

Imagining Home

Migrants and the search
for a new belonging



Edited by

Diana Glenn, Eric Bouvet and Sonia Floriani



Wakefield Press

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*To our beloved children
Stephen, Sébastien and Selene*

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Migrants, home, belonging and self-identities

Diana Glenn, Sonia Floriani and Eric Bouvet

The peer-reviewed essays presented in this interdisciplinary volume explore the many facets of migration and the consequences of displacement on the biographies of those individuals who undertake the experience. As such, they provide an insight into the complexity of migration as an event and as an object of study. The core intent of the chapters is to analyse how migrants both experience and express the complex nature of migration, and how this biographical event of tremendous importance can affect and transform individual lives and community networks. The title of the volume – *Imagining Home. Migrants and the search for a new belonging* – is a synthesis of the key issue that is shared to varying degrees by all of the contributors in their analysis of the conflicting concepts of migration and home, and the many ways that the two notions can question and redefine each other. In other words, the assumption that the migrant's sense of disorientation about their home and their sense of belonging – which can be a consequence of the pluralisation of self-identities, languages, biographical plans and places that inevitably occurs in a migratory experience – turns out to be a more or less active search for a new home and a new sense of belonging.

As can be attested from the chapters of this volume, migration is above all experienced as a biographical 'trauma' through which migrants lose their sense of home and thus perceive themselves – metaphorically, at least – as homeless. The shift in the migrant's experience from *feeling at home* to *becoming homeless* lies at the core of most of the chapters. The authors assume that the migrant's homelessness is not a lasting condition as, even though all migrants sooner or later perceive

themselves as homeless, most of them try in various ways to discover and construct a new sense of home. This recast sense of home may be transient or definitive, while the new home may be either a metaphorical space, a narrative construction or a physical place. The search and the recreated sense of home can be either in continuity with the pre-migratory life-experience, or inspired by both the pre-migratory past and the post-migratory present and future. The resulting homes might be re-elaborated according to the following three types: the *diasporic home*, a projection of the migrant's wish to feel at home more in the pre-migratory context than in the post-migratory one, and therefore still affected by the diaspora the migrant experienced; the *transnational home*, located beyond the borders of both the homeland and the adopted new land; and the *cross-cultural home*, which emerges from the negotiation between the home that was a long time ago and the home that could have been.

The migrant's sense of home and their perception of homelessness are interrelated with feelings of loss and the reconstruction of personal or cultural identity, a sense of belonging, and biographic continuity. The way migrants try to face and overcome their condition of being homeless is inevitably correlated to the ways that they try to reshape identity, recompose biographical disruptions, and redefine their sense of belonging. To some extent, the migrant's reconstruction of the sense of home is intended as a metaphor for their reconstruction of a sense of self, biography and belonging.

In discussing the migratory experience, the authors explore historical and contemporary, overseas and transnational, 'forced' and 'voluntary' migrations. All these types of migratory experience are analysed by adopting diverse methods and research instruments – from archival research to ethnography, from life-stories and semi-structured interviews to biographical, conversation and discourse analysis. Indeed, both the authors and their subjects of research come from or are located in different parts of the world. Moreover, the volume offers an interdisciplinary analysis of migrants and migration. The authors belong to many disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, political science, literature, linguistics, cinema and media studies. Active engagement with the conceptual frameworks and methods of other disciplines can provide a more complete exploration and understanding of a rich phenomenon such as migration. The range of interdisciplinary

exchange is reflected in the volume's two-part division which deals firstly with the particular migration experiences of individuals and collectives, memory and self-identity, while in the second part the contributions offer a probing look at migration itself as a phenomenon explored in literature and the media.



