



# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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The three essays in this issue focus on the theme of *home and at-homeness*. In the first essay, interior designer **Jane Barry** tells the story of her California family home. She describes family routines in the house and her father's increasing inability to live comfortably at home during the last few years of his life. Though he became steadily more disabled, he would not move from the house or accept design modifications to make his life there easier.

In the second essay, health sociologist **Andrew Moore** and nursing researcher **Bernie Carter** consider the impact of life-saving assistive technology (AT) that many children with complex health needs depend on in their homes. In author interviews, parents of these children explained how this equipment intrudes into the home yet is absolutely necessary if the child is to remain alive. Moore and Carter offer no easy way to reconcile this tension between technological essentials and lived qualities of at-homeness, but their essay perceptively illustrates how properties of the material and technological environment can play both a supportive and undermining role in domestic wellbeing.

In the third essay, philosopher **Janet Donohoe** overviews home and at-homeness. She draws on the phenomenological ideas of Gaston Bachelard, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but gives particular emphasis to Edmund Husserl's concepts of *homeworld* and *alienworld*. Husserl interpreted *homeworld* as the tacit, taken-for-granted sphere of experiences and situations typically not called into question. Though unique for each person, the homeworld is always in some mode of lived mutuality with the *alienworld*—a world of difference and otherness but only brought forward to awareness because of the always already givenness of the

homeworld. In the last part of her essay, Donohoe considers what these concepts might mean for considering the experience of "displaced" peoples and for answering the question of whether an alien place can ever take on the normative identity of home place.

One of phenomenology's major contributions to contemporary thinking is recognition that human beings and their worlds are existentially intertwined and that an integral aspect of this interconnectedness is how particular physical, environmental, and spatial qualities of a world make that world one way rather than another. In referring to environmental features like dwelling layout, technological devices, landscapes, and geographical worlds, these essays illustrate how materiality, spatiality, and environmental embodiment contribute to specific domestic lifeworlds. Directly or indirectly, the essays suggest how such understanding might facilitate more life-grounded theories, designs, and policies.

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*Below: One house in a 1938 booklet of American house plans. In her essay beginning on p. 4, Jane Barry describes her father's living in this house for 65 years and the environmental difficulties he faced in the last several months of his life there.*



## More Donors, 2012

We are grateful to readers who, since the winter issue, have contributed more than the base subscription for 2012.

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## EAP Symposium at EDRA, Seattle

The 43<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of the **Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA)** will be held May 30–June 2, 2012, at the Renaissance Seattle Hotel, Seattle. **EAP** is sponsoring a symposium, “Challenges for Qualitative Methods and Approaches in Environment-Behavior Research: Ideology, Ethics, and Understanding Phenomena.” Presenters include **Lynne C. Manzo**, Associate Professor Department of Landscape Architecture, College of Built Environments, University of Washington, Seattle; **Jeremy C. Wells**, Assistant Professor, Historic Preservation Program, School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation, Roger Williams University, Bristol, Rhode Island; and **EAP** editor **David Seamon**. [www.edra.org/](http://www.edra.org/).

## Items of Interest

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the **Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists** will be held May 25–27, 2012, at New York City’s Fordham University. The theme of the conference is “Interdisciplinarity beyond the Academy: Lived Worlds of Consequence for Academic Work.” [www.icnap.org/](http://www.icnap.org/); [jmartinez@asu.edu](mailto:jmartinez@asu.edu).

**Aesthetics and Ethics of Architecture and the Environment** is a conference to be held July 11–13, 2012, at Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. The conference aim is to broaden aesthetic discourse “beyond questions relating to purely visual phenomena to include those derived from all facets of human experience.” <http://ispaconference.wordpress.com/>

The 16<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the **International Association for Environmental Philosophy** will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Rochester, New York, November 3–5, 2012. This event follows the annual meetings of the **Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP)** and the **Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS)**. [www.environmentalphilosophy.org/2012cfp.html](http://www.environmentalphilosophy.org/2012cfp.html).

The **Nature Institute** in upstate New York is sponsoring two Goethean-science seminars this summer: “The World of Color and Light” (June 17–23, 2012); and “Coming to our Senses” (July 8–14, 2012). The second seminar aims to explore how the different senses facilitate different modes of seeing and understanding. [info@natureinstitute.org](mailto:info@natureinstitute.org).

## Citations Received

**Christopher Klemek, 2011. *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.**

From the introduction: “The attempts to impose a new order on cities, and specifically a modernist vision of urbanism, via urban renewal policies eventually engendered a fierce backlash... that extended from North America to Western Europe. Instead of such sweeping approaches to cities, writer Jane Jacobs joined a younger generation of New Left urbanists to advocate a house-to-house approach, both for organizing grassroots resistance, and for a gentler, graduate renewal of cities.... Suddenly, the once vigorously contested boundary that had characterized the urban policy favored by many liberal reformers, with its clear demarcations, became a vanishing frontier, and gave way instead to a more complicated condition. Old political, conceptual, and even economic categories fell apart; old battle lines disengaged.... The American urban frontier was effectively abandoned by the 1970s, when President Richard Nixon took a declare-victory-and-retreat approach by dismantling all urban renewal programs.”

**Jeff Malpas, 2012. *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.**

Expanding arguments in his earlier *Heidegger’s Topology*, this philosopher examines the place aspects of Heidegger’s thought. Malpas suggests that “philosophy begins in wonder and beings in place and the experience of place. The place of wonder, of philosophy, of questioning is the very topos of thinking.”

Linda Finlay, 2011. *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Though this psychotherapist directs her discussion to therapists, her presentation of the nature of phenomenology and phenomenological methods provides a lucid introduction for anyone interested in phenomenology. The first part of the book provides an accessible overview of phenomenology broadly and then highlights specific aspects of the “phenomenological project,” which Finlay explicates in terms of six central themes:

1. A focus on lived experience and meanings;
2. The use of robust, thorough descriptions of experiences, situations, and events *as lived*;
3. A concern with existential issues;
4. The intertwining of people and world;
5. The use of the “phenomenological attitude,” which includes bracketing and reflexivity;
6. A potentially transformative relational approach.

In the second part of the book, Finlay explicates six specific phenomenological methods, which she identifies as:

- descriptive empirical phenomenology;
- hermeneutic phenomenology;
- lifeworld approaches;
- interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA);
- first-person approaches;
- reflexive-relational approaches.

Finlay first describes each of these methods broadly and then highlights specific research studies and potential strengths and weaknesses. The last part of the book considers “phenomenological methods in practice” and delineates some general principles for doing phenomenological research, including chapters on gathering and interpreting experiential descriptions.

Finlay’s book is exceptionally valuable in the way it provides a comprehensive and understandable introduction to phenomenology broadly and to specific phenomenological principles, notions, and research methods. An excellent introduction for phenomenological beginners. See sidebar, right.

