

Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism

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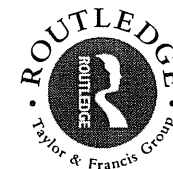
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Strange Encounters

Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality

Sara Ahmed



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For Erin and Charlotte

1 Recognising strangers

I turn around as you pass me. You are a stranger. I have not seen you before. No, perhaps I have. You are very familiar. You shuffle along the foot path, head down, a grey mac shimmering around your feet. You look dirty. There are scars and marks on your hands. You don't return my stare. I think I can smell you as you pass. I think I can hear you muttering. I know you already. And I hold myself together and breathe a sigh of relief as you turn the corner. I want you not to be in my face. I cast you aside with a triumph of one who knows this street. It is not the street where you live.

How do you recognise a stranger? To ask such a question, is to challenge the assumption that the stranger is the one we simply fail to recognise, that the stranger is simply *any-body* whom we do not know. It is to suggest that the stranger is *some-body* whom we have *already recognised* in the very moment in which they are 'seen' or 'faced' as a stranger. The figure of the stranger is far from simply being strange; it is a figure that is painfully familiar in that very strange(r)ness.¹ The stranger has already come too close; the stranger is 'in my face'. The stranger then is not simply the one whom we have not yet encountered, but the one whom we have already encountered, or already faced. The stranger comes to be faced as a form of recognition: we recognise somebody *as a stranger*, rather than simply failing to recognise them.

How does this recognition take place? How can we tell the difference between strangers and other others? In this chapter, I will argue that there are techniques that allow us to differentiate between those who are strangers and those who belong in a given space (such as neighbours or fellow inhabitants). Such techniques involve ways of reading the bodies of others we come to face. Strangers are not simply those who are not known in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, *already recognised as not belonging*, as being out of place. Such a recognition of those who are out of place allows both the demarcation and enforcement of the boundaries of 'this

place', as where 'we' dwell. The enforcement of boundaries requires that some-body – here locatable in the dirty figure of the stranger – has already crossed the line, has already come too close: in Alfred Schutz's terms, the stranger is always approaching (1944: 499). The recognition of strangers is a means by which inhabitable or bounded spaces are produced ('this street'), not simply as the place or locality of residence, but as the very living form of a community.

In this chapter, I analyse how the discourse of stranger danger produces the stranger as a figure – a shape that appears to have linguistic and bodily integrity – which comes then to embody that which must be expelled from the purified space of the community, the purified life of the good citizen, and the purified body of 'the child'. Such an approach to 'the stranger' considers how encounters between others involve the production and over-representation of the stranger as a figure of the unknowable. That is, such encounters allow the stranger to appear, to take form, *by recuperating all that is unknowable into a figure that we imagine we might face here, now, in the street.*

On recognition

To recognise means: to know again, to acknowledge and to admit. How do we know the stranger *again*? The recognisability of strangers is determinate in the social demarcation of spaces of belonging: the stranger is 'known again' as that which has already contaminated such spaces as a threat to both property and person: 'many residents are concerned about the strangers with whom they must share the public space, including wandering homeless people, aggressive beggars, muggers, anonymous black youths, and drug addicts' (Anderson 1990: 238). Recognising strangers is here embedded in a discourse of survival: it is a question of how to survive the proximity of strangers who are already figurable, *who have already taken shape*, in the everyday encounters we have with others.

A consideration of the production of the stranger's figure through modes of recognition requires that we begin with an analysis of the function of local encounters in public life. As Erving Goffman suggests, 'public life' refers to the realm of activity generated by face-to-face interactions that are organised by norms of co-mingling (1972: ix). Such an approach does not take for granted the realm of the public as a physical space that is already determined, but considers how 'the public' comes to be lived through local encounters, through the very gestures and habits of meeting up with others. How do such meetings, such face-to-face encounters, involve modes of recognition that produce the stranger as a figure?

Louis Althusser's thesis of subjectivity as determined through acts of misrecognition evokes the function of public life. Althusser writes:

ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'

(1971: 162–163)

All individuals are transformed into subjects through the ideological function of interpellation, which is imagined as a commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing. The recognition of the other as 'you there' is a misrecognition which produces the 'you' as a subject, and as subject to the very law implicated in recognition (the subject is suspect in such encounters). Althusser's thesis is clearly to be understood as a universal theory of how subjects come into being as such. However, we might note the following. First, the constitution of the subject through hailing implies that subjectivity is predicated upon an elided 'inter-subjectivity' (see Ahmed 1998a: 143). Second, the function of the act of hailing an-other, 'hey you', opens out the possibility *that subjects become differentiated at the very same moment that they are constituted as such*. If we think of the constitution of subjects as implicated in the uncertainties of public life, then we could imagine how such differentiation might work: the address of the policeman shifts according to whether individuals are already recognisable as, 'wandering homeless people, aggressive beggars, muggers, anonymous black youths, and drug addicts' (Anderson 1990: 238). Hailing as a form of recognition which constitutes the subject it recognises (= misrecognition) might function to differentiate *between* subjects, for example, by hailing differently those who seem to belong and those who might already be assigned a place – out of place – as 'suspect'.

Such an over-reading of Althusser's dramatisation of interpellation through commonplace hailing suggests that the subject is not simply constituted in the present as such. Rather, inter-subjective encounters in public life continually reinterpellate subjects into differentiated economies of names and signs, where they are assigned different value in social spaces. Noticeably, the use of the narrative of the police hailing associates the constitution of subjects with their subjection to a discourse of criminality, which defines the one who is hailed as a threat to property ('Hey, you there'). If we consider how hailing constitutes the subject, then we can also think about how hailing constitutes the stranger in a relationship precisely to the Law of the subject (the stranger is constituted as the unlawful entry into the nation space, the stranger hence allows Law to mark out its terrain). To this extent, the act of hailing or recognising some-body as a stranger serves to constitute the lawful subject, the one who has the right to dwell, and the stranger at the very same time. It is not that the 'you' is or can be simply a stranger, but that to address some-body as a stranger constitutes the 'you' as

the stranger in relation to the one who dwells (the friend and neighbour). In this sense, the (mis)recognition of strangers serves to differentiate between the familiar and the strange, a differentiation that allows the figure of the stranger to appear. The failure embedded in such misrecognition – rather than the failure of recognition – determines the impossibility of reducing the other to the figure of the stranger: as I will argue in Chapter 2, the singularity of the figure conceals the different histories of lived embodiment which mark some bodies as stranger than others.

By analysing recognition in this way, I am suggesting that the (lawful) subject is not simply constituted by being recognised by the other, which is the primary post-Hegelian model of recognition (see Taylor 1994). Rather, I am suggesting that it is the recognition of others that is central to the constitution of the subject. The very act through which the subject differentiates between others is the moment that the subject comes to inhabit or dwell in the world. The subject is not, then, simply differentiated from the (its) other, but comes into being by learning how to differentiate between others. This recognition operates as a *visual economy*: it involves ways of *seeing the difference* between familiar and strange others as they are (re)presented to the subject. As a mode of subject constitution, recognition involves differentiating between others on the basis of how they 'appear'.²

Given the way in which the recognition of strangers operates to produce who 'we' are, we can see that strangers already 'fit' within the 'cognitive, moral or aesthetic map of the world', rather than being, as Zygmunt Bauman argues, 'the people who do not fit' (1997: 46). There are established ways of dealing with 'the strangers' who are already encountered and recognised in public life. The recognisability of strangers involves, not only techniques for differentiating strange from familiar (ways of seeing), but also ways of living: there are, in Alfred Schutz's terms, 'standardized situations' in which we might encounter strangers and which allow us to negotiate our way past them (1944: 499). Goffman's work on bodily stigma, for example, attends to how the bodies of others that are marked as different, such as disabled bodies, are read in ways which allow the subject to keep their distance (1984: 12). Social encounters involve rules and procedures for 'dealing with' the bodies that are read as strange (Morris 1996: 72–74).

Encounters between embodied others hence involve *spatial negotiations* with those who are already recognised as either familiar or strange. For Schutz, the stranger is always approaching – coming closer to those who are at home (1944: 499). In the sociological analysis of strangers offered by Simmel, the stranger is understood, paradoxically, as both near and far (1991: 146). In the next section, I consider how the determination of social space and imagined forms of belonging takes place through the differentiation between strangers and neighbours in relationships of proximity and distance.

Neighbourhoods and dwelling

How do you recognise who is a stranger in your neighbourhood? To rephrase my original question in this way is to point to the relation between the recognition of strangers and one's habitat or dwelling: others are recognised as strangers by those who inhabit a given space, who 'make it' their own. As Michael Dillon argues, 'with the delimitation of any place of dwelling, the constitution of a people, a nation, a state, or a democracy necessarily specifies who is *estranged from* that identity, place or regime' (1999: 119; emphasis added). At one level, this seems to suggest the relativisability of the condition of strangers: any-one can be a stranger if they leave home (the house, the neighbourhood, the region, the nation).³ However, in this section I want to argue that forms of dwelling cannot be equated in order to allow such a relativisation. Some homes and neighbourhoods are privileged such that they define the terrain of the inhabitable world. The recognition of strangers brings into play relations of social and political antagonism that *mark some others as stranger than other others*.

How do neighbourhoods become imagined? In the work of Howard Hallman, neighbourhoods are understood as arising from the 'natural human trait' of being neighbourly, which combines a concern with others and a concern for self (1984: 11). According to Hallman, the neighbourhood is an organic community that grows, 'naturally wherever people live close to one another' (1984: 11). It is both a limited territory – a physical space with clear boundaries – and a social community where 'residents do things together' (1984: 13). The simple fact of living nearby gives neighbours a common social bond. However, according to Hallman, some neighbourhoods are closer and hence better than others. He argues that neighbourhoods are more likely to be successful as communities when people live near 'like people': 'people with similarities tend to achieve closer neighbour relationships' (1984: 24). Hallman defines a close neighbourhood through an analogy with a healthy body, 'with wounds healed, illness cured, and wellness maintained' (1984: 256).

The analogy between the ideal neighbourhood and a healthy body serves to define the ideal neighbourhood as fully integrated, homogeneous, and sealed: it is like a body that is fully contained by the skin (see Chapter 2). This implies that a good or healthy neighbourhood does not leak outside itself, and hence does not let outsiders (or foreign agents/viruses) in. The model of the neighbourhood as an organic community – where a sense of community arises from the simple fact of shared residence – defines social health in terms of the production of purified spaces and the expulsion of difference through ways of living together. Matthew Crenson's consideration of neighbourhood politics hence concludes, 'social homogeneity and solidarity ... may contribute to the defensive capabilities of neighbourhoods, and in fact it may take an external attack upon some of these homogenous neighbourhoods to activate the latent sense of fellow feeling along local residents' (1983: 257). Likewise, David Morris and Karl Hess describe

neighbourhoods as protective and defensive, like 'tiny underdeveloped nations' (1975: 16).

Neighbourhoods become imagined as organic and pure spaces through the social perception of the danger posed by outsiders to moral and social health or well-being. So although neighbourhoods have been represented as organic and pure communities, there is also an assumption that those communities will fail (to be). A failed community is hence one which has weak or negative connections: where neighbours appear as if they are strangers to each other. The neighbour who is also a stranger – who only passes as a neighbour – is hence the danger that may always threaten the community from within. As David Sibley argues, 'the resistance to a different sort of person moving into a neighbourhood stems from feelings of anxiety, nervousness or fear. Who is felt to belong and not to belong contributes to an important way of shaping social space' (1995: 3). However, the failure of the community should not just be understood in terms of failed communities. *It is the very potential of the community to fail which is required for the constitution of the community.* It is the enforcement of the boundaries between those who are already recognised as out of place (even other fellow residents) that allows those boundaries to be established. The 'ideal' community has to be worked towards and that labour requires failure as its moment of constitution (to this extent, then, the organic community is a fantasy that *requires* its own negation).