In the opening chapter, Andreas Boldt analyses a particular migratory experience from a biographical-historical perspective. Clarissa Graves is a nineteenth-century Irish woman who moves from Dublin to Berlin as a consequence of her marriage in 1843 to the German historian, Leopold von Ranke. In managing her life experience as a transnational migrant, Clarissa never fully assimilates into the new city and the German culture, but tries to adjust herself to the new 'home' by creating a cosmopolitan 'world', in the form of a literary salon, that brings together a plurality of cultures, languages, intellectual activities and personalities. By spending her everyday life in a pluralised context, Clarissa avoids feeling like a stranger in her new country and continues to survey the world beyond the geographical borders of her new home. What is worthy of Boldt's analysis is his interpretation of this nineteenth-century migrant's 'solution' as a consequence of her biography. Although it was not common in her day, the young Clarissa was permitted by her parents to receive an education in several European countries. Thus, as a child, she lived in different places, spoke a variety of languages and grew accustomed to experiencing diverse cultures and life-styles. In a word, she became 'cosmopolitan' and chose to live her migration as a cosmopolitan experience. At the same time, she remained loyal to her first language, her home-country and her family who were still living in Ireland. As has been noted in the literature, migrants can easily lose themselves in a life experience that inevitably becomes pluralised. One common way of facing the problem is to try to recreate, in the new context, as many elements as possible of the pre-migratory life. As Boldt informs us through his meticulous study of archival sources, Clarissa always preferred to speak English while living in Berlin, and also chose to keep 'living' in Dublin through an almost daily correspondence with one of her brothers.

Migration is synonymous with exile in Wayde Brown's analysis

of two historical cases of exile which are representative of North American diaspora: the mid-eighteenth-century exile of *l'Acadie*, a francophone community, established in Nova Scotia at the beginning of the seventeenth century, whose deportation was ordered by the British colonial authorities; and the early nineteenth-century exile of the Cherokee, an indigenous community removed by the United States' federal government. Taking a historical perspective which is indebted to other disciplines – chiefly, to architecture and archaeology – the author does not intend to deal with the consequences of these dislocations in the lands of exile. Rather, the focus of his analysis is on the 'left-behind' places of memory in the homeland and on the role they play in the 'return' of later generations of the diaspora, and in reconciling with the injustice of the exile. For this purpose, Brown compares the two sites now associated with the historical events, namely Gran-Pré in Canada and New Echota in the United States. Following historians such as Nora, Bevan and Samuel, the main assumption of Brown's analysis is the existence of complex interrelations among geographic sites, collective memory, 'official history' and the construction of a contemporary sense of nation and national identity. On this theoretical basis, the author analyses and explains how the two sites of Gran-Pré and New Echota have been constructed and identified as places of memory by the descendants of the exiled communities and of the post-exile settlement groups, and by the descendants of those who were responsible for the exile events. Brown also elucidates the role played by a 'left-behind' place of memory in reconstructing a sense of nation where the nation was subject to diaspora. The twentieth-century formal recognition of these geographical sites as places of memory by the respective federal governments might be interpreted as a formal attempt to include the diaspora events in the national history, thereby compensating for the forced exile and reaffirming a sense of national unity. In order to better pursue such aims, the involvement of the descendants of the diasporic communities is crucial.

In her exploration of the concepts of 'home' and 'homelessness' as seen by Palestinian women living in Lebanon, Maria Holt draws on interviews of women carried out in Lebanese refugee camps. In her discussion she examines how her informants have attempted to recreate home when home no longer exists. In doing so, Holt gauges the impact that exposure to violence and trauma has had on the forma-

tion of the women's identities. She argues that, at least for Palestinian refugee women who have been forcefully displaced, home is rarely synonymous with the familiar and the comfortable place/space where they belong. Rather, home and exile are experienced by the women on several levels, which include living on the margins, in a homeless and sometimes hostile environment, but where home may be redefined by some, not just as a glorified place of longing, but as a place where, in the words of L. Hammond, 'community identity, and political and cultural membership intersect'. In fact, one informant aptly makes a difference between 'home', where the family is, and 'homeland', the place of belonging. These interconnected levels are essential to the identity formation of the Palestinian refugee women. Holt concludes by drawing attention to the lack of acknowledgement of the central role of Palestinian women living in Lebanon – in a context where men have taken charge of telling the Palestine story – in preserving their nation's memories and maintaining a livable environment in exile.