## From *Phenomenology for Therapists*

The aim of phenomenology is *to describe the lived world of everyday experience*. Lived experience can be general, such as what being a therapist is like, or else specific, such as being pregnant, dying of cancer, or having a sense of ‘losing one’s footing’ after a trauma. Phenomenological research into individual experiences gives insight into, and understanding of, the human condition. Sometimes it languages things we already know tacitly but have not articulated in depth. At other times quite surprising insights reveal themselves....

Phenomenological research is potentially *transformative* for both researcher and participant. It offers individuals the opportunity to be *witnessed* in their experience and allows them to ‘give voice’ to what they are going through. It also opens new possibilities for both researcher and researched to *make sense of* the experience in focus (p. 10).

Phenomenology... discloses, transforms and inspires. That is why it excites me, why I am passionate about it. It is not just a research method. It offers a way of both being in *and* of seeing the world from inside *and* out. It is not just an intellectual project; it is a life practice. It is concerned with the discovery and celebration of our own immersion in body-world experience. The phenomenological project calls the researcher to be reflectively open to connecting with the phenomenon in all its complexity. When I do phenomenological research, I immerse myself in wonder and awe of the other’s experience. I want to be caught up inside that experience. Through it, I become enchanted and fascinated with the ambiguity, multiple layers and mysterious paradoxical depths of human existence.

The strength of this method lies in its ability to bring to life the richness of existence through description of what may appear at first sight to be ordinary, mundane living. The magic comes when we focus so deeply on aspects of individuals’ ordinary lives we see that what is revealed is, inevitably, something special; something *more*. What is revealed is actually quite extra-ordinary (p. 26).

# My Dad's Story:

## The House He Lived in for Sixty-Five Years

Jane Barry

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*Barry is an interior designer whose professional work focuses on “aging in place.” She earned a master’s degree in Interior Design from Washington State University in 2008. This essay is a revised version of a chapter from her graduate thesis, which focuses on home modifications for older people. In an email, she explains how her late father played a central role in her finding a professional focus: “My father put me on this path, and I think about him almost every day. I remember how hard his last months were, and I think I didn’t do enough for him... I wasn’t kind enough. But, he was so difficult to deal with! He didn’t want anything different in his environment. He just wanted things, including himself, to be the way they always were.” [jbarryd@g.com](mailto:jbarryd@g.com). Text and illustrations © 2012 Jane Barry.*

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**A**s I stayed with my father in the last few months before his death, I observed his declining ability to function, his intense attachment to his home (photograph, right), and his refusal to consider changes to make life easier. His deepening difficulties made me aware of the power of habit in human lives—its rootedness in the body and the lived experience of moving in and through the home. In my thesis in interior design, I decided to explore how these ideas might help in envisioning home modifications for aging in place [1].

Drawing on my dad’s experience as well as the aging literature and interviews with other elders, I developed two design guidelines to direct a theoretical remodeling of my dad’s home: First, to preserve the familiar; and, second, to design for the senses. Both guidelines require a focus on the experiential qualities of moving into and throughout a home. One pays heed to level changes, the direction of circulation, and shifts in spatial volumes—for example, moving from a small, low-ceilinged entry into a cathedral-ceilinged living room.

In my dad’s case, I considered his habit of fetching supplies from the basement, a regular behavior involving the familiar experience of descending and ascending, in all its physical, personal, and cultural meanings. I decided that he would inevitably make these trips down and up the basement



stairs. What I could do was to make this action safer. I planned a hand rail along each side, and a high-contrast edging on each step—common practice but now deeply meaningful. So it is that my father’s struggles guide my professional life today.

My dad’s life was deeply rooted in his home. For that reason, I want to honor him and focus on that attachment. The meaning of place played a strong role in his behaviors and the choices he made, and in his resistance to making changes in his environment. For example, even after I had placed canned goods upstairs in a kitchen cupboard where I thought they would be more convenient for him, he persistently made trips down to the basement even as he faced declining strength, energy, and balance. His behavior regularly baffled me.

For part of a year, I lived with my father and helped him as his health failed. He had occupied his home for 65 years. Understandably, his wish was to die at home. Over time, I observed his fervent desire to remain in that house and his difficulty in almost every task. But he refused to make changes. It seemed that he couldn't (or wouldn't) imagine what helpful changes might be possible. I labeled my father's behavior "stubborn." But before I lay out my deepening understanding of his situation, let me set the stage and tell the history that shaped his house at 516 G Street, Davis, California.

## History of a House

My dad was a third-generation California boy. His grandparents came West in the mid-nineteenth century and settled in the Napa Valley. My father grew up in and around St. Helena, California, where his father was a ranch hand but apparently not very good at keeping a job. My dad didn't talk about his dad very much. I suspect his dad was a rowdy Irishman, with all its unseemly connotations.

As a young man, my dad moved to Davis, 75 miles to the east. He worked in a Purity grocery store and for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a crossing guard. In the tower at night, he studied for the civil-service examination and soon secured a job at the Davis post office. He started as a mail carrier, spent time as a clerk, and eventually became Davis' postmaster. He retired in 1975 at age 59.

When my dad moved to Davis in 1937, he lived in a boarding house on the corner of Fourth and F Streets. Two blocks away and two years later at the age of 22, he contracted to have a house built for himself and his mother, who was now divorced. I believe that this new house embodied all the hopes and dreams of his life up to that point. The house was security in the face of uncertain economic

No. 433 — A lovely little cottage somewhat on the Cape Cod order. The plan shows a very fine living room, two excellent bed rooms, bath, closets and a convenient kitchen and dinette. The stairs from the hall lead to large attic space which may be used for storage or may be finished into rooms.

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times. Ownership meant that he was now head of the family.

The house was a two-bedroom "cottage." The plans came from a 1938 pamphlet, "New Small Homes," published by the L. F. Garlinghouse Company of Topeka, Kansas. The house is described in the rather flowery language of the time as "a lovely little cottage somewhat on the Cape Cod order" (plan, above). There was a basement as well as an attic—features unusual for Davis, even in 1939. The cost of the 1000-square-foot dwelling was \$3,732.00, according to all the original paperwork he saved in a file. To finance the house, my dad borrowed from his mother's brother, Uncle Neely. He made the final payback payment in 1958.

In 1941, my father entered the army and, during World War II, his divorced father and mother lived in the home. His father stayed in the attic. I would guess that my grandmother allowed it because he had nowhere else to go. He died in the home in 1950. My father recalls hearing him upstairs coughing.

When my mother and father were married in 1951, they moved ten miles east to Sacramento, and my grandmother stayed in the house alone. She became ill in 1958, and my dad had a laundry and another bedroom and bath added to the rear of the

house so we could move in to care for her (see plan, p. 10). I spent my school years from first grade through high school at 516 G Street.

Including the addition, the house was about 1,850 square feet in size. My parents and I had the two front bedrooms and my grandmother had the new space in the back. She passed on in 1960, when I was eight, so we didn't all live together very long. After her death, I moved into her bedroom, and the front bedroom became an office.

