

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

In industrialised societies, most of what matters to people is happening behind the closed doors of the private sphere. The home itself has become the site of their relationships and their loneliness: their broadest encounter with the world through television and the internet, but also the place to reflect upon and face up to themselves away from any other. For this reason it is likely that people are paying increasing attention to their relationship to their own homes, to its structure, its decoration, its furnishing and the arrays of objects that fill its spaces and reflect back on us our agency and sometimes our impotence. It is the material culture within our home that appears as both our appropriation of the larger world and often as the representatives of that world within our private domain. Yet precisely because it is a private sphere, an investigation that studies such an intimate relationship, a sharing that can only take place if we are ourselves present inside these private homes, seems intrusive. Every chapter in this book is written on the basis of just such an experience: ethnographic encounters that took place behind the closed doors of domestic homes. We justified these, even where they were clearly experienced as intrusive, on the grounds that we need to understand, through empathy, the diverse ways in which this intimate relationship is being developed as the foundation to so many people's lives.

As such this is not merely 'another book about the home'. It is a volume that attempts to change our understanding of the significance of the home as a route to social and cultural analysis and question some assumptions about

what might have been through to be the `obvious' nature and implications of the home. It does so through developing and extending certain key insights and new perspectives. Given the multitude of books that have already been published on the topic of houses and homes the primary purpose of this introduction is to highlight the several ways in which this particular book is an original and distinctive contribution to the topic. The book does not aim to be comprehensive, it is complemented by many other recent works on the home, some of which also emphasise material culture. It does not, for example, provide the same attention to the development of domesticity found in some of the contributions to Cieraad Ed (1999), or examine the house as instrumental in the localisation and appropriation of global forms as found in some contributions within Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga Eds (1999), or consider the relationship to state and private institutions found in Chapman and Hockey (1999) or emulate the social psychological approaches that range from Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) to Steedman (1992) Instead it concentrates on directly observing the processes by which a home and its inhabitants transform each other.

The study of home life is hardly new to anthropology. Indeed it is probably its core. Typically in the `classic' period of ethnographic enquiry the supervisor would instruct their graduate students that it was essential that they live in the homes of their informants, at the heart of a community. Not surprisingly the family that hosted them often became primary informants. Indeed the problem was often that they became the gatekeepers in determining the ethnographer's relationship to other households. So observing the intricate

details of such homes was central to fieldwork. But in most of the societies deemed appropriate to ethnographic study homes were relatively speaking public places. In some cases male anthropologists may have had more difficulty gaining access to female 'quarters' that lay at the back of the house, but there was considerable fluidity between the world of work and the home. Artisan and agrarian activities often happened within the home and family life often took place in the public domain. So the study of the home could remain integral to the holistic ambition behind the classic ethnographic study.

Today, however, anthropologists find themselves increasingly exposed to quite different situations. One reason has been the rise of anthropology 'at home', which has required a meeting point with both the tradition of ethnology in continental Europe, but also of indigenous anthropology in countries such as Japan. Another was the increasing reciprocal exchange of anthropologists between all countries, and a third a growth of suburban style private housing within regions of more traditional anthropological enquiry, and the spread of the 'modern' professionally constructed home (see Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga (1999: 19-25). This volume and that which preceded it (Miller 1998) contain several examples of anthropology 'at home'. These include a Greek anthropologist studying Greeks, a Taiwanese anthropologist in Taiwan and a French-Canadian working in Montreal. On the other hand they also include a French anthropologist carrying out fieldwork in England, an Irish anthropologist studying in Norway, and a Belgian anthropologist studying in Japan. But even anthropologists who were once situated in societies where residence for some might be in long houses complemented

by menstrual huts, such as in New Guinea, now find they have to contend with the local rotary club and a suburbia marked by fences and guard dogs (e.g. the recent work of Gerwertz and Errington 1999).

Contemporary material culture studies have placed themselves in the vanguard of anthropological acceptance of these changes. What they strive for is the maturity of true comparative studies, which does not separate out the study of Toyotas in Australian Aboriginal society as somehow more exotic than the study of Volvos in Sweden (see Miller in press), and where any easy dualism of simple and complex but also colonial and colonised are transcended. The problem indeed is not that privatised households are new. Abundant historical and ethnographic research in Britain (e.g. McKibben 1998) has shown that for some considerable time the working class house has been the rigorously privatised, and apart from kin, entry into the private home has been highly restricted. This separation of the private is, however, exacerbated when so much of the encounter with the larger world is through television and now the internet, encounters that takes place mainly within the home (see Morley 1992).