Sonia Floriani gives an in-depth analysis of the transnational migratory experience of Calabrians who moved to Canada in the 1950s and 1960s. Presenting a case study of Calabrian men, women and children who migrated, Floriani's chapter strongly conveys theoretical notions about homelessness and its thematisation in the context of modern-day plurality. For the author, the migratory event and the diverse ways in which the experience has been lived and re-elaborated by the project informants, including their entrepreneurial activity, constitute the central core for examining the effect of the migration event on the shaping of individual biographies. Employing the Schutopian concept of 'here and now' in the interpretation of the oral narratives, Floriani decodes the biographical narratives of her Calabrian informants, interpreting the plurality and diversity of their self-identification in the time continuum by means of a micro-sociological perspective. Through a consideration of the spatial and temporal coordinates that of necessity are redefined by the dynamics of migration flows, Floriani delves into the strategies enacted by individuals whose oral narratives reveal the extent to which the calibration of their internal time continuum has been subjectively recast. Through the prism of the migratory experience, the informants' cultural dislocation has altered perceptions of space-time, such that dichotomies of here-elsewhere and then-now linear temporality present challenges, both real and meta-

physical, for the migrant seeking to reconstruct their identity in the new location and rediscover a sense of home that has been irrevocably altered. Floriani's analysis evidences how the subjective experience of migration leads to a process of redefinition in the migrant's own spatial and temporal horizons that continues throughout their life.

Migration through a linguistic prism is the subject of the chapter by Colette Mrowa-Hopkins and Eric Bouvet. By means of a discourse analysis approach, they investigate how a group of French-born residents of Adelaide, who migrated to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, have shaped their identity and sense of belonging in their country of adoption. Mrowa-Hopkins and Bouvet hypothesise that, at an individual level, the language used by migrants is likely to reveal the complexity of shifting identities, as well as a conflicting sense of socio-cultural belonging to a place that used to be 'foreign' to them. In order to elicit their data, the authors choose to focus on the analysis of pronouns and markers of modality (such as verbs of obligation, necessity and volition, for example) used by the informants. They argue that the choice of pronouns and modal expressions may indicate how the informants position themselves in relation to their home and adopted countries, thus revealing the extent to which the migrants are agents in constructing their identity. The study finds there is little evidence of a strong affiliation or disaffiliation to the French or Australian cultures among the French migrants interviewed. Furthermore, it suggests that the construction of identity is ambivalent and subject to tensions and shifts. While the reasons why the informants have adopted Adelaide as their 'home' remains unclear, the study shows the importance of discourse analysis as a tool for providing information as to how people perceive themselves in relation to their environment since their discourse reveals the personal, collective and imaginative dimensions of identity and sense of belonging. The merit of Mrowa-Hopkins' and Bouvet's study is that it adopts a methodological approach that could be extended to other migrant groups.

Michelle Barrett deals with migration focusing on how migrants can manage and redefine self-identity in everyday life. The chapter is based on empirical research whose case-study consists of Eurasian people – i.e. people of mixed European and Asian heritage – who migrated from South and South-East Asia to Australia. Through the migratory movement, Eurasian identities, that were already 'mixed',