## Describing the House

The house at 516 G Street was essentially a backwards “L” shape, with sleeping and bathroom areas at each end of the structure and living and eating areas at the center. The kitchen was galley style—long and thin, widening into a dining area at the north end. The kitchen functioned as a food-preparation and eating area. It also served as a corridor from the front of the house to the back. In the winter, my parents closed front and back doors and heated the kitchen with its stove—a Wedgewood model with four gas burners and a wood-burning compartment, installed when the house was built (photograph, above right).

The house had no central-heating system. Instead, there was a gas floor heater between the living room and front hall serving the original parts of the house. The back addition was warmed by a wall heater between the laundry room and rear bedroom. My dad never had the heating system upgraded, and the complicated process of lighting pilot lights was one of his seasonal routines. He kept a record of the dates when he turned the pilot lights on and off.

There were three entries to the house: a west front door into the living room; a north side door into the kitchen; and an east back door from the backyard into the laundry, each with a screen door and two steps up. In the back yard, my dad built a concrete-paver patio that, over the years, became lumpy and uneven. About five years before he died, my dad put grab handles on the outside frames of the side and back doors to help my mother climb the steps, but he did not erect any entry railings. The screen doors made entry somewhat complicated as my parents aged because they had to hold the screen doors open while unlocking the entry door.



The house had hardwood floors in the living room, bedrooms, and hallway. The kitchen floor was linoleum. A stairway off the kitchen led down to the basement, and along the top of the basement wall my father stored canned goods, potatoes, and onions. There was an open crawl space between the ground and the sub-flooring where one could see soft, powdery dirt in all directions. Originally, the basement stair had no railing, but after my dad had a stroke in 1999, he had a handrail installed. Underneath the stair was a workshop where he kept tools, hardware, paint and household cleaners, fishing and camping equipment, and things he might need, like jars. These he used as containers for nuts and bolts that he neatly sorted according to size and purpose. He never disposed of a jar, bottle, can, bag, or box!

The attic stair was in the front hall off the living room, between the two bedrooms. This stair had a single railing. In the attic were trunks of old clothes, boxes of old letters, papers and documents, a few pieces of old furniture, and lots of dust. Neither the basement nor the attic was finished: The basement walls were plain concrete, and the attic had no insulation—just bare studs and rafters. In fact, none of the house's walls were insulated.

The front bedrooms each had two sets of double-hung windows that provided lots of light and fresh air. During summer nights, we opened these windows to let in the cooling “delta breeze.” During the day, we shut them early, pulled the shades, and relied on the outside awnings to protect the inside from the hot summer sun. The house stayed re-

markably cool unless there was a run of 100-plus-degree days and no nighttime breeze.

A short hall led from the kitchen to the back addition, past a storage closet and bedroom to the left, bathroom to the right, and into the laundry. Here was the washer, dryer, and washtub. The washer's rinse cycle emptied into the tub: a hose was hooked over the side. More than once, my mother left a sock in the tub, the drain clogged, and water overflowed into the room.

Light filled this room because of its north and west windows. We blocked the summer heat with an outside bamboo shade. The laundry was a large room and storage space for various devices and furnishings: a second refrigerator, a bookcase, a built-in linen closet, and a dining room table where my mother folded clothes and set up her sewing machine for mending. When we had guests, we could put leaves in the table and extend it to seat eight or ten. In this way, the laundry room was transformed into a dining room for holidays. My dad mounted a beam with curtains that, when pulled, hid the washer, dryer, and refrigerator.

## **My Dad's Routines**

My dad was in his prime during my high school years. His typical day went like this. The family would awake around 6:45 a.m., and my parents would go into the kitchen. My mother would light the oven and open the oven door to heat the room. My dad started a fire in the stove firebox to burn junk mail, milk cartons, and other discards. He would use the front bathroom getting ready for work while my mother made breakfast we ate at the dinette table. We then went on our ways to work and school. My dad walked to work, only about three blocks away. My mother and I rode our bikes—she to her job at the University library and I to the high school.

Dad came home for lunch, which I prepared for him when I was home during the summers. After work my mother fed the five cats, balancing five plates in her arms from the kitchen out to the back door, sometimes with cats underfoot. Shortly after, my parents would have their five o'clock cocktail hour. If the weather was nice, they would sit outside in the back yard. Then they watched the television

news in the living room, my mother fixed dinner, and we ate in the dinette. My dad often went into the home office after dinner to take care of bills and other paper work. My mom read on the couch in the living room, and I did homework in my room or at the dinette table.

My dad's spaces were the office, the basement, and the detached garage on the north side of the house. My mother rarely ventured into these spaces. There was frequently something that needed fixing: window screens replaced, awnings put up or taken down, pilot lights turned off or on, and so forth. My dad did these things himself, using tools and supplies he kept in the basement or garage.

He also made sure cupboards and drawers were stocked. He kept the kitchen supplied with staples. In the basement, he stored bulk sugar, flour, and rice in large jars. From this stock as needed, he would refill smaller jars in the kitchen cupboards. This way of separating bulk storage and the daily supplies necessitated my father's making many trips up and down stairs or from the front of the house to the back. At the rear of the laundry room, he made piles of things to save or tend to later, like newspapers and magazines. For my dad, there was never a direct route from package to use or from storage to garbage. Rather, there was always an in-between, "holding" stage, which used multiple spaces and made for a certain amount of clutter. This was not a difficulty for him when he was younger, but as he got older and had to struggle just to get up from a chair, it was exhausting.

## **Physical and Functional Changes**

When I left home for college in 1970, my parents had retired and were active and involved with travel and the community. They spent more than 30 years of their lives in retirement. Travel was their passion, but when at home in Davis, they joined in meals, classes, and social gatherings at the Senior Center and did volunteer work in the community and the church. My mother swam several times a week throughout her life, and both mom and dad walked with friends regularly.

Gradually, my dad absorbed my bedroom into his territory as he stashed clothes and other things throughout the house. The house seemed to become

more and more his and less and less my mother's. I believe she never felt that the place was hers. She had wanted a dishwasher and an air conditioner, but my dad always said no. She was tired of the old-fashioned amenities and ready to move to a retirement village when she reached age 85. My parents considered various facilities, but my dad would not budge from his home. My mother died two and a half years before he did. She was 95 and eight years his senior.

Not too much changed about the way my dad used the house after her death. He left my mom's clothes in her dresser and in the closet and her many family pictures and swimming ribbons on the walls. He began to use her bed, next to his in their bedroom, for piling clothes and sitting while dressing.

He had several chronic health conditions. His vision was always poor, and he could barely see out of his left eye due to a long-standing optic nerve anomaly. He'd had a stroke in 1999 when he was 82. He recovered most of his function but was left with a shuffling gait and some weakness and numbness in his left arm and hand. These problems worsened over the last seven years of his life as he became more fatigued and stiff. He took medications for high blood pressure and a heart arrhythmia.

