). Even the boy, who was able to recognise and accept difference and befriend the lost thing at the beach, averts his gaze in the family home and seems

only concerned about being in charge of the remote control. The lost thing is the visual manifestation of the metaphorical elephant in the room, emphasising that the domestic setting on the inside is continuing on the small scale what is portrayed on the large scale outside: “a hell of monstrous uniformity where individual difference has almost been eliminated” (Mills 65).

Along the same lines, even interior spaces are infested with industrial plumbing, various cables, and strange machinery – all of which fashioned in a greyish rectangular design. The inside spaces prove as microcosms of the world outside (Dewan 5) and even Shaun’s parents represent the typical citizens of this industrial dystopia: His father is dressed in loosened business attire with his briefcase neatly placed beside him, suggesting that he is one of the many slavish workers of Tan’s pastiche of John Brack’s “Collins St., 5 p.m.” (1955). His void gaze is directed towards the TV set. His mother is partly hidden behind the newspaper with the headline “Flamingo Recaptured” and hence seems to only absorb what authorities mediate. Insofar, Shaun’s explanation for his parents failed perception of the lost thing seems ironic. While he attributes their ignorance to them being “[t]oo busy discussing current events” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 6), not much interaction seems to be going on between them, much less a discussion about current events. Furthermore, the seating arrangement in the living room indicates estrangement on an interpersonal level. Instead of sitting on the couch together, each member of the family has a separate seat, with each of them positioned quite far apart from the others. The proliferation of rectangular geometrical shapes, first encountered on the beach where “rectangular shaped people [...] stand alone with only their shadows for company, and the rectangles repeat themselves in lampposts, signs, and buildings, so people are barely distinct as human forms” (Dudek, “Dogboys” 12) extends also to the interior. Nearly all home furnishings display a boxed design, from the parent’s armchairs to the rug on the floor. As Moebius (“Codes” 318) notes, “an emphasis on rectangular shapes is [often] coupled with a problem, or with an encounter with the disadvantages of discipline or civilized life”. Accordingly, all that matters to the parents is the “Fundamental Question of Efficiency” from the background collage of old physics and engineering textbooks, which here more than ever “underlie[s] and supplement[s] the painting [...] especially” (Dudek, “Dogboys” 19). When the boy points out the lost thing to his mother and father, they show little enthusiasm at the prospect of the thing staying at their house. Seeing no point in its presence, they demand him to take it back where he found it, cutting Shaun short in wanting to explain the situation.

Eventually, the lost thing is temporarily “hid” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 7) in the back shed and Shaun is feeding it “what it liked”, Christmas decorations. Compared to the living

room scene, the feeding scene in the dark back shed emanates intimacy in secrecy. The boy and the lost thing are alone and close, just as they were back at the beach, where their friendship started. In the warm light of a single light bulb, Shaun is shown standing on a ladder and sprinkling Christmas baubles and stars in the opened hatch on top of the lost thing. Placed at the very core of the book, this is the first and only time the lost thing opens up for Shaun and the reader, exposing a *mélange* of tentacles, gearing wheels and scales. While Shaun's living room setting appeared destructive and physically confining, their friendship strives in the dark. Although the lost thing may be "*taken out* (like household trash) to live in the back shed" (Mallan 5; original emphasis) by the parent's request, the boy is taking good care of it there. Still, not even the space in the garden shed is big enough for the lost thing. As Mayrhofer and Reichl (15) phrase it, "[i]ts 'ill-fitting' existence is reflected by the thing [...] notoriously extending its body and limbs beyond the margin of the narrative's single frames". Indeed, the lost thing, which enjoyed playing fetch at the beach, running twinkled-toed after the sticks the boy threw him, appears clunky and heavy when squeezed into the boy's living room, with the image frames cropping and trimming its edges. Likewise, one of its curly tentacles reaches out of the back shed door. Hence, the composition of the images not only highlights the lost thing's feelings of not belonging but also indicates that "the identity of the lost thing simply cannot be contained" (Mayrhofer and Reichl 15) in the home of the boy.

Interestingly, the writing seems to comment indirectly on the state of the boy's home. Beneath the small centred long shot of the back shed the single sentence "It was a real dilemma." (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 7) is pasted upon the yellowed backdrop and stands out from the rest of the text. While this comment seems to refer to the fact that Shaun "couldn't keep the thing in the shed forever" because his "Mum and Dad would eventually notice it" (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 7), the page arrangement also suggest another interpretation. The back shed and by extension the home of the boy could be argued to be the "real dilemma" the boy has to face. Once again, the text-image interaction sheds light on the fact that it is not the lost thing which is the problem of this industrial, capitalist society. It appears that not even domestic life, which otherwise often functions as safe haven and refuge in children's literature (Reimer, "Introduction" xiii; Reimer, "Keywords" 106; Stott and Francis 223), is a retreat in this bleak dystopian city. The boy's home and his family both seem equally corrupted by the "current state of technological excess" (Mallan 7) as the rest of society. Home indeed leaves Shaun in a quandary as it contributes nothing to a solution but proves to be part of the problem. When the boy leaves the lost thing at the end of the book and returns "home to classify [his] bottle-top collection" (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 7), home as a place and direction is intensely

bound up with the classificatory logic of the city and outside world. The story's closure thus seems to be achieved by the boy being re-“absorbed by postmodern meaninglessness and mundane everydayness” (Stephens, “Postmodernism” 97).

By contrast, the home in *Eric* is not deprived of the ability of change. As mentioned above, Eric's host family appears to be living in an everyday Australian household. The china and canned goods surrounding Eric's sleeping quarter of choice (Tan, *Eric* opening 4) connote an ordinary middle-class family home. The fact that the reader is presented the household one piece at a time “lends an air of first-hand experience and bolsters the illusion of wandering through a scene”, as McCloud phrases it in reference to comic books in general (McCloud, *Making Comics* 166). In each close shot image, the focus is attached to small Eric, resulting in a limited view of the surroundings. As such, it could be argued that the reader shares the point of view of a foreign exchange student who might have difficulties attaining a comprehensive picture of the new country. In addition, the combination of limited perspective and same-sized framing draws the reader's attention to the picture content. Carefully following each of Eric steps, the reader is encouraged to concentrate on seemingly mundane details of everyday existence, like the code of a PC cord (Tan, *Eric* opening 6) or the shape of a sink drain (Tan, *Eric* opening 8). Looking underneath the stamp on a postcard (Tan, *Eric* opening 7), it seems that Eric's motto might be taken from Goethe's *Faust* (part 1, lines 30-31): “So that I may perceive whatever holds/ The world together in its inmost folds”.

Yet, Eric does not limit himself to studying the host family's world but instead enlightens both family members and their home. The narrator finds that Eric is “very curious” and always has “plenty of questions” (Tan, *Eric* opening 6), yet they are not “the kind of questions [he] had been expecting” (Tan, *Eric* opening 8). It seems as if Eric's unconventional questions and his attention to detail prompt a change in the narrator's view of home. His answers (“‘I'm not really sure,’ or, ‘That's just how it is.’” (Tan, *Eric* opening 8)) and his uneasy feelings (“I didn't feel very helpful at all.” (Tan, *Eric* opening 8)) indicate that he increasingly becomes aware of the naturalisation processes at work in his home. His loss of interpretative control is accentuated by the change of stance and the increasing amount of hedging in the text. When before Eric's visit the narrator was “determined to show [...] the best places in the city and its surrounds”, he now finds it “hard to really know” if Eric enjoys these trips (Tan, *Eric* opening 9) and wonders about Eric's sentiments in the new country (Tan, *Eric* opening 5).

Moreover, Eric not only leaves his traces in the minds of people but his interest in “small things discovered on the ground” (Tan, *Eric* opening 13) provides for a transformation of space as well. On the penultimate opening, the reader is invited to discover the gift Eric left the family upon his sudden departure (Tan, *Eric* opening 20): a magical pantry garden planted in the bits and bobs Eric found on the ground (see fig. 4). According to Dewan (7), houses also act as “externalized projections of the inner self”. Consequently, changes in the homely settings of books may symbolise psychic growth and maturation (Dewan 10). Thus, the changes Eric performs in the family’s kitchen pantry, a hidden corner in the centre of their home, could also be read metaphorically. By transforming the innermost part of their domestic space, metonymically signifying warmth, cosiness and nurturance (Reimer, “Keywords” 106), Eric could be said to touch the hearts of those at home there. Amidst stored groceries and canned goods, he leaves them food for thought, transforming not only their house but potentially also their attitudes. His kind present, which is “the first thing we [the narrator and his family] show any new visitors to our house” (Tan, *Eric* opening 19), combines both homely and foreign pieces and hence proves that home can also be imagined as a space open to negotiation and transformation (see chapter 4.3. for a close reading of home as an imagined space).

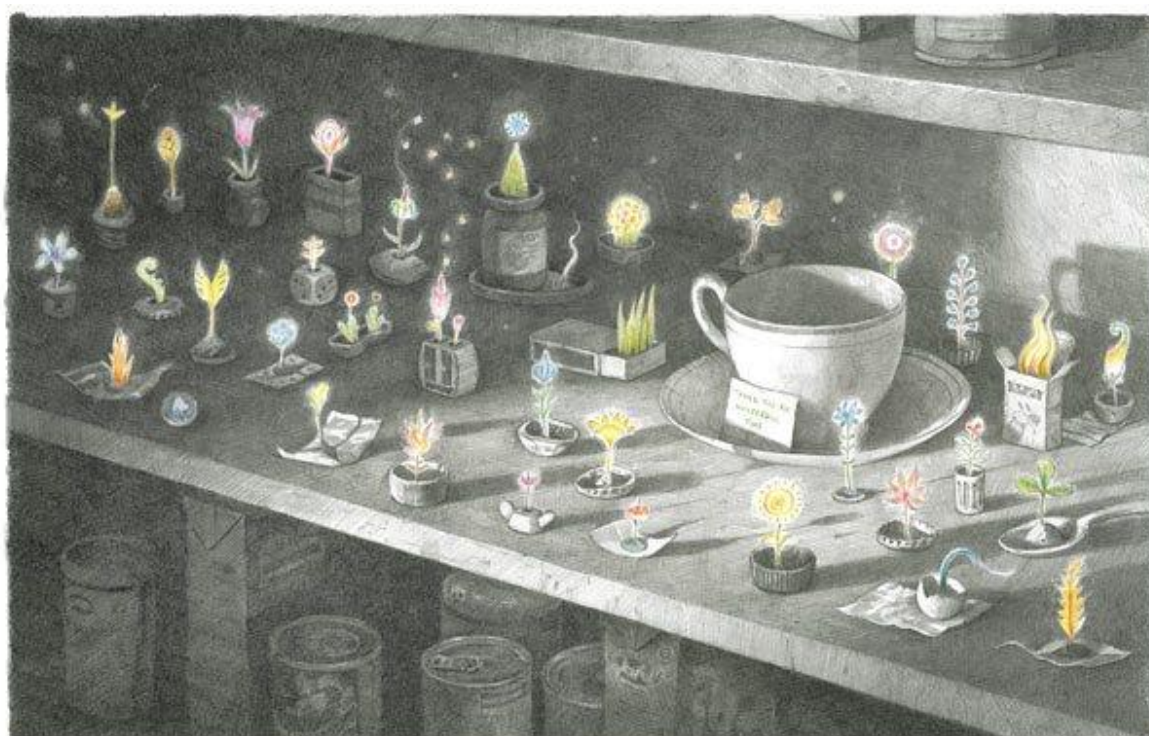


Fig. 4. The magical pantry garden. (Tan, Shaun. “Story in pictures: Eric by Shaun Tan.” *Guardian* 27 July 2009. 29 May 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2009/may/13/shaun-tan-eric-story-pictures#img-12>>.)

As a story about migration, the 128-page-long *The Arrival* portrays various homely dwellings and changes happening in these. The initial family home is set in the land riddled by

terror and fear. Situated in one of the plain bleak houses with unadorned crumbling façades and dark, narrow windows, the exterior of the family home stands in stark contrast to the interior. The very first opening (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 1) displays various signifiers of home in nine same-sized panels. Moving from one aspect of the protagonist's lodging to another, the close-ups display different objects of everyday life, with each of them relating to a different aspect commonly associated with home. While each of these items is traditionally found in a Western family home, they do not only represent concrete manifestation of household articles but also refer to encoded abstract, imaginary meanings of home. Thus, the child's drawing of the smiling family in the centre of the page, for example, portrays not only the household members but connotes feelings of belonging, comfort and love. Along the same lines, the right front row panel of a hat hung on the wall could be read as a visual rendering of the English idiom "hang your hat" (Ayto 164) conveying the practical aspects of having a roof over one's head. By allowing insights into this intimate space, Tan evokes highly emotive and atmospheric aspects of home.

Yet, as Johnston (431) aptly notes, this "microcosm of the familiar and the family is increasingly filled with signs of departure". The cracked teapot and chipped cup convey not only nurture and warmth but also a sense of poverty and disintegration, which might be looming over the peaceful family home. The use of aspect-to-aspect transitions, that is, "transition from one aspect of a place, mood or idea to another" (McCloud, *Making Comics* 15), creates "a strong sense of place" (McCloud, *Making Comics* 17) instilled with homely and migratory themes. Already the very first image of a white origami bird spreading its wings points towards imminent departure, intensified in the last row by the boat tickets lying next to a steaming cup and a packed suitcase. On the next double spread (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 2), Tan uses moment-to-moment transitions in the verso to show a series of hand movements of the packing protagonist, resulting in a slowing down of action (McCloud, *Making Comics* 16) as if to present the protagonist's reluctance and hesitation regarding the impending painful farewell. The action seems to come to a complete standstill in the recto image of the kitchen, when his wife gently places her hand on his, with all the previously introduced household items at their place in the background. The battered kitchen table along with the chipped china in the sparsely decorated scene suggest that the protagonist leaves his home seeking better prospects for his family elsewhere.