have inevitably increased in fluidity and ambiguity. The key hypothesis of this chapter is derived from the cultural geographer Divya Tolia-Kelly, who contends that in the migratory experience cultural artefacts, through the memory they are imbued with, are functional in (re)creating a sense of home and self-identity. More precisely, Barrett's intent is to explore the role played by the objects of home decoration chosen by Eurasian migrants in keeping memory alive, in (re)creating meaning and, thus, in (re)defining their sense of belonging and identity. As to the conceptions of Eurasian identity expressed by the objects of home decoration, which have emerged from the semi-structured interviews that the author held with these migrants in their houses, the chapter discusses three different approaches that have been adopted to anchor self-identity. More precisely, home decorations can represent either a Eurasian identity whose Asian component is felt to be more relevant, or a more situated Eurasian identity, or even a more hybrid Eurasian identity which also tries to come to terms with a new Australian identification. On the basis of this typology, it can be assumed that the correlation among the choice of home decorations, the memories and meanings they evoke and the post-migratory definition of ethnic identity are also affected by the migrant's pre-migratory biography. Among other conditions, the family background, the specific Eurasian ethnicity, the age of personal migration, the life-time mainly spent in Asia or also travelling in Europe resound through the varying openness, complexity and stability of the Eurasian identity in the Australian context of migration.

Diana Glenn explores connections between the metaphors of journeying found in a selection of celebrated classical literary texts and oral testimonies of the sea voyage undertaken by a group of first generation Campanians who migrated to Australia in the post-World War II period. By evoking the journeying typologies contained in works such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Comedy*, Glenn argues that the voyage undertaken by her informants some 50 to 60 years ago may remain the focal point of their migration experience; a moment often preserved almost intact in memory, which acts as a bridge between the familiar and the unknown, between pre- and post-migration. The sea voyage not only represents a special/physical relocation into an unfamiliar territory (horizontal voyage), but it also constitutes a redefinition of the self, a reconfiguration of identity, and,

as a result, a negotiation of one's sense of belonging (vertical voyage in a metaphysical sense). In her analysis of the informants' narratives, Glenn highlights the dramatic impact that the sea crossing had on the migrants, which, for them, resulted in a sense of liminality. She quotes vivid recollections of the discomforts of travelling in crowded conditions, of the abundance of food on the ship, of people's expectations about the land that would change their lives, of disappointments and even despair on arrival. She also gives particular attention to the role of women migrants post-voyage, suggesting that by relocating to a new country, female informants acquired a new status as they became the custodians of familial and communal traditions, as well as the catalyst for adaptation and change, gaining agency and thus assuring the successful integration of the next generation.

Keith Jacobs argues that a close reading of literary texts can provide a rich medium for examining the complex nature and transformative power of the migratory experience. His presentation of selected fictional narratives, drawn from the Australian migrant literary genre, includes works such as Mary Rose Liverani's *The Winter Sparrows*; the autobiographical recount by Paul Kraus, *A New Australia, A New Australian*; Chandani Lokuge's *If the Moon Smiled*; *Café Scheherazade* by Arnold Zable; *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* by Richard Flanagan; and Graham Kershaw's novel *The Home Crowd*. According to Jacobs, a more active engagement with literary sources, far from constituting an unreliable scholarly enterprise, affords invaluable opportunities for an enhanced understanding of the migration experience. In his discussion and overview of the conceptual frameworks connected to migrant literature and its critical interpretation, Jacobs demonstrates how the endless variety of narration, whether autobiographical or fictional, provides fertile ground for exploring a sense of identity and emotional sensibility in the face of cultural and physical dislocation. As such, the variety, subjectivity and unrevealed aspects of the migration experience are evoked in profound and unexpected ways. The creation of what Jacobs terms 'discursive space' helps to diversify cultural practice, thereby encouraging new forms of commitment by means of a literary genre that complements the empirical study of the migratory experience. Through the literary medium, the destabilisation of selfhood and the reformulation of cultural identity resonate with a different focus. As a result, the critical reading of literary texts

influences the reader's conceptualisation of how literature shapes our understanding of social phenomena and ways of being in the world.

