involved in the large-scale manufacturing, distribution, and consumption of beer from 1700 to 1900 are relatively unremarked upon here. Such caveats aside, this volume satisfies the two chief requirements of any edited collection. It presents original research and it provokes ongoing debate. It is therefore to be convivially welcomed.


Cecile Sandten and Kathy-Ann Tan take up one of the most passionately debated political and academic issues today: home and its opposite of migrancy signified by flight and asylum, exile and diaspora. Not surprisingly, topicality and urgency prove somewhat problematic because they raise expectations of originality, depth and scope which are not always easy to fulfil. The two editors try their very best offering the reader twelve scholarly essays on a broad range of subject matters, a series of photographs and a poem, which altogether make for varied and interesting reading. Moreover, they obviously asked the authors to define the term ‘home’ according to their respective disciplines to standardize the volume and to allow them to keep their introduction short. With this decision, they forgo, however, the chance of drawing on their contributors’ expertise to develop an interdisciplinary methodology for the study of ‘home’ in its various manifestations and absences. Instead, they choose the modal verb “might” (2) for their thesis statement, which turns it into a perhaps overly cautious suggestion serving not much more than the average postmodern fare of a “flexible, multivalent and even inherently contradictory term” (ibid., also 1). Rather than truly “challenging the common associations of the term” (2), they invoke the four dimensions – “the notion of home […] commonly entails” (3): spatial, temporal, social and cultural – and follow this up with a reference to Sigmund Freud’s “uncanny” (1, 3) and Bernhard Schlink’s “home as a ‘non-place’” (3).

To provide orientation, the essays are grouped into two neat categories, "concepts and constructions" and "contexts." While the alliteration works nicely for the title, closer inspection reveals this order as slightly arbitrary because the categories are too broad to limit the centrifugal drive of the qualitatively heterogeneous essays. This, of course, is often the editors’ predicament when faced with highly individual contributors. It would have been better, perhaps, to arrange the essays along disciplinary, generic or geographic-cultural criteria. Classification by discipline shows a preference for cultural studies, followed by art history, literature and music. This review roughly sticks to the editors’ order. They start with Simone Diender’s descriptive survey of American conceptualisations of the private sphere in service to ‘the nation’ without any reference to race or class. The next two pieces are works of art: photographs by Palestinian Ahlam Shibli who displays the interior of martyr homes as Phantom Homes. Neither these pictures nor the poem by Kenyan poet Keguro Macharia are mentioned again in the collection, which continues with art history. Well founded on the rediscovered “sailing letters,” which she embeds in economic history, Irene Cieraad plausibly re-interprets the letter-reading woman in 17th-century Dutch genre painting. To her, this character does not only stand for middle-class female domesticity but represents emotional bonding through letters in the age of the expanding Dutch trading empire. The other outstanding essay, co-authored by Susan J. Matts and Luke Fernandez, convincingly combines the history
of class- and race-based ideas of home with the history of technology since the 19th century. They argue that the internet and the modern gadgets to access it are only the most recent in a row of technical "invasions" (97) into the private sphere. The "demands of a neo-liberal, post-industrial economy, in which private life is for sale" (ibid.) expose the separate spheres-ideal as a middle-class ideology under threat by the very consumer capitalism that gave rise to it in the first place (cf. 98ff.). Equally well-written and methodologically self-aware is Tim Wood's contextualised close reading of hip-hop lyrics, which pays special attention to both language use and African-American gendered politics of home in the "ghetto" (210ff.) and "the 'hood" (220ff.). Positioned after Cieraad, Linda Young offers attractive case studies in house museums such as British stately homes and American art collections or writers' homes. However, she relies on obsolete Western liberal humanism and thus unquestioningly reads the houses as symbols of 'the nation.' Melanie Armstrong explores the Yellowstone National Park and, thoroughly studying commercial images, traces its function for the construction of a particular identity as it offers Americans a 'home' in the – discreetly managed – wilderness.

The second part begins with a theoretically challenging essay by Mieke Bal, in which she explains her cross-cultural video installation on the absence of Western middle-class homes in times of flight and exile. Creating an idiosyncratic hybrid of academic art criticism, performance studies and philosophy, Bal develops an "ethics of non-indifference" (114) to counteract "indifference's coldness" (ibid.), reminiscent of Paul Gilroy's 'conviviality.' Thomas Stubblefield vividly illustrates how two postmodern American art photographers "destabilize domestic space to disclose a shared anxiety regarding the cultural position of the home" (148). Winnie L. M. Yee describes how Jia Zhangke's films on forced displacement in modern China reduce "the traditional concept of home and place [...] to rubble" (161) but offer characters who, in their daily lives, reconstruct the idea of home from objects and memories (153). Discussing three films by Sophia Coppola, Danica van de Velde employs American middle-class domesticity as the – socially and racially unspecified "traditional" (166, 176) – norm to evaluate the constructions of feminine subjectivities. At the end of the volume Maureen E. Ruprecht and Cecile Sandten emphasise femininities in their respective pieces on trauma in a novel by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat and the city of Vancouver in short stories by Nancy Lee. Even though the collection might have profited from a unifying theoretical input it rewards the readers' efforts by thought-provoking essays with many suggestions for further research into the sensitive and topical subject of home.


This little volume assembles nine contributions, all by members of the English department of the University of Szczecin, Poland. As the editors state in their introduction, " [...] although seemingly disparate, the selected articles as their least common denominator share the general notion of exile as being any state of 'awayness,' including the possibility of positive (creative distance) or negative (estrangement) connotations, and of migration as the path to 'being away' (and still 'here') " (9). Indeed, the essays conceive of 'migration' and 'exile' in a very wide sense, and readers will need to keep in mind the editors' claim towards 'unity in diversity.'