He was finally diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, and all these impairments contributed to a slowness of movement and an increasing inability to grasp objects. He had difficulty holding objects with his left hand and dropped things constantly. He had trouble opening containers, using tools and utensils, or manipulating buttons and zippers. The ability to grasp is critical, and I believe this disability caused him more grief than his declining strength and loss of balance and flexibility.

## **Bathroom and Kitchen Difficulties**

In the front bathroom, the hot and cold sink spigots were twisting knobs that required a grasp. There was little space around the sink to set things. The light over the mirrored medicine cabinet had an on/off pull chain requiring a reach above shoulder level. Rather than a shower, my dad took sponge baths because the tub's shower valve had been broken for years. He tried to fix it but couldn't grasp

the pliers tightly enough to turn the stem. The toilet paper dispenser was to the toilet's left, which was his weaker side, so he kept a paper roll on the sink in front of him. This was an easy reach for his right hand but took up space on the small vanity.

As it became more difficult, he would shave only every few days. Getting dressed in jeans and shirt took him two hours. Physically, it was difficult to pull a t-shirt over his head or pull up pants with one hand. Mentally, these changes in his physical capabilities confused and depressed him. He didn't strategize but, rather, blamed the object or the situation: "These damn buttons....why are they so small?!" "These damn jars....why do they put the lids on so tight?!"

## **Having Breakfast**

In the kitchen, his habits and room configuration required that he make multiple trips across the room between refrigerator and dinette table and between sink and stove. Multi-tasking and efficiency were never his style. He did one thing at a time.

My dad always had tea and usually, hot cereal, for breakfast. He kept several varieties of loose tea in the cupboard to the right of the sink. He stored the tea in labeled, easy-to-handle tins and kept the original packages in the basement. To boil water, he used a Revere Ware tea kettle, lightweight, fillable through the spout, and thus requiring no lid. He kept the teapot in the cupboard to the left of the sink. He "scalded" the pot before he put in the tea.

To move between sink and stove required turning around and crossing a four-foot space. For workspace, he used the counter top, or "sink board," as he called it. He also used the stove surface, since iron lids covered the wood burner and the unused gas burners. The oven top served as storage for utensils, honey, and salt and pepper.

In making tea, he placed the teapot near the sink, walked across to get the kettle off the stove, then returned to the sink to scald the teapot with boiling water. Then he emptied the scalded pot into the sink, measured tea into the pot, poured in more boiling water, and placed the teapot in the open oven (across from him, at waist level) to steep. He did all these interconnected actions with one hand.

Next, he would prepare his oatmeal, grits, or cream of wheat. Moving back and forth across the room, he would bring water from sink to stove, and take containers and utensils from cupboard and drawer. When the cereal was ready, he put it in a bowl, which he placed on the table. He then put teapot, two cups, and strainer on the table and moved to the refrigerator to get orange juice, which he poured into a glass and took to the table.

It was a considerable distance from refrigerator to table—about 12 feet. The refrigerator door swung to the right, out into the room, and the work area was across the room. To open the door with his right hand required removing items with his unreliable left hand. He then had to pivot left to place items on the counter about four feet behind him. After carrying the orange juice to the table, he would make another trip to the refrigerator to get milk and carry the quart carton to the table. He chose to sit facing west, a vantage point to the street. This placement required that he go round to the table's far side. After he ate, he left dishes and milk out and moved to the living room, where he sat in his favorite chair with a heating pad on his shoulders.

This breakfast-time routine was complicated and exhausting for my dad. He would hold onto kitchen chairs as he moved around the table. He would keep a hand on the counter as he traversed the length of kitchen. Suffering numbness as well as weakness, he would lose his grip and frequently drop utensils, pots, and pans during his last months of life. He knocked things over. He cleaned up after himself less and less because it was too tiring and too much more than he could do.

Mental inflexibility added to my dad's physical problems. He was unable to change his habits or to adapt his taken-for-granted actions to his deepening disability. He wanted the house to stay as it always was, even when that made it almost impossible for him. He became angry when I moved some canned goods from the basement to a lazy Susan in the kitchen cupboard. Rather than use the stores there, he would continue to go downstairs, precariously clutching the basement stair railing.

In a few instances, he did make things easier for himself. He kept pliers, magnifying glasses, and

flashlights strategically placed throughout the house—front, center, and rear. I provided him with a large-button phone, and he kept a portable phone by his bed at night, although the cradle remained in the front office because there was no bedroom phone jack. He called a handyman from the senior center to change light bulbs. As time went on, he asked a family friend, Nyla, to do banking and grocery shopping for him. Eventually, when she discovered that items she'd purchased were spoiling in the refrigerator, Nyla arranged for deliveries from Meals on Wheels.

## Self and Place

My dad's identity was so bound up in his home that I'm not sure he differentiated between self and place in the weeks before his death. He did have some dementia and was consumed with visions of disasters at 516 G Street. Several times he asked me to call 911 to report an imagined fire or theft. Another time he demanded to leave the house and move to a hotel. The day before he died, he had a moment of clarity and apologized for all his worry and outbursts.

Participating in my dad's home situation in the last few months of his life has been a revelatory experience. I have been moved and inspired by his attachment to home, by his "stubbornness," by his struggles and suffering, and by his unwillingness to accept his declining health. I did the best I could to help him. And I continue to remember him as I help others find practical ways to remain in their own homes [2].