It is symptomatic then of the very nature of neighbourhood that it enters public discourse as a site of *crisis*: it is only by attending to the trauma of neighbourhoods which fail that the ideal of the healthy neighbourhood can be maintained as a possibility (which is then, endlessly deferred as 'the real', as well as endlessly kept in place as 'the ideal', by that very language of crisis). Such failed communities are the source of fascination: they demonstrate the need to regulate social spaces. On British television in 1998, there were a number of programmes dedicated to 'neighbours from hell', neighbours who are dirty, who make too much noise, who steal, and who are 'at war' with each other. On *Panorama's* 'Neighbours from Hell' (30 March 1998), urinating in the street becomes the ultimate expression of the anti-sociality of stranger neighbours. The passing of bodily fluids in public spaces becomes symptomatic of the failure to pass as neighbours. In the United Kingdom, new powers of eviction for local councils give further power to the community to reassert itself against these stranger neighbours. The imaginary community of the neighbourhood hence requires enforcement through Law.

The enforcement of the boundaries which allow neighbourhoods to be imagined as pure and organic spaces can be understood as central to neighbourhood watch schemes. Such schemes began in the United States in the 1970s, and in the United Kingdom in 1982. The National Neighbourhood Watch Association in the United Kingdom (NNWA) describes it as, 'the best known and most effective example of the police and community

working together in partnership to prevent crime, build safer communities and improve quality of life'. In the United Kingdom, there are currently over 161,000 schemes and over 10 million people involved. Neighbourhood Watch brings together the creation of an ideal community as one 'which cares' and the production of safer spaces through the discourse of 'crime prevention'. Its main motto is, 'Crime cannot survive in a community that cares – Neighbourhood Watch works'. In other words, crime only exists when communities fail, when communities do not care. Marginalised or under-valued spaces where there is a high rate of crime against property are hence immediately understood in terms of *a failure to care*.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are more common in middle-class areas, where residents are more likely to want to co-operate with the police, and where there is more 'property' with value to protect (Hill 1994: 150). The value attached to certain spaces of belonging is enforced or 'watched' through schemes that allow middle-class spaces to become valued: the subject who watches out for crime, is also *maintaining the value of her or his neighbourhood*. The link here between value of spaces, the protection of property, and the maintenance of social privilege helps us to theorise how the defence of social boundaries against unwelcome intrusions and intruders produces certain categories of strangers – those who don't belong in the leafy suburbs – that are socially legitimated and enforced. In Elijah Anderson's work, there is a discussion of how the concern with safety amongst residents means that, 'they join their diverse counterparts in local struggles to fight crime and otherwise preserve the ideal character for the neighbourhood, forming town watches and shoring up municipal codes that might discourage undesirables and encourage others more to their liking' (1990: 4). The production of safe spaces that have value or 'ideal character' involves the expulsion of unlike and undesirable 'characters'. In Anderson's work, these characters have *already* materialised or taken the form of, 'wandering homeless people, aggressive beggars, muggers, anonymous black youths, and drug addicts' (1990: 238).

How does neighbourhood watch work to produce such safe spaces? The literature produced on the Neighbourhood Watch schemes by the Home Office in the United Kingdom certainly links the designation of value to social spaces with the detection of strange events, and the expulsion of strangers. There is a double emphasis on the improvement of community living and on security and crime prevention. So Neighbourhood Watch schemes are described as both providing 'the eyes and ears of the police' and as providing, 'the soul and heart of the community' (Home Office 1997). The NWS link the production of safe spaces with the organic growth of a healthy social body: 'Neighbourhood Watch is not just about reducing burglary figures – it's about creating communities who care. It brings local people together and can make a real contribution to improving their lives. The activity of Watch members can foster a new community spirit and a belief in the community's ability to tackle problems. At the same time, you

feel secure, knowing your neighbours are keeping an eye on your property' (1997). There is a constant shift between an emphasis on a caring community and a safe one: a safe community moreover is one in which you feel safe as your property is being 'watched' by your neighbours. A link is established here between safety (in which safety is associated with property), a discourse on good neighbourliness (looking out for each other) and the production of community as purified space ('a new community spirit'). Hence, 'it is widely accepted that within every community, there is the potential for crime prevention. Neighbourhood Watch is a way of tapping into this and of drawing a community together'. Neighbourhood Watch hence constitutes the neighbourhood as a community through the protection of the property of nearby others from the threat posed by the very proximity of distant others.

In an earlier Neighbourhood Watch pamphlet (Home Office 1992), the reader is addressed more directly, 'Deciding to join your local group means you have made a positive commitment to act against crime in your community. You have also become one of the largest and most successful grass-roots movements in the country.' Here, the reader is praised for her or his community spirit: not only are you a good neighbour – willing to look out for your neighbours – but you are also a good citizen, who has displayed a positive commitment to 'act against crime in the community'. Neighbourhood watch purifies the space of the community *through purifying the life of the good citizen*, whose life becomes heroic, dedicated to fighting against crime and disorder. Significantly, then, the praise given to the reader/citizen involves a form of reward/recognition: 'You can also get lower insurance premiums from some Insurance companies' (1992). The reward demonstrates the value given to social spaces where subjects watch out for the extraordinary sounds and signs of crime, or the sounds and signs of that which is suspect and suspicious.

But how does Neighbourhood Watch involve techniques of differentiating between the ordinary life of the purified neighbourhood and the extraordinary events that threaten to contaminate that space? The Home Office pamphlet is cautious, 'Sometimes it is hard to tell if you are witnessing a crime or not. You must rely on common sense. ... You may also become suspicious if you notice something out of the ordinary. Don't be afraid to call your local police station to report the incident' (1992). Here, common sense should tell the good citizen what they are witnessing. Whatever happens, the good citizen must be a witness: a witness to an event that might or might not be a crime, an *event that unfolds before the patient eye and ear*. The last sentence moves from the importance of differentiating between extraordinary events through common sense (is it a crime?), to the differentiation between ordinary and extraordinary. Here, you might be made suspicious by *some-thing* out of the ordinary. The good citizen is a citizen who *suspects rather than is suspect*, who watches out for departures from ordinary life in the imagined space of the neighbourhood. The good citizen

hence watches out for the one who loiters, acts suspiciously, looks out of place. As a Chief Inspector explains in a letter to *The Independent*, 'Neighbourhood Watch is about looking after your property and that of your neighbours, taking sensible crime prevention action *and reporting suspicious persons to the police*' (Scougal 1996, emphasis added). According to the leaflet given by the Divisional Commander to Neighbourhood Watch coordinators, Neighbourhood Watch 'rests on the concept of good neighbourliness', which means that, 'Neighbours are encouraged to report suspicious persons and unusual events to the police'. With such an exercise in good neighbourliness and good citizenship, the neighbourhood comes to police itself: not only is it 'the heart and soul of the community', but in being the 'heart and soul of the community', it is also *'the ears and eyes of the police'*.

The signifier 'suspicious' does an enormous amount of work in Neighbourhood Watch discourse precisely insofar as it is *empty*. The good citizen is not given any information about how to tell what or who is suspicious in the first place. It is my argument that the very failure to provide us with techniques for telling the difference is itself a technique of knowledge. It is the technique of *common sense* that is produced through Neighbourhood Watch discourse. Common sense not only defines what 'we' should take for granted (that is, what is normalised and already known as 'the given'), but it also involves the normalisation of ways of 'sensing' the difference between common and uncommon. That is, information is not given about how to tell the difference between normal and suspicious, because that difference is already 'sensed' through a prior history of making sense *as* the making of 'the common'. The good citizen knows what they are looking for, because they know what is common, and so what departs from the common: 'You must rely on common sense' (1992). Neighbourhood watch is hence about *making* the common: it makes the community ('the heart and soul of the community') insofar as it looks out for and hears the threat to the common posed by those who are uncommon, or those who are 'out of place' in 'this place' ('the eyes and ears of the police').

In this way, the 'suspicious person' and 'the stranger' are intimately linked: they are both emptied of any content, or any direct relationship to a referent, precisely as they are tied to a (missing) history of seeing and hearing others: *they are both already seen and heard as 'the uncommon' which allows 'the common' to take its shape*. The failure to name those who inhabit the signifier 'suspicious' hence produces the figure of the unspecified stranger, a figure that is required by the making or sensing of 'the common', of what 'we' are, as a form of distinction or value (property). Neighbourhood Watch can be characterised as a form of humanism. Such a humanism – Neighbourhood Watch is 'about creating communities who care' (1992) – conceals the exclusions that operate to allow the definition and policing of the 'we' of the good neighbourhood. The definition and enforcement of the good 'we' operates through the recognition of others as strangers: by seeing those who do not belong simply as 'strangers' (that is, by not naming *who* are the ones

who do not belong in the community), forms of social exclusion are both concealed and revealed (what is concealed is the brute fact of the matter – only some others are recognisable as ‘the stranger’, the one who is out of place). In this sense, the policing of valued spaces allows the legitimization of social exclusion by being tied to a heroic ‘we’ who takes shape against the figure of the unspecified stranger. The production of the stranger as a figure that has linguistic and bodily integrity conceals how strangers are always already specified or differentiated. Neighbourhood Watch becomes definable as a mechanism for ensuring, not only that certain spaces maintain their (property) value, but that *certain lives become valued over other lives*. The recognition of strangers within the neighbourhood does not mean that anybody can be a stranger, depending on her or his location in the world: rather, some-bodies are more recognisable as strangers than other-bodies precisely because they are already read and valued in the demarcation of social spaces.

What is also significant about the Neighbourhood Watch concern with seeing and hearing the difference (becoming the eyes and ears of the police), is that it involves the production of a model of ‘good citizenship’. The discourse on good citizenship involves an individualising of responsibility for crime (Stanko 1997). This model of the good citizen, which Stanko’s work suggests is very much gendered as masculine, takes such responsibility in part through a form of self-policing by, in some sense, *becoming the police*. Certainly in post-Foucauldian work on surveillance, the emphasis is on the shift from public forms of monitoring – where the subject is watched by an anonymous and partially unseen and partially seen Other – to self-monitoring, when *the subject adopts the gaze of the other* (Foucault 1975). My analysis of Neighbourhood Watch might complicate this model of displacement from the gaze of the other to the gaze of the self. The ‘eye’ of the good citizen is certainly the site of labour – it is this ‘eye’ that is doing the work. However, that ‘eye’ does not simply return to the body, as that which must be transformed and regulated as ‘the seen’, but looks elsewhere, to and at others. In other words, ‘the good citizen’ is one who watches (out for) suspicious persons and strangers, and who in that very act, becomes aligned, not only with the police (and hence the Law), but with the imagined community itself whose boundaries are protected *in the very labour of his look*.

Furthermore, self-policing communities are inscribed as moral communities, those that care. Caring evokes a figure of who must be cared for, who must be protected from the risks of crime and the danger of strangers. So Neighbourhood Watch ‘reassures vulnerable members of the community that you are keeping a neighbourly eye on them’ (1992). The construction of the figure of the vulnerable member/body alongside the heroic good citizen provides the moral justification for the injunction to watch; it detaches ‘watching out for’ from ‘busybodying’ (1992) by redefining it as ‘watching out on behalf of’. The discourse of vulnerability allows self-policing to be readable as the protection of others: the risk posed by suspects and strangers

is a risk posed to the vulnerable bodies of children, the elderly and women. The figuring of the good citizen is built on the image of the strong citizen: in this sense, the good citizen is figurative primarily as white, masculine and middle-class, the heroic subject who can protect the vulnerable bodies of ‘weaker others’: ‘crime cannot survive in a community that cares – Neighbourhood Watch Works’ (NNWA).