Ethnographers working in such environments often respond by carrying out their researches in a very different situation from traditional ethnography. Usually they do not live with a family, but visit. They find there is no particular community and there is no reason to expect that knowing one family will lead to an acquaintance with their neighbours. Indeed the relationship between neighbours may be cursory or antagonistic. In the absence of community

there are fewer cross-references in the gossip and exchanges that take place. The home may have developed historically to become systematically opposed to other arenas such as work (Davidoff and Hall 1987 through see Nippert-Eng 1996). But if this is where and how life is lived, it is very hard to see a future for an anthropology that excludes itself from the place where most of what matters in people lives takes place. Furthermore there seems no likelihood that any other discipline will take up this challenge. For example, there has been a vast increase in media studies, which acknowledge the role of the home as the site of consumption (e.g. Morley 1992) but these still largely rely on the focus group (a method which often produces quite the opposite results from ethnography see Miller et al 1998: 79-89) and questionnaires and so the sense of both the experience and consequences of media consumption may be limited (with exceptions e.g. Hirsch 1992 Lull 1988). Early studies of the Internet that call themselves ethnographic actually just mean the experience of being on-line, rather than the relationship between that and off-line life (compare Markham 1998 with Miller and Slater 2000). The topic of consumption ought to raise the same issue but while, for example, Clammer (1997) provides a highly informative book on consumption in Japan, what is missing is a sense of the private life of households.

Much of the motivation behind the contents of this volume and Miller 1998 was the feeling that this is the single most important site for material culture studies. Tacchi (1998) for example, didn't just accept the challenge of media studies within the home, she took the most private example of that encounter: the very personal relationship between individuals and their radios. In this

volume it is not just that most of the papers include material from behind these closed doors but they include case studies from Norway and Japan, which present two of the most extreme national stereotypes of the intensely private domain. Nor was it regarded as sufficient to just have occasional access. Chapters such as Garvey and Daniels depend on coming to know the strains and contradictions of household relations behind the apparent tight normative order of home life. In these as other chapters this knowledge was obtained vicariously but effectively through a study that focused on the precise implications of the material culture within the home.

As will be evident in the chapters in this book, working behind closed doors does not constitute a simple dichotomy between the private and the public, which itself has been subject to a complex history (e.g. Sennett 1976, and Attfield 2000: 177-201 who consider the implications for material culture). Clarke's opening chapter demonstrates that the relationship between these two is found to be far more complex, with each having a place inside the other, and this theme of projection and interiorisation is continued throughout. Furthermore within the home there are equally complex relationships, because we cannot equate the private with the personal. There are many conflicts between the agency expressed by individuals, by the family, the household, and not least as we shall see the house itself, that make the private more a turbulent sea of constant negotiation rather than simply some haven for the self. This becomes clear precisely because all the papers use ethnography to immerse themselves in the particularity of individual houses.

The study of the home from the perspective of material culture is not new to anthropology. There were many influential examples during the heyday of structural analysis and many since then. But the emphasis was on the home as a representation of normative order through symbolic contrast. The architectural structure of the home was found to have a shadow in its symbolic structure. Other approaches at that time emphasised the home as a stable foundation or anchor to kinship and domestic life. The first section of this book overturns the concomitant assumptions behind such approaches. By contrast they emphasise the home as both the source and the setting of mobility and change. The second section of this book in turn acts as a critique of the dominant thrust of the literature that followed the decline of structuralist perspectives in the 1980's. That literature turned to the active agency of the occupants of the home: the home as a site of consumption and the 'do-it-yourself' process of people transforming their homes. Instead of looking at what we do with homes the second section of this book examines what the home does with us. The concern is with the agency of the home itself. How this is conceptualised and made manifest.

The third section of this book uses both these previous insights to examine the dynamics of processes in which the transformation of the home is integral to the transformation of social relations and shows how these develop in tandem. But it also highlights the messy and often contradictory nature of such processes. Finally this introduction will conclude by returning to this initial concern with the significance of ethnographic work carried out in the private sphere. What this book demonstrates is what can be achieved through

this focus upon the material culture of homes. But the promise it holds for anthropology as a whole lies in the degree to which so many other topics, from the organisation of budgets to the process of socialisation might be built upon the ethnographic foundations that are being laid.