The way that the protagonist finds a dwelling place in this Nameless Land can be understood as a self-reflexive comment on the art of visual storytelling (Tan, *Sketches* 31): After failing to communicate in the unknown language, the protagonist resorts to drawing in

order to find a home (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 14). In contrast to the visually rich and complex imagery of home used in the very first panels of the book, the protagonist uses a simple line drawing of a bed and window reminiscent of a pictogram in order to ask a city resident for a place to stay. This points towards the fact that his solo-lodgings in the new world represent only an interim solution. As the following double spreads prove, the main character is painfully aware of the fact that his lodging lacks an important aspect of what he considers to be home: family. He gains access to an apartment, which is “at least functional and fully furnished” (Tan, *Sketches* 36) – a state not to be taken for granted particularly as an immigrant – but still bewildering and strange. After closely inspecting the curious valves, accessories and fittings of the kitchen and bathroom (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 16), the protagonist’s first act in his new apartment is to hang the family portrait on his bedroom wall (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 17), indicating that he is trying to make himself at home. The accommodation, consisting of “three minimal rooms – a kitchen, a washroom and a small bedroom loft only accessible by ladder” (Tan, *Sketches* 36), is then shown later in the book with the protagonist’s washing hung up and books and sheets of paper strewn all over the bedroom, suggesting that he settled in his new environments (Tan, *Arrival* chapter V opening 5). Yet again, the images depict him looking at the photography of his family. The fact that he is facing away from the reader conveys distance and detachment (Kress and Van Leeuwen 144). In the intimacy of his bedroom, he is turning his back on this world, delving into treasured memories. While the man feels secure enough at his apartment to expose his back and to make himself vulnerable (Kress and Van Leeuwen 144), this gesture also signifies his longing for another kind of home. Interestingly, even in his companion volume to *The Arrival*, named *Sketches of a Nameless Land: The Art of The Arrival*, Tan (36) only ever refers to the protagonist’s dwelling as “lodgings” or “apartment” but never uses the term “home”.

The initial family home and the imagery of home established in the first few pages is echoed not until the protagonist arrives at “The place of nest” (Tan, “Comments on The Arrival”). On his journey for food, the main character travels by air ship to a market place, evocative of an agora, a central gathering place in the Ancient Greek city-states (Tan, *Arrival* chapter III opening 6). Just like in the protagonist’s apartment, food is stored and sold in various cupboards and drawers bearing incomprehensible labels in the foreign language, alluding to “a world full of hidden spaces and meanings” (Tan, *Sketches* 36). There, he meets a man and his son who help him find his way around the plethora of different foods, fruits and vegetables. The hospitable pair invite him over to their place for dinner, located in a district inhabited by flocks of birds nesting on giant owl statues (Tan, *Arrival* chapter III opening 12). Tan

(“Comments on The Arrival”) references this dwelling place as “The place of nests” on his website, emphasising not only the harmonious cohabitation of animals and humans, with the latter residing in various pieced together houses on this peninsula (Tan, *Sketches* 36), but also its imminent quality of living. Indeed, it seems as if “[t]he home of the friend becomes the first ‘nest’ the man belongs to” (Devos 21). The friend along with his son and wife hold a considerable feast for the protagonist, enjoying themselves over drinks, “anemonelike foods” (Khailova 5) and music (Tan, *Arrival* chapter III opening 12f.). Both style and arrangement of the kitchen table and chairs in the friend’s house run parallel to the protagonist’s family home (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 2), reinstating familiarity, warmth and homeliness. Yet, there are no worries at this richly decorated kitchen table. Instead, a sequence of panels with laughing faces and enjoyable activities portrays the forging of a friendship in new surroundings. The fact that the earlier “stream of visual consciousness ideas of hearth and home, warmth of fire and comfort of food, [and] companionship of table” (Johnston 428) are re-employed and expanded, designates the friend’s house as an affiliative home for the protagonist.

The kitchen table as the centre and epitome of friendship and family is finally also used in the last chapter. Reunited with his loved ones, the image of the laughing family (Tan, *Arrival* chapter VI opening 2) proves to be a reworking of the first kitchen scene (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 2). Instead of showing the scenery from an oblique angle, Tan chooses again to show the characters from a front angle, producing high reader involvement (Kress and Van Leeuwen 143). The background on the recto panels suggests that the protagonist and his daughter and wife might have moved to “The place of nests” (Tan, “Comments on The Arrival”); in any case, the man seems to have vacated his apartment in favour of this new place. In contrast to the empty, drab streets of their (first) hometown, their new residential area is nicely landscaped and the housing looks neat and well maintained. Similarly, their formerly sparsely furnished kitchen is now teeming with decorations reminiscent of the solar radial patterns found all over the new city and landscape. Every aspect of the new home thus seems to convey the joy and bustle of a happy family life, including the laughing faces of the man and his wife. The parallel compositions draw the attention of the reader to the different shapes and forms homely dwellings might take. Domestic houses and flats in *The Arrival* are hence not depicted as static and space-bound but as dynamic and mobile.

4.1.3. Gardens and Outside Spaces

As an integral part of a specific type of domestic space, gardens and outside spaces around homely dwellings and houses are of particular importance when it comes to the negotiation of

the relationship between the private and public sphere (Briganti and Mezei 247). As such, gardens are liminal places, designating the space where concepts and physics of both nature and culture converge (Boyd 12). The appearance of gardens and their maintenance, their function and their way of demarcation from the outside world allow for drawing conclusions on the nature of the homely dwellings they surround. Interestingly, both *The Lost Thing* and *Eric* conflate inside and outside by showing interior gardens or garden-like scenes behind doors. In the dystopian world of *The Lost Thing*, the reader is confronted with two types of gardens, although identifying either as such is admittedly debatable. The first garden is the back yard of Shaun's house. Not recognisable from its appearance, this open space can only be identified as purported green space by its topographical location. When Shaun mentions the back shed as a temporary hiding place for the lost thing, the accompanying image looks nothing like a shack in a garden (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 7). Situated at the back of the lot, the back shed is surrounded only by concrete, walls and industrial pipes. As mentioned above, the city in *The Lost Thing* is characterised by a complete absence of flora and fauna, with Shaun's garden space being no exception. While the garden traditionally signifies "excess, inversion, a festive exuberance" as a place where both young and old engage in play and other recreational activities (Alexander 271), the family's back yard in *The Lost Thing* seems eerily empty and depleted. No single blade of grass or flower shows its head in this walled in space and the only sign of life – a dog's leash attached to a tube – proves to be equally deserted. The garden is not even re-signified with countless futile signposts and demarcations like the city's public spaces but is entirely blank. As a space most commonly used for regeneration and transformation (Alexander 270), the garden has been stripped of its assets and deprived of its functions. Since gardens are permeated with social and cultural values, they can be read as a true "art of milieu and a space of heightened expression" in a text (Boyd 11). Thus, the remaining empty shell of a garden in *The Lost Thing* bears witness to a society occupied with efficiency and order to such an extent that anything outside the tangible, measurable and manageable realm is discarded. The Australian dream of home ownership takes a dystopian turn with these detached single-storey houses with empty garden spaces. The urban sprawl, evident in Pete's "Greater Suburbia" (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 5), leads to wilderness not being domesticated but entirely eradicated. In a world subject to profit, the operational reliability of cities and machinery outvalue the free little pleasures of life.

The second garden-type space in *The Lost Thing* is the place the boy and the lost thing eventually discover "in a dark little gap off some anonymous little street" (Tan, *Lost Thing* 12). While this ambiguous space is examined in detail in chapter 4.3., some remarks appear

nevertheless indispensable in this chapter. After following the small squiggly arrows spread all over the city, the odd pair finds a place where the lost thing can stay behind a big door (Tan, *Lost Thing* 13). While again not immediately recognisable as a garden, the visual conception and function of this space constitute its garden-like qualities. Mallan (6) describes this space both as “Dali-esque” and as an appropriation and transformation of Hieronymus Bosch’s “The Garden of Earthly Delights” (ca. 1504). Indeed, the vertical image composition, the cornucopia of various fantastic composite beings and explicit image citations reference the edenic scenes of the famous Renaissance triptych. For example, a version of the book-reading mythical creature at the bottom right in Bosch’s left panel appears also at the exact same spot in Tan’s images. Ironically, Tan’s being appears to be reading a book called *The Idiot*, which could be read as an intertextual reference to Fjodor Dostojewski’s novel of the same title (1869).¹⁰ This vast “visual space of playful energy” (Mallan 6) features the garden as a dream-like place where action is unrestrained (Alexander 272). As Boyd indicates, this garden indeed serves “as an interpretative lens through which central concerns of a text as a whole may be reflected in a heightened manner” (11) as it affords “a renewed perspective of what we consider to be the norm” (14). This garden-type space is the opposite of Shaun’s back yard, admitting “dissolution, inversion, and [...] sweet disorder” (Alexander 272). All creatures engage in recreational activities with no immediate purpose, opposing the logic of numbers ruling the outside world. While this vast indoor space is certainly no lush garden in the conventional sense, it is a space of enjoyment, which the dystopian world is so desperately lacking.

A similar conflation of interior and exterior can also be found in *Eric*. As stated above, Eric employs his transformative gardening skills in midst of the host family’s house (Tan, *Eric* opening 20). The pantry garden in *Eric*, which may have been inspired by Tan’s brother growing crystal gardens in tiny aquariums as a child (Tan, “Comments on Tales From Outer Suburbia”), is not only a mix of nature and culture (Boyd 12) but also a place where the foreign and familiar collide. Eric plants tiny luminous flowers into the cultural artefacts he found on the ground, dumped by others as worthless trash. Reading the garden as a means of culminating and emphasising the text’s main concerns (Boyd 14), the magical cupboard plants illuminate the expansion and cultivation of the foreign exchange student’s and the host family’s relationship. Although not without miscommunication, their joint efforts for mutual appreciation bears fruit and, once planted, even “thriv[es] in the darkness” (Tan, *Eric* opening

¹⁰ It could be argued that *The Lost Thing* could also be read as a transformation of Dostojewski’s *The Idiot*. Like the main character in *The Idiot*, the boy in *The Lost Thing* appears naïve and unconventional, while yet being able to recognise society’s contradictive misfits. Yet, similar to Prince Myshkin, he is portrayed as essentially powerless against public authority and cannot help but return to ignorance and isolation at the end of the narrative.

19) of the family's pantry.

While there are no private gardens in *The Arrival*, the magical landscape and fantastic parks in the Nameless Land could be argued to take over the recreational and transformational functions of gardens without preclusive ownership. In a scene titled "enlightenment" (Tan, *Sketches* 46), his factory co-worker leads the protagonist outside the city (Tan, *Arrival* chapter IV opening 11). In this overwhelming and powerful landscape beaming with rays of blazing lights, the pair then meets some friends to play a boule-type game and enjoy their free evening (Tan, *Arrival* chapter IV opening 11). In the new country, it thus seems that nature is public property treated as creative commons. Instead of trying to domesticate nature and to draw borders with the help of private gardening, each city resident treats the surroundings with respect and is hence free to make use of its possibilities. Furthermore, the long shot of the family's new district in the last chapter shows a well-embedded park area among houses and streets (Tan, *Arrival* chapter VI opening 3). Instead of the unpopulated, baleful streets of the family's place of origin, the city they emigrate to is teeming with people and the bustle of everyday life. This urban garden not only illustrates again the harmonious co-existence of humans and nature but also conveys social equality: the beauty of nature is not reserved for a privileged few but available for everyone.

4.2. Home as a Psychodynamic Space: Belonging

Considering the fact that home unites concrete as well as abstract notions, home is not only constructed around topographical and material aspects but can and should also be explored as a psychodynamic space. "Location, geography and land ownership contribute fundamentally to people's sense of belonging", as Wisker (47) observes, but yet, states, buildings and dwellings constitute only the material building blocks for places called home. As a concept imbued with feelings (Blunt and Dowling 2), home is "conceived as a state as well as a place" (OED). As mentioned above, home is constructed on the basis of "select inclusions and exclusions" (George 2) and thus may be tied to feelings such as belonging, intimacy and desire but also alienation, violence and fear (Blunt and Varley 3). After examining the spatial and material relations of home, the following chapter is thus devoted to the study of social, political and psychological aspects of homely constructions in *The Lost Thing*, *The Arrival* and *Eric*. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' and the concept of 'othering' rooted in philosophical, psychoanalytical and postcolonial contexts home is investigated as modes of belonging and not belonging (George 2). Assuming that home is as

much a process as place, particularly in migration, home is also considered a matter of appropriation in *The Arrival*.

From the surface level up to the intricate layers of the picturebook, all aspects of *The Lost Thing* are intimately linked to the ambivalent negotiation of otherness, alienation and belonging. The basic premise of the story is the existence of a “lost thing” in a society governed by an overbearing industrialised bureaucracy obsessed with taxonomic categorisation. The technocratic government of this dystopian Never Never rules by an extensive system of federal departments responsible for maintaining the “order of day-to-day life” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 8) by rationalising decisions, maximising technological efficiency and abolishing distinctions. Specifically, the titles, logos and mottoes of six distinct government entities introduced throughout the whole narrative allow conclusions to be drawn on society’s rules, values and beliefs and thus on the style how this political community is imagined (Anderson 6). “The Federal Department of Economics” defines the ideal citizen with its slogan “Consumere ergo sum.” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 8). The caption, “We understand that at the end of the day, all that matters is the balance sheet.”, along with the existence of a “Federal Department of Management” (“bureaucritae opacus.”), indicates that Shaun lives in a capitalist society where numbers outvalue humans. Along those lines, “The Federal Department of Tubes & Pipes” and its motto “plumbiferus ductus.” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 8) bespeak the rise and predominance of technology and industry evident in the whole cityscape. Furthermore, “The Federal Department of Information” (“ignorare regulatum.”) (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 1) and “The Federal Department of Censorship” (“illūmināre prohibitus”) (Tan, *Lost Thing* back cover) essentially characterise the state as reigned by a totalitarian regime which arranges for the excision of unauthorised information and the obliteration of opposing ideologies. Any actual objects defying the classificatory logic and system of society are dealt with in a separate department: “The Federal Department of Odds & Ends”, which according to its motto “sweepus underum carpetae.” prevents non-conformism by providing a “pigeon hole to stick in” “unclaimed property”, “troublesome objects of unknown origin” and “things that just don’t belong” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 8). The fact that all of the city’s logos include pigs, including the emblematic blindfolded pig on the official seal of “The Federal Department of Censorship” (Tan, *Lost Thing* back cover), is reminiscent of another fictional dystopian society. In George Orwell’s famous *Animal Farm* (1945), it is the pigs that establish a brutal despotism after rebelling against the humans.