The 1997 pamphlet also describes the newer scheme ‘Street Watch’ (there are currently over 20,000 in operation in the United Kingdom) which, ‘covers many different activities, ranging from providing transport or escort services for elderly people, to walking a specific route regularly, keeping an eye out for trouble and reporting it to the police’. Here, the good citizen is valued not only for his heart, eyes and ears, but also his feet.⁴ He takes specific routes, but most importantly, according to the Home Secretary responsible for the introduction of the scheme, Michael Howard, he is ‘walking with purpose’ (Bennetto 1995). Street Watch is described as ‘patrolling with a purpose’.

We can consider here Hallman’s definition of who and what must be watched in his work on neighbourhoods: ‘people who seem to have no purpose in the neighbourhood’ (Hallman 1984: 159). Strangers are suspicious because they ‘have no purpose’, that is, they have no legitimate function within the space which could justify their existence or intrusion. Strangers are hence recognisable precisely insofar as they *do not enter into the exchanges of capital that transforms spaces into places*. Strangers are constructed as an illegitimate presence in the neighbourhood: they have no purpose, and hence they must be suspect. You can recognise the stranger through their loitering gait: strangers loiter, they do not enter the legitimate exchanges of capital that might justify their presence. In contrast, the street watcher is constructed as a heroic figure whose purpose is the very detection of those who are without a legitimate purpose, of those whose purpose can hence only be explained as suspicious, as criminal, as a crime (Young 1996: 5). The stranger’s presence on the street is a crime (waiting to happen). The proximity of such loitering strangers in the purified space of the good neighbourhood hence requires that the heroic citizen take a specific route: those who are recognisable as strangers, *whose lack of purpose conceals the purpose of crime*, need to be expelled through purposeful patrolling in order that the value of property can be protected.

Such a construction of the good citizen through the figure of the loitering stranger is clearly subject to forms of social differentiation: in one reading, the good citizen is structured around the body of the dominant (white, middle-class) man, who protects the vulnerable bodies of women and children from the threat of marginalised (black, working-class) men. However, these differences are concealed by the very modes of recognition: the figure of the stranger appears as ‘the stranger’ precisely by being cut off from these histories of determination (= stranger fetishism). That is, the recognition of strangers involves the differentiation between some others and

other others at the same time as it conceals that very act of differentiation. What is significant about Neighbourhood Watch is precisely the way in which it links the formation of community with safety and the detection of crime: such links produce the figure of the stranger as a *visible danger* to the 'we' of the community, and hence as the necessary condition for making what 'we' have in common.

Stranger danger

If the construction and enforcement of purified spaces of belonging takes place through the production of the figures of the good citizen, the vulnerable body and the loitering stranger, then how is this linked to the social perception of danger? In this section, I examine the discourse of stranger danger as a way of analysing how strangers are already recognised as posing danger to property and person, not just in particular valued dwellings and neighbourhoods, but also in public life as such. I want to consider, not only how the construction of stranger danger is tied to valued and devalued spaces, but also how strangers are read as posing danger *wherever* they are: the projection of danger onto the figure of the stranger allows the definition of the subject-at-home, and home as inhabitable space, as inherently safe and valuable. One *knows again* those whom one does not know by assuming they are the *origin* of danger.

Partly, this concern with public life involves a consideration of urban space and cities as 'a world of strangers' (Lofland 1973). Lofland suggests that cities, in particular public spaces within cities (such as streets and leisure spaces), involve perpetual encounters between people who are not personally known to each other, although they may be known through forms of visual identification and recognition (1973: 15–16). As a result, he argues that cities involve particular kinds of social and spatial encounters. I would not want to refute the premise that there are different kinds of spaces that involve different kinds of encounters between others (such as urban and rural spaces, or such as different forms of the public within urban spaces). However, Lofland's account does involve a form of spatial determinism – these spaces determine these encounters between others – which shifts quickly into a form of cultural determinism – cultures have different spaces and therefore involve different encounters between others.⁵ What I am interested in is how the very encounters that take place between others involve the forming of both cultural and spatial boundaries: that is, how the (mis)recognition of others as strangers is what allows the demarcation of given spaces within 'the public domain', but also the legitimation of certain forms of mobility or movement within the public, and the delegitimation of others.

I am positing here a relationship between dwelling and movement:⁶ spaces are claimed, or 'owned' not so much by inhabiting what is already there, but by moving within, or passing through, different spaces which are

only given value' as places (with boundaries) through the movement or 'passing through' itself. The relationship between movement, occupation and ownership is well documented in feminist work: for example, women's restricted movement within public spaces is a result, not only of the fear of crime, but of the regulation of femininity, in which 'being seen' in certain spaces becomes a sign of irresponsibility (Stanko 1997: 489). Women's movements are regulated by a desire for 'safe-keeping': respectability becomes measured by the visible signs of a desire to 'stay safe'. In this sense, movement becomes a form of subject constitution: *where* 'one' goes or does not go determines *what* one 'is', or where one is seen to be, determines what one is seen to be.

Elijah Anderson's work on how communities are established through the concern with safety examines how the fear of crime becomes a fear of strangers. Such a fear produces a way of inhabiting the world, as well as moving through it. He writes, 'Many worry about a figure lurking in the shadows, hiding in a doorway or behind a clump of bushes, ready to pounce on the unsuspecting victim' (Anderson 1990: 5). The danger posed by the stranger is imagined as partly concealed: the stranger always lurks in dark spaces. While the victim is unsuspecting, the safe subject must be suspecting: the safe subject suspects that the suspect is around the corner, always hidden to the gaze, to the watchful eye. The danger of the stranger is hence always there in the imagined future of the subject who is safely at home, the stranger is always lurking as the threat of that-which-might-yet-be. Safety hence requires that the subject must become familiar with the terrain: the safe subject must become 'street wise' and 'alive to dangerous situations' (Anderson 1990: 6). Certain lives become liveable as both safe and valuable insofar as they are *alive to* the danger of strangers.

The discourse of personal safety is not about the production of safe and purified spaces from which strangers are expelled (such as 'the home'), but also defines ways of moving through spaces that are already dangerous given the possibility that strangers are close by, waiting in the shadows of the streets (where good citizens walk only with purpose, living their legitimated lives). The possibility of personal safety for mobile subjects hence requires 'collective definitions' of that which is 'safe, harmless, trustworthy' and that which is 'bad, dangerous and hostile' (Anderson 1990: 216). Such collective definitions provide the subject with the knowledge required to move within the world, allowing the subject to differentiate between familiar and strange, safe and dangerous, as well as to differentiate between different kinds of strangers ('characters').

Clearly, discourses of personal safety involve forms of self-governance that differentiate between subjects. As much feminist research has suggested, safety for women is often constructed in terms of not entering public spaces, or staying within the home (see Stanko 1990). Safety for men also involves forms of self-governance, not in terms of refusing to enter the public space, but in terms of *how* one enters that space. So at one level, the discourse of

personal safety presumes a vulnerable citizen who is gendered as feminine, at another level, it legislates for a form of mobile and masculine subjectivity that is not only a safe form of subjectivity, but also one that is heroic. Such a mobile subject, who can 'avoid' the danger of strangers in public spaces is constructed as 'street wise'. This subject's mobility is legitimated as a form of dwelling: first, in relation to the vulnerable bodies that stay within the home; and second, in relation to the strangers whose passing through public spaces is delegitimated as the 'origin' of danger (the movement of strangers is hence not a form of dwelling; it does not lead to the legitimated occupation of space).

The knowledges embedded in street wisdom are linked by Anderson to a kind of 'field research' (Anderson 1990: 216). The wise subject, the one who knows where and where not to walk, how and how not to move, who and who not to talk to, has an expertise that can be understood as both *bodily and cultural capital*. It is such wise subjects who will prevail in a world of strangers and dangers: 'To prevail means simply to get safely to one's destination, and the ones who are most successful are those who are "streetwise"' (Anderson 1990: 231). In this sense, the discourse of stranger danger involves techniques of knowledge that allow wise subjects to prevail: to arrive at their destination, to leave and return home and still maintain a safe distance between themselves and dangerous strangers. Community is not just established through the designation of pure and safe spaces, but becomes established *as a way of moving through space*. Becoming street wise defines the subject in terms of the collective: the wise subject has collective knowledge about what is, 'safe, harmless, trustworthy' and what is 'bad, dangerous and hostile' that gives that subject the ability to move safely in a world of strangers and dangers. The stranger is here produced as a figure of danger that grants the wise subject and community, those who already claim both knowledge and capital, the ability to prevail.

The discourse of stranger danger also involves the figuring, not only of the wiser subject who can move through dangerous places (a mobile subject who is racialised, classed and gendered), but also the vulnerable body, the one who is most at risk. Here, 'the child' becomes a figure of vulnerability, the purified body that is most endangered by the contaminating desires of strangers. Indeed, it is the literature on child protection that has familiarised 'stranger danger' as the mechanism for ensuring personal safety. One double page of the Home Office leaflet on crime prevention in the United Kingdom is hence dedicated to 'your family' and, 'to keeping your children safe' (the ideal reader/subject/citizen is always a parent, bound to Law and duty through the demands of parenthood). The pamphlet advises, 'Do not talk to strangers. Most well-meaning adults will not approach a child who is on his own, unless he is obviously distressed or in need. Tell your children never to talk to strangers, and to politely ignore any approach from a stranger. Get them to tell you if a stranger tries to talk to them.' Immediately, strangers are differentiated from 'well-meaning' adults, who would not approach

children. Indeed, the child itself must become 'street wise': one colouring-in book produced by the Lancashire Constabulary in the United Kingdom is entitled, 'Operation Streetwise workbook' and aims 'to provide children with an exciting opportunity to learn and practice personal safety skills'. Here, growing up is narrated in terms of acquiring the wisdom to deal with danger that already stalks in the figure of the stranger.⁷

The figure of the child comes to perform a certain role within the narrative of crime prevention and stranger danger: the innocence of the child is what is most at risk from the proximity of strangers. The child comes to embody, in a narrative that is both nostalgic (returning to an imagined past) and fearful (projecting an unimaginable future), all that could be stolen or lost by the proximity of strangers. The child's innocence and purity becomes a matter of social and national responsibility: through figuring the stranger as too close to the child, the stranger becomes recognisable as an attack on the moral purity of nation space itself. It is over the bodies of children that the moral campaign against strangers is waged.

In recent debates in the press, the paedophile is hence represented as the ultimate stranger that communities must have the power to evict. A change in the law in 1997 allowed the British police force to inform members of the community when a paedophile is in their midst, on a 'need to know' basis. Community action groups, as well as some local councils, have redefined the need to know as *a right to know*: arguing that paedophiles should not be allowed into communities as they pose a risk to children, 'Recent moves include attempts by some councils to ban paedophiles from their communities altogether, and campaigns to keep them in prison longer' (Hilpern 1997). The construction of sex offenders against children as monsters who do not belong in a community is clear in the following statement from John O'Sullivan, from the pressure group, *Parents Against Child Abuse*: 'If there is a wild lion loose in the street, the police would tell us. A paedophile in the neighbourhood is the same. They might not rip the flesh, but they are just as damaging to the mind of a child. We need to know who they are.' The number of vigilante attacks on suspected paedophiles in Britain in the 1990s suggests what this knowledge will be used for.