SECTION ONE: MOBILE HOMES

If there was a pivotal study that re-launched the material culture of the home as a core topic in the development of modern anthropology it was surely the study of the Kabyle house by Pierre Bourdieu (1970). Although Bourdieu stressed the degree to which he was transforming the legacy of Levi-Strauss by emphasising practice and thereby time, contingency and strategy as against what were already by then coming to be seen as the more formulaic and static aspects of Levi-Straussian structuralism (e.g. Bourdieu 1977) the study of the Kabyle house harks back to the core of structuralist teaching. In a sense it almost outdoes Levi-Strauss himself in demonstrating how a series of core symbolic oppositions constitute the unspoken foundation for how a people express their beliefs about the world in material culture. For Bourdieu this habitat appears central to what he termed habitus. In the Kabyle house culture as a normative structure reproduces itself through a social order that is present more in the externalised order of the house itself than through some cognitive order inside the minds of its inhabitants.

Bourdieu's was not the only example. Other anthropologists influenced by structuralism looked for homologies between the order of the house and other

domains (e.g. Tambiah 1969). Indeed so pervasive has this style of analysis become, that even a text by Weiner (1991) that announces itself as the absolute enemy of structuralist analysis through a claimed affinity with Heidegger is actually a fine piece of micro structuralism delving into the precise symbolic oppositions constituted by the material culture of the house that would sit well alongside the Kabyle study, since it takes the structural order of the house as the basis for homologies with other expressive systems such as that of poetry.

If there has been a more progressive element to later studies of material culture and the home it has tended to be through a more traditional route of deeper and more subtle ethnography. Vom Bruck (1997) would be a case in point in her analysis of the Yeminite house. Along with this has been some repudiation of the 'neatness of fit' that came with Bourdieu's homologies (e.g. Halle 1993) and an emphasis on contradiction and the way the house may not reflect other domains but itself become an instrument in resolving moral and other dilemmas. So amongst the best studies are Gell (1996) showing the house being used to avoid what is expressed in other domains or Wilk (1984, 1989) revealing the dynamics whereby the house might at one point express individualism within a collective ethos but later on is used in an attempt to suppress rising individualism. There has also been a considerable rise in feminist approaches. These tended first to follow from structuralism (and associated anthropological Marxism) in that they showed how oppressive structures of patriarchy were naturalised as ideology in the taken for granted

order of the home (e.g. Ardener 1981) while later stressing the possibility for alternative sites of resistance (Moore 1986).

A greater sense of the house as a dynamic rather than a synchronic figure in the landscape has developed in part through recent historical research. For example, work in the Netherlands (see Ciierad 1999, de Mare 1999, Schama 1987) renders the architecture and material culture of the house as critical to the development not only of current concepts of domesticity but also civil society more generally (see also Frykman and Lofgren 1987 for Sweden. Comeroff and Comeroff 1997: chapter six for colonial Africa) In addition there has developed a greater attention to the intricacies of material culture (e.g. Bryden and Floyd, 1999) and the details of both provisioning of furniture (e.g. Auslander 1996,) and the influences of states and commercial bodies on home interiors (e.g. Buchli 1999: 77-98, Forty 1986 Lofgren 1991, Zukin 1982)

In both these respects historians are developing perspectives which were already accepted in archaeology where the sheer centrality of house foundations in the litany of what survives created a tendency amongst archaeologists to assign it considerable significance in understanding long term change . In addition the relationship between home and associated material culture (such as tombs) has been central to archaeological methodology (e.g. Bradley 1996 Hodder 1984). What the chapters in this first section add to this trajectory is an appreciation of this same sense of the dynamic nature of houses as excavated from the more synchronic snap shot of ethnography. By emphasising the house and its contents as a source and

instrument of mobility and change the ethnographic evidence is rendered more compatible with the findings of historians and archaeologists.

In Clarke's chapter the home is evidently more a process than a place. As such she is able to take apart one of the most simplistic and generalised clichés about the home that sees us as all involved in 'keeping up with the Joneses' that is to say a site of aspiration based on emulation of neighbours, in the context of a rise of privatised and more materialistic lifestyles. Clarke replaces this cliché with a far more informed and complex understanding of what the house performs in mediating the relationship to others. The context for her studies, that of working class households within a British council estate, presents an initial paradox. On the one hand there is a clear concern with neighbours 'the Joneses' and with what other people might think about one's home. But in accordance with historical traditions there is almost no actual visiting of homes by neighbours. So the Joneses could never be based on an actual comparison or emulation.