The dystopian ‘imagined community’ of *The Lost Thing* is established by way of forcible synchronisation, illustrated best by the masses of seemingly identical, blinkered

business people swimming with the tide in Tan's rendering of John Brack's "Collins St., 5 p.m." (1955) (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 8). The "deep, horizontal comradeship" Anderson (7) defines as a characteristic for the nation, thus appears to be deliberately manufactured. As Dudek ("Desiring Perception" 59) phrases it, "[t]he overwhelming ethos of this on-the-streets dystopia and the lingering urgency of the story is that the world of *The Lost Thing* is a world in which people have lost the ability, or lost the desire, to see or read a world beyond the television, the newspaper, the signage, the dollar". This restricted view is also accentuated by the choice of framing. Except for one double spread depicting the place where the lost thing eventually ends up, all openings are characterised by a proliferation of square frames, with some images even being doubly framed making them even "tidier" and even "less energetic" (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 50). The title page, which establishes the narrator's current position telling the story about the lost thing, also features particularly fractured views. The windowpane of the tram Shaun is riding appears to be randomly interrupted by dark frames, which prohibit an unrestricted outlook. From the inside, only a specific kind of looking is possible as the frames effectively fracture the reality flashing by outside. Thus, the fact that Shaun returns to this view at the end of the narrative suggest that he might have succumbed to the blinker mentality the society inflicts on him. Indeed, the grey statues of human figures with monitor heads (Tan, *Lost Thing* front cover; opening 11) as well as the countless road signs and rules posted all over the city indicate that this community is bereft not only of the ability to see but also to think independently, outside governmental control.

This eerie fraternity based on the suppression of individual differences is also typified in both the way people are stylised and the way they act. The "HOMOGENEOUS EQUATIONS" (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2) posted on the beach describe the status of a society, which "values tidiness over creativity, routine over thought, and process over judgement" (Scott, "Frames" 110). The homogeneity and order found in the architectural design is continued in the stylising of equally rectangular and rigid people (Dudek, "Dogboys" 12), suggesting they are in fact not only dwarfed by the enormous square grey constructions in the city (Mills 65) but effectively swallowed up. As Dudek ("Dogboys" 12) puts it, "[t]his flattened, sepia-toned landscape is a homogenous equation wherein people = buildings = signs = lampposts in both shape and colour". Like the industrial plumbing continuously releasing their fumes into the air, many of the similarly drained looking people are constantly smoking. One man is even trying to smoke and to eat an ice cream at the same time (Dudek, "Desiring Perception" 60), while others look like reincarnations of the pasty-faced, time-stealing Men in Grey from Michael Ende's *Momo* (1974). Three elegantly dressed gaunt gentlemen in black

suits and hats are smoking their cigarettes behind pipelines with clock-like measuring instruments next to a panel where Shaun is looking at his wristwatch (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 4). Besides their dull sepia-toned skin, what they all have in common is their gruesome, frozen expression. In fact, the majority of city dwellers are only shown in the background, at an impersonal long distance where “there is an invisible barrier between the viewer and the object” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 134). As Maurice Grosser asserts for portrait painting, “at the normal distance of social intimacy and easy conversation, the sitter’s soul begins to appear” (17) whereas “[a]t more than thirteen feet away, [...] we can look at a man as if he were a shape cut out of cardboard, and see him coldly as something having little connection with ourselves” (16). The images position the reader at a distance far away from the bulk, thus resulting in an alienating effect where there appears to be no soul in the characters. Like a painter who “[at] this distance [...] can look at his model as if he were a tree in a landscape or an apple in a still life” (Grosser 16), Tan manufactures most of the city’s inhabitants as anonymous, expressionless backdrop, with barely visible facial features in order to reflect the decrease of individuality. If faces can be discerned, they are haggard, care-worn and stony-faced, with “expressionless mouths [...] pull[ing] into grimaces” (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 60).

This literal and metaphorical human petrification also limits interaction to a bare minimum (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 60). Not only are the city dwellers depicted as blinded by technocratic uniformity through showing them with closed eyes or glasses (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 59ff.), but they also rarely look at each other and virtually never face the reader. When Shaun asks around at the beach if anyone knows about the lost thing, the lifeguard high up on his tower he tries contacting keeps looking straight ahead into his binoculars while shouting into his microphone (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 4). Rudd (137) reads this image not only as alluding to society’s myopia but also to surveillance. The extreme bird’s eye view amplifies the sense of detachment and distance pervading the long panel (Eisner 90) and indeed could also be interpreted as mimicking the style of a surveillance image. Even if citizens are portrayed in close proximity to each other, as in the cable car (Tan, *Lost Thing* title page) or on the street (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 8), they are in fact not interacting with each other. This is also reflected in the text when Shaun states that “nobody was very helpful” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 4) and “too busy doing [...] stuff” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 2). Belonging is not a matter of choice, but forced upon this extrinsically determined ‘imagined community’, which is a space “empty of humanity” (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 60).

The parent’s behaviour towards the lost thing clearly indicates the extent of the citizens’ internalisation of rules and values (Dudek, “Dogboys” 13). Like nearly all other people in the

city, Shaun's mother and father do not "really notice it at first" (Tan, *Lost Thing* 6). This 'imagined community' apparently defines itself as homogenous to a point where difference is not even noticed. Yet, when Shaun eventually points it out to them, the illusory superiority of the community does not only manifest itself in vilifying the outsider but also in the matter-of-course legitimacy to determine its fate (Dudek, "Dogboys" 13).

'Its feet are filthy!' shrieked Mum.
'It could have all kinds of strange diseases,' warned Dad.
'Take it back to where you found it,' they demanded,
both at the same time.

Here, the lost thing is most evidently subject to processes of 'othering'. Shaun's parents identify the lost thing as dirty, unsound and potentially harmful, constructing it as the negative reflection of their community to justify their demand for removal (Rudd 138). Drawing on several philosophical and theoretical traditions, such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's phenomenological writings (Jensen 64) and Jacques Lacan's concept of the formation of subjectivity (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffins 155), the concept of 'othering' is also applied in postcolonial studies, inter alia in the works of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. On a basic level, the 'other' denotes "a site or location upon which we project all the qualities that we – as individual subjects, social groups or even nations – most fear, or dislike, about ourselves" (J. Allan 164). Reflecting Lacan's distinction between the 'other' and the 'Other', postcolonial theory refers to the colonised as 'other', who imperial discourse constructs as the inferior subject of colonisation, in contrast to the 'Other', the imperial centre, which in turn is afforded a superior subject position (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffins 155f.). Referencing the lower case variant of 'othering', it seems that lost thing is constructed as the 'other' in opposition to Shaun's community, marking its status as threatening and non-belonging.

Yet, it could be argued that tendencies of 'othering' can be detected long before Shaun takes the lost thing home. As the first-person narrator and focaliser of the verbal text, Shaun tells the story of the lost thing from his point of view and thus holds the power of speech, while the lost thing is essentially rendered voiceless throughout the whole narrative. Just as 'others' are denied "their right to name and define themselves" (Pickering 73), the eponymous subject of the book is exclusively named and defined by Shaun. That is, it is verbally constructed as a nameless creature, an unspecified (no)thing to many of the city dwellers and yet in any case a lost thing for the narrator. As Dudek ("Dogboys" 10) states, Shaun "reads the lost thing as lost, or as other, because its huge, red, tentacle machine-body is visually unlike any other being known to the boy". And while the omniscient visual perspective certainly affords the view of a

red being, peculiar both in appearance and size, it is the narrator who not only determines its lostness but also defines it as the single most outstanding quality of this creature. As Rudd (137) affirms, “[t]his is his perspective but many of the other inhabitants seem even more out of place”. Similarly, it could be argued that the lost thing is situated in a dystopian secondary world, where everything could be equally described as strange on the part of the reader. Hence, the narrator’s identification of the thing as lost reveals the extent to which he is himself part of the community’s mainstream ideology and draws attention to the arbitrariness and naturalisation involved in the fashioning of such attributions. While Shaun is certainly the one who is able to see difference, he nevertheless acts upon the classificatory logic and values of his society, which is also evident from his favourite pastime – collecting and classifying bottle tops (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 64). Whereas the extraordinary Pete suggests that, “[m]aybe it doesn’t belong to anyone” and could be “plain lost” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 5), thus “not needing anyone to find it (any more, than, say America needed a Columbus)”, the narrator keeps making decisions on his behalf in order to classify it, treating it like his property or a pet (Rudd 138).

However, consistent with the text’s ability to “proliferate meaning” (Stephens, “Postmodernism” 94), *The Lost Thing* is anything but clear and its ambiguity is also evident in the construction of belonging. Despite his framing of the lost thing as lost, and thus as not being at ease within an ‘imagined community’ which defines itself as centred in uniformity, Shaun’s actions oppose an exclusively negative construction of difference. He refers to the lost thing as “quite friendly though” and states that he has “great fun” when playing with it (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 3). As a character who himself is depicted as not entirely fitting in, highlighted by his (former) ability to perceive difference, his friend Pete and his status in the family symbolised by sitting on a round beanbag on the floor whereas his parents indulge in the rectangular conformism, Shaun is able to befriend the lost thing despite its unknown origin. As already mentioned above, Mallan (8) reads the friendship between Shaun and the lost thing as a sign of resistance in an estranged society. Indeed, the odd couple seems to offer a kind of human relief in a space devoid of compassion and functions as a beacon of hope (Mallan 9): Together, they enliven a cold world of otherwise deserted space on their way to find a place where the lost thing belongs (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 61). This is particularly noticeable as they search all over the city for the wavy sign, which first appeared on the business card the caregiver handed them (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 11). Throughout several images, ranging from extreme long to middle shots, the pair is portrayed closely together and is shown against a “desolate backdrop that both diminishes and emphasises the boy and the lost thing” (Dudek, “Desiring

Perception” 61). Their mutual understanding on this joint venture for a potential home is emphasised by them moving shoulder to shoulder and literally having each other’s backs despite it not being “an easy job” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 11). Hence, it is not only “the boy’s concern and compassion for the lost thing” but also their mutual affection which is “a testimony to a lingering humanity in this bleak dystopic space” (Mallan 9).

Even as Shaun decides to take the lost thing to “The Federal Department of Odds & Ends”, the institutionalised point of culmination of society’s homogenising and essentialising tendencies, he ultimately shies away from surrendering his friend to this place of “forgetting, leaving behind, smoothing over” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 10) (Rudd 139). On the pictorial level, the “tall grey building with no windows” is depicted from a high angle, with the odd pair at its entrance (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 9), emphasising the objectification and dehumanisation which awaits them inside (Kress and Van Leeuwen 133). This department is obviously engaged with the establishment and maintenance of the imaginary borders of the community, which are inherent to any ‘imagined community’ since “[n]o nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind” (Anderson 7). As the department for pigeonholing, it decides what lies outside the common frame of reference and produces ‘othering’ authoritative descriptions, which reject “the real and diverse qualities of any group or entity” but instead reveal “the values and norms of the individual or group that constructs” them (J. Allan 164). The department constructs essentialising categories such as “objects without names”, “unclaimed property” and “things that just don’t belong” and defines them as outside the norm, undesirable and in need for removal. What remains is a bureaucratic society that seeks to erase difference in order to strengthen their own sense of belonging and that denies complexity in order to live on their supposedly undisturbed lives.

It is on the next page, that the richly textured, overflowing backdrop once again functions as a junction between fiction and reality and places this dispiriting bureaucratic hell into a specific political context. As Dudek (“Desiring Perception” 60) points out, the barely legible hand-written question “WHAT ABOUT THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT?” is pasted beneath a typed definition of “a perfect vacuum” (Tan, *Lost Thing* 10). This explicit reference to the radical strengthening of Australian immigration laws under Prime Minister John Howard is not the only allusion to reframe the narrative, leading critics¹¹ to read *The Lost Thing* “as a story which deals with the immigrant displacement in a postcolonial multicultural state” (Stephens, “Postmodernism” 94). To take a case in point, Dudek (“Dogboys” 9f.) underpins her

¹¹ See Dudek (“Dogboys”; “Desiring Perception”), Rudd and Mayrhofer and Reichl for elucidating insights into the political subtext of *The Lost Thing*.

reading of the lost thing as a “racialized subject who challenges and makes visible some of the ways in which people and institutions cannot embody the racialized other into the unified (read homogenized) body politic” with a range of cues she discerns from the endpapers and the background collage. Amongst other things, she reads the shreds of Chinese characters reoccurring in the yellowed backdrop as “counter-hegemonic utterances that speak alongside the visual and written text to provide another level of racialized discourse” and points to the publication information page, where the lettering of the term “LOST” is stylised as fingerprints underneath a stamp from the Australian “Immigration & Ethnic Affairs” department (Dudek, “Dogboys” 11). It follows, then, that the discourses of belonging in *The Lost Thing* can be read both metaphorically “as an allegory of human fear and prejudice against those who are different” (Mills 68) or as a political statement concerned with (inter)national issues of migration and integration. The negotiation of belonging and home ultimately appears unresolved, since Shaun “can’t say that the thing actually belonged in the place where it ended up” (Tan, *Lost Thing* 14).

The main protagonist in *Eric* seems equally strange, if not even more otherworldly than the creature in *The Lost Thing*. As mentioned above, *Eric* is a prime example of a narrative exhibiting a counterpointing relationship between word and image, as defined by Nikolajeva and Scott (12) since it features “two mutually dependent narratives”. This contrapuntal effect draws attention to the synergetic interrelationship between several narrative levels, together forming a unique reading experience. First and most obvious, the pictures offer a radically different, surrealistic version of an exchange student and certainly contradict any conventional ideas about the foreign and unknown. This counterpoint in characterization (Nikolajeva and Scott 25) also amounts to a counterpoint in genre or modality (Nikolajeva and Scott 24). Tan juxtaposes seemingly realistic, matter-of-fact text passages and surrealistic image content, which counterpoint and elaborate the narrative. On the verbal level, the words bespeak a foreign exchange student in the manner of a factual report or anecdote (“Some years ago we had a foreign exchange student come to live with us.” Tan, *Eric* opening 1), while the black-and-white pencil illustrations depict a tiny leaf-like figure carrying a nut-suitcase (Tan, *Eric* opening 2). Thus, the images fill in the gaps of the reduced text and provide a second, independent surrealistic narrative, which positions the foreign exchange student not only as non-belonging but also as inherently different from the world depicted in the images. From what can be gathered from the background, the world surrounding Eric seems to be the world as we know it: There are kitchen cupboards with diverse tins of peas and other canned goods (Tan, *Eric* opening 4), car seats and seat belts (Tan, *Eric* opening 9) and apparently also humans, which

can be inferred from the feet shown next to little Eric as he is standing in line (Tan, *Eric* opening 11). In all these images, Eric's difference is also evident from his difference in size, since he fits neatly into a teacup on the kitchen cupboard, appears lost in the car seat far too big for him and barely reaches the ankle of the woman in low heels standing next to him in the queue.