Significantly, then, the paedophile comes to embody the most dangerous stranger as he poses the greatest risk to the vulnerable and pure body of the child. The community comes together through the recognition of such dangerous strangers: they must expel him, he who is the wild animal, the lion, at loose in the street. The monstrosity of such recognisable strangers is figured through the tearing of the skin of the child. The monsters who must be excluded to keep children safe, prey on children: they require the heroic action of the moral community that cares. The imaginary community is constructed as a safe community where children's bodies are not vulnerable: the moral community itself becomes the child, pure, innocent and free. The recognition of dangerous strangers allows the enforcement of the boundaries

of such communities: a definition of the purity of the 'we' against the monstrous 'it'.

Sally Engle Merry's *Urban Danger: Life in a Neighbourhood of Strangers*, discusses how the fear of crime 'focuses on the threat of the violent attack by a stranger' (Merry 1981: 6). Such a fear means that the familiar is already designated as safe: one is safe at home, unless there is an intrusion from a stranger. One could comment here how such a reduction of danger to the stranger conceals the danger that may be embedded in the familiar: much feminist work, for example, demonstrates how the perception of the rapist as a stranger conceals how most sexual attacks are committed by friends or family. As Elizabeth Stanko argues, 'Danger many of us believe arises from the random action of strangers who are, we further assume, usually men of colour. Yet according to most people's experiences ... danger and violence arise within our interpersonal relationships' (1990: 3). The projection of danger onto the figure of the stranger allows violence to be figured as exceptional and extraordinary – as coming from outside the protective walls of the home, family, community or nation. As a result, the discourse of stranger danger involves *a refusal to recognise how violence is structured by, and legitimated through, the formation of home and community as such.*

The stranger is here figured as the violent monster whose elimination would mean safety for women and children. Such a figuration allows the home to be imagined as a safe haven: an imagining that cannot deal with the violence that is instituted through the social relations within the home. As Merry argues, 'Violence at the hand of the stranger is usually perceived as dangerous, but an assault in the context of a fight with a known enemy or neighbour is rarely viewed in this way' (Merry 1981: 14). The notion of violence as domestic, while now recognised through Law as a result of years of feminist campaigning, remains a difficult one for the social imaginary: the violent husband is then read as a monster underneath, as a stranger passing as husband, rather than as a husband exercising the power that is already legitimated through hegemonic forms of masculinity. According to stranger danger discourse, the stranger husband has intruded' into the ideal home: he is not understood as an element *in the ordinary production of domestic space*, and in the formation of relations of power and exchange within that space.

The ultimate violent strangers are hence figured as immigrants: they are the outsiders in the nation space whose 'behaviour seems unpredictable and beyond control' (Merry 1981: 125). Cultural difference becomes the text upon which the fear of crime is written: 'cultural difference exacerbates feelings of danger. Encounters with culturally alien people are defined by anxiety and uncertainty, which inhibits social interaction and reinforces social boundaries' (Merry 1981: 125). The projection of danger onto that which is already recognisable as different – as different from the familiar space of home and homeland – hence allows violence to take place: it becomes a mechanism for the enforcement of boundary lines that almost secure the home-nation as safe haven. On the one hand, the fear of crime

embedded in the discourse of stranger danger allows the protection of domestic, social and national space from the outsider inside, the stranger neighbour, by projecting danger onto the outsider. On the other hand, the stranger only appears as a figure of danger by coming too close to home: the boundary line is always crossed, both 'justifying' the fear and legitimating the enforcement. In doing so, the discourse of stranger danger, not only allows the abdication of any social and political responsibility for the violence that takes place within legitimated spaces, and which is sanctioned through Law, but also becomes a mechanism for the justification of acts of violence against those who are already recognised as strangers.

In this chapter, I have examined how 'the stranger' is produced as a figure precisely by being associated with a danger to the purified space of the community, the purified life of the good citizen, and the purified body of 'the child'. Rather than assuming that the stranger is anybody we don't recognise, I have argued that strangers are those that are already recognised through techniques for differentiating between the familiar and strange in discourses such as Neighbourhood Watch and crime prevention. The 'knowing again' of strangers defines the stranger as a danger to both moral health and well-being. The knowing again of strangers as the danger of the unknown is a means by which the 'we' of the community is established, enforced and legitimated.

4 Home and away

Narratives of migration and estrangement

I strolled around in the Invalides for quite some time after my father's departure. There was always something comforting, familiar about airports and air terminals. They give me a sense of purpose and security. I was there with a definite destination – usually home, somewhere. In London, I came 'home' at the end of the day. During the holidays, I came 'home' to Paris and family. And once every two years, we went 'home' to India on 'Home leave'. India was 'real' home, and yet, paradoxically, it was the one place we didn't have a home of our own any more. We always stayed as guests. Of course we'd had a home once, but, when India was divided, it was all lost – the house, the city, everything. I couldn't remember anything.

(Dhingra 1994: 99)

What does it mean to be at home? How does it affect home and being-at-home when one leaves home? In Dhingra's story, the familiar place, the place that is comfortable and comforting, is the inbetween space, the interval, of the airport. Such a space is comforting, not because one has arrived, but because one has the security of a destination, a destination which quite literally becomes the some-where of home. Home is here, not a particular place that one simply inhabits, but more than one place: there are too many homes to allow place to secure the roots or routes of one's destination. It is not simply that the subject does not belong anywhere. The journey between homes provides the subject with the contours of a space of belonging, but a space that expresses the very logic of an interval, the passing through of the subject between apparently fixed moments of departure and arrival.

It is the 'real' Home, the space from which one imagines oneself to have originated, and in which one projects the self as both homely and original, that is the most unfamiliar: it is here that one is a guest, relying on the hospitality of others. It is this home which, in the end, becomes Home through the very *failure* of memory: '*I couldn't remember anything*'. The very failure of individual memory is compensated for by collective memory, and the writing of the history of a nation, in which the subject can allow herself to fit in, by being assigned a place in a forgotten past: '*Of course we'd had a*

home once, but, when India was divided, it was all lost – the house, the city, everything'. In the discussion of what 'was all lost' the subject moves from an 'I' to a 'we': when the subject returns to the real Home, the 'we' becomes writeable as a story of a shared past that is already lost. Through the very loss of a past (the sharing of the loss, rather than the past as sharing), the 'we' comes to be written as Home. It is the act of forgetting that allows the subject to identify with a history, to find out, to discover, what one has already lost: what is already lost is the fantastic 'we' of a nation, city and house.

The narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves through the carving out of inhabitable space, and hence no place that memory can allow the past to reach the present (in which the 'I' could declare itself as having come home). The movement between homes allows Home to become a fetish, to be separated from the particular worldly space of living *here*, through the possibility of some memories and the impossibility of others. In such a narrative journey, then, the space that is most like home, which is most comfortable and familiar, is not the space of inhabitation – I am here – but the very space in which one is almost, but not quite, at home. In such a space, the subject has a destination, an itinerary, indeed a future, but in having such a destination, has not yet arrived: *'There was always something comforting, familiar about airports and air terminals. They give me a sense of purpose and security. I was there with a definite destination – usually home, somewhere.'* Home is some-where; it is indeed else-where, but it is also where the subject is going. Home becomes the impossibility and necessity of the subject's future (one never gets there, but is always getting there), rather than the past that binds the subject to a given place.

Such transnational journeys of subjects and others invite us to consider what it means to be at home, to inhabit a particular place, and might call us to question the relationship between identity, belonging and home. You might think from such a narrative of homely subjects who have forgotten 'the Home', who are temporary guests in their place of origin, that this chapter takes the perspective of 'the stranger', that it examines 'home' from the point of view of those who, in leaving home, have become the strangers. Indeed, migrants are often constructed as strangers (Diken 1998: 123). In such a construction, the strangers are the ones who, in leaving the home of their nation, are the bodies out of place in the everyday world they inhabit, and in the communities in which they come to live. The editors of *Travellers' Tales* discuss how 'the migrant, journeying from "there" to "here" becomes a stranger in a strange land' (Robertson *et al.* 1994: 3). Here, the condition of being a stranger is determined by the event of leaving home.

Iain Chambers considers the 'drama' of the stranger as being 'cut off from the homelands of tradition' and the stranger becomes 'an emblem' and a 'figure' that, 'draws our attention to the urgencies of our time: a presence that questions our present' (1994: 6). The stranger is presented as figurative,

as a presence in a contemporary landscape of dislocation and movement. It has been the argument of this book that to take the figure of the stranger as simply present is to overlook and forget the very relationships of social antagonism that produce the stranger as a figure in the first place. Such a fetishisation of the stranger, indeed, such an ontology of the stranger as given in and to the world, conceals how 'the stranger' comes into being through the marking out of inhabitable spaces, bodies and terrains of knowledge. To talk of the migrant as the stranger is not sufficient. It cannot deal with the complexities of the histories, not only of the displacement of peoples, but the demarcation of places and spaces of belonging (the dwellings which, in Chapter 1, I discussed in terms of neighbourhoods).

The problems of such a reduction of the stranger to a being (in which the figure is more than simply a figure of speech), are clear in the work of Madan Sarup when he suggests that, 'One may say the stranger is universal because of having no home' (1994: 102). According to Sarup, the stranger's lack of a home makes strangeness a universal condition, detached from the particularity of a given place. Quite clearly, assuming that one can inhabit the position of the stranger, by not inhabiting a given place (= being-at-home), creates a form of universality premised on the refusal of place itself, that is, the contingent and worldly relations that mark out habitable terrains. How can we read migrant narratives without taking for granted the stranger as a figure? Indeed, how else can we narrativise migrant subjectivities without reducing 'the stranger' to some-one that one can simply be, a being that is then premised on universality in the very loss of home?

In this chapter, I want to examine the affect of the transnational movement of peoples on the formation of identity without assuming an ontology of the stranger. While the argument will be developed through considering the perspective of the subject who has left home on the relationship between the subject and the place in which the subject inhabits, I will not assume that perspective *as* the stranger's perspective. Instead, the chapter will complicate our notion of what 'home' means, both for the narrative of 'being-at-home' and for the narrative of 'leaving home'. This chapter offers, not an ontology of the stranger, but a consideration of the historical determination of patterns of estrangement in which the living and yet mediated relation between being, home and world is partially reconfigured from the perspective of those who have left home. This reconfiguration does not take place through the heroic act of an individual (the stranger), but in the forming of communities that create multiple identifications through collective acts of remembering in the absence of a shared knowledge or a familiar terrain. The chapter will interweave a variety of different texts: short stories by Asian women in Britain, autobiographical reflection, theoretical constructions of migrancy, and literature from two very different nomadic or migrant communities, the Global Nomads International (GNI) and the Asian Women's Writing Collective.

Theorising migrancy

In order to interrogate the mediated and lived experiences of estrangement, their relationship to community formation, and the reconstruction of home, we need to challenge how migration and home have been theorised in the critical literature. This section will consider how migration is employed as a metaphor within contemporary critical theory for movement and dislocation, and the crossing of borders and boundaries. Such a generalisation of the meaning of migration allows it to be celebrated as a transgressive and liberating departure from living-as-usual in which identity (the subject as and at home) is rendered impossible. Certainly, in Iain Chambers's *Migrancy, Culture and Identity*, migration becomes a way of interrogating, not only the different social relations produced by the histories of the displacement of peoples, but the very nature of identity itself. Migration is one journey amongst a number of journeys that involve the crossing of borders: the migrant, *like* the exile and the nomad, crosses borders and breaks barriers of thought and experience (Chambers 1994: 2).