What Clarke discovers is that in practice the home itself carried the burden of the discrepancies between its actual state at a given time and a wide range of aspirational 'ideal homes' that are generated out of much wider ideals that a household might have for itself (see also papers in Chapman and Hockey 1999). These range from immigrants aspirations towards assimilation, through aspirations of a single woman towards an ideal partner, or aspirations for the future of one's children. As such the home becomes not an expression of other people 'gaze', but rather an interiorised and more controlled

replacement of those absent others. It becomes in and of itself the effective 'other' against which one judges oneself. So through the ethnographic study of detailed strategies of home improvement, placed back into the context of the narrative history and narrated futures of the households, Clarke finds a much more profound role for the home itself. In turn she can then confront an often simplistic representation of the politics of do-it-yourself, which has tended to dismiss this core household activity as a kind of superficial expression of 'cheap' emulation. Instead it re-emerges as a profound process of mediation within the contradictions of the household's encounters with wider society.

If Clarke demonstrates what can be achieved through an ethnographic focus upon the house as a process, the chapter by Garvey shows what is gained by taking us to a still more fine grained perspective on this process. Her chapter corresponds to what has become a 'classic' mode within modern material culture studies, one that is pivoted upon the term 'inconsequential'. That is to say we tend to divide our actions and possessions between that which we recognise as having important implications and the minor routines, practices or objects that we regard as having little or no consequence. For Garvey the division between major and minor actions is important, but precisely because the consequences of the latter are often hidden and disregarded: despite being just as significant. We might assume that moving house or major acts of refurbishment are important, but separate these off from minor, often spontaneous, attempts to simply move a bit of furniture around to give a room a slightly different feel.

Garvey's observations on working class women in Norway suggest that while the major acts of refurbishment have acknowledged consequences for the presentation of the home to others, it is the small easily undertaken forms of re-ordering that bear most on personal and intimate feelings where decorative order become a mirror for the self. So far from being the same (but smaller) kind of action as home refurbishment, moving things around may have quite the opposite effects. For example the former is costly the later is costless. Garvey concludes that in stark contrast to the act of home decoration within which it would normally have been subsumed, re-ordering the furnishing becomes a means by which the individual escapes from the arena of social positioning, or explicit narrations of the self.

Garvey's use of material culture to clarify the precise relationship between the private and public domain is of particular significance within the ethnography of Norwegian society. Most commentators have noted the centrality of privacy in Norway as compared to many other regions, but what exactly makes the sense of privacy and its domain different is much harder to determine. Yet it is at this subtle level that a core to an ethnographic account of Norwegian society might be formed. This is why Gullestad's (1984, 1992) earlier work on the home and home decoration was so pathbreaking both in studies of the home and in studies of Norwegian society, and Garvey provides further nuance and depth to Gullestad's observations.

Clarke and Garvey render suspect any assumption about the stability and unchanging nature of the home and this opens the path to a more direct confrontation with the process of actually moving home which is the subject of a study by Marcoux. While they show the value in regarding the house as a dynamic process rather than a static backdrop, Marcoux shows that when it comes to the actual movement of people, the tension between the change in the home itself and the movement of the material culture becomes critical in the same kind of re-alignment of person with their possessions that is the concern of the two previous papers. Indeed for Marcoux more than for any other paper the title of this book implies not the home as material culture so much as the relationship between mobile objects and the immobility of the place they reside in. In the case of Marcoux it is not just the ethnographer who focuses upon material objects that normally work best as the silent backdrop or frame to everyday life, it is the householder themselves who is faced by the way the presence of these things is made explicit by the decisions that have to be made as to what should be brought to the new home and what should be discarded.

What Marcoux demonstrates is the way in which this confrontation between a person and their possessions is also an opportunity to re-configure both the repair and re-writing of the narratives of their own personal biography and also the way their relationship to others has formed part of this biography. This is because the objects of the home are the mementoes and reminders of the past and so the decision to discard some and retain others when moving house becomes the active management of one's own externalised memory.

We are forced to confront directly the detritus that is left in the wake of our passage through life.