## Notes

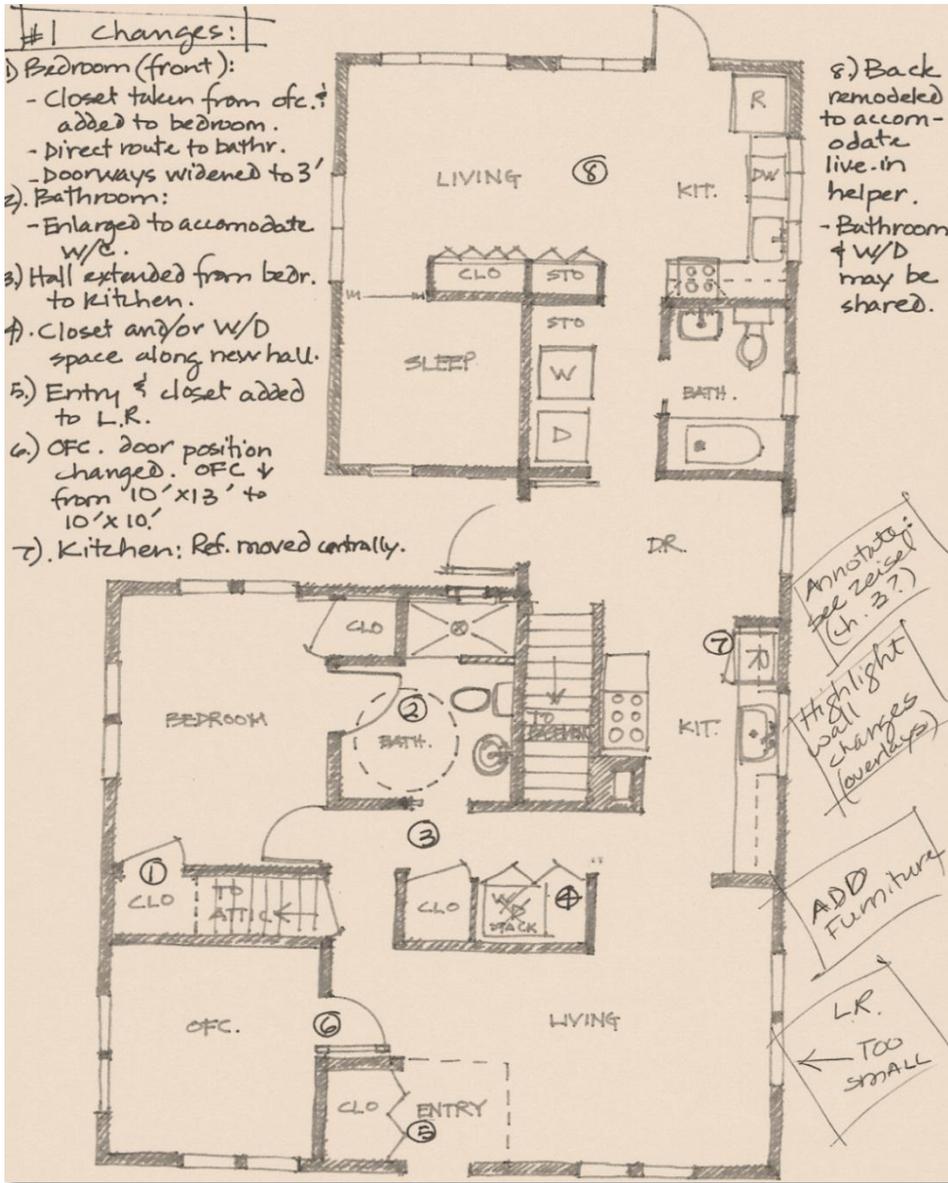
1. Jane Barry, 2008, "Everyday Habits and Routines: Design Strategies to Individualize Home Modifications for Older People," master's thesis, Department of Interior Design, Washington State University, Spokane, Washington. Go to: <http://spokane.wsu.edu/academics/design/documents/JaneBarry.pdf> (accessed February 5, 2012).
2. See next page.

*Images: The author in front of 516 G Street, Davis, California, 2007; Description and plan of the house from "New Small Homes" (Topeka, KS: L. F. Garlinghouse Company 1938); The Wedgewood kitchen range, installed when the house was built in 1939.*

# Re-Envisioning a House

In her thesis, Barry (2008) envisioned a redesign of her father's house that might have better accommodated his physical and mental decline.

Below are her revamped floor plan for the house and computer renderings of proposed changes for the kitchen and house exterior.



# The Place of Assistive Technologies in the Homes and Lives of Families with a Child with Complex Healthcare Needs

Andrew J. Moore and Bernie Carter

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Within any research project, serendipity places a role. New lines of inquiry often emerge from post-fieldwork dialogue among team members. As we were completing work on a study of UK children's and family's experiences of Community Children's Nursing Services (CCNS) (Carter & Coad 2009; Department of Health 2011), our attention was drawn from service delivery to a more intense focus on the impact of the technology and equipment that many children with complex needs rely on in their homes.

For those parents we interviewed, we were usually invited into their living rooms. Parents frequently referred to the technological aids (e.g., postural chairs and ventilators) and medical supplies (e.g., syringes and suction tubes) that they and their children relied on, revealing how ever-present this equipment was within the home.

To reduce the impact of the functional technology, manufacturers have designed some of the equipment to be more homelike and child-friendly—for example, postural chairs that look like a “wooden bumblebee.” Similarly, manufacturers have attempted to design roboticized assistive devices to appear more *discreet* (to avoid attention), in

an attempt to make them look less *discrete* (distinct from everything else) and more sympathetic to a normative aesthetic of home and family life.

In other homes, ventilators and pumps whirred and labored, medications and distinctive smelling feeds were administered, and boxes of syringes and medication were stacked under the cot in which a child lay. The child's dependence on technology was visually, audibly, and often olfactorily apparent. There was no hiding it from us as guests, and we do not suggest it should be hidden. Still, some parents did speak of *trying* to hide equipment—in cupboards, behind the sofa, or upstairs out of view.

For the parents we spoke to, these objects framed the difference between their child and other children. One mother spoke of how the pediatric cradle her son lay in, next to the generic “Moses basket” of his twin sister, became the focus of visitors. They ceased to see him as a child and instead saw only the cradle that framed the difference between the two children. The mother's draping the cradle with a blanket to hide the stark difference between the cradles was an effort to remove the frame that the physical equipment presented—to pass the child as *normal* to visitors and to provide a

“protective capsule” (Carnavale 2007, 10) controlling who sees and does not see the difference.

The mother frankly admitted that the equipment intruded into her home. She challenged us to “imagine it in your lounge—it’s ugly” (we did imagine it and she was right: it was ugly in the sense it didn’t fit). More importantly, she resignedly emphasized that such devices “...*make* the child disabled.”

We agree with Carnevale (*ibid.*) that assistive technologies (AT) may be seen as stigmatic symbols. We contend, however, that they may also be seen as *that which does not belong*—as something that is out of place in the home. At the same time, the child’s life depends upon the existence of this thing itself, as life-giving and, therefore, appropriating. This was the tension we witnessed in the children’s homes.

**T**he question of being at home in the world as dwelling involves an ambivalent dialectic (Lindahl et al., 2003, 2005, 2006). For the child and adult, the taken-for-grantedness of one’s relationship to AT sometimes renders it invisible and a bodily extension or part. At other times, AT becomes an object of direct attention as when it malfunctions or when visitors see it and the child’s limitations become obvious in contrast to those who are more able. In its appearing, it re-appropriates the spaces of dwelling and at least partly alienates the child.

This sense of alienation can also be felt by the child’s caretakers. Though the continuation of their life does not directly depend upon AT in the way the child’s does, ontologically, their continued existential security does, since their relationship with the child characterizes their being-at-home in the world. Thus, in their shifting visibility, ATs represent continual changes in one’s attunement to the world, or to “homelikeness” as Svenaeus (2001) aptly calls it.

If, as Jager (1985, 219) suggests, total inhabitation relies on full embodiment, then, arguably, this can never be provided by AT. Consequently, those who rely upon AT can never fully inhabit their world. The re-appropriation of alien things that really do not belong re-presents itself in “the suffering of a ‘no’ of things” (*ibid.*).

The home spaces of families with technology-dependent children are different from other family homes in that they are *re-constructed* around the child’s condition and needs. The home space becomes an appropriated landscape: No longer a family landscape but a landscape of care, “like a mini hospital.” Home as it was is essentially changed, and the stories that parents told showed how this shift had resounding effects.