In Chambers's work, migration, exile and nomadism do not simply refer to the actual experience of being dislocated from home, but become ways of thinking *without* home: 'For the nomadic experience of language, wandering without a fixed home, dwelling at the crossroads of the world, bearing our sense of being and difference, is no longer the expression of a unique tradition or history, even if it pretends to carry a single name. Thought wanders. It migrates, requires translation' (1994: 4). Migration is generalised, such that it comes to represent the very nature of thinking itself, in which to think is to move, and to move away, from any fixed home or origin. While I will come back to how such a narrative itself constitutes home as a site or place of fixity in the next section, it is important to note here how migration becomes a mechanism for theorising how identity itself is predicated on movement or loss. What is at stake in such a narrative?

In the first instance, one can consider how different kinds of journeys become conflated through theorising identity as migrancy. The shift in Chambers's work between the figures of the migrant, the nomad and the exile serves to erase the real and substantive differences between the conditions in which particular movements across spatial borders take place. For example, what different effect does it have on identity when one is forced to move? Does one ever move freely? What movements are possible and, moreover, what movements are impossible? Who has a passport and can move *there*? Who does not have a passport, and yet moves? These provocative questions echo Avtar Brah's, when she asks: 'The question is not simply about who travels, but when, how, and under what circumstances?' (1996: 182).

However, what is problematic about Chambers's narrative is not simply that the differences between histories of movement are erased under the sign of migrancy, but also the slippage between literal migration and metaphoric migration. Literal migration suggests the physical movement of bodies

within and across spaces. Indeed, there is no clear and obvious referent here: to talk about migration literally is to open oneself to the complex and contingent histories of the movements of people across borders. However, Chambers's narrative refuses to take migration literally. Instead, migration becomes a metaphor for the very process of dislocation. Migration becomes an impossible metaphor that no longer refers to the dislocation from place, but dislocation as such (thought already dislocates). The migrant becomes a figure: this act of granting the migrant the status as a figure (of speech) erases and conceals the historical determination of experiences of migration, even though those experiences cannot be reduced to a referent.¹ As Uma Narayan puts it, 'Postcolonial global reality is a history of multiple migrations, rooted in a number of different historical processes' (1997: 187). To talk literally about such migrations is to complicate rather than reduce the meaning of migration: it is to introduce questions of context (post-coloniality/globality), historicity, temporality and space.

In her discussion of the literature on exile, Anita Haya Goldman analyses the problems implicit in the metaphoric treatment of the term exile: 'there has been a rather misleading tendency to use the term metaphorically, so that the experience of exile has come to mean, more broadly, the experience of difference and estrangement in society, and most broadly, an aspect of what is human in all of us' (1995: 108). Goldman demonstrates how the gesture of taking exile as a metaphor works to generalise the meaning of exile, such that it becomes an element in the very staging of 'the human'. Indeed, such metaphoric readings of exile imply that what 'we' have in common is precisely the lack of being implicated in exile. In a similar way, the use of migrancy as a metaphor for the impossibility of the human – what we have in common is the absence of being or the absence of a home – ironically confirms the violence of humanism. It substantiates a 'we' based on what is common, even if what we have in common is the lack of being.

The metaphoric treatment of migrancy and exile is also clear in the introduction to *Travellers' Tales*, where the authors state that, 'Life is a journey, even for the stay-at-homes, and we are all exiles whose return is always deferred' (Robertson *et al.* 1994: 6). The creation of the 'we are all' demonstrates how the generalisation of the meaning of exile and migration can found a new form of humanism: what we share as 'humans' is the deferral of home. The humanistic 'we' in this migrant ontology is defined in terms of a particular set of experiences of what it means to depart from a given place. To say, 'we are all exiles', is to conceal the substantive difference it makes when one is forced to cross borders, or when one cannot return home.

In such metaphoric treatments of migration, migration is equated with a movement that already destabilises and transgresses forms of boundary making: 'Migrancy ... involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to

mutation. Always in transit, the process of home-coming – completing the story, domesticating the detour – becomes an impossibility' (Carter, cited in Chambers 1994: 5). Migration is defined against identity; it is that which already threatens the closures of identity thinking. However, the conflation of migration with the transgression of boundaries in the impossibility of arriving at an identity is problematic. It assumes that migration has an inherent meaning: it constructs an essence of migration in order to theorise that migration as a refusal of essence.

The implications of this gesture of essentialising migrancy as beyond essence are clear in a later passage. Chambers discusses how an '*authentically migrant perspective*' would be based on, 'an intuition that the opposition between here and there is itself a cultural construction, a consequence of thinking in terms of fixed entities and defining them oppositionally' (1994: 42). Such an assumption of an authentic migrant perspective immediately constructs an inauthentic migrant: the inauthentic migrant would be the one who believes in fixed entities and who refuses to transgress. The production of authentic and inauthentic migrant perspectives clearly relies on assumptions about what migration already is, as well as what it *should be*. Such an evaluative narrative, which creates a hierarchy of perspectives on migrancy assumes, not only that migrancy can be detached from the social relations in which it is lived, but also that there are better and worse ways of 'being a migrant'. The violence of this gesture is clear: the experiences of migration, which can involve trauma and violence, become exoticised and idealised as the basis of an ethics of transgression, an ethics which assumes that it is possible to be liberated from identity as such, at the same time as it 'belongs' to an authentically migrant subject.

The designation of an authentically migrant perspective also involves the privileging of a certain kind of theoretical work: Chambers's work, which at one level is on 'migrancy' (as its object of study), comes to name itself as an example of authentically migrant theorising, a theorising that refuses to think in terms of fixed entities. The claim to a migrant theory, or a theory which is multiple and transgressive given its dislocation from any secure origin or place, is also evident in Rosi Braidotti's work, although here the privileged figure is 'the nomad'.² Braidotti considers that, 'though the image of "nomadic subjects" is *inspired by* the experience of peoples or cultures that are literally nomadic, the nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour. ... It is the subversion of conventions that define the nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling' (1994: 5; emphasis added). Again, the relation between the literal and metaphoric is important. By separating her understanding of nomadism from those that are literally nomadic, Braidotti translates the literal into the metaphoric, such that the nomads come to represent something other than themselves. The specificity and difference of particular nomadic peoples is alluded to (as an inspiration), and then erased (such that it is 'not the literal act of travelling'). The erasure

of cultural difference through the figuring of the nomad as a general way of thinking, turns into a kind of *critical self-consciousness*: in the end, what the nomad comes to figure is the kind of subversion of conventions that the book constructs itself as doing.

The naming of theory as nomadic can be understood in terms of the violence of translation, a form of translation that allows the theory to name itself as a subversion of conventions – the erasure of others allows 'the self' as 'critical consciousness' to appropriate all that is threatening under the sign of the nomadic. Indeed, what is at stake here is a certain kind of Western subject, the subject of and in theory, as a subject who is free to move (see Ahmad 1992: 86). Braidotti later states that critical nomadism is about choice: 'Homelessness as a chosen condition, also expresses the *choice* of a situated form of heterogeneity' (1994: 17; emphasis mine). What is offered here is a liberal narrative of a subject who has autonomy and is free to choose, even if what is chosen is a refusal of the kind of subjectivity we might recognise as classically liberal. The subject who has chosen to be homeless, rather than is homeless due to the contingency of 'external' circumstances, is certainly a subject who is privileged, and for whom having or not having a home does not affect its ability to occupy a given space. Is the subject who chooses homelessness and a nomadic lifestyle, or a nomadic way of thinking, one that can do so, *because the world is already constituted as its home*? Is this an example of movement being a form of privilege rather than transgression, a movement that is itself predicated on the translation of the collective and forced movements of others into an act of individual and free choice?³ We need to complicate the narrative whereby movement is read as necessarily transgressive, and examine the different kinds of movement available to subjects that are *already differentiated*.

We can offer a very cautious reading of Braidotti's later return to the 'real nomads'. She suggests that, 'just like real nomads – who are endangered species today, threatened with extinction – nomadic thinking is a minority position' (Braidotti 1994: 29). First, we might note the use of analogy: the narrative claims the real nomads and nomadic thought are *like* each other. They are presented as alike because both are on the margins, and by implication, both are endangered. What is at issue here is not only the loose nature of analogies that serve to flatten out real and substantive forms of difference into a form of indifference (we are alike), but also how those analogies serve to construct what is nomadic thinking. It is the abstraction of thinking that we need to problematise: the representation of nomadism in terms of thought, implies that it can be separated from the material social relations in which 'thought' itself is idealised as the rational capacity of well-educated subjects (see Pels 1999: 64). To make an analogy between nomadic peoples and nomadic thought hence does not simply flatten out differences, but serves to elevate such thought to the level of being (by thinking as nomad, I am endangered like the nomad). It is the privilege of some beings

over others (in the very detachment of thought from being) that is concealed in the analogy.

For Braidotti, the nomad is 'a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity', and a nomadic consciousness is 'an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries' and 'the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing' (1994: 36). We might consider how the very theoretical approach which privileges 'transgression' and 'subversion' and a lack of fixity, does not necessarily define itself simply against the law, convention and boundaries, but may actually serve to reconstitute the law, conventions, and boundaries: we can ask, how does the desire to go beyond fixity serve to fix? How does the law require transgression in order to exist? How can migratory subjects (the subjects written by such theories of migrancy) reclaim space and identity in their refusal to inhabit a particular space, in their very transgression of the law of home? My own consideration of how migrant ontology works as a form of humanism – we are all migrants – might suggest a way in which migratory subjects can claim space in their refusal to inhabit it.

In order to consider how movements of migratory subjects can involve a form of privilege, and can allow the creation of new forms of identity thinking, rather than their necessary transgression, we can consider the narratives offered by Global Nomads International (GNI). This is a volunteer organisation that promotes the welfare of current and former 'internationally mobile' families and individuals through literature, conferences and education. Internationally mobile families is a term that refers largely to families who have spent significant time overseas as members of the diplomatic corps, the missionary movement, or the military. In order to examine GNI, I will discuss two contributions to the book, *Strangers at Home*, written by past presidents of the organisation.

Paul Asbury Seaman's contribution, 'Rediscovery of a Sense of Place', begins with the grief of feeling 'like a refugee in my own country' (1996: 37), of not being-at-home in one's home. The feeling of displacement becomes a question of memory: 'Instinctively, I understood that to connect more fully in the present – to *feel* at home – I had to reconnect with my past' (Seaman 1996: 38). The desire to make connections given the sense of alienation from home – or the 'feeling of being at home in several countries or cultures but not completely at home in any of them' (Seaman 1996: 53) – leads to the discovery of a new community: 'The community of strangers – our experience of family with other global nomads – is one of the large and often unrecognised paradoxes of this heritage' (Seaman 1996: 53). The sense of not being fully at home in a given place does not lead to a refusal of the very desire for home, and for a community and common heritage. The very experience of leaving home and 'becoming a stranger' involves the creation of a new 'community of strangers', a common bond with those others who have 'shared' the experience of living overseas. It is the constitutive link between the suspension of a sense of having a home to the formation of new

communities that we need to recognise. The forming of a new community provides a sense of fixity through the language of heritage – a sense of inheriting a collective past *by sharing the lack of a home rather than sharing a home*. The movement of global nomads hence allows the fixing rather than unfixing of the boundaries implicated in community and identity formation. As Norma McCaig, the founding member of GNI argues, 'That global nomads share a common heritage is clear when they meet ... there is a sudden recognition of kinship' (1996: 115).