Yet, the images continuously present Eric as likeable, endearing and open. He is frequently portrayed as looking directly at the reader, establishing and inviting friendly contact (Kress and Van Leeuwen 122). This is particularly striking in the first image (Tan, *Eric* opening 2), which leaves a lasting impression due to the surprise effect emerging from the text-image-interaction. Eric is shown from a frontal angle, which is the angle of "maximum involvement" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 149), holding his suitcase with one hand and waving with the other at the readership. Although his regularly shaped maple leaf head only sports two white dots as eyes, his posture and his gesture indubitably illustrate his peaceful intentions. Kress and Van Leeuwen (122) call this kind of image a "demand" since it "creates a visual form of address" and "demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation" with the depicted subject. Furthermore, it could be argued that the fact that Eric is stylised as a simplistic, cartoony character facilitates reader identification (McCloud, *Understanding* 31). Hence, this image asks the reader to "enter in a relationship of social affinity" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 123) with Eric, and to identify with him, despite or maybe also because of his otherworldly appearance. Instead of using an oblique angle, Tan also continues to depict Eric from a frontal angle. Although there are instances where he is looked down upon from a slightly higher angle, perhaps representing the narrator's view of the small exchange student, the predominant choice of angle indicates that the "small two-dimensional figure" which appears "more like a paper cutout with two dots for eyes" (Do Rozario 27) is presented as part of the narrator's world (Kress and Van Leeuwen 143).

On the textual level, however, Eric seems to be refused to join the 'imagined community' of the text until his departure. Like in *The Lost Thing*, Eric is denied the right to speak for himself and is mostly represented solely in relation to the narrator and his family: "For once I could be a local expert, a fountain of interesting facts and opinions." (Tan, *Eric* opening 6); "It bothered us for hours, or at least until one of us discovered what was in the pantry." (Tan, *Eric* opening 19). Not even his name is left unmediated ("We found it very difficult to pronounce his name correctly, but he didn't mind. He told us to just call him 'Eric'." Tan, *Eric* opening 1f.) and while he is the only creature shown in full in the pictures, with no representation of the family, the verbal text continues to be *about* him but not *of* him.

Lister (101) defines ‘othering’ as a “process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained”. As such, tendencies of ‘othering’ are also visible in the text, since Eric is not only deprived of the power of discourse but – up until the ending – never enters the “we” of the text. In other words, Eric continues to be represented as the foreign visitor until his sudden departure. While the unnamed narrator’s ‘imagined community’ seems to not only tolerate but welcome visitors and exchange students, signified by the family’s preparations (“We had repainted the spare room, bought new rugs and furniture and generally made sure everything would be comfortable for him.” Tan, *Eric* opening 3) and general attitude towards their guest (“We started storing food and kitchen things in other cupboards so we wouldn’t disturb him.” Tan, *Eric* opening 4), Eric keeps being positioned as the outsider who is hard to decipher during his stay. Statements like “A few times I saw him through the pantry door gap [...] and imagined what it might be like for him here in *our* country” (Tan, *Eric* opening 4; my emphasis) construct Eric as outside the ‘imagined community’s’ boundaries.

Moreover, Eric’s appearance is – to the amusement of the reader – not mentioned once throughout the entire text, but it is his behaviour, which is read as foreign and ‘other’, and hence ironically questions the rigid patterns of belonging that appear to govern the ‘imagined community’. While it appears understandable from the pictorial fantasy point of view that smallish leafy Eric is not likely to claim a huge bedroom for himself, the text attributes the fact that he prefers the kitchen pantry to culture. To be specific, it is the host mother’s repeated remarks, which reference an ominous concept of culture, and appear like a counter-discourse to all the friendly, endearing pictures: Represented twice in direct discourse (“‘It must be a cultural thing,’ said Mum.” Tan, *Eric* opening 3; opening 21) and once indirectly (“I might have found this a little exasperating, but I kept thinking about what Mum had said, about the cultural thing.” Tan, *Eric* opening 14), the statements reveal a problematic construction of culture as a fixed and stable entity, which is used to account for Eric’s behaviour. Even if he shows interest in his surroundings, asking potentially profound and complex questions, this unexpected behaviour is not appreciated because the narrator cannot shine with his expert knowledge. Hence, his differences are not considered to be part of him but what makes him.

Yet, as Do Rozario (28) puts it, “[t]hough the mother still puts this all down to ‘a cultural thing,’ there is an expression not only of tolerance but also of a longing for cultural dialog”. This is evident from the comments of the narrator, who is part of the next generation and seems to be less biased than his mother is. He is still able to wonder about Eric’s behaviour before

judging it and tries to form his own opinion: “But sometimes *I wondered* if Eric was happy; he was so polite that *I’m not sure* he would have told us if something bothered him.” (Tan, *Eric* opening 5; my emphasis); “I saw him [...] and *imagined* what it might be like for him here in our country.” (Tan, *Eric* opening 5; my emphasis); “*I think* Eric enjoyed these trips, but once again it was *hard to really know*.” (Tan, *Eric* opening 9; my emphasis). All these uncertainties do not concern the “we” of the text, until Eric’s sudden departure. Only then the whole family starts to wonder (“There was much speculation over dinner later that evening.” Tan, *Eric* opening 18). Still, the narrator seems to be susceptible to the older generation, which the mother represents: “[...] but I kept thinking about what Mum had said” (Tan, *Eric* opening 14).

Tan (“Purposeful Daydream” 194) suggests reading his suburban native landscape, which is also the setting of *Eric*, as a “microcosm of Australia as a whole, a land of displaced lives, of worlds imported, transplanted, and rebuilt from scratch”. Along these lines, I propose reading *Eric* as a private staging of the foreign and homely converging in one place. Just like multicultural Australia has to “com[e] to terms with a dark history” (Tan, “Purposeful Daydream” 194) as the purported ‘terra nullius’ accountable for atrocities against indigenous people and environment alike (Brittan 73), it could be argued that with the repeated remarks of the mother subconsciously essentialist ideas about race and culture manifest themselves in the text and urge resolution. Indeed, Eric’s status of belonging seems to have changed with his departure and the present he left for the family. While Eric was at the beginning of the text referred to as “a foreign exchange student” (Tan, *Eric* opening 1; my emphasis), the family directly addresses the reader when asking to “go and see for yourself [...] what *our* foreign exchange student left for us” (Tan, *Eric* opening 19; my emphasis) at the end of the text. With the seemingly direct, unmediated representation of the family’s personal, casual language, the reader is positioned as an intimate and asked to share not only the family’s wonder and awe seeing Eric’s present but perhaps also their change of mind (Kress and Van Leeuwen 135). As the first thing they show any new visitors to their house (Tan, *Eric* opening 19), it seems as if Eric and his pantry garden literally broadened their perception by bringing colour into the family’s life. Straying from the page and panel design of the rest of the book, the full bleed double spread and the use of colour in a book previously featuring exclusively graphite on paper images convey notions of wonder, miraculousness and joy. By literally breaking the frame, Eric is no longer constructed as an outsider but has finally – and if only with his pantry garden – achieved a view from within (Moebius, “Codes” 318).

A similarly positive tenor of belonging resonates over the entirety of *The Arrival*. Whereas the dystopian society of the *Lost Thing* illustrates a daunting way of how to construct

and deal with matters not belonging, *The Arrival* studiously avoids positioning the main character as an outsider in the unnamed land due to his appearance or his behaviour. Instead, a sense of belonging of both the protagonist and his family is slowly established over 128 pages. As Johnston (428f.) affirms,

the book is structured around ideas of belonging and not belonging, and, in common with a familiar children's book narrative pattern, the idea of home and away and home again [...] – all of course based around the pervasive narrative theme of the odyssey or quest. In *The Arrival* the 'home again' does not relate to the same home in the same country; rather, it is a transplanting of home – and its familiar bits and pieces, its signs and symbols, into the new, as part of establishing belonging. It is a story about a new way of coming home."

Indeed, the sense of alienation and estrangement in a foreign land, which accompanies both the protagonist and the reader in the first half of *The Arrival* gives way for a rekindling of hope and home in the second half. While in chapter I the family's sense of belonging is threatened by an anonymous power, leading to their separation, the following chapters are characterised by providing reassuring answers to the questions raised through the relocation and potential reimagination of home. The protagonist's initial forlornness and troubled sense of belonging is continuously eased as he accustoms himself to the wondrous surroundings and his family is finally allowed to follow him.

As already examined above, *The Arrival* is structured around themes of aviation and flight. Besides the fantastic means of transportation insight in the new land, Tan employs birds as a coupling link, connecting both the old and the potential new home. Thus, birds do not only "act as symbols of hope, home, and belonging", as Devos points out, but their continuous presence throughout "the most significant places and moments in the story" (21) also invoke a reconciliation of home in migration. The first bird appearing in the graphic narrative is the white origami bird spreading its wings in the very first panel (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 1). As if to compensate for the lack of life on the streets haunted by terror, the paper bird in the family's kitchen bespeaks at once the dearly missed vitality and freedom of the past and promises an equally prosperous and peaceful future. As such, "[t]he man creates hope for his family when he folds birds out of paper prior to leaving his country" (Devos 20) and presents one of them to his daughter as both farewell and token, anticipating their reunion in the new land. Next, it is flocks of real, yet foreign-looking white birds soaring in the sky above the traveller's steamship "as if to welcome the arriving people" (Devos 20), which not only point the way to land but also to a promising future (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 5).

Birds in every shape or form reappear also throughout the whole fantastic cityscape in the nameless land (Devos 20) and seem to epitomise the essence of the city. That is, apart from denoting the prosperity and fertility of the unnamed land (Tan, *Sketches* 24), they signify the possibility of home even in the foreign. As migratory animals, birds do not have their home only at one place but establish a sense of belonging en route, just like the migratory inhabitants of the foreign country (Tan, *Sketches* 9). The birds hence symbolise an otherwise intangible fact, namely the tiresome journey of migration, which many of the city dwellers had to endure before settling in the city. As mentioned above, it is the “unstated premise” of the city, that every inhabitant is a former immigrant (Tan, *Sketches* 29), who has built a nest in this fertile town just as the birds which dominate the face of the town have. This is exemplified by three visual stories-within-story used to expand on individual fates of other migrants, who the protagonist meets in the new land. Upon his arrival, the protagonist meets three people who share their migration story with him, which is indicated by changes of hue and framing. Their experiences include forced labour, prosecution and war atrocities on the battlefield, but each story is characterised by the return to the fictional present, which functions as a relief for the gruesome and haunting pictures. As such, each story-within-story is a self-contained successful immigration narrative, telling of horrible pasts in the pleasant present and acting as models for the protagonist. Since Tan employs his method of “imaginary representations” (Tan, *Sketches* 5) of horror in war-torn countries also in these stories, they directly align with the experiences of the main character in his homeland and thereby function as a pattern of inclusion. Migration seems to be a unifying experience in the new country, connecting different people instead of dividing them.

As a symbol of home, birds and their nesting techniques also signify that home is as much process as it is place in *The Arrival*. The variety of home-making practises shown in the text, which help the man to settle in and feel at ease in the new land, are skilfully interwoven with the bird motif. As mentioned above, the protagonist makes friends with a man and his son at the market and discovers that they live in a place referenced as “The place of nests” (Tan, “Comments on *The Arrival*”), signifying shelter, warmth and belonging (Tan, *Arrival* chapter III opening 12). Just like many of the other new world citizens the protagonist meets on his way, they prove to be kind and generous and function as facilitators of home-making practises. The man and his family introduce the protagonist to the customs of shopping and food preparation in this new land, helping him to understand how to use the strange apparatuses he also finds in his kitchen. Moreover, they also accustom him to the musical instruments of his potential new home. His first friends also present him with a nesting pot, which the main

character puts on the windowsill in his apartment. The nesting of birds in this pot coincides with the man nesting in his apartment, as Devos (21) aptly points out. Just as the apartment is getting homelier, the first birds also settle in the birdhouse. The small changes within the protagonist's domestic space also stand for his appropriation of the outside world: aside from his personal belongings, his private living quarter also displays newly appropriated apparatuses and furniture. A sense of belonging in the new land is thus established by way of friendship, which enables other home-making practises. The protagonist's socialising with this family is just one of various instances when the city dwellers help him along; another example is the young fellow migrant woman on the air ship, who shows him the way, assists him when buying a ticket and explains the time telling method (Tan, *Arrival* chapter III opening 3).

The man's sense of displacement and fragmentation is relieved in this hospitable community with a similar background. Even in instances when he is portrayed as particularly lonesome and homesick, the focus on the bigger picture not only has an alienating effect but simultaneously also provides for a sense of hope and belonging. This is particularly striking when he is first shown in his apartment, looking at the photograph of his family (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 16). As Ladislava Khailova (9f.) remarks,

[t]he panels gradually re-focus to present a bird-eye view of his position in the tenement building, showing him as just one of the many human shapes in one of the multiple windows. Such progressive distancing highlights the paradigmatic similarities between his life experiences and those of other characters, especially those who also embark on an immigration journey and who attempt to settle down in a distant land of opportunity.

Yet, while Khailova (10) goes on to argue that this sequence focuses on "the experience of loneliness and a sense of notbelonging, feelings which often accompany migrant endeavours", I suggest that this panel succession functions as a reminder for the possibility of inclusion and belonging at the same time. The gradual expansion of the view signifies that many of this bustling beehive society share the protagonist's fate and equally seek shelter, food, love and warmth. Even in moments like this, when he feels alone, a community united by their migratory experiences surrounds him and is there to offer help, friendship and support in order to facilitate homing-in.

Moreover, in the comfort of the family living at the "The place of nests" (Tan, "Comments on The Arrival"), even previous patterns of exclusion are reframed as patterns of inclusion. To be specific, "the serpentine symbol is subject to substantial revision" in the new land (Khailova 7). While the serpent-infested hometown of the protagonist implicates horror and fear, spikey tails designate a completely different set of meaning in the nameless land. While "the readers are likely to share the immigrant's alarm when they discern a spiky tail

emerge from a container belonging to his new friends”, they learn with the protagonist that this “tail does not embody a menace but is a body part of a cuddly family pet” (Khailova 8). This kind of companion animal, which each and every new land citizen seems to own, also plays a significant role in the home-making process of the protagonist. As Tan (*Sketches* 35) confirms, “the relationship between man and creature in the book is a metaphor for one’s connection to an environment and how affection is learned over time.” Indeed, the protagonist is initially shocked to find his apartment infested by some kind of mysterious, surrealistic animal (Tan, *Arrival* chapter II opening 16). However, this crossbred between tadpole and dog proves to be an ingenuous friend and his presence acts as a signifier of home and inclusion.

