HOME: THE TERRITORIAL CORE

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The ethological concept of territoriality has recently received considerable attention in the social sciences, and not least in geography. Briefly, the theory of territoriality suggests that in many animal species, including Homo sapiens, both individuals and groups tend to assert exclusive jurisdiction over physical space. This is especially true of non-nomadic Western societies. At the level of personal space, that portable bubble of corporeality which surrounds each individual, spatial control is necessary for the maintenance of psychic health. At all levels of territoriality, however, from body space to national loyalties, the exclusive control of territory confers three substantial benefits on its occupants. These essential territorial satisfactions are identity, security, and stimulation.

The Territorial Triad

Home provides both the individual and the small primary group known as the family with all three territorial satisfactions. These satisfactions derive from the control of physical space, and this control is secured by two major means. The personalization of space is an assertion of identity and a means of ensuring stimulation. The defense of space is the means by which stimulation is achieved and security assured. If we exclude personal space because of its mobile nature, the average citizen appears to expend more effort personalizing and defending the home than any other level of fixed physical space.

The concept of security includes both psychic security and physical security, or protection. Both forms of security are obtained in the home, and also in its individualized cores, usually bedrooms, boudoirs, or studies. The rituals involved in entering the home of another, such as knocking on the door, ringing the bell, or using the more elaborate apartment-house intercom, have been compared to the recognition ceremonies of nesting birds. These generally recognized security measures are vital because the home is used for sleeping, grooming, and reproductive behavior, all of which are activities which divert attention away from outside threats and therefore render the individual more vulnerable to intruders.

Lord Raglan has suggested that the security of the home involves a recognition of

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the Jungian concept of the sanctity of the threshold. Rapoport hypothesizes that the approach of a stranger to an unfamiliar private door raises the anxiety level of both stranger and occupant. The point of anxiety release on the part of both invader and territory controller may vary with lot layout, from the rigid demarcation between public and private domains expressed in the high wall surrounding the Muslim dwelling to the much less defensible open planning of Western subdivisions. Security in most apartment homes is a greater problem, for privately owned defensible space rarely exists beyond the walls of the apartment.

Personalization may confer psychic security on the occupant of a home. In "Nicholas Nickleby" both the obnoxious Grinde and the kindly Linkinwater seek security through creating and maintaining an idiosyncratic decor. Linkinwater has kept the same flowerpot in the same place for forty-four years; both his own quarters and his office reflect his passion for detail and order. In sharp contrast, the miser Grinde's home is dark, meager, lean, and sparse, but again the occupant derives personal security and satisfaction from the unchanging arrangement of his chosen surroundings. In both cases, of course, territorial space has taken on the personality of its occupant.

Thus personalization promotes both security and identity. Identity includes not only self-knowledge but also one's persona as recognized by one's fellows. Identity and the individualism it implies are valued because of the implication of freedom of self-determination. Various degrees of the latter exist. In the Muslim case, the high wall pierced with few openings which surrounds the home suggests a marked gap between the owner's public persona and his private personality. By contrast, the North American suburban lot, lacking fences and with large picture windows, indicates a culture that demands greater congruence between the individual's private and public lives.

In either case, the security of the home allows personal identity to flower. Within the home the individual is most likely to find a place to be alone. When bedrooms are shared, as among the urban poor, the sitting or living room is often cited as a good place to be alone. Both in Great Britain and North America, the "front room" or parlor has traditionally been used by the poor family only on formal occasions, such as when strangers visit.

Beyond the individual's private space within the home, the home itself becomes a vehicle for expressing identity through manipulation of its external appearance. Cooper, using a Jungian psychoanalytic approach, sees the house as a symbol of the self. In poetry, literature, and dreams, houses are invested with human qualities. Jung suggested that the individual's house is a universal, archetypal symbol of the self. The house reflects how the individual sees himself, how he wishes to see himself, or how he wishes others to see him. The house, then, is a means of projecting an image both inwardly and outwardly. Extroverted businessmen are often found in

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11. Clare Cooper: The House as Symbol of the Self, in Designing for Human Behavior (edited by J. Lang,
ostentatious mock-colonial houses with an emphasis on display. By contrast, professionals whose goals are directed toward personal satisfaction rather than financial success frequently choose retiring, inward-looking styles. Cappon has delineated archetypal housing styles for introverts and extroverts, mixers and misanthropes. Jung’s relationship between home and identity extended to his dreaming of himself as a house. The house he had built for himself he regarded as “a symbol of psychic wholeness.”