In McCaig's contribution, 'Understanding Global Nomads', she discusses the benefits of a global nomad upbringing: 'In an era when global vision is an imperative, when skills in intercultural communication, linguistic ability, mediation, diplomacy, and the management of diversity are critical, global nomads are better equipped' (1996: 100). McCaig discusses global nomads as a highly skilled workforce whose ability to move across places, and between languages and culture, makes them better equipped and hence more useful to a globalised economy of difference. The ability to travel clearly gives global nomads access to a set of privileges, a set of equipment, which makes them highly commodifiable as skilled workers on a global landscape of difference and cultural exchange.

The skills of the global nomads are also associated with their ability to move beyond the boundaries of a given culture, to question those boundaries, and perhaps even to recognise their cultural constructedness (to allude here to Chamber's notion of an authentically migrant perspective). McCaig suggests that, 'The ease with which global nomads cruise global corridors often gives rise to an expanded world view, the capacity to extend their vision beyond national boundaries' (1996: 101). The questioning of boundaries, and the movement across borders, leads to an expansion of vision, *an ability to see more*. The transgression of the border provides the subject who knows and can see with an *ease* of movement. Such a narrative clearly demonstrates how some movements across spaces become a mechanism for the reproduction of social privilege, the granting of particular subjects with the ability to see and to move beyond the confined spaces of a given locality.

McCaig quotes Margaret Push, who talks of the global nomad's ability, 'to view the world'. The expansion of the meaning of 'home' is clearly evident: by refusing to belong to a particular place, the world becomes the global nomad's home, giving this nomadic subject the ability to inhabit the world as a familiar and knowable terrain. The claiming of ownership of global space through the refusal to identify with a local space of inhabitation suggests that the GNI involves a new form of citizenship, which I would call *global-nomadic citizenship*. Here, citizenship is not predicated on the rights and duties of a subject who dwells within a nation-state, but is produced by a subject who *moves through space and across national borders* (see also Chapter 8).

We can consider how the expansion of the meaning of home involves the creation of a new imagined home and community, that of the globe itself. Globality becomes a fantastic space: for example, the notion of 'global corridors' imagines a space in which globalisation literally can take its shape, and through which global nomads can move. McCaig ends her article by quoting Lev, 'It's as if we [global nomads] have replaced the physical "home" [of] non-nomads ... with an internal home' (McCaig 1996: 120). The challenge to the very physical confinement of home leads to a home that travels with the subject that travels: a home that, in some sense, is internalised as part of the nomadic consciousness. As John Durham Peters puts it, 'For nomads, home is always mobile. Hence there is a subtle doubleness here: being-at-home everywhere, but lacking any fixed ground' (1999: 17). The internal home that moves with the subject who moves allows the world to become home. McCaig goes on to suggest that, 'I prefer to think of us looking out at the new world from a place inside ourselves that we share with other nomads' (McCaig 1996: 120). Not only does the 'home' become internalised as the world the nomad can take on the journey, but it is this interior space which is detached or unattached to place, that allows for the new identity and community of nomadism itself. The very detachment from a particular home grants the nomadic subject the ability to see the world, an ability that becomes the basis for a new global identity and community. In such a narrative, identity becomes fetishised: it becomes detached from the particularity of places which allow for its formation as such.

I am arguing, not that all nomadic subjects are implicated in such relations of privilege, and in the creation of a new globalised identity in which the world becomes home, but that there is no necessarily link between forms of travel, migration and movement and the transgression and destabilisation of identity. An investigation of migrant journeys has to examine, not only how migration challenges identity, but how migration can allow identity to become a fetish under the sign of globality. The assumption that to leave home, to migrate or to travel, is to suspend the boundaries in which identity comes to be liveable, conceals the complex and contingent social relationships of antagonism which grant some subjects the ability to move freely at the expense of others. As I argue in the next section, problematising such a narrative that equates migration with the transgression of identity thinking requires that we begin to ask the question of what it means to be at home in the first place.

Home

What does it mean to be-at-home? Certainly, definitions of home shift across a number of registers: home can mean where one usually lives, or it can mean where one's family lives, or it can mean one's native country. You might say I have multiple homes, each one a different kind of home: home is

England, where I was born and now live, home is Australia, where I grew up, and home is Pakistan, where the rest of my family lives. The different possibilities of 'home' are not necessarily either/or: where one usually lives can be where one's family lives, and this can be 'one's native country'. Does being-at-home involve the co-existence of these three registers? Can we understand 'leaving home' as the breaking apart of this co-existence, such that where one usually lives is no longer where one's family lives, or in one's native country? This rather obvious approach begs more questions than it can answer.

In the first instance, we can return to the narratives of migrancy examined in the previous section. To some extent, Chambers's and Braidotti's visions of migrancy and nomadism seem self-contradictory. On the one hand, migration and nomadism become *symptomatic* of what it means 'to be' in the world: migration and nomadism make clear that being cannot be secured by any fixed notion of home or origin. On the other hand, migration and nomadism are inscribed as *exceptional* and *extraordinary* in the very event of being defined against home: that is, an implicit opposition is set up between those who are authentically migrant (Chambers) or those who have a nomadic consciousness (Braidotti), and those who simply stay put. Both narratives, which seem in contradiction – migration as symptom and migration as exception – share a common foundation: they rely on the designation of home as that which must be overcome, either by recognising that being as such is not homely (migration as symptom) or by refusing to stay at home (migration as exception).

What is at stake in such a narrative of 'the home' as that which must be overcome? In both Chambers's and Braidotti's work, home is not given any positive definition: it is constructed only through reference to what it is not, that is, through reference to the homelessness of migration and exile. By being defined negatively in this way, home becomes associated with stasis, boundaries, identity and fixity. Home is implicitly constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experience, indeed, where the subject is so at ease that she or he does not think. Such a construction of home as too familiar, safe and comfortable to allow for critical thought has clear resonance in some post-colonial literature. Nalina Persram, for example, defines 'home' as rest and respite, where there is 'being but no longing' (1996: 213). Home is associated with a being that rests, that is full and present to itself, and that does not over-reach itself through the desire for something other. To be at home is the absence of desire, and the absence of an engagement with others through which desire engenders movement across boundaries.

In such a narrative, home and away are divided, not only as different spaces, but as different ways of being in the world. Home is constructed as a way of being by the very reduction of home to being, as if being could be without desire for something other. Such a narrative of home assumes the

possibility of a space that is pure, which is uncontaminated by movement, desire or difference, in order to call for a politics in which movement is *always and already a movement away from home as such*. I want to suggest that this narrative requires a definition of home that is itself impossible: it stabilises the home as a place with boundaries that are fixed, such that the home becomes pure, safe and comfortable. However, encounters with otherness which, in Persram's terms, would engender desire, cannot be designated in terms of the space beyond home: it is the very opposition between 'home' and 'away' that we must question.⁴

According to the model which assumes that the opposition between home and away is fully secure, home would be the familiar space, while 'away' would be 'a strange land' (Chambers 1994: 18). When one is at home, one would be a member of the family, a neighbour, a friend, and when one leaves home one would become the stranger. The problem with such a model of home as familiarity is that it projects strangeness beyond the walls of the home. Instead, we can ask: *how does being-at-home already encounter strangeness? How does being-at-home already engender desire?* For example, if we were to expand our definition of home to think of the nation as a home, then we could recognise that there are always encounters with others already recognised as strangers within, rather than just between, nations. To argue otherwise, would be to imagine the nation as a purified space, and to deny the differences within that space: it would be to assume that you only encounter strangers at the border (see Chapter 5). Within any home, it is not only the border line that brings our attention to the strangers that seem out of place. To return to an earlier argument, the stranger only comes to be recognised as such by coming too close to home (see Chapter 1).

Given this, there is always an encounter with strangeness at stake, even within the home: the home does not secure identity by expelling strangers, but requires those strangers to establish relations of proximity and distance within the home, and not just between home and away. The association of home with familiarity which allows *strangeness to be associated with migration* (that is, to be located as beyond the walls of the home) is problematic. There is already strangeness and movement within the home itself. It is not simply a question then of those who stay at home, and those who leave: *as if these two different trajectories simply lead people to different places*. Rather, 'homes' always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive, and those who leave. We can use Avtar Brah's notion of diasporic space here: there is an intimate encounter at stake between those who stay and those who leave, or between natives and strangers (1996: 181). Given the inevitability of such encounters, homes do not stay the same as the space which is simply the familiar. There is movement and dislocation within the very forming of homes as complex and contingent spaces of inhabitation.

However, to argue for the non-opposition between home and away is not to claim that it makes no difference if one leaves a place in which one has

felt at home (this would turn migration into a symptom: we have all left home, as you can never simply 'be' at home). We need to think about ways of understanding this difference without identifying home with the stasis of being. We can begin by returning to my earlier attempt to define home across three registers: home is where one usually lives, home is where one's family lives, or home is one's 'native country'. Already this seems vastly inadequate – for example, it is possible that one's native country might not be *felt* as a home. Indeed, for me, while I was born in England, it never really felt like a home: England was what I read about in school text books; it was where it snowed at Christmas; or it was where I got birthday cards from, and the occasional funny five pound notes. The lack of a sense of England being my home was precisely because of a failure to remember what it was like to inhabit the place (I tried to remember – I was 4 when we left for Australia – but could never get past the blue window frames). So, England didn't really feel like home, despite the astonishing ability of my mother to keep her accent. The issue is that home is not simply about fantasies of belonging (where do I originate from?) but that it is *sentimentalised* as a space of belonging ('home is where the heart is'). The question of home and being-at-home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being-at-home is a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*.

Avtar Brah rethinks the difference between home as where one lives and home as where one 'comes from' in terms of affect: 'Where is home?' On the one hand, *"home" is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination*. In this sense, *it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin"*. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells' (1996: 192). Home as 'where one usually lives' becomes theorised as *the lived experience of locality*. The immersion of a self in a locality is not simply about inhabiting an already constituted space (from which one could depart and remain the same). Rather, the locality intrudes into the senses: it defines what one smells, hears, touches, feels, remembers. The lived experience of being-at-home hence involves the enveloping of subjects in a space which is not simply outside them: being-at-home suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, *inhabit each other*. We can think of the lived experience of being-at-home in terms of inhabiting a second skin, a skin which does not simply contain the homely subject, but which allows the subject to be touched and touch the world that is neither simply in the home or away from the home. The home as skin suggests the boundary between self and home is permeable, but also that the boundary between home and away is permeable as well. Movement away is also movement within the constitution of home as such. Movement away is always affective: it affects how 'homely' one might feel and fail to feel.

Migration and estrangement

We can now reconsider what is at stake if one leaves a space in which one has already been enveloped, inhabited by (rather than a space which one simply inhabits). The journeys of migration involve a splitting of home as place of origin and home as the sensory world of everyday experience. What migration narratives involve, then, is spatial reconfiguration of an embodied self: a transformation in the very skin through which the body is embodied (see Chapter 2). The experience of moving to a new home is often felt through the surprise of different skin sensations. When we came to Australia, what I first remember (or at least what I remember remembering) is all the dust, and how it made me sneeze and my eyes itch. When I returned to England, I felt the cold pinching my skin. The intrusion of an unexpected space into the body suggests that the experience of a new home involves an expansion and contraction of the skin, a process which is uncomfortable and well described as the irritation of an itch. So while Parminder Bhachu's question about migration is, 'how is cultural baggage re-located?' (1996: 284), mine would be, 'how do bodies re-inhabit space?' and even, 'how do spaces re-inhabit bodies?'