The symbolic birds are finally also revisited at the family’s long awaited reunion (Devos 21). The origami paper birds, which the protagonist continues to send his family, are again replaced by flocks of real birds taking flight as the eyes of the family members meet for the first time after their separation (Tan, *Arrival* chapter V opening 6f.). At the day the man receives word from the arrival of his wife and daughter, the nesting pot in the window sill is shown to inhabit small baby birds (Devos 21). Accordingly, the nest the man “has carefully been preparing will now finally be complete” (Devos 21). After a rapid succession of small panels featuring action-to-action transitions, which are frequently used in comics in order to advance the plot and increase the pace of the narrative (McCloud, *Making Comics* 16), this extreme long shot of the family reunion is perceived as a major turning point in the story. Given the skilful employment of birds as precursors of this scene as well as the size and composition of the panel itself, Tan appears to be devoting both space and artistic effort to this scene. Again, the reader’s attention is directed to the recto, where the man and his wife and daughter are lying in each other’s arms in the golden ratio of the image. While the footprints still left on the ground designate three distinct characters, with the traces of both mother and daughter coming from the right and the father’s trails from the left, their joining in the middle visualises the emotional significance of their reunion. Framed by both a cone-shaped object and the hot-air balloon mother and daughter travelled by, the family almost appears like a unified shape within the large space surrounding them, as if to compensate for the time they had to spend apart. The deserted luggage on the right and the man’s pet still trying to follow up on the left both emphasise the speed of the actions preceding their meeting, alluding to the fact that this moment of joy and happiness only belongs to the family and all else is rendered insignificant. Hence, upon their reunion, the family’s sense of belonging is finally recuperated. I agree with Johnston (436) who claims that “[i]f home is belonging, belonging only comes when the protagonist is

reunited with family” while yet the sense of “‘homing in’, with all the idiom means, has been present, if not since departure, certainly since arrival”.

4.3. Home as an Imagined Space: Utopian Thoughts?

After examining the physical, topographical and psychodynamic aspects of potential homes in *The Lost Thing*, *Eric* and *The Arrival*, the following chapter is devoted to the most abstract level of potential homely constructions, namely to home as an imagined space. While the three focus texts differ vastly in terms of their constructions of potential homely spaces, they all include homely spaces or places which are now addressed specifically in their quality as imagined spaces: the hidden UtøqIA where the lost thing stays at the end of *The Lost Thing*, the foreign exchange student’s magical pantry garden in *Eric* and the corner of the wondrous new world in *The Arrival* where the protagonist and his family set up their potential new home. In the following, these three spaces are examined in terms of their potential to constitute a (re)imagining of home as a utopian space, ranging from “the ultimate in human hope” to the “unattainable dream of perfection” (Stephens, “Utopia” 139). To be specific, it is investigated to what extent the three spaces in question could be read as utopian homely constructions. For the purposes of this thesis, utopia is defined as an “imagined, unreal world of peace, harmony, order and happiness in which the conflicts and complexities of the world we know have been eradicated” (Stephens, “Utopia” 139). Hence, the determining factor for a utopian construction in this case is the utopian thought, the solution of problems in the world known to the reader, and not the affiliation to the literary genre first established by Sir Thomas More (Vieira 7f.). The significance, function and possible limitations of these imagined potential homes are analysed in particular with regard to the graphic narratives’ closure and their overall impact.

As already mentioned above, Shaun and the lost thing eventually find a place where the lost thing can stay without being subjected to the elaborate mechanisms of demarcation, exclusion and marginalisation of the mainstream society in *The Lost Thing*. Just as Shaun is searching for a pen to fill out the massive stack of necessary forms to consign the thing to the care of the abysmal “Department of Odds & Ends”, the department’s caretaker advises him to reconsider and presents him with a business card sporting nothing but a wavy arrow (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 10). In the gloomy darkness of the seemingly endless department, where even the small playful puffs of smoke the lost thing blows out of one of his tentacular arms are sucked out of the air into nothingness, the small janitor is standing in the only shaft of light as he raises his “tiny voice” to argue that Shaun should not leave the lost thing here if he really cares about it. Rudd (139) points out that the layout of this double spread echoes the one where Pete is

introduced: The cleaner's tentacle holding the card is also presented within a small circular frame, linking it to Shaun's unconventional friend and presenting this incident as particularly noteworthy. Moreover, the type-faced slip of paper placed directly under this image spells "POSITIVE INTEGRAL INDEX", suggesting with the "CONVERGENCY AND DIVERGENCY OF SERIES" also pasted upon this opening's yellowed background collage that the card and by extension also the target it points to might lead the odd pair to a diverging, but positive place. Furthermore, both provider of the clue and the arrow itself mirror the shape of the lost thing (Dudek, "Desiring Perception", 61; 65). The janitor is portrayed only from behind and throughout the narrative never shows his face. Yet, just as the lost thing could be described as "an incongruous hybrid between a crab and a furnace" (Ommundsen 223), the custodian is easily recognisable as a hybrid, liminal creature as well. Although dressed in a white work coat and cap, his long curly tapered tail and tentacled limbs bespeak a close relation to the lost thing's physicality. Most strikingly, the caretaker is also combining the organic with the inorganic: On his back, there are two grey disks connected with each other through a black reel, reminiscent of "analogue tape reels" (Dudek, "Desiring Perception", 65) or "Australian power points" (Rudd 143). Thus, just as "the lost thing's posthuman, hybrid, enormous body writes against and challenges a poetics of the straight line" (Dudek, "Desiring Perception" 61), so do also the custodian and the arrow, with the latter even bearing resemblance to an animated being, as it is looking like a pointy-headed tadpole (Rudd 139). Accordingly, the hybrid janitor with yarn mop and bucket seems to be a helper figure, a fellow hybrid being, who gives the impetus to keep on searching for a potential home for the lost thing (Rudd 142f.; Dudek "Desiring Perception" 64f.).

After Shaun and the thing are handed the card with the squiggly arrow, they search all over the city for similar signs, which supposedly lead them to a place other than the daunting "Department of Odds & Ends". Attentive readers will have spotted these finely drawn easily overlooked fluid signs even before they appear on the caretaker's business card, often pointing in the opposite direction of the rest of the city's road sign clutter. As a befitting twist in this "tale for those who have more important things to pay attention to" (Tan, *Lost Thing* front cover), it is this minor detail in the art of *The Lost Thing*, which foreshadows a major development in the narrative, as might be the case in comics generally (McCloud, *Making Comics* 29). Epitomising what Moebius ("Codes" 318f.) termed "capillary-like squiggles or bundles", these signs represent the only instance of pleasant vitality and individuality in the otherwise homogenous, drab and stone-cold surroundings. Alluding to the scenery that is about to open for the odd pair and the reader, Dudek ("Desiring Perception" 62) reads the arrows as

utopian impulses, which are already embedded in the dystopic scenery only in need for someone to notice them. Accordingly, Shaun's and the lost thing's search for the squiggly arrows proves to be tedious, as indicated both by the text ("we [...] hunted all over the place for this sign. It wasn't an easy job" Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 11) and the ambiguous, confusing arrangement of different sized panels, which deliberately throws the reader off the conventional (Western) reading track from left to right and top to bottom (Eisner 41; Nikolajeva and Scott 148f.; Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 163). Yet, out of the six images on this doublespread, five show the protagonist and the unnamed creature marching rightwards, indicating that although their search appears protracted and arduous, the choice of direction bespeaks progress and advancement (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 163f.). Yet, in the last picture on the bottom of the recto, the two friends are presented as moving to the left, which might indicate a potential homecoming for the lost thing (Nodelman, *Words about Pictures* 164).

As they finally arrive at a big door "in a dark little gap off some anonymous little street", there seems to be a moment of delay, signified by both the standstill of the pair in the picture on the verso and the comment signalling a pause of story-time on the recto (Tan, *The Lost Thing* opening 12). The strip stating "MOMENT OF INERTIA" besides the verso panel could thus be read as a kind of ironic metacomment on the artful creation of suspense. Teasing particularly the adult readership, Tan puts a sophisticated twist on the "drama of the turning of the page" (Bader 1), which "encourages the viewer to turn the page and find out what happens next" (Nikolajeva and Scott 152). Presented again within a circular frame on the recto, Shaun's finger is shown as just about to press the red buzzer encircled by a white ring as the odd pair enters the shadowy darkness of the cul-de-sac. Yet, the gangway proves not to be a dead end but reveals "the sort of place you'd never know existed unless you were actually looking for it" (Tan, *The Lost Thing* opening 12). Along these lines, it appears to be almost too much of a coincidence that the button actually looks like the iconic representation of an eye (as does, in anticipation, the 'o' in the name of the land behind the door). Aligning with the other round and circular shapes in the layout of the text, already the buzzer promises the eye-opening qualities of the place Shaun and the thing are about to enter.

On the next opening, the whole doublespread presents the view opening up to Shaun and his friend (see fig. 5). The bright blue sky and sandcastle-like landscape behind the door build a stark contrast to the dark black frame of the doorway (Rudd 141). The image unfolds vertically over two pages, forcing the reader to adopt his or her view physically and emphasising that this space "exists on a different reading plane, and, in turn, must be read differently" (Dudek, "Desiring Perception" 62), namely, "laterally" (Rudd 139). As noted above, it seems

to be an edenic, garden-like scene, which appears before the eyes of the boy and the lost thing without any narrative comment (Markotić 60), illustrating both the speechless awe of the onlookers and the fact that this place is beyond the constrictive logic of words. The place before them is everything the boy's dystopian homeland is not. Identifiable by a graffiti spray-painted on one of the walls, this UtQIA proves to be a real "space of relief and difference", representing "a utopian enclave" (Dudek, "Desiring Perception" 58) in the boy's dystopian homeland. It exudes a welcoming air of liberty, joie de vivre and harmony, as its inhabitants enjoy themselves and live and play in unity despite or may precisely because of their differences. As Rudd (139) argues, the scene appears "like a playground, which Tan has depicted using a much brighter, more primary coloured palette". Even the architecture with

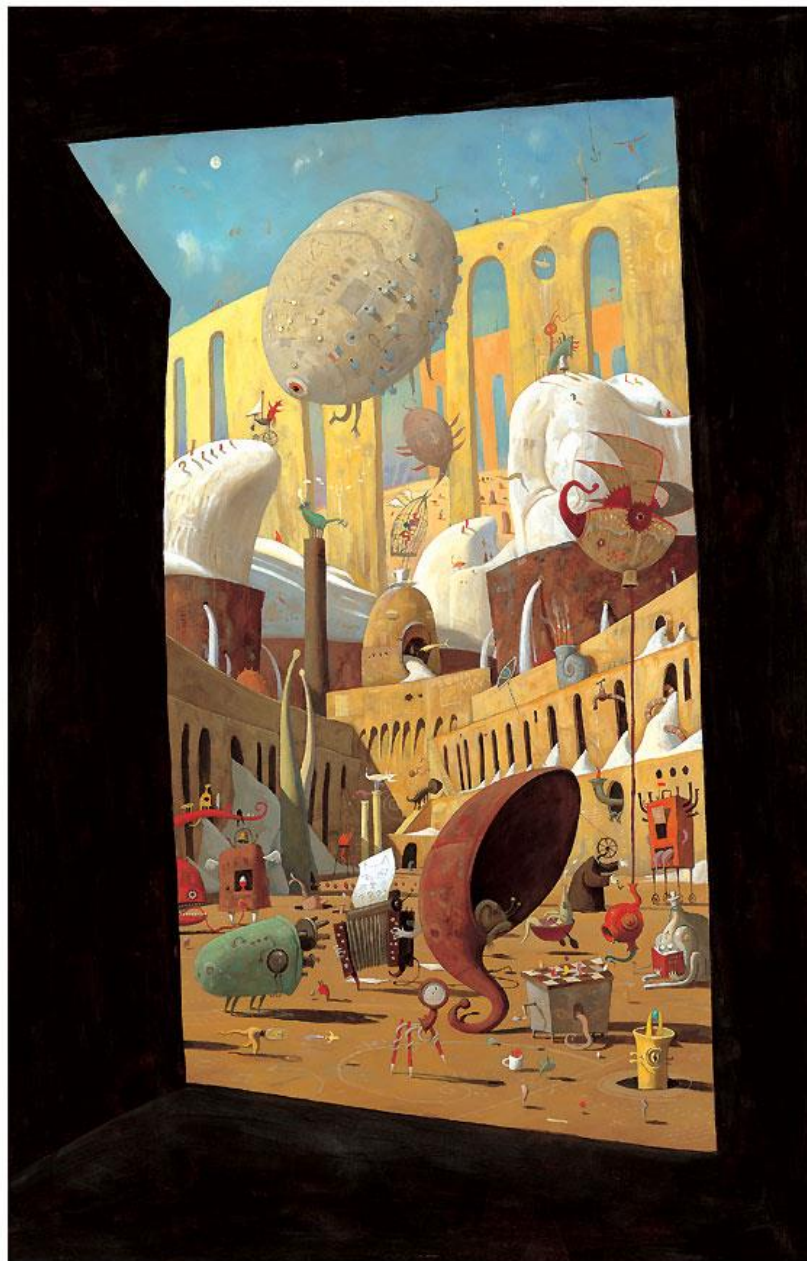


Fig. 5. UtQIA. (Tan, Shaun. 'Utopia' signed edition of 500. 29 May 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/prints%20previews/LT%20utopia.html>>.)

rounded shapes and inconclusive light arches and staircases bears no resemblance to the machinery, ductwork and stark uniformity of straight edges on the outside (Rudd 140). Where the enormous dystopian architecture seemed to reduce and degrade the lost thing and the boy, and all city dwellers have their eyes cast downwards, the architecture and inhabitants of Ut⊙qIA are oriented towards the sky, with all trajectories going upwards.

Furthermore, this place seems to brim with impressions alluding to the senses. Dudek (“Desiring Perception” 62) notes that “[f]or every closed and sunglassed eye in the dystopia, there is a bevy of open eyes” here. The playful creatures thus seem not blinded by technocratic uniformity like the city dwellers outside, but wide-awake and open to perception. Yet, she fails to notice the iconic eye in the stylised name, Ut⊙qIA, which alludes to this notion as well. Moreover, by reading the ‘eye’ as a homophone, it represents not only the lost thing’s desire for perception (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 62) but could also be read as a symbol for individuality (the ‘I’), which the things are allowed to express freely in Ut⊙qIA. Alluding again to the senses, many of the animated objects living in this space are musical, as the giant horn, the different barrel organs, the bell and the accordion prove. When Dudek (“Desiring Perception” 61) argues that Tan’s “poetics of the grey monolith looming” bespeak a “visual silence” in the dystopic landscape, it is a poetics of the vivid and colourful individuality, which pervades this double spread like a sweet melody. Thus, it seems as if the dystopian world outside has nothing in common with the space behind the door.