Stimulation, the third of the territorial triad of satisfactions, is clearly necessary for survival, as many sensory deprivation experiments have shown. It is achieved by making, modifying, and defending the home. Moderate levels of stimulation may be achieved through personalization. In suburban tract housing, where several thousand houses may share similar architectural styles, great efforts are made to individualize each house. Antique carriage lamps and cartwheels, plastic lawn fawns and flamingos, ceramic gnomes and huntsmen are all symbols of individualism, albeit conformist individualism. The naming of houses and summer cottages (“Mon Repos,” “Iona House,” “Dunromin”) is less fashionable today than before World War II. Personalization is extended into color schemes, tree planting, and even garden sculpture. The garden itself, changing yearly and seasonally, provides maximum opportunity for personal expression. In this way mild levels of competition between neighbors provide mutual stimulation.

Higher levels of stimulation emerge when that which is personalized is also defended. Boundary lines are important to the homeowner and may be actively defended to the point of litigation. Fences and walls are efficient territorial markers when their locations are agreed upon by both parties; in the words of Frost, “Good fences make good neighbors.” Unsocialized young children and pets, however, may not recognize fences or lot lines as boundaries. Home areas are often defended against intruders, though rarely against wild birds.

**HOME AS ACTIVITY FOCUS**

Home is not only the focus of psychic satisfactions, it is also the fulcrum of the individual’s activity space, the locus at which individual control of fixed physical space is paramount. At lower levels of territoriality, such as personal space, personal control is predominant, but fixed physical space is absent. At more extensive levels of territoriality, such as the individual’s daily range or orbit, fixed-feature space is dominant, but personal control is strongly reduced because of the presence of others.

Few persons have more than one true home at any given time. One may personalize and defend an office or other work area, but these zones are ultimately invaded by cleaners, secretaries, janitors, and others who may legitimately claim temporary jurisdiction. The degree of identification with an area regarded as a “home away from home” is rarely as intense as that of the home base. Moreover, although a psychic space, home is usually identified with a particular physical space, though it rarely

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consists of the latter alone. Each individual belongs to, and operates sequentially in, one or more spaces, groups, and times. Home is perhaps the most significant of the many space-group-time complexes, and as such it can claim to be the basic focus of territoriality.

There is much evidence for this assertion. Most attempts to create territorial models have involved a home-base area, usually, and significantly, located centrally within the various layers of spatial territory. As the nexus of individual and family activity, home is the goal of almost half of the daily trips taken by urban residents and is also the single core space in which, according to time-budget studies, the individual spends the greater part of his day. Further, cognitive mapping studies from Trowbridge to Lynch have shown that individuals are not only anthropocentric, echonocentric, and egocentric, but also tend toward a domenicentric view of space. Gould's well-known maps of preference surfaces in Great Britain, the United States, and elsewhere readily illustrate this phenomenon. Recent cognitive mapping studies have shown that, excluding downtown areas that are known to almost everyone, cognitive maps are most detailed in the region of the home. This is especially true for women and children.

Home is thus a major fixed reference point for the structuring of reality. Because of this function as the archetypal reference point it has been suggested that, just as self and non-self appear to be the basic divisions of psychic space, so the fundamental dichotomy in geographical space is between home and non-home.

**Home and Journey**

Personalized and actively defended, the home becomes the one sure refuge for the individual who is compelled to venture beyond its confines on a regular basis. The word refuge not only implies security from the outrages of the outside world but also suggests that this security provides both space and time for the awakening and assertion of identity, which itself is a form of stimulation. The "house as haven" is not, as Rainwater has suggested, a life-style confined to the lower class. Rather, home is a haven for everyone in a public world where we are valued less for ourselves than for the roles we play. In essence, the possession of a home confers certain valuable rights of privacy and autonomy on the occupant.

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102 Gaston Bachelard: The Poetics of Space (Beacon Press, Boston, 1959); Cooper, op. cit. (see footnote 10 above), p. 135; and Jung, op. cit. (see footnote 13 above), p. 31.
Our emotional investment in this place is illustrated by a wealth of poetry extolling the virtues of home, a multitude of proverbs and sayings that reemphasize this theme, and a range of glossy magazines (many with the word “home” included in their title) that confirm a preoccupation with home decoration, external appearance, comfort, and cooking. Accepted, commonplace phrases illuminate the meaning of home: home is imbued with emotion (“Home is where the heart is”); its objective quality is less important than the feeling of belonging it imparts (“Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home”); it is the symbolic hearth and source of our being (“The old folks at home”) to which we constantly return. It is a refuge we defend against the world (“Every man’s home is his castle”). Territorial principles suggest that our ability to defend increases with our proximity to home (“Every dog is a lion at home”). Conversant with a subject, we are “at home” with it; secure in the fortress of a friend, we “make ourselves at home.”

