studies (e.g. Helen Long, *The Edwardian House*; Thomas Barrie, *House and House*). Similarly, the fact that all primary texts come from the core nations of the so-called Anglosphere (i.e. England and the United States), and that most of the theorists consulted are either northwestern Europeans – predominantly English, German, and French – or U.S. Americans must surely give us pause.\(^4\) Much has undoubtedly fallen outside the purview of this study, and our supposedly nomadic forays into the fields of home and belonging in many ways stand revealed as decidedly provincial.

And yet, this is not to say that nothing has been gained from our inquiry into home and belonging. The remainder of the conclusion will attempt to highlight the most important findings. Rather than retrace our analysis of home and belonging step by step, we will rephrase the argument by addressing three underlying themes that have rarely surfaced as explicit concerns in the six chapters that make up this study: the concept of genre and its thematic as well as formal relation to home and belonging; the recurring problem of suicide as a symptom of unbelonging that allows us to reflect on the limited power of fiction; and the idea that fiction itself constitutes a home-making practice because it offers imaginary solutions to real-life contradictions (cf. introduction). We will examine each of these three concerns in a separate section and, in so doing, provide at least some sense of closure to this purposefully meandering exploration of home.

**Genre and Home: From Content to Form**

The last of the seven precepts outlined in the introduction suggests that any critical analysis of home must focus not only on the content or ingredients of home, but also on their formal arrangements. This need to take into account both form and content also applies to the discussion of genre and its relation to home and belonging. Indeed, form is arguably the more important category of the two because, on the level of content, the link between home and genre is relatively straightforward and, therefore, not particularly interesting. In the case of the *Bildungsroman* or novel of formation, for instance, we are faced with a genre that has as its key concern the problem of a young person leaving the family home in order to find his or her place in the world (i.e. to establish a broader sense of social belonging as a well-adjusted and ‘mature’ individual). We have examined this generic tradition most thoroughly in the discussion of George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (see chapter two), but the specific challenges associated with the transition to adulthood also play a role in other texts dis-

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cussed in this study. In *E. T.*, for instance, little Elliott must abandon his narcissistic self-absorption and learn to consider the feelings of others, while the eleven-year-old Kelly Brown in *Union Street* must come to terms not only with growing up in a precarious home, but also with the terrible experience of rape. To some extent, Kelly thus resembles the traumatized group of male adolescents in *The Virgin Suicides*, but while the latter remain trapped in a ritualistic re-enactment of their founding trauma, Kelly finds a way of reestablishing a sense of belonging in a moving encounter with a frail and desperate old woman (i.e. her meeting with Alice Bell, to whom we shall return in the following section).

A second genre discussed in this study that has a close thematic relation to home is the Gothic, which at times even intersects with the narrative of *Bildung*. As noted in chapter four, in the course of the nineteenth century, Gothic narratives increasingly turned away from sublime landscapes and gloomy castles, and instead focused their attention on more domestic settings – a variant of the genre that Fred Botting has called the “homely Gothic” (113). *Absalom, Absalom!* is one example of this subgenre: a text that examines the ideology of plantation domesticity as well as the horrors of slavery, highlighting how the material remains of a supposedly superseded racial order continue to haunt Faulkner’s protagonists, as well as the United States as a nation, well into the twentieth century (and, arguably, beyond). Moreover, we can detect echoes of the “homely Gothic” in the suburbs of *E. T.* and *The Virgin Suicides*. In the case of Spielberg’s film, we have examined closely the way in which *E. T.* functions as Elliott’s uncanny double, and we may now add the Gothic motif of a family home being taken over by powerful forces beyond the inhabitants’ control (i.e. the agents of a notably paranoid government bent on maintaining ‘homeland security’). Similarly, in *The Virgin Suicides*, the motifs of female incarceration and memories that refuse to stay buried have at least a remote kinship with the genre of the Gothic. The ‘derelict’ people living in the crumbling houses of *Union Street*, finally, are in some ways modern-day variants of Gothic revenants or monsters: abject and unruly bodies that lurk in the marginal spaces of society, continually threatening to encroach beyond their narrow confines, and unable to live or die in peace.

Indeed, the list of genres that have some relation to home and belonging on the level of content could be extended almost indefinitely. Among the genres discussed in this study, for instance, there is tragedy as a genre of failure and unbelonging (chapter two); pastoral as a literary tradition that tries to envision an ideal, homely fusion between nature and culture (chapters three and six); and

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realism as the genre of the everyday, the familiar, the domestic (chapter five). To these, we might add others that are not discussed in this study: the Western as a genre of European settlement and native dispossession (e.g. Bronfen 96–97); film noir and its concern with traumatized war veterans returning home (e.g. Spicer 20); or comedy, which in its narrowest sense can be conceived of as celebrating communal reintegration (e.g. Stott 1).

The truly interesting link between genre and home, however, concerns the level of form or style, and in particular the question of how genre theory conceives of texts as belonging to multiple genres. In recent decades, genre theorists from across the critical spectrum have insisted that individual texts do not simply belong to one particular genre, in the sense of being tied to the supposedly unchanging laws of a single category of texts; rather, a literary text belongs to a genre to the extent to which it participates in certain generic practices: engaging with genre conventions, revising and rejecting some of them, and as a rule combining practices associated with diverging generic traditions (e.g. Amigoni 58; Frow 3; Zagarell 502). In the case of Moby-Dick, for instance, we saw that the novel’s strange opening sections (“Etymology” and “Extracts”) are followed by several chapters that seem to set up Ishmael as the protagonist of a ‘single-focus’ narrative of Bildung – only to thwart these generic expectations later on, when the text’s focus broadens and becomes much more diffuse. Nevertheless, Melville’s text remains affiliated with the generic tradition of the Bildungsroman: not fully or exclusively at home in it, but retaining significant ties of belonging – just as individuals, too, can at least try to explore new ties without necessarily abandoning all their former associations. The discussion of other novels in the present study likewise focuses on intersecting and sometimes conflicting literary lineages (e.g. in the case of Mrs. Dalloway, which sets up a dialogue between the ‘rural’ genre of pastoral, the literary tradition of the marriage plot, and a series of texts focusing on urban flâneurs; or Union Street, which pits the conventions of novelistic, bourgeois realism against the aesthetic of the short-story cycle). Various generic affiliations may thus coexist in a primary text – sometimes peacefully, at other times uneasily – just as an individual’s sense of belonging may involve a set of diverse, potentially conflicting loyalties (e.g. familial, professional, and national).

Moreover, if we agree with critics such as Aijaz Ahmad (251), Wai Chee Dimock (1383), and John Frow (2) in regarding genres as fields of knowledge, then there is an important cognitive dimension to the idea of multiple generic

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6 Stott rightly notes, however, that comic reintegration may simultaneously be exclusionary if it relies on the “systematic humiliation of targeted groups” (105).