Getting their child home from hospital represented the most important part of a socio-spatial reconstruction process that more often than not had begun a long time before the child’s homecoming. Parents spoke of how the home felt empty without the child. Prior to the his or her homecoming, the dwelling was restructured in preparation for the child: a string of professional strangers wandering across and scrutinizing what is essentially sacred space. Home is anticipated in light of the passing through of nurses, therapists, installers, health and safety assessors, and representatives from social services.

When the child returns, the home is complete but with the addition of new things in new places, and old things re-ordered or pushed out. Waves of new objects move in different directions, displacing older objects, routines, and a sense of belonging. Since children with complex health-care needs regularly move in and out of hospital, there are liminal modes of existence between hospital and home. The identities of these two places meld as the family tries to comprehend what has become hospital and what has become home.

Home is part of a parent’s identity as “parent.” Any disorder in the home leads to the realization that home is no longer the same place. For some parents, this shift invokes the feeling that the home is “not my home” anymore. In one sense, this admission is felt to be heretical, since *getting* home does not automatically mean that the parents feel at home. The event that necessitates a child’s reliance on AT may be seen as presenting a biographical disruption to the parents of that child, and this disruption extends into the lived spaces and lived identities of the child’s parents and siblings (Bury 1982).

Children, their family, and friends become experts in the use and administration of medical tech-

nologies. The physical (the building and contents), social (family, friends and health professionals), and symbolic landscapes (the objects and rituals) of the home then start to reflect those of the place that all families wish to avoid—the hospital. In avoiding the hospital, the family’s goal is a “normal family life” in which the child feels included, cared for, and safe. Though medical technology enables this possibility, it remains incongruous and symbolic of the place they aim to avoid. For some parents, the lack of autonomy and control over the appropriation of the home space created resentment.

The dialectical relationships with AT are presented in a series of studies by Lindahl and colleagues (2003, 2005, 2006), who suggest that home as a lived space is not an unreflective or taken-for-granted place for those families who rely on home AT. Lindahl’s research with adults who rely on ventilators indicates that home is seen as a place of comfort, security, and well-being but also as a place of uncertainty and fragility. Relief characterizes relationships with AT when they are perceived as life-saving. At the same time, however, they are seen as an “enemy,” provoking fear and feelings of a burdened life.

While the home may feel safe, the need for AT for travel and encounters beyond the home can be both worrying and burdensome for parents. In one story we heard from parents, their child with a breathing tube went on a class trip to the zoo. He was accompanied by a care-giver trained to deal with emergencies. The child’s wheelchair was equipped with oxygen, suction equipment, and emergency supplies.

All was going well until the group arrived at the meerkat enclosure where the children became more animated and excited. In his enthusiasm, the child pulled at his breathing tube and hurled it toward the nearest meerkat. The situation suddenly shifted to an emergency as the care-giver had to replace the tube. The medical equipment and the child’s dependence on technology were instantly exposed, made visible and public. Though the new tube was quickly inserted, this event underlined the parents’ anxieties about the potential for harm outside of the relative security of home. Despite these

dangers, they were aware that home is a place of comings and goings rather than *stayings* and that if home is to be homelike, it can never be one-hundred percent risk free.

Seamon’s concept of “at-homeness” provides one interpretive framework for exploring how parents reflect on the lived experience of home. Seamon (1979) identified five prerequisites for a sense of *at-homeness*, or the feeling of being completely comfortable and secure in one’s home: *rootedness* (a sense of familiarity and belonging); *regeneration* (the restorative function of place); *at-easeness* (the freedom to be oneself); *warmth* (a friendly and supportive atmosphere); and *appropriation* (a sense of possession and control).

The presence of AT is a challenge particularly to appropriation and also affects at-easeness. The presence of AT is a reminder that the family does not have a choice and is not fully control of their home space. In addition, AT reminds parents of the fragility of their child’s life. This is a source of unremitting anxiety, which one father described as living “a couple of rungs up the stress ladder.” Arguably, this anxiety corrodes the anchor points of ontological security, which Giddens (1990, 92) describes as “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action.” Without AT, children would be required to live in hospital, or they would die.

While the parents of the children in the CCN study were grateful for AT, they also saw it as burdensome in the way it transformed their lived experience of home as they had to restructure their lived space to accommodate the technology. Regardless of whether such technology is designed well, it might be that the individuals and families who rely on AT will experience persistent ambivalence toward it, being both simultaneously grateful and resentful. This oscillating relationship will always mean that at-homeness for these families remains a precariously balanced existential state, characterized not by questions related to one’s belonging but by questions related to *fitting* into the world, where AT must “fit” into time and place (lived time and lived space), into human relationships (lived rela-

tionality), and into the child's body, facilitated by the skills of others (lived body).

We offer no solution here. More than likely, designers cannot make discreet that which is discrete and unsympathetic to a homelike setting, though more attentive aesthetic designs could possibly enable a more sympathetic fit with domestic environments. What our findings do bring to light are the difficulties that families face in their own homes. We should perhaps be more appreciative of just how far the challenges of chronic illness and profound disablement penetrate into the lives of families, affecting their very being-in-the-world on every level—physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and, of course, environmentally.

There will always be a tension between medical technology, health needs, and the aesthetic of the “family home,” at least for the parents and caregivers of those who are technology-dependent. Professionals should recognize that compromise is required in that keeping a child at home means that that home is subsequently changed. Some families will be able to deal with the situation by reorganizing space or hiding away and storing technology in cupboards and boxes. In other situations, families without such possibilities will deal with the situation however best they can.

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# The Place of Home

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A few years ago, a colleague and I were sitting on a park bench on the grounds of the Prague Castle. This colleague is Scandinavian and, as we talked about the beauty of Prague, she explained that she measures all landscape beauty according to her own hometown and its surroundings. She finds those landscapes most beautiful that are like her childhood landscape. Her remark struck me as an insightful commentary on the normative power of place [1].

In thinking more about this issue, I was drawn to consider the relationship of body to home and, specifically, to Gaston Bachelard's descriptions of the places of the childhood home (Bachelard 1969). Bachelard's account can be more explicitly theorized through Martin Heidegger's analysis of dwelling and Edmund Husserl's distinctions between homeworld and alienworld.

In what follows, I consider the interconnections between place and body, followed by an exploration of Bachelard's imaginative descriptions. Next, I move into a more theoretical analysis of the function of dwelling and home in the works of Ed Casey and Martin Heidegger. Finally, I provide a functional analysis of these themes through the Husserlian notions of homeworld and alienworld.

## Body and Place

Yi-Fu Tuan claims that, although divisions and measurements of space differ from culture to culture, two things are constant as fundamental principles of spatial organization and experience: "the posture and structure of the human body, and the

relations (whether close or distant) between human beings" (Tuan 1977, 34). In part, this means that body and place are inseparable. The fact that we are embodied creatures means that we take up space. But more than that, we inhabit a place through and in our lived bodies.