It is in this joyful landscape that the lost thing is making “an approving sort of noise” and seems “happy enough” to Shaun to stay, although he cannot say “that the thing actually belonged in the place where it ended up” (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 14). This Ut⊙qIA is beyond the boy’s grasp (“I didn’t know what to think” Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 14) and it is exactly this inadequacy of the boy’s either/or logic which suggests that this space is a reimagination of home beyond the constrictive boundaries of his community. Shaun catches only a glimpse of a place which is diverging from his own domestic setting to such an extent that it disrupts and exceeds the binary ideology of his hometown and he is unable to classify it. As such, it appears to be a home radically different from Shaun’s home, but a potential home nevertheless.

Shaun seems to be doubtful about the homely quality of this place because it contradicts all qualities of his own home. Most importantly, it would seem that the lost thing’s potential home presents a utopian sense of belonging, which exceeds exclusionist tendencies and is not built on the nation’s homogeneity. This potential home is no longer delineated by way of contrast but instead, it “is a space of nonconformity and acceptance which celebrates difference

rather than condemns or corrals it” (Ch. Allan 137). As none of the critics fail to mention, the inhabitants of UtQIA are united not by their sameness, but by their difference. This “large, open space” (Rudd 142) conflating inside and outside equals a sheer celebration of “hybridity by depicting a utopian space in which hybrid beings can and do belong” (Dudek, “Desiring Perception” 62). All creatures there are hybrid, hyphenated beings engaging in playful interactions, which are grounding “a new cultural formation in intersubjectivity” (Stephens, “Postmodernism” 97). As Mallan (6) notes, it is a “dreamlike space with a multitude of bizarre figures and objects occupying a delightfully implausible, otherworldly landscape, where all the elements appear to exist in a state of harmonious chaos”.

Along these lines, it seems to suggest itself to read the place where the lost thing eventually “ended up” (Tan, *Lost Thing* 14) as a visualisation of Bhabha’s metaphorical ‘Third Space’ which is inscribed in the heart of the dystopian city. According to Bhabha, this ‘Third Space’ is a hybrid space where cultural and individual differences are re-negotiated and new identities, which are more than just a simple combination of cultural and distant influences, are created. Similarly, in UtQIA, meaning appears to be not fixed and prescribed as in the outside world, which attempts to annihilate heterogeneity, but seems to be the subject of playful negotiation. The mixing of different stylistic visual and cultural elements illustrates that “the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity and fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (Bhabha 55). The Roman triumphal archways and zeppelins, light bulbs and soap bubbles, water taps and chessboards, as well as the tentacled creatures conquering the air with only the sky as the limit could be interpreted as the ultimate rejection of binary logic, illuminating in bright colours the heterogeneity of culture. As Stephens (69) notes, “each creature is as diverse from the others as the thing is from people in the ‘real’ world, but all have accepted their mutual differences (their cosmopolitan cultural citizenship) as a cause for celebration”.

Yet this contact zone, where heterogeneity is celebrated and the formation of new hybrid identities is no longer discouraged, seemingly only exists behind closed doors. The fact that this “bizarre landscape of happy freaks” (Tan, “Picture Books: Who Are They For?”), where the lost thing finally finds a place to stay, is shut away from the seemingly orderly human life outside also sparks menacing interpretations. As Mills (68) notes, even “the cheerful appearance of the thing’s new world, in this reading, barely masks its function as a ghetto”. Along the same lines, Rudd (143) reads the custodian helper figure as corrupted by the dystopian state and suggests that in this case “the miraculous heterotopia, rather conventionally accessed simply at the press of a buzzer, would more likely be a transit camp, presaging some

more final solution". And albeit the reading above demonstrates that there is plenty of evidence indicating that *UtøqIA* can and should be "read as the world of imagination and open-ended meaning: playful, chaotic, purposeless, and with much greater promise of aesthetic and intellectual freedom" (Tan, "Picture Books: Who Are They For?"), the barb of ghettoisation remains for some critics. It could be argued, that the lost thing is ultimately denied a home within Shaun's community but has to resort to this utopian space. In this reading, the lost thing's potential home where communal living thrives in the light of difference remains – at least for now – an unattainable dream (Stephens, "Utopia" 139) for Shaun's society.

However, with this fleeting glimpse into this utopian space Tan certainly affords hope for the future, which resonates even after Shaun bid farewell to the lost thing and returns home to classify his bottle-top collection. The fact that he "still think[s] about that lost thing from time to time" despite his lament that there are not "many lost things around anymore" or maybe he has "just stopped noticing them" (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 15) implies that the lost thing and the hybrid space must have had a lasting impression on him (Mallan 9). And while the ambiguous ending is often read as the boy having "succumbed to the drabness of his society and [...] fallen prey to his society's way of ridding itself of that which does not fit" (Rudd 145), Dudek ("Desiring Perception") and even Rudd suggest more hopeful reading paths. To be specific, Rudd (145) concedes that the book serves as Shaun's testimony, praising the fact that "for a short while, he did abandon his habitual behaviour, taking the time to compile a scrapbook of the events". Furthermore, Dudek ("Desiring Perception" 64f.), in her reading of Shaun, Pete and the custodian as utopian impulses, argues that the book ultimately encourages the reader to read the world outside the text beyond the prescribed boundaries and "offers strategies for ways of navigating and changing a textuality that erases difference" (65). Indeed, the existence of the book along with the last opening seem to provide hope for Shaun's homeland. When in the ultimate opening the custodian helper figure is scrubbing the floor of "The Department of Odds & Ends" (Tan, *Lost Thing* opening 16) the reader is reminded that there is a potential home for every lost thing in Shaun's world and someone could be working for a realisation of a home like *UtøqIA* even in places where it is least expected.

In *Eric*, the full bleed panel of the foreign exchange student's pantry garden certainly also exhibits utopian qualities as in fact the whole iconotext bespeaks a sense of the fantastic permeating the fictional reality of an ordinary family. However, this time utopia is not a secluded potential home as in *The Lost Thing*, presenting a "future that comments upon one's present situation, [...] but a future, also, that has not yet, and never will, arrive" (Dudek, "Desiring Perception" 62), but rather a little piece of visionary dreaming, which actually seems

to influence the narrator and his family. Focusing on the introduction of colour into the black-and-white world of the family, the utopian aspect of the pantry garden lies in the introduction of a powerful idea. As Nodelman (*Words about Pictures* 141) notes, “[o]f all the variations in the picture plane, those of color are the most immediately noticeable, and, like shapes, colors have emotional connotations that allow them to act as signifiers of states of mind”. By extension, colour is often used for denoting not only specific people, places or things, but also ideas (Kress and Van Leeuwen 347). Eric’s present could hence be read as a symbol for the idea of celebrating difference in a potentially hybrid society. The actual plants of Eric’s garden emphasise this as well: His combining and mixing of the little cultural artefacts he finds on the ground with equally tiny flowers and plants could be read as a transformative action, alluding to Bhabha’s concept of ‘hybridisation’. The pantry garden and its hybrid form seem to adumbrate the emergence of new hybrid identities unsettling established community boundaries.

Hence, in contrast to Shaun, whose passion for collection can be understood as the “introspective, misplaced focus of his society, where most of the population walks around eyes downcast” (Rudd 136), Eric’s exploratory urge pursues other intentions. With his pantry garden he is actually able to plant the seeds for a realisation of this hybrid society. Although in the very last opening of *Eric* the mother’s statement “It must be a cultural thing” lingers on, home seems indeed to have changed a little at the end, shaking the fixed and stable truths spread in the narrator’s home. In *Eric* such a potential home appears ultimately possible, if yet far away, even in the conformist suburbs.

In *The Arrival*, the fantastic new world where the family settles in the end could certainly also be considered utopian (Ommundsen 225; Höppner 162; Oppolzer 273). As Ommundsen (225) phrases it,

[t]he new world of *The Arrival*, for all its semblance of photo-realist characterisation, is offered as a migrant dream, a fantasy which, in my reading, is much more utopian than the secret refuge for misfits in *The Lost Thing*. It is a world dominated by cultural difference but socio-economic sameness and solidarity: a community of strangers bonding through shared experience of hardship. It is nothing like America, or Australia, in the past or today.

As argued above, a sense of belonging traverses the entirety of *The Arrival*: neither the protagonist nor his family are denied access to the established ‘imagined community’ in the new world but are welcomed with open arms. And while the graphic narrative not only points the reader’s attention to the alienation and disorientation migrancy entails but actually forces the reader to gain all meaning from visual cues like the protagonist has to do (Lempke 34),

“[t]here are no failures in *The Arrival*’s storylines, only setbacks and the wisdom of experiences” (Rhoades et al. 312). As Boatright (471) argues, “Tan’s archetypal immigrant is consonant with the American Dream myth [...] we experience an ideal immigrant narrative, one in which the main character determinedly overcomes all obstacles to become a self-made man by the graphic novel’s end”.

More precisely even, the new world seems to be deliberately utopian in that the protagonist simply does not have to grapple with arbitrary distrust, hostility and xenophobia (Höppner 161). In a revealing interview, Tan states that he originally planned on including some of the problematic and difficult aspects that immigration often entails but ultimately decided against it:

I did play with some ‘scenes’ of hostility and racism in the earliest drafts of the book. I’m very sensitive to these issues, particularly through the experiences of my father who is Chinese, and living in a country (like many others) where immigration is a political issue plagued by misunderstanding and undercurrent racism. I worked on some drawings of a group of clan-like figures, for instance, who appear in a street harassing some immigrants, which later blended into a sequence where the main character dreams of being swallowed by an enormous serpent. Narratively, this was ultimately too complicated, and I wanted the overall theme of the book to be much simpler, and more a vision of how things should be, rather than how they are. (Verstappen, “Tan”)

The potential home of the family thus seems to part of a “utopian narrative that portrays a world in which migrants are greeted with generosity and kindness by the people they encounter upon arrival, people who share their own stories of oppression and escape“ (Dudek, “Bedazzling” 92). From the beginning, the immigrant story is pervaded by signs of hope and freedom and the protagonist is kindly included in the migrant-community of the new country, which “allows for a non-hierarchical coexistence of a very broad spectrum of cultures” (Khailova 14). While the sepia-toned panels and the migrancy imagery pertain an air of past and historicity, as they are made to look old and worn, with “applying stains, cracks, creases and other ‘damage’ taken directly from old photo albums borrowed from a local museum” (Smith, “After The Arrival”), *The Arrival* really represents a utopian vision, which could be considered as “contradicting evidence about first-generation immigrants’ difficulty and struggles, evading issues of equity and discrimination” (Rhoades et. 312f.). As Tan (*Sketches* 29) states, the immigrants “[c]ollectively [...] built a world inspired by idealism and the lessons of history”.

As such, it is not only the whole new country, which conveys “a utopian sense of illuminated open space” (Tan, *Sketches* 19) but also the ending of this migration story. In mirroring the very first double spread (Tan, *Arrival* chapter I opening 1), the first opening of the last chapter of *The Arrival* (Tan, *Arrival* chapter VI opening 1) suggests that the family has

established a home away from home. The various signifiers of home introduced in the first nine panels of the text are transferred to the new setting and intermix with homely signifiers of the new land. Markus Oppolzer (276) claims that this parallel structure amounts to a “complete replacement of the immigrant’s own culture with that of the new land” in that it “highlight[s] this complete eradication of what they once considered to be key signifiers of home”. Yet, upon closer inspection, this view does not hold. While the origami bird of the first panel has now been exchanged for an otherworldly origami creature and the kitchen appliances appear different, “several items remain constant across the cultures” (Khailova 12). In fact, the dressing attire of the family remains the same, not only in the family portrait, which is still shown as hanging in the kitchen, but also in form of the hat on the wall (Khailova 12). Hence, instead of presenting the ideal of integration as a complete negation of one’s cultural roots, as Oppolzer (276) assumes, Tan shows the re-establishing of home away from home as an intermingling of different cultural artefacts. The same is also true for the next opening, where the new kitchen is portrayed as place where the old and the new converge. As Khailova (12) notes, “[t]he result appears to be a fractured, polyvalent self, with the portrayed subject taking on an identity characterised by multiplicity and blending”.

Yet, *The Arrival* does not simply end on a happy note for the family only, but again expands the reader’s attention and focus from the individual fate to social responsibility. The last panel sequence (Tan, *Arrival* chapter VI opening 2ff.) shows the protagonist’s daughter and the hybrid pet on their way to purchase the root-like vegetables or fruits that seem to be so popular in the new country. The images bespeak not only the blooming friendship between the daughter and the helpful animal once perceived strange and frightening, but also a sense of freedom and prosperity. As in the first chapter, the daughter is putting on her hat and boots to go outside, but this time it is not to bid her father farewell. The little tad-pole dog amicably assists in dressing, before the two are shown running down the stairs in front of their building. Nothing could seem to harm the girl in this country as she marvels at the luminous entities on the street and curiously eyes the cat-like creatures on a wall. The fact that she seems to be routinely going shopping on her own in the busy streets indicates that the family has adapted to the new world as a safe and comfortable place. After buying her wanted goods, the girl’s attention is drawn to a woman with a city map. For the final image of *The Arrival*, Tan chooses to portray the girl as expertly showing the newly arrived woman with her big suitcase the way into the city. With this “sense of generative responsible carryover” (Johnston 436), the family seems to have taken their place amongst the other migrant city dwellers as the daughter is welcoming new arrivals as generously and helpfully as the protagonist was received before. In

their community, they might not share their country of origin, but certainly live by cosmopolitan values such as welfare, humanity and responsibility for each other.

5. Hitting Home? Conclusion

In fact, I often think of a good story, whether written, illustrated, filmed or spoken, as really being a beautiful question. The most beautiful questions are actually a little unsettling, because at their best they have no simple answer.

(Tan, “Lost and Found” 7)

Home, once an icon of fixity and stability, is a contested area. Contrary to popular assumptions, home proves to be not a matter of course – and yet, the longing for home, for a place to be at ease and “at home” seems to be innate to humans. In times shaped by involuntary and voluntary relocation, migration and travel, home is no longer synonym to the country of origin – if it ever was. Children’s literatures negotiation of potential homes proves to be dominated by the safe haven, while yet the ever-changing circumstance of life in a globalised world see literary representations of the overwhelmingly positive representation of home undergo processes of modification, variation and transformation. Even within children’s literature, the complications of home are no longer left unspoken or rather unwritten. The well-established home/away/home plotline loses ground for other patterns, where home is lost, recreated or rejected. Texts dealing with home in colonial and migratory contexts illustrate the diversity and multiplicity of homely constructions, which may elaborate, complicate and challenge binary opposites such as home and away or familiar and foreign. Postcolonial studies reveal further rewritings of home, which uncover essentialist and nationalist ideologies involved in the construction of home and disclose the fragmentary and discontinuous state of home in migrancy.