Finally in Petridou's chapter the issues raised are taken to a kind of extreme, since her study is concerned with people who are not just moving house but moving country. If the previous papers help us to confront a myth of stability, the Greek students she studies have to create one. Food is often used for this purpose. For example Knight (1998) shows the importance for the urban Japanese of country food that brings them the taste and smells they associate with an idealised rural other. In Petridou's case there is paradox in that it is the very mobility of food, the fact that it can be easily transferred from one country to another, that makes it suitable as their means to stabilise their sense of home. Food is often intimately associated with both the particular cooking and smells of one's natal home and more generally the 'taste' of one's homeland. By virtue of this redolence it helps people to constitute a 'home from home' at a time when people are increasingly having to live with a more portable concept of their home (see Rapport and Dawson 1998 for the possibilities of an anthropology of more mobile and mediated experiences of home).

While the mothers who send this food are thereby attempting to reproduce at a distance the relationship of power and dependency that pertains within home family life, the students in turn use it to re-cast their understanding of the English people around them in terms of the perceived tastelessness of the latter which implies also a lack of sociability that is assumed to be also true of

the English home. This in turn allows the Greeks to constitute themselves as a homogenised representation of the positive qualities of their homeland. Food becomes the basis of a process including the social relations of preparing food, cooking and eating, which turns the superficial quality of taste into something that is sufficiently profound and rooted that it can appear as a more solid version of the home than the mere house or flat in which they reside. So in this case a taste of home which has itself become fully mobile can in turn be mobilised in the defensive constitution of identity. There is a final virtue to this chapter with respect to the volume as a whole in that there is a danger when analysing the material culture of the home that this will of itself generate too close an identification with the physicality of the house itself. Here we can see the sense of home emanating not from a house but from mobile material culture,

Petridou's chapter reinforces the insights of the previous papers into the nature of home as a process rather than just a place. Together these papers amount to a refusal of any assumption that the study of the home would have to be the study of some sort of concrete foundation or stable entity against which we can contrast the mobility and agency of the persons who sometimes dwell there. By contrast, these four chapters demonstrate that both the home and its attendant material culture can be central to the practices which make people mobile and able to re-configure their relationships and indeed themselves in tandem with the changes that take place in the contexts within which they live.

SECTION TWO : ESTATE AGENCY

If the main thrust of anthropological work on the material culture of the house in the 1960 and 1970s was based on structural and symbolic analysis, in the 1980s and 1990's there arose a new wave of studies (mainly arising from inter-disciplinary contexts) which emphasised the house as a point of consumption, with more emphasis on domesticity and the home. The home was the locus for the 'do-it-yourself' process in which people transformed their home interiors as a mode of self expression. The home came to be seen less as a backdrop or reservoir of an almost unconscious habitus constructed out of order and relations. Instead, partly in the light of new gender studies that emphasised the agency of women (and subsequently also gays) in the home it became a mode of expression, a means by which people constructed themselves and their ideologies (e.g. contributions in Attfield and Kirham 1989, Putnam and Newton 1990, Segelan and De Witta 1993, Sanders, J, 1996).

As this work has progressed, however, the model of a semiotic home which occupants could use to create meaning, has had to contend with the contradictions and complexities of the substantive results of the studies inspired by this approach. Indeed the chapters in the first section of this volume act in part as a critique of any simple reading of the home as expressive. Most of these chapters emphasise problems of contradiction and dissonance in the relationship between people and their homes. This becomes part of the explanation for the stress laid in those papers upon

mobility and change. Other studies have shown the way the occupants themselves respond to their need for the home to represent both longer and short term ideals by separating the home into two opposed units, for example the inalienable possession of the family lineage represented by the second often rural home in much of Europe as against the mere occupancy of the present family (see Chevalier 1998 for France) or the home reflecting the high speed of urban life as against the rural idyll (Hirsch 1992 for England). Where the state and commerce might favour a shift to the expression of modernism and change this could be assimilated by populations who find ways of appropriating modernism within less disruptive and more inclusive agendas (e.g. Attfield 1997).

What the papers in this second section contribute is an extension of this growing realisation that there are clear constraints to regarding the home as an expressive genre. Against the grain of an increasing emphasis upon what people are able to do with their homes, these papers take up the opposite perspective of how far people are thwarted by the prior presence of their houses and the orders of their material culture. In addition they consider how they come to see their lives as formed through the influence of the home itself, and their role as serving in the reproduction of that historical legacy. If the house is accepted as something that reflects a long term or set of historical processes, then any present occupant has to contend not only with the agency of the previous occupants but increasingly with the house itself as an agent. As Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga note (1999: 9), the

degree to which the house becomes taken for granted accentuated rather than detracts from this effect.