Migration is not only felt at the level of lived embodiment. Migration is also a matter of generational acts of story-telling about prior histories of movement and dislocation. I remember being told about my family's migration to the newly created Pakistan in 1947. A long hard train journey. My father just a child. Then the arrival at the house in Modeltown, Lahore where I lived when I was a baby (my grandmother and aunt looked after me when my mother was ill in England, or so I am told). My father used to have some old volumes of Shakespeare. He'd found them in the new house in Lahore. I used to finger those books, little brown objects, rem(a)inders of a lost inhabited space, of a space I might have inhabited. Now, it seems fitting that this is what we have left from that old house, volumes of Shakespeare, reminders of the impossibility of us inhabiting Pakistan without the discomfort of an English heritage (a heritage that is lived out through and in the 'constitution' of bodies). And then there was the story of my father coming to England. This was a more comfortable journey. It was a journey that was as much about colonialism (the young upper-middle-class Pakistani man coming to do his postgraduate medical training back at the centre), as it was about class privilege and gender. And then, having met my mother, we migrated as a family to Australia: again a story about class privilege (he was to take up a consultant position), as it was about racism (he couldn't get a consultancy in England), as it was about heterosexuality and gender (my mother followed him).

So many stories, so many journeys: each one, fantastic in its particularity (how did it feel, what happened here and there?) and yet mediated and touched by broader relationships of social antagonism (the history of the British empire, class relations and the politics of sexuality and gender). Migrations involve complex and contradictory relationships to social

privilege and marginality (they are not necessarily about one or the other) and they involve complex acts of narration through which families imagine a mythic past. The telling of stories is bound up with – touched by – the forming of new communities. In this sense, memory can be understood as a collective act which produces its object (the 'we'), rather than reflects on it. As Keya Ganguly argues, 'The past requires a more marked salience with subjects for whom categories of the present have been made unusually unstable or unpredictable, as a consequence of the displacement enforced by post-colonial and migrant circumstances' (1992: 29–30). The stories of dislocation help to relocate: they give a shape, a contour, a skin to the past itself. The past becomes presentable through a history of lost homes (*unhousings*), as a history which hesitates between the particular and the general, and between the local and the transnational.

If we think of home as an outer skin, then we can also consider how migration involves, not only spatial dislocation, but also temporal dislocation: 'the past' becomes associated with a home that is impossible to inhabit, and be inhabited by, in the present. The question then of being-at-home or leaving home is always a question of memory, of the discontinuity between past and present: 'For an exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occurs against the memory of things in the other environment' (Said 1990: 366). Indeed, Poult suggests that the process of leaving home and coming home is *like* memory: 'it is the already lived that save the living. If the familiar places are sometimes able to come back to us, they are also able to come back to our notice, and to our great comfort to retake their original place. Thus one can see that places behave exactly like past memories, like memories. They go away, they return' (cited in Buijs 1993: 3).

The analogy between places and memories is suggestive, though we may want to make the analogy on different grounds: it is the impossibility of return that binds place and memory together. That is, it is impossible to return to a place that was lived as home, precisely because the home is not exterior but interior to embodied subjects. The movements of subjects between places that come to be inhabited as home involve the discontinuities of personal biographies and wrinkles in the skin. The experience of leaving home in migration is hence always about the *failure of memory to make sense of the place one comes to inhabit*, a failure that is experienced in the discomfort of inhabiting a migrant body, a body that feels out of place. The process of returning home is likewise about the failures of memory, of not being inhabited in the same way by that which appears as familiar.

The temporal and spatial dislocation implicit in migrant stories are linked: the question of memory – and its failings – is bound up with the reinhabiting of bodily space. The reinhabiting of bodily space is explored in Ameena Meer's story about migration, 'Rain'. Here, the memories of another place are felt through and on the skin:

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Crossing the street on a steamy grey day in September, Zerina feels as if she's walked into a memory of last summer in Delhi, the last few days before the monsoon. When the air was thick and hot, tension building in the clouds and in her forehead, where the humidity made her sinuses swell and block, so that she could barely see a few feet ahead of her.

Still the grumbling clouds hold back, occasionally letting go a thunderclap or a flash of lightening like a stinging slap across someone's cheek, a sharp insult cuts through the skin. There is no release, just a regathering of explosive anger, like a mad woman screaming down a carpeted hallway.

The sweat gathers on the back of her neck, under her thick black hair, steaming her face, each wiry hair sticking to her fingers when she tries to brush it off.

(Meer 1994: 139)

The experiences of migration – of not being in a place one lived as home – are felt at the level of embodiment, the lived experience of inhabiting a particular space, a space that is neither within nor outside bodily space. Throughout the story, the trauma and pain of not being fully at home is narrated through skin sensations. The physical sense of moving through space is enough to trigger a memory of another place. Memory hence works through the swelling and sweating of the skin: the memory of another place which one lived as home involves the touching of the body, and the animating of the relation between the body and the space which it inhabits and is inhabited by. The story is one of suffocation, of smells and sounds that intrude into bodily space, of bodies 'overflowing', of bodies 'shuddering' and 'slipping'. As her skin becomes cut and sticky, the narrator remembers with and through her body. Migration stories are *skin memories*: memories of different sensations that are felt on the skin. Migrant bodies stretch and contract, as they move across the borders that mark out familiar and strange places.

Acts of remembering are felt by migrant bodies in the form of a discomfort, the failure to inhabit fully the present or present space. Migration can be understood as a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home. The word 'estrangement' has the same roots as the word 'strange'. And yet, it suggests something quite different. It indicates a process of transition, a movement from one register to another. To become estranged from each other, for example, is to move from being friends to strangers, from familiarity to strangeness. The term is suggestive precisely because it names the process of moving from one to the other, *rather than referring to different states of being*. The process of moving away or estrangement involves a reliving of the home itself: the process of moving is a movement in the very way in which the migrant subject inhabits the space of home.

In the work of Michael Dillon, 'estrangement' is what we have in common, rather than being that which divides us: 'the estrangement of human beings ... is integral to their condition of being here as the beings that they are' (1999: 136). In contrast, I would argue that we need to understand estrangement in a way which emphasises how the histories of movement of peoples across borders make a difference to the spatiality and temporality of estrangement. Estrangement is always an estrangement from a particular time and place. To universalise estrangement as that which brings us together is to conceal how estrangement marks out particular bodies and communities. Estrangement needs to be theorised as beyond that which we simply have in common.

For example, in Pnina Werbner's work on Asian migrants in Britain, she emphasises how migrants are strangers to each other, and how they make positive acts of identification in the very process of becoming friends: 'I start from the assumption of a void – from strangerhood, non-relationship. So when I find that these strangers ... create, generate, make multiple identifications with one another, then this is a process (not a pre-given static situation) which I find interesting' (1996: 69). Here, there is no shared terrain of knowledge which is presupposed by the gesture of identification. What is at stake is not, as in the case of the narratives of the global nomads, a 'sudden recognition of kinship' (McCaig 1996: 115), through which an automatic 'community of strangers' can be established (a common estrangement or commonality through estrangement). Rather, there is void or an absence: the other migrants are already known again as not known, they are already assigned a place as strangers before the identification can take place. In other words, it is through an *uncommon estrangement* that the possibility of such a migrant community comes to be lived. The gap between memory and place in the very dislocation of migration allows communities to be formed: that gap becomes reworked as a site of bodily transformation, the potential to remake one's relation to that which appears as unfamiliar, to reinhabit spaces and places. This reinhabiting of the migrant body is enabled through gestures of friendship with others who are already recognised as strangers. It is the role of community in the re-inhabiting of migrant bodies that is so important. The community comes to life through the collective act of remembering in the absence of a common terrain.

In order to examine the relationship between the reinhabiting of bodies community and estrangement in migration journeys and narratives we can consider the edited collection *Flaming Spirit*, which was produced by the Asian Women's Writing Collective in the United Kingdom in 1994. The book is itself a journey in migration: migration is not its object (not all the stories are *about* migration), but allows for the very gestures of identification through which the book becomes readable as a collection. The book is made possible through the forming of a migrant community of writers brought together under the problematic, if not impossible, signs of 'Asian', 'women' and 'writers'. Hence, the editors reflect on how the forming of the collective

did not pre-suppose a shared identity (either as Asian, women or writers), but made apparent that the criteria for who should belong to the community can always be contested.

The forming of a community through the shared experience of not being fully at home – of having inhabited another space – presupposes an absence of a shared terrain: the forming of communities makes apparent the lack of a common identity *that would allow its form to take one form*. But this lack becomes reinscribed as the pre-condition of an act of *making*: how can we make a space that is supportive? How can we become friends? How can we write (as) a collective? The editors reflect on the differences of class, sexuality and religion between the women in the collective, as they also reflect more profoundly on the politics of the category 'Asian' and the uncertainty about which women are to be included within the category (Ahmad and Gupta 1994: xii). The forming of this community of migrant women writers makes clear that there is always a boundary line to be drawn. This lack of clarity makes a definition and redefinition of the community possible; it allows the group to emerge in the need to 'redefine our identity as a group' (Ahmad and Gupta 1994: xii).

The process of estrangement is the condition for the emergence of a contested community, a community which 'makes a place' in the act of reaching out to the 'out-of-place-ness' of other migrant bodies. The work of such community formation is hence always 'outreach work' (Ahmad and Gupta 1994: xiii): in this case, it is about reaching out to different women who might share, not a common background, but the very desire to make a community, a community of Asian women who write. The community is reached through reaching across different spaces, towards other bodies, who can also be recognised – and hence fail to be recognised – as out of place, as uncomfortable, or not quite comfortable, in this place. Migrant bodies, selves and communities cannot be understood as simply on one side of identity or the other, or on one side of the community or the other: rather, it is the uncommon estrangement of migration itself that allows migrants to remake what it is *they might yet have in common*.

5 Multiculturalism and the proximity of strangers

Multiculturalism is much more than the provision of special services to minority ethnic groups. It is a way of looking at Australian society, and involves living together with an awareness of cultural diversity. We accept our difference and appreciate a variety of lifestyles rather than expect everyone to fit a standardised pattern. Most of all it requires that we each can be 'a real Australian', without necessarily being 'a typical Australian'.

(Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs 1982)

How does multiculturalism reinvent 'the nation' over the bodies of strangers? How does the act of 'welcoming the stranger' serve to constitute the nation? How is the 'we' of the nation affirmed through the difference of the 'stranger cultures', rather than against it?

In the above definition, the proximity of different ethnic groups becomes integral to the definition of the nation space. Multiculturalism is defined, not as providing services for 'specific ethnic groups', but as a way of imagining the nation itself, a way of 'living' in the nation, and a way of living *with* difference. Significantly, the role of difference in allowing or even establishing a national imaginary presupposes the proximity of those who are already recognisable as strangers as well as the permanence of their presence: living together is here simply a matter of being aware of cultural diversity. The strangers become incorporated into the 'we' of the nation, at the same time as that 'we' emerges as the one who has to live with it (cultural diversity) and by implication with 'them' (those 'specific ethnic groups'). By suggesting that multiculturalism is *not* about the provision of services to specific ethnic groups, and then defining multiculturalism in terms of cultural diversity, this statement powerfully evokes and then erases particular histories of racial differentiation: racial difference, already construed as ethnic difference, is redefined in terms of cultural diversity, that is, in terms that erase any distinctions between groups. The 'acceptance' of difference actually serves to conceal those differences which cannot be reduced to 'cultural diversity'. In such a story of 'multicultural Australia', the differences and antagonism between white settler groups, Asian immigrants and Indigenous peoples are hidden from sight.

local at the expense of the structural and general, leads to his own privileging of the structural and general at the expense of the local. His suggestion that 'globalized capitalism' is 'the totality within which local cultural encounters take place' (Dirlik 1997: 9) is in danger of reifying the forms of globality itself, and of making 'it' appear as if it comes from nowhere. I want to argue that the global is itself an effect of local encounters, as well as affecting those encounters. My concern with how the local and the global become mutually determined (and are hence not fully determined) is a direct critique of both localism and what we can call theoretical globalism.