Venus Tsang explores the transformative influence of storytelling and storytellers on identity formation and negotiation as evidenced in Maxine Hong Kingston's 1981 novel *The Woman Warrior*. Taking as its premise the concept of identity as a fluid and iterative process influenced by historical, cultural and individual viewpoints, Tsang's analysis of diverse storytelling modes highlights the interactive, multivalent nature of storytelling and postulates a four-fold typology of solicited, response, collaborative and performative storytelling. While the first of these conversational activities involves the creation of a narrative for a distinct purpose and with a particular audience in mind, the second is identified as a reaction to a story that has already been narrated. A dynamic approach characterises collaborative storytelling wherein two or more narrators contribute to the storytelling in spontaneous or deliberate ways and, lastly, the performative variety is the attempt by storytellers to engage their listeners in the narrative. In the exemplification of each type, the nature of the rapport and interactivity between storyteller and listener in the conversational mode is explored. Through a range of diverse characters whose stories are brought vividly to life, for example, Maxine, Brave Orchid, Moon Orchid, the no-name aunt, Fa Mu Lan and Ts'ai Yen, the author evokes ancestral patriarchal ideologies and strictures in order to demonstrate the exigencies of contemporary life in modern American society through the lens of Chinese migration and migrants to the United States. As they participate in the act of storytelling and the articulation of types, whether to achieve a specific goal or purpose, register a reaction, engage in the act of co-narration, or simply perform, the characters weave their tales and, in so doing, help the protagonist Maxine to realise and reaffirm her dual identity. Thus Tsang demonstrates how the act of storytelling fulfils a significant function in allowing the characters in *The Woman Warrior* to express and articulate their identity in a unique and multiform way.

Sukhmani Khorana discusses the cinematic traditions that have influenced the work of Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta, who is best known as the director of the elements film trilogy: 'Water', 'Earth' and 'Fire'. Since her first foray into feature film-making in the early 1990s, Mehta's work in cinema has attracted both praise and controversy, due to its reception by numbers of critics as a socio-

political critique of her home country, India. Khorana maintains that by locating her screen output beyond the borders of both homeland and adopted home, Mehta is able to hone her diasporic practice. The resultant hybridity opens the door to greater artistic expression and allows access to a community of fellow practitioners whose creative output locates them within a wider and more fluid diasporic space. It is Khorana's contention that Mehta's bold crossover tropes produce work that traverses borders, culturally, politically and intellectually. In this respect, Mehta's diasporic and exilic films must be viewed in their situated contexts, whether that be transnational commercial cinemas such as B/Hollywood, the national cinema of the Canadian host society, South Asian diasporic cinema or transnational world cinema. Importantly, Khorana traces how Mehta has been influenced by filmmakers of the calibre of Yasujiro Ozu, Ingmar Bergman and Satyajit Ray. An identifiable thread from this precursor influence is Mehta's use of local storytelling to explore cross-cultural themes. However, the author concludes that Mehta creates her own 'crossover cinema', as Khorana terms it; a description that encompasses the broad cultural reach of the director's personal and political deliberations on issues of identity and home.

The last chapter by Bruna Emanuela Manai and Franco Manai examines *Die Sprachen Moabits*, a radio feature, broadcast on Berlin's Offener Kanal in July 2007, as an acoustic representation not only of the linguistic and cultural situation of the neighbourhood of Moabit, but also in terms of its aesthetic and cognitive value. The authors retrace the history of Moabit, a neighbourhood situated in the heart of Berlin, from a marginal zone populated by French Huguenots, in the eighteenth century, to a place of settlement of a wide variety of ethnic populations in recent years. Because of its transient history, the authors qualify Moabit as a 'no-place', a place akin to a railway station, where individuals, groups, cultures and languages are in constant transit. Interestingly, they argue that, despite this lack of homogeneity, cultures are able to co-exist without being recast into a melting pot. Rather, they form a conglomerate of polymorphic nature, in the image of the 50 languages of Moabit collected for the radio program, described by the authors 'as intertwined, superimposed and entangled'. According to the authors, 'no-places' like Moabit may incarnate a new *aesthetic dimension* of living, where there is no common material or spiritual

property to administer. What there is, however, is a restructuring of being-together within the rich and complex fabric of diversity and marginality.