It would be unfair to suggest that the home base is all “home sweet home.” Like an overattentive mother with her child, the home may smother an individual who is unable to leave it for considerable periods. The popularity of novels of the saga type, which frequently include as a major character a house which is manipulated by, and in turn manipulates, several successive generations of inhabitants, attests to the existence of ambivalent feelings about home. Home may, in fact, become a trap which first encapsulates and then submerges the ego. This has frequently been implied in literature with reference to specific social groups. Shakespeare noted that “men are merriest when they are from home.” On the other hand, Shaw opined that “home is the girl’s prison and the woman’s workhouse.” Moreover, folk wisdom and literature suggest that remaining at home may be stultifying for youth. Shakespeare stresses that “home-keeping youth have ever homely wits,” and Milton asserts that “it is for homely features to keep home.” The same sources, however, remind us that only the traveler who has rejected “homeliness” (in its several meanings) by leaving home can fully appreciate the virtues of the hearth. Many have wished to go home to die.

Home, in fact, cannot be understood except in terms of journey. Travelers are temporarily homeless; they carry small articles from home along with them and perform certain rituals that confer the feeling of home upon any temporary abode. Emigrants try to reproduce home. The former British Empire is cluttered with attempts to reproduce the ambience of charming Cotswold villages, an effort most notable in the hill stations of India. Such efforts were also made in settlement colonies such as Canada. In response to her father’s creation of an English garden-scape in the midst of the mid-nineteenth century British Columbia wilderness, the painter Emily Carr observes, “It was as if Father had buried a tremendous homesickness in this new soil.” For women of her mother’s age, homesickness was overwhelming: “It was extraordinary to see Canada suddenly spill out of their eyes as if a dam had burst and let the pent-up England behind drown Canada.”

The exotic landscapes in the novels and travel books of Graham Greene are peopled with exiles who, for some reason or another, cannot go home. The tug of home on the journeyer is one of Greene’s major underlying themes. In “A Burnt-Out Case,” Querry, architect manqué, sought the opposite of home, an “empty place.”

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54 Emily Carr: The Book of Small (Clark Irwin, Toronto, 1947), pp. 44 and 81.
that held no memories. In his journey into the Congolese interior, however, Query found that

In an unfamiliar region it is always necessary for the stranger to begin at once to reconstruct the familiar, with a photograph perhaps, or a row of books if they are all that he has brought with him from the past. . . . And so from the first morning he set himself to build a routine, the familiar within the unfamiliar. It was the condition of survival.

At journey's end, moreover, Query was immediately confronted by a native who categorically stated, "One should die in one's own village if it is possible." At the emotional minimum, home is simply a sure refuge between journeys: "Home is for me . . . a fortress from which to essay raid and foray, an embattled position behind whose walls one may retire to lick wounds and plan fresh journeys to farther horizons." More subtly, the chronic traveler may indeed be seeking home. T. S. Eliot agrees with Jerry Moore that "life is a constant journey home and I think that if I could be back where I started I'd be where I'm going." But it is probable that, during an absence, both home and the individual may irrevocably change. As Heraclitus taught, we can never step into the same river twice. In this sense we can never fully return home and thus our longing is tinged with unassuageable regret. This feeling is admirably captured in the Beatles' song, "Once there was a way to get back homeward."

Many journeys, however, are obviously and inevitably one-way trips. Thus we consign the aged parent to a geriatric complex which we feel constrained to call a "home." With his play "Home," David Storey has effectively demythologized the "mental home"; the same scalpel should perhaps be used to demolish the euphemistic screens surrounding other "homes" for those whom society has seen fit to pack away into what may, with greater semantic and social logic, be referred to as asylums.

The transfer of an individual from "felt home" to "euphemistic home" is usually traumatic. Bereft of family, of familiar space, of psychic connections, the removed person frequently suffers a drastic decline in health. Similarly, victims of urban renewal grieve for their lost homes. Trauma is induced not only through the sense of loss of home but also because of the quality of life in institutions. In contrast with the homes their occupants have left, euphemistic homes lack warmth and privacy. The economics of staffing prohibit the former, and the economics of the large ward eliminate the latter. This is not to deny that the homeless, once incarcerated, may come to regard the institution as home. Indeed, for the severely institutionalized, the trauma of release may be greater than the trauma of admission.