1 Recognising strangers

- 1 To the extent that I am challenging the assumed opposition between strange and familiar (and also in Chapter 4, between home and away), I am following Freud, whose model of the uncanny emphasises how the strange leads back to the familiar. He also suggests that homely (*das Heimliche*) and unhomely (*das Unheimliche*) are intimately linked (Freud 1964: 225–226). However, Freud explains this intimacy of apparent opposites through a model of repression: 'this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through a process of repression' (1964: 241). In contrast, I am seeking to explain the familiarity of the stranger by considering the *production* rather than repression of that which is strange: the stranger is produced as an effect of recognition and as a category of knowledge (see Chapter 2), and is henceforth familiar in its very strangeness. When we look out 'for strangers' we already know what we are looking for.
- 2 In Chapter 2, I consider how the recognition of strangers involves an economy of touch, as well as a visual economy. We can also note here that recognition has become an important part of political struggle – marginalised groups struggle to be recognised, or *to be seen*, by mainstream politics, which is also a struggle against forms of misrecognition (Taylor 1994; Fraser 1997). A key debate has emerged within feminism on the limits of the politics of recognition (see also Brown 1995; Skeggs 1999). Although I can't enter these debates here, my analysis of how recognition operates as a visual economy in everyday life and social encounters between others might suggest some limits to a politics of recognition, although it might also suggest the difficulties of simply overcoming recognition. In Chapter 6, I complicate this model of recognition as 'seeing the difference' by considering the implications of the structural possibility that the difference might not be seeable as the subject may be passing as it 'passes through' the community.
- 3 For a discussion of the relationship between migration and strangers see Chapter 4. Here, I argue that migration does not allow us to relativise the condition of strangeness.
- 4 Alene Branton, secretary to the steering committee of the National Neighbourhood Watch Association in the UK, is reported to have said, 'We were set up to be the eyes and ears of the police. We never expected to be the feet as well' (Benetto 1995).
- 5 He contrasts the modern proximity of strangers with 'primitive cultures' where strangers are more at a distance.
- 6 I also consider the relationship between dwelling and movement in chapters 4 and 8 where I develop the notion of 'global nomadic citizenship'.
- 7 Importantly, stranger danger discourse attempts to define the stranger as anybody we don't know; it seeks to contest what I have called the recognisability of strangers, and the assumption that 'strangers' only look a certain way. As James

Brewer puts it, 'Who are the bad guys? How can you recognise them before its too late? ... What do the bad guys look like? They look like YOU' (1994: 15, 17). What this reveals, despite itself, is precisely the ways in which strangers are already recognised as looking unlike 'YOU': the discourse of stranger danger seeks to contest the very familiarity of strangers, but can only do so, by first confirming that familiarity, and the 'common-sense' assumption that danger is posed only by certain bodies, who are marked by their difference from the everyday of the neighbourhood.

2 Embodying strangers

- 1 Feminist critiques of Merleau-Ponty have drawn attention to how his approach to embodiment has been based around an elided masculinity (Irigaray 1993; Young 1990). What I want to suggest is that the failure to address (sexual) difference is structural to his model of inter-embodiment as a generalised 'sharing between bodies'. Difference is here not what is already marked on bodies (such as male or female bodies), but is what is constituted through the very forms of inter-embodiment, or bodily exchange, that Merleau-Ponty draws our attention to, in his powerful descriptions of his own bodily dwelling.
- 2 In Chapter 6, I further complicate this analysis by examining how bodies can take shape through the recognition of 'the strange' as assimilable. In the desire to assimilate that which has already been recognised as strange, there is also a desire to get closer to 'the stranger's body', or even to inhabit that body. I demonstrate that such a desire for proximity does not fully expand the contours of the *body-at-home* to incorporate the stranger's body: what is confirmed is precisely the difference between the one who is the stranger, who becomes reduced to the body, and the one who *temporarily* becomes or passes as the stranger, by moving through the body.
- 3 This idea of expanding and contracting skins is further developed in Chapter 4, where I consider how migration involves skin sensations and skin memories.

3 Knowing strangers

- 1 There is an intimate relationship assumed here between 'foe' and stranger. In Latin, the word for 'stranger' was the same as the word for 'enemy' (Walzer 1989: 32). This conflation of stranger and enemy survives powerfully in the stranger danger discourses discussed in the previous chapter. However, the broader argument of this book is that the identification of stranger as a friend still relies on the same discursive mechanisms (which I have theorised as 'stranger fetishism') as the identification of the stranger as an enemy. In this chapter, the stranger is known again precisely as the one who is different from 'us', yet also familiar in that difference. The accumulation of knowledge about strangers hence functions to establish an epistemic community.
- 2 See also Chapter 8 for a further exploration of these issues.
- 3 I have put 'co-author' in quotation marks because it is this description of Topsy Napurrula Nelson's contribution to the article that is precisely in dispute. Huggins *et al.* suggest that naming Nelson as co-author rather than chief informant involves an appropriation of her voice, while Bell argues that naming her as chief informant rather than co-author would involve a denial of her voice.
- 4 This letter was eventually published in 1991, with the following names: Jackie Huggins, Jo Willmot, Isabel Tarrago, Kathy Willetts, Liz Bond, Lillian Holt, Eleanor Bourke, Maryann Bin-Salik, Pat Fowell, Joann Schmider, Valerie Craige and Linda McBride-Levi. It was printed along with another response from Diane Bell (who always seems to be given the last word) and an editorial which

clearly 'sides' with Bell against the dissenting Indigenous women. As a reader, I found this editorial extremely dismissive in its refusal to even recognise the substance of Huggins *et al.*'s critique about race and/in feminism. The editorial simply implies that the Indigenous women are betraying feminism with the following statement: 'we find it deplorable that speaking out about rape still means paying a price – even in *feminist* circles' (Klein 1991: 505–506). See Aileen Moreton-Robinson (forthcoming) for a fuller account of what was and is at stake for Indigenous women who questioned Bell's authority to speak.

- 5 Hence it is not surprising that in Bell's more recent ethnography she links her work to the 'postmodern turn in anthropology', though she also describes postmodern work as 'jargon-ridden, elitist and morally vacuous' (1998: 30).
- 6 One of the problems of considering the debate in terms of 'who speaks' is that it allows others to trivialise the issue of representation. Take the dialogue between Larbalestier and Bell that took place in the *Anthropological Forum*. Larbalestier claims that the problem with the original article is not so much 'what is said', but the 'shaping of the speech' (1990: 146). Bell responds to this by reading 'the shaping of the speech' as simply a matter of form or aesthetics: 'Were I undertaking an analysis of say, an epic poem, I might find it helpful, but Napurrula and I were trying to tell you (the reader) that Aboriginal women and girls were being raped' (Bell 1990: 163). Of course, by paying attention to the shaping of the speech, Larbalestier is actually talking about the *institutional conditions* which make speech acts possible, and which affect the form that the speech acts take. My attempt to move the terrain from the question of 'who speaks' to 'who knows' – and from the question of otherness to strangeness – is an attempt to show that the issues involved in speech acts are not trivial, but substantive, and that they can involve issues of violence.
- 7 Joy Hendrey emphasises the problems and risks attached to the development of friendships within the field. The relationship, in her case, increased her knowledge at the expense of friendship (Hendrey 1992: 173). Alternatively, you could argue that the increase of knowledge takes place *through* her friendship (see also Hastrup 1995: 2–4).
- 8 For an exploration of the relationship between 'being strange' and 'becoming strange' in consumerism see Chapter 6.
- 9 As Annette Hamilton argues, the picture presented by Bell of the Indigenous women tends to locate them in the past, rather than 'as political actors in the contemporary scene' (1986: 14). This contributes to a representation of 'them' as 'being' rather than 'becoming', as having 'an' identity which can be known and interpreted through ethnographic translation. I consider Diane Bell's later ethnography, *Ngarrindjeri Wurrnuarrin*, quite different in this respect. Not only is there more attention to the partiality of her own perspective throughout the text (the I doesn't insert itself, only then to disappear), but you get a sense of the complexity of the relationship of the past and the present, as well as the impossibility of grasping the truth of the Ngarrindjeri women in the ethnographic document, given the ways in which their stories interweave. Of course, in this text, Bell is also responding to the Hindmarsh Island Royal Commission in 1995 and the failure of the Ngarrindjeri women's land claim in South Australia. Doesn't this remind us that ethnographic knowledges are necessary for social justice, that Indigenous peoples need anthropologists to help them to reclaim the land that has been stolen? In the opening prologue, Bell implies that better ethnography would have led to a just resolution in the Hindmarsh Island case (1998: 35). At times, she almost mourns the absence of anthropologists in past encounters between white peoples and Indigenous peoples (Bell 1998: 154). The implication of centring such a regretful narrative on the absence of anthropologists, is that anthropologists (at least good ones) would

have provided the necessary witnesses to establish the truth of Indigenous oral testimonies. While I can certainly recognise the good political sense of this argument, I would also point to the injustice that is already at stake in the very rule of law that requires that oral testimonies be translated into anthropological truths before they can be given a proper hearing. That is, the position of anthropologists as proper witnesses as well as translators (translating Indigenous knowledges into documents that are admissible to the Law) is linked to injustice rather than the realisation of social justice. This does not mean that anthropologists should stop representing Indigenous peoples in land claims. Of course, it does not – we have to work within the pragmatic constraints that are enforced by the common law, as it unfolds through its legal decisions and judgements. We have to fight for justice in particular cases, even if there is an injustice in the very way we have to fight for justice. As we work within these constraints, we need to think more critically about what would be the necessary conditions for an-other justice.

4 Home and away: narratives of migration and estrangement

- 1 As I argued in the introduction, stranger fetishism operates precisely as a fetishism of figures. The figure comes to have a 'life of its own' by being cut off from the histories of its determination which I have theorised in terms of strange encounters (suggesting that the history of its determination, also involves the failure of its determination).
- 2 Although I offer here a strong critique of Braidotti's use of 'the nomad' as a figure, I am otherwise very sympathetic to her theoretical and political commitment to explore the difficulties and contradictions of subjectivity and community.
- 3 To define free choice against force is certainly to beg a lot of important questions about the social conditions that make some movements possible and others impossible. On the one hand, you can consider the refugee as the one who is forced to move due to situations of extreme persecution. However, to conclude from this that migrants make free choices is to assume that force only operates in this way. The constraints to choice do not just impose on the body from the outside, but are constitutive of subjects in the first place. The whole notion of 'choosing' requires a more proper dismantling in its very presupposition of an autonomous subject who can be detached from the social relations in which it is embedded.
- 4 In a similar vein, we can contest the opposition between local and transnational (see Chapter 8). It is problematic to define the local in terms of fixity, and the transnational in terms of movement. As Lata Mani has argued, 'the local' is not a fixed point, but involves a temporality of struggle (1989: 5). Caren Kaplan also suggests that we should view the local in terms of movement and multiplicity rather than stasis and singularity (1998: 168). Likewise, I am suggesting that 'home' needs to be theorised in terms of movement as well as attachment. That is, we need to avoid 'locating' movement in what is 'away' from 'home'.

5 Multiculturalism and the proximity of strangers

- 1 This is the major category used to define ethnic difference. Clearly, this is quite important as it makes language the key register of difference. Given the role of the English language in disseminating national culture (one of the explicit 'limits of multiculturalism'), as well as the way in which such a definition