On the basis of this theoretical background, this thesis investigated negotiations and reimaginings of “home” in three of Shaun Tan’s work. *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*. Arguing for the choice of instruments, the texts were first defined as fusion texts, combining notions of genres such as picturebooks, comics and graphic novels as well as fine arts, filmmaking and photography, which are targeted at readers of any age. As generic hybridity seems to be an integral part of the overall design of all three books, the focus texts were analysed by drawing on a variety of analytical instruments from picturebook theory, comic book theory and semiotics as well as literary perspectives. Following a three-part structure, the thesis examined potential homes on three different but interconnected axes, namely the topographical axis, the psychodynamic axis and the imagined axis. Specifically, home was considered first as a physical and topographical space. Second, by drawing on Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘imagined communities’ and the concept of ‘othering’, the sense of belonging established in the focus texts was investigated. Third, home was explored as an imagined space, bearing utopian possibilities.

From the analysis of the potential homes in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*, it is evident that home, whether assumed to be a place, status or imaginary, is neither easily defined nor determined. In all three focus texts, the issues revolving around the conception of home seem to raise new questions as soon as others are answered. As shown above, *The Lost Thing*, *Eric* and *The Arrival* prove to differ in their approach towards the potential home(s) as formed out of vast networks of intricate topographical, psychodynamic and imagined ties. It appears that the potential homes in *The Lost Thing* could not be more different and yet both function as some kind of homely dwelling for the protagonist, the lost thing and Pete. The overall impression of Shaun's potential home is drab and grey uniformity in a totalitarian state, which is ruled by numbers and not people. Referencing various famous Australian and American paintings, Tan creates a powerful over-technocratic dystopian background where the submission to industrial life is visible in the subdued colours and lighting, in the architecture rendering people and things invisible and the ethos of making foreign things disappear. In this depressing surroundings, UtøqIA provides a glimpse of hope for a potential home where difference and communion are compatible and difference is perceived as positive. In the dystopian outer world, however, there is not even a potential home for the lost thing, which is constantly overlooked and marginalised. The close examination of potential homes in *The Lost Thing* reveals also the possibility to be lost without being found, and to exist without a home – but this is ultimately rejected in dystopia. The character who introduced this curious thought, Shaun's friend Pete, meanwhile lives quietly in "Greater Suburbia", which combines notions of conformity with artistic deviation.

Tan's own background, growing up in suburban Perth, is also evident in *Eric*. In this masterfully created counterpointing narrative, the text tells the story of a foreign exchange student visiting a generic Suburban family home while the images bespeak wonder and magic. While the pictures invite a friendly look on the magical creature Eric proves to be, the text suggests he is the non-belonging 'other' up until the end. Moreover, it could be argued that essentialist ideas about race and culture manifest themselves in the text and urge resolution. This resolution is presented in the form of Eric's magical pantry garden, which could be read as a multi-coloured symbol for a sense of hybridity and belonging and in a metaphorical reading of home could be said to epitomise the family's transformed set of mind. While Eric is only included in the familiar space upon his actual departure, the family cherishing his present indicates that he broadened their minds and brought colour into their lives.

In *The Arrival*, a father has to leave his family in a serpent-infested city, stricken by terror and fear, to travel to a new country where he finds hope and a potential new home. From

a topographical and physical perspective, *The Arrival* works at conveying a sense of wonder and estrangement as the reader beholds the new land, which leaves him or her as speechless as the migrant protagonist. Yet, the potential new home and the city dwellers prove to be welcoming, warm and generous, which is signified not only by sequences of homing in and establishing friendships but also by symbols of flight and fertility. To be specific, it is especially the bird, which epitomises a dynamic notion of home, not restricted to any one place. The new country pervades a utopian air, in that the protagonist does not have to overcome xenophobia, but is instead welcomed in a community of fellow-migrants.

Following Reimer and her colleagues, the aim of this thesis was to “study [...] the languages of home in use in literary texts [...] by trying to articulate the rules, beliefs, and values governing these uses” (Reimer xii) in *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*. Comparing and contrasting the different layers of potential homes in three very different fusion texts by the same author, potential homes prove to be a dystopia with a potential for utopia, a generic family home ultimately open for change and transformation and a place to flee from as well as to settle in. Thus, the formation of home is at all times intricately interwoven with the constant negotiation of familiarity and difference. In *The Arrival*, migrancy and home are not mutually exclusive in a potential homeland that “celebrate[s] [difference] as a source of diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity, where the recognition of change and difference is seen as enriching” (Woodward 35). Similarly, in *Eric*, the potential home in the end proves to be inclusive to what was once defined foreign, but only with a little magical help. Yet, in the dystopian *The Lost Thing* the potential home takes on a threatening shape and form, since difference is “constructed negatively as the exclusion and marginalization of those who are defined as ‘other’ or as outsiders” (Woodward 35). However, a glimpse of hope is provided with the view of Utøya as a potential shelter for or even home to things defined as lost or ‘other’. As such, potential homes are shown to be essentially ambiguous places and states in Shaun Tan’s works, which highlights the complex negotiations involved in the making of a home.

6. Bibliography

Primary Sources

Tan, Shaun. *The Lost Thing*. Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2000.

---. *The Arrival*. Melbourne: Lothian, 2006.

---. *Eric*. Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 2010.

Secondary Sources

Alexander, Catherine. "The Garden as Occasional Domestic Space." *The Domestic Space Reader*. Ed. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei. Toronto: Toronto UP, 2012. 268-272.

Allan, Cherie. *Playing with Picturebooks: Postmodernism and the Postmodernesque*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Allan, Janice. "Other." *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Ed. Peter Childs and Roger Fowler. Oxon: Routledge, 2006. 164-165.

Alston, Ann. *The Family in English Children's Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 2006.

Arizpe, Evelyn, Colomer, Teresa, and Carmen Martínez-Roldán. *Visual Journeys through Wordless Narratives: An International Inquiry with Immigrant Children and The Arrival*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

The Arrival Website. Hachette Australia, 2012. 26 Oct. 2015.

<<http://www.thearrival.com.au>>.

Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Helen, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Ayto, John. Ed. *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. 1958. Trans. Maria Jolas. Foreword John Stilgoe. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1994.

Bader, Barbara. *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to The Beast Within*. New York: MacMillan, 1976.

Banerjee, Bidisha. "Utopian Transformations in the Contact Zone: A Posthuman, Postcolonial Reading of Shaun Tan and John Marsden's *The Rabbits*." *Global Studies of Childhood* 3.4 (2013): 418-426.

Barclay, Donald. "Mark Twain." *Children's Books and Their Creators*. Ed. Anita Silvey. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995. 656-657.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. 1957. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Noonday, 1972.

Beckett, Sandra. *Crossover Picture Books: A Genre for All Ages*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Bellorín, Brenda, and María Cecilia Silva-Díaz, "Reading Mental Processes in *The Arrival*." *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship* 17.2 (2011): 210-226.

Besner, Neil. "Homeward bound?" Ed. Mavis Reimer. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 225-232.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Blunt, Alison, and Robyn Dowling. *Home*. Key Ideas in Geography. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Blunt, Alison, and Ann Varley. "Geographies of Home." *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004): 3-6.

Botelho, Maria José, and Masha Kabakow Rudman. *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

- Boyd, Shelley. *Garden Plots: Canadian Women Writers and Their Literary Gardens*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2013.
- Bradford, Clare, Mallan, Kerry, Stephens, John, and Robyn McCallum. *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.
- Bradford, Clare. "There's No Place Like Home: Unhomely Moments in Three Postcolonial Picture Books." *ACLAR 2001: Cinderella Transformed: Multiple Voices and Diverse Dialogues in Children's Literature: Proceedings of the 2001 Australasian Children's Literature Association for Research Conference*. Christchurch, N.Z.: Centre for Children's Literature, 2003: 104-109.
- Bradford, Clare. *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007.
- Bradford, Clare. "The Homely Imaginary: Fantasies of Nationhood in Australian and Canadian Texts." Ed. Mavis Reimer. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 177-193.
- Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Gender, Racism, Ethnicity Series. 1996. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Briganti, Chiara, and Kathy Mezei. Ed. *The Domestic Space Reader*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 2012.
- Brittan, Alice. "Australasia." Ed. John McLeod. *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 2007. 72-82.
- Cadden, Mike. "Home is a Matter of Blood, Time, and Genre: Essentialism in Burnett and McKinley." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 28.1 (1997): 53-67.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Through The Looking-Glass*. Waiheke Island: The Floating Press, 2009. eBook Super Collection - Austria. Web. 8 Mar. 2016.
- Chaston, Joel. "If I ever Go Looking for my Heart's Desire: 'Home' in Baum's 'Oz' Books." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 18.2 (1994): 209-219.
- Clausen, Christopher. "Home and Away in Children's Fiction." *Children's Literature* 10 (1982): 141-152.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-338.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Collins-Gearing, Brooke, and Dianne Ostland. "Who Will Save Us from The Rabbits? Rewriting the Past Allegorically." *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature*. 14.2 (2010). 2 Jan. 2014. <www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/227/225>.
- Devos, Lien. "Not all that's Modern is Post: Shaun Tan's Grand Narrative." *Bookbird* 49.4 (2011): 17-23.
- Dewan, Pauline. *The House as Setting, Symbol, and Structural Motif in Children's Literature*. Mellen Studies in Children's Literature 5. Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2004.
- Dony, Christophe. "Towards a Vocabulary of Displacement and Utopian Possibilities: Reading Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* as a Crossover Text." *Studies in Comics* 3.1 (2012): 83-105.
- Do Rozario, Rebecca-Anne C. "Australia's Fairy Tales Illustrated in Print: Instances of Indigeneity, Colonization, and Suburbanization." *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 25.1 (2011): 13-32.
- Dresang, Eliza. *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age*. New York: Wilson, 1999.
- Dudek, Debra. "A Bedazzling Strangeness." Rev. of *The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan. *Overland* 187 (2007): 92.
- . "Desiring Perception: Finding Utopian Impulses in Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing*." *Papers* 15.2 (2005): 58-66. Print.

- . "Dogboys and Lost Things; or Anchoring a Floating Signifier: Race and Critical Multiculturalism." *ARIEL* 37.4 (2006): 1-20.
- Eisner, Will. *Comics and Sequential Art*. Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse, 1985.
- Evans, Janet. "Raymond Briggs: Controversially Blurring Boundaries." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 49.4 (2011): 49-61.
- Evans, Janet. "From Comics, Graphic Novels, and Picturebooks to Fusion Texts: A New Kid on the Block!" *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary, and Early Years Education* 41.2 (2013): 233-248.
- Fischer-Tiné, Harald. "Postcolonial Studies". *European History Online* (EGO). Mainz: Institute of European History (IEG) 2010: 1-11. 21. Dec. 2014. <<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/fischertineh-2010-enURN:urn:nbn:de:0159-20101025210>>.
- Foster, John. "Picture Books as Graphic Novels and vice versa: The Australian Experience." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 49.4 (2011): 68-75.
- George, Rosemary Marangoly. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction*. 1996. Berkeley: U of California P, 1999.
- Ghorashi, Halleh. *Ways to Survive, Battles to Win: Iranian Women Exiles in the Netherlands and the United States*. New York: Nova Science, 2003.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust: Parts One and Two*. Trans. George Madison Priest. 26th ed. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1984.
- Graham, Judith. "Reading Contemporary Picturebooks." *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction*. Ed. Kimberly Reynolds. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 209-226.
- Grosser, Maurice. *The Painter's Eye*. New York: Rinehart, 1951.
- Grzegorzczuk, Blanka. Ed. *Discourses of Postcolonialism in Contemporary British Children's Literature*. Children's Literature and Culture series. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Hage, Ghassan. *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. Annandale, AU: Pluto P, 1998.
- Hallberg, Kristin. "Litteraturbezenskapen och Bilderboksforskningen." *Tidskrift för Litteraturvetenskap* 3-4 (1982): 163-168.
- "Home". Oxford English Dictionary Online. 6. Nov. 2015. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/87869?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=olx9ns&>>
- Höppner, Stefan. "Ohne Worte: Erzählweisen des Fremden in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*." Ed. Monika Schmitz-Emans. *Comic und Literatur: Konstellationen*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012. 136-166.
- Hundt, Marianne. "Home Is Where You're Born: Negotiating Identity in the Diaspora." *Studia Neophilologica* 86.2 (2014): 125 -137.
- Hunt, Peter. "Ideology and the Children's Book." Ed. Peter Hunt. *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*. Routledge: New York, 1992. 18-40.
- Hunter, Linnet. "The Artist as Narrator: Shaun Tan's Wondrous Worlds." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 49.4 (2011): 10-16.
- Innes, Catherine Lynette. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Jensen, Sune Qvotrup. "Othering, Identity Formation and Agency." *Qualitative Studies* 2.2 (2011): 63-78.
- Johnston, Rosemary Ross. "Graphic Trinities: Languages, Literature, and Words-in-Pictures in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*." *Visual Communication* 11.4 (2012): 421-441.
- Johansen, Martin Blok. "'Darkness Overcomes You': Shaun Tan and Søren Kierkegaard." *Children's Literature in Education* 46 (2015): 38-52.