Miller contends that there are times when we do indeed objectify our sense of the house possessing agency. This can be found in the traditional figure of the ghost within the haunted house. This act of projection anthropomorphises our sense that the house may actually be a good deal older and have developed more 'personality' than its mere occupants. In coming to terms with the ghost that haunts the house the occupants have to acknowledge this history and its consequences for the present. The ghost of a haunted house is in effect the original 'estate agent'. This is the most extreme end of a sensibility that in more attenuated form 'haunts' most ordinary householders. In moving in and maintaining a home we have constantly to contend with the pre-given decorative and other ordering schemes of the house. Although we may seek to overthrow these, more often we develop a kind of negotiated compromise between that which is expressed by the house and that which we seek to express through the medium of the house. As such the house comes to occupy us as we come to occupy it, and as the chapter concludes what we may not be able to fully possess comes to some degree to possess us.

Hecht's study takes us from the implications of the longevity of the home itself to the longevity of persons. But the implications are quite similar. In contrast to an emphasis upon what people have done to their homes, Hecht presents us with an individual who has become increasingly conscious of what homes have done to her. Having become engaged as a museum volunteer with the

task of illustrating history through the material culture of the home, she has come to reflect on her own legacy as the repository of the material objectifications of her own family history. This in turn leads her to see the successive homes she has lived in as central to the development of her own identity. Her biography is narrated as a sequence from the home of her childhood, which originally gave her (and remains as witness to her) continued identity as a working class Scot. Her biography ends in her present house which is almost as much a museum as is the actual museum where she works as a volunteer. This provides the backdrop to her present identity as the individual responsible for cultural reproduction by which the younger generation come to understand not just the meaning of these artefacts they see both in the Museum and in her house, but also why they should continue to matter. The material culture of the home having served as the agency that gave her own identity is now used as the agent for transcending her life to become her legacy.

SECTION THREE : BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The final section exploits points made in the two previous sections and applies them to the central concern of anthropology with the home, which is its place in the development and reproduction of social relations. But precisely because of our emphasis on material culture this relationship appears somewhat differently from its treatment within more conventional social anthropology. Within anthropology there has developed a considerable literature that attempts to mediate between the analyses of the house itself

and that of the social relations of the home. If this literature is examined in detail, however, one finds that in most cases a direct relationship between the two is made secondary to a kind of triad, whereby the relationship between people and home is mediated by a third category such as the 'household' in most societies and the 'house society' in some tribal societies.

The household has been understood as a social rather than a physical entity, yet one that because of its stress on residence seems to implicate the house itself. It therefore contrasts within categories such as kinship and the family in according some weight to the physicality of the home in constituting social relations. For this reason the term household seemed to 'do the trick' of creating a non-reductionist approach to this relationship of home and those who dwell there (e.g. Netting, Wilk, and Arnould 1984). In a similar vein the book *'About the House'* (Carsten and Hugh Jones 1995) attempts to achieve the same result for tribal societies. While the term household tends to be used for the more restricted units of, for example, many European societies, here the discussion is about what have been termed by Levi-Strauss 'house societies' which seemed pertinent to larger systems of kinship that are present in South East Asian and South American tribal societies in particular (although the original model was from European lineages). While 'household' mediates with the concept of family, 'house society' mediates between the concept of lineage and the longevity of the site of residence.

In some ways, however, the construction of this triad whereby both home and social relations are mediated in their relationship by a third category that of

household and house society, has still led to a playing down of the materiality of the home and its attendant material culture. So, for example, although in their introduction Carsten and Hugh Jones say they will pay attention to the architectural aspects of the home, this rarely happens in the essays that follow, where the house tends to appear as metaphor rather than substance. But the two previous sections of this book have shown why a focus on this materiality is itself critical to an analysis of the social relations of the home. Once one acknowledges the degree to which the home itself is both a site of agency and a site of mobility, rather than simply a kind of symbolic system that acts as the backdrop or blueprint for practice and agency then the rewards of this focus upon material culture in trying to understand the social relations that pertain to the home, becomes apparent. Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga (1999: 1-7), also suggest the materiality of the house can usefully mediate between the concepts of household and family.