On a basic level, we can see the relationship between the body and place in the idea of the home. When we inhabit a house, we say we live there. We say "come back to my place." It is a space that is intimate and into which we usually only allow those whom we consider family or friends. The house is where we develop a certain style of acting in the world. In the way it is decorated and arranged, it reflects our character.

But the house, too, arranges us much as any building arranges us but in a much more fundamental, determinate way. Any time we enter a building, we come under its sway. Our movements must be attuned to the building as we find our way down hallways, as we locate bathrooms, and so forth. The building opens a particular world to us.

We are motivated in various ways by the building as well—motivated to look out the windows or not, depending upon whether they are accessible to us. Motivated to linger or not, depending upon whether the chairs invite or discourage lounging. We are often forced, perhaps not merely motivated, to walk the long way through the store past all kinds of goods that might catch our eye, rather than having a straight shot to the checkout aisle with our more meager purchase.

We most often are not cognizant of these motivations, but bodily respond to them without really thinking. These ways in which we bodily respond to the built environment do not disappear once we step outside. We are in the world in the same way as we find ourselves in the built environment, not only in the way that the built

environment includes the sidewalks and streets, light poles, and electrical wires but also in the ways we are motivated by the soft grass in the park or the need to avoid the fire ant hill. These things we often do with complete neglect of our embodiedness. We move through the world very much buffeted by its pre-giveness.

There must be one cautionary word here. We do not want to think of the body exclusively as something that is passively acted upon by the environment. Because the body is a lived body, it is situating as well as situated. For phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, the body is in the world, but not as water is in a glass [2]. The world and the places we inhabit do not contain our bodies. Body and world are intertwined, making place integral to body and vice versa. The body is what allows us to move in the world and to respond to the pull of things that interest us.

As Merleau-Ponty (1962, 340) suggests, “It is one and the same thing for us to perceive our body and to perceive our situation in a certain physical and human setting, for our body is nothing but that very situation in so far as it is realized and actualized.” Thus, it is through the body that we inhabit our dwelling places, since it is the body that develops the habits and memories that allow it to take up the place of dwelling. The body is how we get our bearings and orient ourselves in a place.

But my own body is also only given to me through the place it inhabits. As Eva Simms (2008, 42) explains, “the body as mine is given to me not in itself and through the recognition of the boundedness of its skin but as an element in the equation of action space... The body becomes predictable in encounters with the things and people of its action space, and particular gestures and experiences repeat and sediment in the flesh.” The body is how we make a place our own, and the central place of our embodiedness is our home.

## The Priority of Home

Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* is unique in its poetical treatment of the childhood home. Beginning with the dwelling’s cellars and darker, secretive places, Bachelard explores their impact on the childhood psyche. For Bachelard the home rep-

resents the “protected intimacy” of the houses of our dreams as well as those of our reality. He describes it simply as “inhabited space”—as “the non-I that protects the I” (Bachelard 1969, 5).

Bachelard also recognizes that the home is intimately connected to memory. In fact, he understands the home as retaining our past and opening up an immemorial domain. He links this retention of the past with daydreaming, which he insists makes possible the memories of prior dwellings. As he remarks,

the places in which we have experienced daydreaming reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time (ibid., 6).

Further, Bachelard credits the house with the preservation of human identity. Because it is the first world that a child encounters, the hostility of the “external” world is something that is experienced secondarily. He acknowledges, however, that the house is more than a simple repository for memories. It is “physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits” (ibid., 14). He explains that the originary house of our childhood is one that would not trip us up on a visit after decades of absence. We would automatically, physically respond to it as we once did, skipping the creaky step, raising our hand just the right height for the light switch, moving about it with the same gestures we once did:

In short, the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme (ibid., 15).

Edward Casey (1993) describes the childhood home in similar ways. For Casey, however, what is important is the role of the home as hearth, as situation for living and as a foundation for identity. Who we are has to do with where we are from. We have a tendency to identify ourselves according to the places in which we dwell. Casey adopts this term from Martin Heidegger, who describes home in terms of our ability to dwell. Dwelling is a basic character of being and entails a wish to belong to the environment and to be at home.

Further drawing upon Heidegger’s notion of dwelling, Casey argues that a building becomes a home from practices of cultivation. In his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking,” Heidegger (2008, 349) suggests that:

to be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell...It also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine (Heidegger 2008, 349).

But surely, we think, Heidegger isn't romanticizing to such a degree that he thinks in order to dwell we need to go back to an era when each of us cultivated the land? Although romanticizing, Heidegger is not doing so to quite such an extent. Rather, he speaks of cultivating in terms of the caring that is related to culture.

Heidegger is underscoring the inseparability of dwelling and building, but he understands building as constructing and cultivating, the making of edifices and architecture as well as the cultivation of culture. Both of these activities, constructing and cultivating, are carried out in terms of dwelling. For building is dwelling and "remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset 'habitual'—we inhabit it" (ibid., 349). For Heidegger, the quality of human life depends upon how we are able to dwell.

And this takes Heidegger back to the idea of home. According to Vincent Vycinas, home for Heidegger is "an overwhelming, inexchangeable something to which we were subordinate and from which our way of life was oriented and directed, even if we had left our home many years before" [3]. Home is fundamental to our identity and communal belonging. Home is the point of departure for all experiences in the world.

Moreover, this home is primordial. Geographer Eric Dardel suggests that:

Before any choice, there is this place which we have not chosen, where the very foundation of our earthly existence and human condition establishes itself. We can change places, move, but this is still to look for a place, for this we need as a base to set down Being and to realize our possibilities—a *here* from which the world discloses itself, a *there* to which we can go [4].

The power of this primordial place seems not to be in dispute, but exactly how does the home function in this primordiality? Before we consider that question, I want to draw attention to a difficulty with these accounts of home that we need to keep in mind. Bachelard has been criticized, by feminists in

particular, who suggest that the childhood home cannot always be viewed as such a positive place. It is frequently, and probably more so for women, a place of abuse and fear [5]. Like any other experience of home, this abuse and fear writes itself on the body and establishes a style of constitution that cannot easily be overcome.

I agree with much of the feminist critique, but I do not think that critique inhibits the claims that I am making here about the normative power of home. If home is a place of abuse and fear, then other places too will be approached initially from that perspective of lack of safety until one can be persuaded that the place is otherwise. While Bachelard's and Casey's descriptions may be limited in that they represent a romanticization of the childhood home, they are nevertheless tapping into the normative role that home plays for each of us.

To claim, as I am doing here, that home has a normative power means that encounters with other places, other homes, places of work, public places, and so forth, are measured according to the place of home. This does not necessitate that home be a positive place, a place of daydreaming as Bachelard would have it, or a place we wish to return to once we have left it [6]. What it does mean is that our bodily encounters in other places are stylized according to the home's normative stylizing of our bodies. Abuse at home writes itself on the body in such a way that places where such abuse is not present, particularly places that we might call home, may feel uncannily safe but also anxiously on the brink of being unsafe.