- Jung, Carl Gustav. *The Archetypes And The Collective Unconscious*. Trans. Richard Francis Carrington Hull. Ed. and Trans. Gerhard Adler. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1969.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. *Archetypen*. 7th ed. München: dtv, 1997.
- Kay, Jackie. *Red Dust Road*. London: Picador, 2010.
- Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002.
- Khailova, Ladislava. "Politics of Postmodern Multiculturalism in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*: Reconfiguring the Subject as a Nomad." *Papers* 23.1 (2015): 1-16.
- Kress, Gunther, and Theo Van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Kureishi, Hanif. 1986. *My Beautiful Laundrette and The Rainbow Sign*. London: Faber, 1991.
- Kuznets, Lois. "Taking Over the Doll House: Domestic Desire and Nostalgia in Toy Narratives." *Girls, Boys, Books, Toys: Gender in Children's Literature and Culture*. Ed. Beverly Clark and Margaret R. Higonnet, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 142-153.
- Kümmerling-Meibauer, Bettina. "From Baby Books to Picturebooks for Adults: European Picturebooks in the New Millennium." *Word & Image* 31.3 (2015): 249-264.
- Lempke, Susan Dove. *Reading Today* 25.2 (2007/2008): 34.
- Lewis, David. *Reading Contemporary Picture Books: Picturing Text*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Lindholm Schulz, Helena, and Liliane Hammer. *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Ling, Chuan-Yao. "A Conversation With Illustrator Shaun Tan." *World Literature Today* 82.2 (2008): 44-47.
- Lister, Ruth. *Poverty*. Cambridge: Polity P, 2004.
- Mallan, Kerry. "Trash Aesthetics and Utopian Memory: *The Tip at the End of the Street* and *The Lost Thing*." *Bookbird* 43.1 (2005): 28-34.
- Markotić, Nicole. "Disability and Belonging in Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing*." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 6.2 (2014): 54-71.
- Mathews, Sarah. "Reading without Words: Using the *Arrival* to Teach Visual Literacy with English Language Learners." *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 87.2 (2014): 64-68.
- Mayrhofer, Miriam, and Susanne Reichl. "Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing*: An Exercise in Looking". (unpublished)
- McGlasson, Dianne. "A Toothy Tale: Themes of Abjection in John Marsden and Shaun Tan's *Picture Story Book, The Rabbits*." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 37.1 (2013): 20-36.
- McGillis, Roger. Ed. *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*. Children's Literature and Culture series. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000.
- Menozzi, Filippo. "Invasive Species and the Territorial Machine: Shifting Interfaces between Ecology and the Postcolonial." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 44.4 (2013): 181-204.
- Mills, Alice. "The Uncanny Lurch in Shaun Tan's *The Viewer* and *The Lost Thing*." *CREArTA Special Issue 6 Imagining Childhood* (2006): 65-74.
- Moebius, William. "Picture Book." Ed. Philipp Nel and Paul Lissa. *Keywords for Children's Literature*. New York: New York UP, 2011, 169-173.
- . "Picturebook Codes." Ed. Janet Maybin and Nicola Watson. *Children's Literature: Approaches and Territories*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 311-320.
- Mukherjee, Neel. Rev. of *The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan. *Oxford Forum* 8 (2008): 46-49.

- Nasta, Susheila. *Home Truths. Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- . *The Magic Code: The Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988.
- . *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*. Oxford: Scarecrow P, 2000.
- Nikolajeva, Maria, and Carole Scott. 2001. *How Picturebooks Work*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Nodelman, Perry. "At Home on Native Land: A Non-Aboriginal Canadian Scholar Discusses Aboriginality and Property in Canadian Double-Focalized Novels for Young Adults." Ed. Mavis Reimer. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 107-128.
- . *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008.
- . "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 17.1 (1992): 29-35.
- . *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1988.
- . "Words Claimed: Picturebook Narratives and the Project of Children's Literature." *New Directions in Picturebook Research*. Ed. Teresa Colomer, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Cecilia Silva-Díaz. New York: Routledge, 2010. 11-26.
- Nodelman, Perry, and Mavis Reimer. *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. 3rd ed. New York: Allyn and Bacon, 2003.
- Ommundsen, Wenche. "Myth And Migration: Alienation And Belonging In Recent Asian-Australian Picture Books." *Coolabah* 3.1 (2009): 220-226.
- Oppolzer, Markus. "Reading Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*." Ed. Pascal Klenke et al. *Writing Worlds: Welten- und Raummodelle der Fantastik*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2014. 265-276.
- O'Reilly, Christopher. *Post-colonial Literature*. Cambridge Contexts in Literature. Cambridge: CUP, 2001.
- O'Reilly, Elizabeth. "Rushdie, Salman." *Literature Online Biography*. 2010. Vienna University Library. 27. Feb. 2016. <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pql:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xr i:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:ref: BIO002868>.
- Pickering, Michael. *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
- Reimer, Mavis. Ed. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008.
- . "Home." *Keywords for Children's Literature*. Ed. Philipp Nel and Paul Lissa. New York: New York UP, 2011. 106-109.
- . "Homing and Unhoming: The Ideological Work of Canadian Children's Literature." Mavis Reimer. Ed. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 1-25.
- . "Introduction: Discourses of Home in Canadian Children's Literature." Mavis Reimer. Ed. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. xi-xx.
- . "'No place like home': The Facts and Figures of Homelessness in Contemporary Texts for Young People." *BLFT - Nordic Journal of ChildLit Aesthetics* [Online] 4 (2013): n. pag. Web. 14 Nov. 2015
- Reimer, Mavis, and Anne Rusnak. "The Representation of Home in Canadian Children's Literature." *Canadian Children's Literature* 100 (2000): 9-41.

- Rhoades, Mindi et al. "The Pen(cil) Is Mightier Than The (S)Word? Telling Sophisticated Silent Stories Using Shaun Tan's Wordless Graphic Novel, *The Arrival*." *Studies In Art Education* 56.4 (2015): 307-326.
- Rudd, David. "A Sense of (Be)longing in Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing*." *International Research in Children's Literature*, 3.2 (2010): 134-147.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Imaginary Homelands." *Imaginary Homelands. Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. By Rushdie. London: Granta, 1991. 9-21.
- Said, Edward. "Reflections on Exile." Marc Robinson. Ed. *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*. Boston: Faber 1994, 137-149.
- Saldanha, Louise. "White Picket Fences: At Home with Multicultural Children's Literature in Canada?" Ed. Mavis Reimer. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 129-143.
- Salisbury, Martin, and Morag Styles. *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Story Telling*. London: Laurence King, 2012.
- Sarkowsky, Katja. "Beyond the Contact Zone? Mapping Transcultural Spaces in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*." *Transcultural English Studies: Theories, Fictions, Realities*. Ed. Frank Schulze-Engler et al. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 323-338.
- Schwarcz, Joseph H. *Ways of the Illustrator: Visual Communication in Children's Literature*. Chicago, IL: ALA, 1982.
- Scott, Carol. "Frame-making and Frame-breaking in Picturebooks." *New Directions in Picturebook Research*. Ed. Teresa Colomer, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Cecilia Silva-Díaz. New York: Routledge, 2010. 101-112.
- Sendak, Maurice. *Where The Wild Things Are*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Serchay, David S. *The Librarian's Guide to Graphic Novels for Children and Tweens*. New York: Neal-Schuman P, 2008.
- Sipe, Lawrence R. "How Picture Books Work: A Semiotically Framed Theory of Text-Picture Relations." *Children's Literature in Education* 29.2 (1998): 97-108.
- Sipe, Lawrence R., and Sylvia Pantaleo. "Postmodernism and picture books." *Postmodern Picture Books. Play, Parody, and Self-referentiality*. Ed. Lawrence R. Sipe and Sylvia Pantaleo. New York: Routledge. 1-8.
- Smith, Zack. "After *The Arrival*: Talking to Shaun Tan." 3 May 2016. <<http://web.archive.org/web/20071028024429/forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=134270>>.
- Stephens, John. "'They are always surprised at what people throw away': Glocal Postmodernism in Australian Picturebooks." Ed. Lawrence R. Sipe and Sylvia Pantaleo. *Postmodern Picture Books: Play, Parody, and Self-Referentiality*. New York: Routledge, 2008. 89-102.
- . "Utopia and Dystopia." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Ed. Jack Zipes. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. 139.
- Stilgoe, John. Foreword to the 1994 Edition. *The Poetics of Space*. 1958. By Gaston Bachelard. Boston, MA: Beacon P, 1994.
- Stott, Jon, and Christine Doyle Francis. "'Home' and 'Not-Home' in Children's Stories: Getting There – and Being Worth It." *Children's Literature in Education* 24.3 (1993): 223-233.
- Tan, Shaun. "The Accidental Graphic Novelist." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 49.4 (2011): 1-9.
- . "Comments on *Tales From Outer Suburbia*." 22 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/books/suburbia%20more%20comment.html>>.
- . "Comments on *The Arrival*." 26 May 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/books.html>>.
- . "Lost and Found: Thoughts on Childhood, Identity and Story." *Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature* 15.3 (2011): 1-13.

- . "Originality and Creativity." ALEA Hobart conference May 2001. 9 Dec. 2015
<<http://www.shauntan.net/essay2.html>>.
- . "Picture Books." 26 May 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/books.html>>.
- . "Picture Books: Who Are They For?" 6 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/images/whypicbooks.pdf>>.
- . "The Purposeful Daydream: Thoughts on Children's Literature." *Iowa Review* 45.2 (2015): 100-115.
- . *Sketches From a Nameless Land: The Art of The Arrival*. Sydney: Hachette, 2010.
- . "Suburban Odyssey: Interview with Ric Spencer. April 2012." 7. Jan. 2016.
<<http://www.shauntan.net/images/essay%20Ric%20Spencer%20interview.html>>.
- . *Tales from Outer Suburbia*. Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 2008.
- . "Words and Pictures, an Intimate Distance." *Lingua Franca*, Radio National ABC, 2010. 14 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.shauntan.net/comments1.html>>
- Trinh, T. Minh-Ha. "Other Than Myself/ My Other Self." *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*. Ed. George Robertson et al. London: Routledge, 1994. 9-26.
- Verstappen, Nicolas. "Shaun Tan." *Du9 – L'autre Bande Dessinée* 1 (2008). 11 Apr. 2016.
<<http://www.du9.org/en/entretien/shaun-tan922/>>.
- Vieira, Fátima. "The Concept of Utopia." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Ed. Gregory Claeys. Cambridge: CUP, 2010. 3-27.
- Waddey, Lucy. "Home in Children's Fiction: Three Patterns." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 8.1 (1983): 13-15.
- Weedon, Chris. "Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Black British Writing." *Black British Writing*. Ed. Victoria R. Arana and Lauri Ramey. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 73-97.
- Wilson, Melissa, and Kathy Short. "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: Challenging the Mythology of Home in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education* 43 (2012): 129-144.
- Wisker, Gina. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- Wolf, Doris, and Paul DePasquale. "Home and Native Land: A Study of Canadian Aboriginal Picture Books by Aboriginal Authors." Ed. Mavis Reimer. *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. 87-105.
- Wolf, Virginia. "From the Myth to the Wake of Home: Literary Houses." *Children's Literature* 18 (1990): 53-67.
- Woodward, Kathryn. "Concepts of Identity and Difference." *Identity and Difference*. London: Sage, 1997. 7-62.
- Yang, Gene Luen. "Stranger in a Strange Land." *The New York Times Book Review* 11 Nov. 2007: 21(L). *Literature Resource Center*. June 2013. Vienna University Library. 17 May 2013 <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>>.

7. List of Figures

Fig. 1. The home/away/home pattern. (Nodelman and Reimer 201).....	18
Fig. 2. The beach. (Tan, Shaun. <i>'The beach' signed edition of 300</i> . 29 May 2016. < http://www.shauntan.net/prints%20previews/LT%20beach.html >.....	43
Fig. 3. The new country. (Tan, Shaun. <i>'The new country' signed edition of 500</i> . 29 May 2016. < http://www.shauntan.net/prints%20previews/A%20new%20country.html >.)	49
Fig. 4. The magical pantry garden. (Tan, Shaun. "Story in pictures: Eric by Shaun Tan." <i>Guardian</i> 27 July 2009. 29 May 2016. < https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2009/may/13/shaun-tan-eric-story-pictures#img-12 >.)	57
Fig. 5. Ut⊙qIA. (Tan, Shaun. <i>'Utopia' signed edition of 500</i> . 29 May 2016. < http://www.shauntan.net/prints%20previews/LT%20utopia.html >.)	81

Abstract

Home is a contested area. In everyday usage, home seems to be a concept to make sense intuitively and it is only when attempting to define it, that its polysemy, complexity and ramifications become evident. The works of acclaimed Australian picturebook author and illustrator Shaun Tan are traversed by negotiations of home in view of topics such as migration, otherness and cross-cultural exchange. The main objective of this thesis is to demonstrate the intricate multimodal reimaginings of potential homes in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* and *Eric*, which expand over diverse interrelated aspects and form fantastic, new constructions of home as states and places, surpassing traditional and static ideas of the homely. Both visual and verbal text as well as their interplay serve as a basis for the analysis of potential homes in the three focus texts, which are examined by drawing on a variety of analytical instruments from picturebook and comic book theory as well as literary theory and visual semiotics. Applying theories from children's literature and postcolonial studies, the thesis follows a three-part structure, moving from concrete manifestations to abstract notions of potential homes. That is, potential homes are analysed as topographical spaces from macro- (the home land or country) to microstructure (houses, rooms and chambers), as psychodynamic spaces permeated with feelings of belonging and nonbelonging and as imagined spaces, conveying utopian thoughts. Comparing and contrasting the different layers of potential homes in three very different fusion texts by the same author, it is found that potential homes prove to be a place to flee from as well as to settle in, a dystopia with the potential for utopia and a generic family home ultimately open for change and transformation. Potential homes are shown to be essentially ambiguous places and states in Shaun Tan's works, constituting fantastic reimaginings of home, which prove to defy attempts to regulate and fixate the homely and highlight the complex negotiations involved in the making of a home.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Der englische Terminus „home“ findet wohl nur schwer eine einfache deutsche Entsprechung, vereint er doch verschiedenste Bedeutungskomponenten, die im Deutschen von Begriffen wie „Zuhause“, „Haus“ und „Heimat“ abgedeckt werden. Die Komplexität einer Konzeptionierung von „home“, die sich nicht nur im Übersetzungsprozess zeigt, sondern auch in theoretischen Überlegungen deutlich wird, findet in den Werken des mehrfach ausgezeichneten australischen Bilderbuchautors und -illustrators Shaun Tan einen besonderen Ausdruck. Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit visuellen und verbalen Repräsentationen von potentiellen „homes“ in Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* und *Eric*, welche in Zeiten von Migration und interkulturellem Austausch Neuverhandlungen unterworfen sind. Unter Anwendung von Theorien aus der Kinderliteratur und postkolonialen Studien werden dabei die potentiellen „homes“ in den drei Werken anhand dreier Achsen analysiert, die wechselseitig aufeinander bezogen sind. So werden potentielle „homes“ zuerst in ihren Eigenschaften als topographische Räume unterschiedlicher Größenordnung untersucht, bevor sie als psychodynamische Räume im Sinne widersprüchlicher Gefühle von Zugehörigkeit und Nicht-Zugehörigkeit erforscht und abschließend als Imaginationsräume utopischer Ideen bedacht werden. Im Rahmen dieser Diplomarbeit wird gezeigt, dass potentielle „homes“ in drei von Shaun Tan’s Werken konzeptionell neu gedacht werden. So rücken in Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing* und *Eric* traditionelle, statische Konzeptionierungen von „home“ zugunsten von fantastischen, vielschichtigen und teilweise dynamischen „homes“ in den Hintergrund.