Feminism has provided a complementary contribution in mediating our understanding of this basic relationship. Because feminist studies concentrated on the role of the housewife, there has been considerable research on activities, such as food preparation (see DeVault 1991) and housework routines such as cleaning (Jackson and Moores 1995). Certainly by looking at such routines and practices the material culture of the home is implicated, but there is a clear difference of degree between the explicit focus upon material culture within this volume and most previous feminist analysis. What the third section of this book accomplishes as a complementary addition to these feminist works is a sense of how this hybridity between social and

material relations can be better achieved if the house is taken as a more equal partner. Of course the separation of this volume into three sections is in many ways artificial. The previous chapters in the volume mostly include the same attention to the detail of the material culture of the home and the subtlety of its place in those processes that also develop social relations.

Tan's chapter focuses upon one particular relationship that between developing one's house and one's marriage. The argument follows from an insight of Bloch (1995) that in many 'house societies' the construction of the home is understood as both a reflection of and a medium for the construction of a marriage. Both are seen to begin as relatively insecure and fragile structures that gradually acquire solidity and foundations. The increasingly 'concrete' house and marriage thereby becomes the solid basis for the core task of reproduction. Tan starts with an exploration of the close correspondence between building a house and marriage within the non-Christian Paiwan (of Taiwan). But in the second half of the paper he demonstrates how under Christianity although the close symbolic associations are often repudiated, what develops is a syncretic alignment with the equivalent ideals within Christianity where again building up a home and building up a marriage are seen as complementary aspects in the ideal of Christian domesticity. As a result Christian households may engage in practices that for them express Christian compassion such as showing forgiveness through giving away possessions, that while entirely compatible with Christian teaching, are not usually found in other Christian communities. They are, however, entirely comprehensible here in the light of the particular

way the material culture of the house had already been seen as a medium of conjugal relations in non-Christian practices.

It is fascinating to contrast Tan's chapter with that of Drazin. In the case of Tan there is a transition between two relatively clear normative structures within which marriage and home building can be aligned. In the case of Drazin there might once have been such an alignment, but the last few generations have turned the establishment of normative culture itself into a struggle. So that what happens within the home is a process developed in direct negation to and often negotiation with what happens outside the home. The startling aesthetic contrast between the grey and crumbling concrete of Soviet system blocks with the emphasis on wooden furniture and infrastructure within the warm flats within, objectifies two histories: that of the public and the state on the one hand and a domestic situation that which has tried to reconstitute itself in defiance of the constraints that were imposed.

The constraints may have changed from lack of products to one of lack of money, but they establish the degree to which in the inside of the home wood itself has become the objectification of care for the family. In the local context the appropriation of furniture from production to consumption signifies what the private household has been able to wrest from what has been historically an alienating state. Although the process within which care has been associated with furnishing is basic, the particular goals, for family and furnishing, that households strive for are much less certain. Drazin can observe how the criteria for success and display are themselves being re-

invented in the new material circumstances of post-Socialist society. We can perceive a struggle to re-link the wider idea of being Romanian with what remains of the normative behind such everyday practice of caring and furnishing; or we can see the recreation of Romanian norms within emerging routines of everyday domestic consumption. So if in the case of Tan we see the Paiwanese striving to develop practices that will objectify their ideals, in the case of Romania we see people formulating and negotiating normative orders that will build upon their practices.

This dichotomy between normative orders projected in this case as an ideal and the practice of domesticity becomes in the final paper by Daniels the central tension that pervades both the relationships of the household and their expression as material culture. The possibilities given by Daniels title are delicious. Not only does her encounter with a series of rather ordinary Japanese home interiors make nonsense of the constant reification of an ur-Japanese aesthetic as though it is seamlessly embedded in everyday practice, but in a way this become symptomatic of this book's attempt as a whole to confront the 'neatness' of certain theoretical assumptions and show how we can ground ourselves in the complexities and contradictions of the ethnography but still emerge as theoretically ambitious.

Daniels first has to mark the ubiquity of the assumptions she confronts as emblematic within orientalism. She exposes the way this ideology made the house a foundation for similar assumptions about the aesthetic harmony of 'tidy' Japanese domestic relations. This leads to an ethnographic encounter in

which she can re-affirm the close relationship between domestic interior arrangements and social relationships, but this time through the way they are being contested. The idealisation of the tidy house is seen to be part of state as well as foreign stereotypes, such that feminism, and other expressions of modernity have to contend with this same homology of material and social practice. As in so many of the contributions to this volume a closing down of the ethnographic lens to focus on the finer detail of household material culture tells us a story about the conflicts and transitional state of domestic relationships that a 'landscape' shot that typifies most Japanese studies has tended to leave hazy and out of primary focus.