Nursing homes for the old or incurable frequently lessen pain and loneliness by shortening life. The mortality rate for persons in their first year in a home for the

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391 "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time" (T. S. Eliot: Little Gidding, in Collected Poems, 1909-1962 [Faber, London, 1965], p. 222).
394 Ivan Illich: Medical Nemesis, The Expropriation of Health (Centro Intercultural de Documentación, Cuernavaca, 1974), p. 44.
aged is significantly higher than the mortality rate of those staying on in their usual surroundings. Institutionalization may exacerbate or even initiate serious illnesses, and, as if aware of this, some old people seem to choose the old-age home as a means of shortening their lives. Others, however, are fearful of such institutions, and in both Great Britain and the United States it has been found that medical treatment at home frequently leads to greater recovery rates on the part of the sick.

The Ideal Home

The euphemistic home is clearly not a preferred living environment. Indeed, when asked to describe their ideal home, people tend to refer again and again to ownership of a rectangular, single-family structure standing in its own yard. The historical roots of this preference lie deep in the British and North American psyche. Studies in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States, using people from all incomes and backgrounds, confirm this preference. Apartments, the opposite of the free-standing ground-occupying house, tend to be rejected as structures suitable for family living. Even childless or childfree couples may prefer to live in a house. Studies of apartment dwellers have discovered that they also tend to consider the private house as an ideal home setting.

Nor is this preference simply that of white middle-class persons, though it may reflect the general acceptance of their standards as norms. A survey of urban blacks, Puerto Ricans, and persons of Italian, Jewish, Irish, and White-Protestant backgrounds in New York City revealed that an overwhelming majority would prefer to own single-family detached homes. Moreover, neighborhood satisfaction was found to vary with housing type, being greatest among dwellers in single-family housing and garden apartments and lowest among those occupying buildings of more than three stories. A contemporary study by Ladd in Boston found that 54 of 60 low-income black youths interviewed wanted suburban housing. Analysis of children's drawings confirms the importance of the individual family house; even when drawing apartment blocks and castles, American children insist on adding peaked roofs and picture windows.

Attempting to elicit the preferred environments of American respondents, Caun used a semantic differential scale and in addition asked respondents to rank photographs of houses in order of preference. The results confirmed the general preference for single-family detached housing. Respondents preferred housing that appeared

33 Ladd, op. cit. [see footnote 30 above], pp. 57-53.
38 Ladd, op. cit. [see footnote 30 above].
expensive, was highly complex visually, and offered a high degree of family privacy. There were significant correlations between privacy and expensiveness, and between the least-preferred houses and those judged to be simple, economical, and public. This overwhelming preference of North Americans for the single-family structure suggests that this unit most readily permits the citizen to express his territorial needs, a concept outlined several generations ago by Veblen.41

Although very general in the Western world, the ideal of the single-family dwelling by no means exhausts the range of physical manifestations of the concept of home. At one extreme, some few individuals expend their strongest territorial energies at the regional, national, or supranational level. At the opposite extreme, the truly homeless may come to regard a single benefactor as “home,” as Smike regarded Nicholas Nickleby.42 In the same novel the hero remarks that home cannot be defined by “any particular four walls and a roof . . . When I speak of home, I speak of the place where . . . those I love are gathered together.”43 It is usual, however, to find these loved ones in some readily identifiable physical location which, however temporary, bears the title of home.

Cases in which no single structure is regarded as home are not uncommon, however. Where loyalty is primarily given to an extended group rather than to the immediate family, home is usually thought of as the territorial base of that group. In many traditional societies home is a collective entity, the village or the compound. Identification with the urban neighborhood as home is common among several Western groups, and is especially frequent among deprived children with unhappy “home” lives at the family level. Such persons are frequently attuned to street life and may readily identify with an ethnic enclave or a gang turf. In “Manchild in the Promised Land” Claude Brown writes, “I always thought of Harlem as home, but I never thought of Harlem as being in the house. To me, home was the streets.”44

**Summary**

Home is more than a house, an apartment, or any other physical structure. It is a building unit or area, of more or less measurable dimensions, in which a considerable emotional investment is made by the individual. Home is the space-group-time entity in which individuals spend the greater part of their lives. It is preferred space, and it provides a fixed point of reference around which the individual may personally structure his or her spatial reality.

If home and non-home are the basic divisions of geographical space, the threshold takes on the function of a fundamental divide between the small area of controllable physical space and the outer world of less-controllable space. As the nexus of preference, spatial control, and routine activity, and as the point of departure and return for journeys, home is a stable refuge for the individual. It provides the territorial satisfactions of security, stimulation, and identity to the most intense degree and thus may be regarded as the core of the ethological concept of territoriality.

Nevertheless, home may stultify the individual, and can be most fully appreciated only by leaving it. As psychic space, home paradoxically involves journey, the result of which may be the loss of the original home image and an infinitude of regret.

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41 Veblen, op. cit. [see footnote 34 above].
42 Dickens, op. cit. [see footnote 8 above], p. 149.
43 Ibid., p. 416.