

Home



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"Home is the place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in. / I should have called it / Something you somehow haven't to deserve." ROBERT FROST'S WORDS tellingly illustrate the centrality of home to the human experience, as an unconditional haven that one simply has, without having to earn. Yet, we live at a time when the idea of home has become extremely problematic. Our homeless fill America's streets and shelters; the comfort of home is increasingly threatened by urban violence; and the world-wide plight of those exiled or fleeing from their homelands due to civil war, starvation, or political repression seems relentless. The idea of home, bound as it is in family and gender roles, has a deep resonance that is not fully captured by its use as a social and political slogan. What is its history and ideology? What has it meant and how has its meaning changed? Home moves us perhaps most powerfully as absence or negation. Homelessness and exile are among the worst of conditions, bringing with them alienation, estrangement and the feelings of greatest despair. This book, based on a multi-institutional collaboration between the New School for Social Research and five major New York City museums, and its resulting conference, convenes many of America's top scholarly minds to address historical and contemporary meanings of home. Among the issues specifically addressed are the artistic rendition of home in art and propaganda; literary meanings of home; exile through the ages; homelessness past; homelessness and Dickens; the homeless in New York City history; alienation and belonging; slavery and the female discovery of personal freedom; and the home and family in historical perspective. Contributing to the volume are Breyten Breytenbach, David Bromwich (Yale University), Sanford Budick (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Stanley Cavell (Harvard University), Mary Douglas, Tamara K. Hareven (University of Delaware), Eric Hobsbawm

(Cambridge University,

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