Concluding with Tan and then Daniels' contributions creates one further argument against the assumption often made about the contemporary home. The stress on the problem of ethnographic work inside the home and the rise of privacy could have led to a conclusion that what was at issue was an aspect of 'Westernisation' created by a simple transition from a public sphere to a private sphere. In Tan's chapter we do see a transformation from houses based around lineages to houses based on a more nuclear family, but as in the case of the Pastor there remains a more complex relationship between these spheres, since the interior decoration is intended in part for public display. If his chapter thereby suggests the need for studying the private sphere for insights into the public sphere, there is some symmetry with the first paper by Clarke, where the home is used as a mode for the imagination of the occupants relationship to the public sphere whether or not many other people actually visit it. Nor is there some simple evolution from public to

private. In the working-class homes Clarke was studying there has been a tradition of privacy that historical records show is certainly not a recent invention. Taking the book as a whole the most extreme examples of privacy come from Norway and Japan. In both cases this has much more to do with the longer historical trajectory of the particular regions. This is all quite contrary to any glib notion of privacy as a sign of Westernisation.

CONCLUSION

What emerges as a collective conclusion from these chapters is a claim. We have shown that our focus on the fine-grained relationship between people and the material culture of the home tends to work, in the sense that it leads to powerful insights into the societies in question. This is at least in some measure because the people being studied are themselves playing out their relationships through the very same material culture and experiencing the same contradictions that emerge in our respective analyses. If home is where the heart is, then it is also where it is broken, torn and made whole in the flux of relationships, social and material. Obviously we do not claim to be alone here, there are many other exemplary studies for almost any region (e.g. Humphrey 1998, Buchli 1999 for Russia) that in a similar fashion pay attention to the materiality of homes both in relation to domestic relations and in articulation with wider forces such as states and commerce. Equally there are other approaches to the home which complement rather than contradict those explored here, such as the vast literature on home ownership and renting, which on the whole we do not try to reproduce. But the particular attention to material culture and the home which characterises the present volume may

have further consequences in situations where home is the centre not just of living but increasingly of an intensely private domain of living. These are implications which are not contained in the individual chapters but follow from the volume as a whole.

It will be evident even from the summaries that have been given above, how dependent this volume has been upon ethnography, which largely takes place within the home itself. An anthropology that thinks sensitivity about being too intrusive is demonstrated by remaining outside and respecting the distance of conventional social proxemics is a dead anthropology, that loses its humanity in the very moment that it asserts it in this claim to sensitivity. The life of anthropology comes from its insistence in seeing the world through perspectives we would never have even imagined if we had not forced ourselves into the site from which other people view their worlds. For this reason material culture studies that focus on the fine-grained developments in material and social relations of the home become once again the vanguard for contemporary anthropology. This vicarious route to the intimacy of relations may well be preferable for both informants and ethnographers than an approach that separates off social relations from the agency of the material worlds within which they occur. Instead of confronting people with questions about love and jealousy we are exploring with them the ways these are experienced as grounded in processes such as decorating and moving home.

I can attest from the approaches that are increasingly made to me that commercial and marketing research is becoming increasingly concerned to

find the means for working inside the home, since this is as critical to topics such as budgeting, or ecommerce as it is to material culture. While such highly focused research will certainly increase in the future, it is important that applied and commercially driven projects are complemented by the kind of academically driven studies that are represented by this volume. These are long-term studies that do not assume prior to fieldwork what any particular practice pertains to. A study of food did not expect to be about the mobility of identity, nor a study of soap in Romania to be about caring, nor a study of rice scoops in Japan to produce a paper on the untidy house. This is why this book does not study objects such as homes and take social relations as its context. It does not 'reduce' things to their correlations with prior social parameters such as gender, class and ethnicity. Rather social and material divisions emerge to the degree that they appeared salient in the fieldwork. What is at stake then is not just the future of studies of material culture and the home but because of the centrality of the home to contemporary life we are concerned with the future of material culture studies and of anthropology more generally. Either to become a romantic elegy for claims to the lost authenticity of public life - in Sennett's (1976) terms *The Fall of Public Man*, or to become the only discipline that retains at its core the sense of humanity and empathy that comes from being in the presence of ordinary life at the place where it is increasingly lived.

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