PART 1

Migrants, memory and self-identity



Migration due to marriage: Clarissa von Ranke and the cosmopolitan cultural atmosphere of the new ‘home’

Andreas Boldt

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Introduction

This chapter will examine Clarissa Helena Graves (1808–1871), who in 1843 married the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), and her life spent away from her homeland, Ireland, in Berlin, Germany, where she lived from 1843 until her death. During this time Clarissa von Ranke built up a kind of socialising circle, known as ‘Salon Ranke’, where people of all professions and nationalities met to exchange their ideas and knowledge. Eminent people like the brothers Grimm and the scholar of philosophy Schelling, the Shakespearean translator Wilhelm von Schlegel, and English diplomats like Sir Andrew Buchanan and Lord Francis Napier met at Luisenstraße in Berlin, the home of the Rankes. In Clarissa’s salon, Enlightenment thought and Romanticism were discussed, while the ideology of revolutionary movements was rejected. Even if the salon was dominated by conservative thought, several opinions that were ‘revolutionary’ at that time were discussed there: the position of women, cultural exchange and the nation-building of different states, like Ireland, Germany, Italy and America, and the role of religion in a changing society. With her poetry and traditions, Clarissa was a type of ambassador for her Anglo-Irish roots and British culture.

Family background

Mass migrations occurring in the last 200 years have seen people leave their homelands for a wide variety of reasons, whether forced or voluntary. Even today, thousands of people leave their homeland due to

marriage – an often-neglected aspect when discussing migrations. Such a form of migration existed during the Middle Ages, mainly within royal families, and it has become gradually more common over the last 300 years within all classes of society. Clarissa Helena Graves is one example of such migration from the nineteenth century. While moving to her new home, she brought much of her cultural heritage with her, thus creating an international cultural atmosphere. Even if, over time, Clarissa felt increasingly like a Prussian woman, nevertheless she never forgot her home in Ireland.

Clarissa Helena Graves, born in Dublin in 1808, came from the well-known Graves family. The family was highly educated and was, in effect, an intellectual dynasty. The roots of the Graves family go back to 1647, when Colonel Graves of Mickleton in Gloucestershire, England, commanded a regiment of horses in the army of the Parliament,¹ volunteering for service in Ireland the same year. As a result of the Cromwellian Land Settlement, the Graves family acquired lands and later public office in Limerick. Clarissa's father, John Crosbie Graves, was Chief Police Magistrate in Dublin. In 1806, he married Helena Perceval from the equally long-established Perceval family who had lived in Ireland for centuries. From 1814 John Crosbie Graves lived at 12 FitzWilliam Square, Dublin. Helena Perceval supported her husband in his career and shortly after their marriage, Lord Redesdale, who was a patron of Helena Perceval, appointed John Crosbie Graves a Commissioner of Bankruptcy. Because of Helena's reputed 'royal descent' from several medieval kings of England, Ireland and France, the Perceval name was widely adopted by the children.²

Leopold Ranke and Clarissa Graves first encountered each other in Paris around July/August 1843 and subsequently met several times. Leopold von Ranke (the *von* was added to his surname when he was ennobled in 1865) was one of the most influential historians of the nineteenth century. He made important contributions to the emergence of history as a modern discipline and has been called the father of 'scientific' history. Due to his efforts, methodical principles of archival research and source criticism became commonplace in academic institutions, and he is generally credited with the professionalisation of the historian's craft. In September 1843 Leopold went to London, followed by Clarissa and her mother. On 1 October they became engaged and on 26 October 1843 Clarissa's brother, Robert Perceval Graves,

officiated at the marriage in Bowness, Windermere, England.³ On the same day as their marriage, Ranke left England with his bride and returned to Berlin. The news of Ranke's marriage quickly spread throughout Berlin. Most people in Berlin, including the royal family, were surprised 'as every one had been convinced that he would live and die a Bachelor'.⁴ Clarissa was welcomed in the city, and it was easy for her to make her life in her new home.

The establishment of 'Salon Ranke' and Clarissa's activity

Notwithstanding their having several children during the early period of their marriage, the home of the Rankes became a preferred meeting place for several famous and educated personalities. The late 1840s marked the beginning of a cultural and intellectual meeting point that developed more and more into the famous 'Salon Ranke', which reached its full fruition after the revolutionary years of 1848/49, and continued, despite the worsening illness of Clarissa, to be an important salon for Berlin society during the 1850s and 1860s. The salon was famous for its musical parties, classes in poetry and literature (especially Shakespeare) and discussions of politics and history. Clarissa also gave classes in various languages including French, Italian and English. She fashioned this style of salon culture based on her experiences back in England and Ireland and adapted them to her new home in Berlin. Before the revolution of 1848, people of the calibre of the Court Preacher Strauss, the American Rev. John Lord, the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, the families of Schelling, Puchta, Bellson, Heman and Napier, the historian and politician Raumer, Prof. Richter, Minister Eichhorn, the brothers Grimm and the Crown Prince of Bavaria, later King Maximilian II of Bavaria, were regular guests.

As the years went on and the increasingly ill Clarissa became more confined to her home, many people came to visit her rather than her husband. From the late 1850s onwards, she was the head of the salon. The number of famous names diminished, yet the intellectual and spiritual life continued. Friends of this period were Hertha von Manteuffel, the wife of Leopold's close friend Marshall Edwin von Manteuffel, the Prussian Ambassador in London Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen and his family, the writer Elfriede von Mühlenfels, whose nickname was 'the Boat' because she promoted the construction of a Prussian fleet, the nature researcher Christian Gottfried Ehrenberg

and the Senior Court Preacher Wilhelm Hoffmann. British diplomats like Sir Andrew Buchanan and Lord Francis Napier were constant guests as well. Clarissa's closest friends were the writer Ida von Düringsfeld and the Prussian Prince Georg, general of cavalry, who was known as the Poet Prince, though he had little poetic success. Altogether the Ranke family was in contact with at least 400 people.⁵

The most important time when friends arrived in the salon of 'Madame Ranke' was the traditional English teatime in the early evening. It was possible to come along freely and without an invitation. In the morning young girls arrived and read letters aloud to Clarissa and wrote letters for her. Once a week Clarissa's Shakespeare class came together to read Shakespeare and other English authors, and they sang songs and ballads before and after class. From 1862, on Fridays, a so-called 'Open Evening' took place. The number of guests generally was around 70 or 80 and sometimes over 100. Drinking tea and having biscuits, followed by wine as the evening proceeded, guests discussed several topics in small groups. On occasion, piano concerts by ladies took place, followed by poetry presentations and society games. During Carnival, fancy dress balls were organised and several times large house concerts were held, the last one in 1869, being the presentation of an Italian comedy. As a result of these activities, Leopold's brother, Heinrich, called the house 'the happy island'.⁶ It followed the example of the Anglo-Irish traditions with which Clarissa had grown up. A special circle developed to discuss religion and biblical knowledge. Clarissa continued to discuss the Bible with her brother Robert in Ireland until she died. After 1862 she managed to cope with her disability by writing letters, by singing and by religious devotion. During the 1850s and 1860s, English, Irish, American, French and Italian visitors became acquainted with Clarissa and her husband. Her salon was unique as the only internationally-minded one in Berlin at which artists, composers, and academics were welcome, as distinct simply from the salons that entertained nobility, diplomats and soldiers only. This is one of the reasons why her cosmopolitan salon is rarely recalled in German memory.⁷

Clarissa helped with her connections wherever she could. A large number of people were assisted in obtaining jobs or exchanges, and people from the Continent asked for her advice on what places to visit in Britain. Of course, London was mentioned as the most important