Our default expectation in such cases would be of places as being unsafe if our bodies have been habituated to pain and abuse. We may move carefully, unwilling to disrupt another in that place for fear of home-like reprisals. We may shrink from touch, even where touch is caring and loving, due to an expectation of bodily harm. Any place that disrupts that expectation would be experienced as not normal, as bodily awkward [7].

## The Structure of the Homeworld

What these theorists are getting at in describing a familiar *here* against which we oppose a *there* is what Edmund Husserl describes as a distinction between *homeworld* and *alienworld*. Our homeworld is a unity of sense that is manifest in a pre-givenness of the things of the world that constitute the norm by which we judge

other worlds and by which the pre-givenness of other worlds becomes given (Steinbock 1995, 154) [8].

In other words, the homeworld structures experience itself. It is pre-given in the sense that we are not engaged in a conscious constitution of the homeworld or what is most familiar. We engage with it in its familiarity in a kind of absent way. We are not always attentive to it, particularly not as homeworld or as normative. It is the world of our habitualities. But more than that, it is the world that has written itself upon our bodies in such a way that our very movement through this world is structured according to it. The ways in which we move and the givenness of the things of the world are all grounded in our homeworld.

As Anthony Steinbock (*ibid.*, 164) notes, “we actually carry with us the structure of our terrain in the structure of our lived-bodies, in our typical comportment and in our practices.” In using “terrain,” Steinbock stresses the actual physical element, not just the cultural practices of a place. The physicality of the world of home has a great deal to do with the cultural practices, the narratives, and the rituals that contribute to our constitution of the world [9].

To say that we live in a physical environment that shapes us is too simple, though. All people of the same homeworld do not constitute the world in the same way. It is not that the homeworld functions as a rigid structure for constitution. Rather, the homeworld serves as a *ground* in conjunction with our approach to the environment. The environment of a poet is different from that of the profiteer, which is different from that of the naturalist, even if they are all experiencing the same place. What they see and how they see it is quite diverse. Where one person may see beauty and is perhaps focused on color and light, another sees potential and is perhaps focused on structure and accessibility.

What is implicit in Husserl’s notion of homeworld is that this varied constitution of the same environment has to do in part with the normative power of the homeworld. We become attentive to certain elements of any place due to the habitualities of our homeworld. Again, Steinbock suggests that the familiarity of home:

has more to do with the way things in the terrain typically behave, which in turn efficaciously sketches out a range of future comportment, prefiguring this rather than that, highlighting one practice, dimming down another (*ibid.*, 165).

The things within the surrounding world are thereby colored by the environment. They are “saturated with normative significance” depending on the practices that compose the environment. That normative significance also makes itself felt at the level of the lived body. The environment calls forth a style of comportment toward it. This comportment is not one’s comportment toward this particular place but simply one’s comportment. It is one’s way of being, living, and engaging in the place that is home, but also in the place that is alien.

Homeworld is always co-relative with alienworld, and these concepts bring with them the notions of normal and abnormal [10]. While bodily habits, traditions, and rituals are being established through the constitution of the homeworld, that which is not these habits, that which stands over against these traditions, is also being established. In eating with fork and spoon, we do not eat with fingers or bread or chopsticks.

At the same time, experiences of alienworlds make the homeworld more explicit to us in its familiarity. Homeworld in its normality can be so close to us as to be unrecognizable until drawn into relief by an alienworld experience. Consider the mundane experience of crossing the street. Until one has gone to a country where people drive on the opposite side of the road, one may not even realize the way in which one’s bodily activity is habituated to look first left and then right before crossing the street. Once one is confronted with traffic moving on opposite sides of the street, one realizes that this quite normal bodily habit is in fact dangerous in the alienworld. One can try to change that habit, but it is awkward, at least at first, and may become easier or even habit, but the behavior is still alien. Even after years of having changed the pattern, there can be occasions when one “forgets” and reverts to the old ways. There are, of course, degrees of these kinds of differences that make themselves apparent at a bodily level between homeworld and alienworld.

We can also understand how this influences the constitution of the world. In my habit of looking first one direction, then the other before crossing the street, I am also used to constituting a streetscape in a particular

way that, at least for me, doesn't include carts, rickshaws, horses, or throngs of bicycles. It is quite possible, then, that when these types of vehicles are on the scene, I do not even see them. They are not given to me in my constitution of the streetscape until I am pulled up short by them, or have to jump out of the way.

We cannot say definitively when these habits are thoroughly sedimented, but we do know that it happens very early in life. As Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) explains, there is tacit knowledge of alienworld which is necessary for knowledge of homeworld. Thus the two are co-constituted. We can also see how this co-constitution transpires developmentally. In considering pre-giveness and givenness in terms of developmental issues, we recognize that the depth or intensity of the influence of homeworld can vary from individual to individual.

Not all individuals develop at the same rate or with the same specificity. Yet we can see from empirical research that infants gain a sense of space and orientation in the first few months of life. As that sense develops and the infant changes from being primarily prone (at least in Western cultures) to an upright, mobile being, the foundational experiences get overlaid with the additional evidence of distance and height, expanse and boundaries (Tuan 1977, 20–33).

At a very young age, roughly two to two and a half, children are able to distinguish between “home” and “outside” as areas of play, but they do not get more specific than that and certain poles that are more familiar seem to hold more significance for the child—for example, “here” as opposed to “there” (ibid., 25).

Other kinds of situatedness do not develop until later. As Tuan indicates, children of four or five are not necessarily aware of how to get from one familiar place to another, since they have not yet acquired the habit of making mental note of the locations of things or landmarks. Child development specialist Arnold Gesell tells us that a child understands “where” at the age of two or two and a half, but that the sense of place becomes more specific as a child gets older [11].

Given these variations in development, it is possible to recognize that the role of place and

home will vary in intensity depending upon the static nature of one's home. The argument remains, nonetheless, that whatever is static and can become habitual for the child serves as a homeworld ground of experience.

The constitution of homeworld and alienworld is constantly transpiring while being reconstituted and critiqued. It is a dynamic process of transference of homeworld from generation to generation. It does not behoove us to think of the homeworld as a static norm. It is a way of constituting that is constantly open to the newness of each constitutive act, but each constitutive act stems from the homeworld/alienworld relationship. We are constantly in the act of generating the homeworld through the repetition and re-constitution of the tradition we take up within the homeworld.

And when we encounter some place other than homeworld, its alien qualities manifest in the environment, and pulling me up short in my habits, reveal the very normative power of the homeworld, which is the place where my body is most habituated [12]. It is not that the homeworld is thereby found to be ethically superior. Rather, it is that any other place is more or less alien by relation to and in constitution with the homeworld. I am not at home when I am bodily uneasy, when my habits do not fit or do not yield the results I expect.

This does not mean that the alienworld is lesser or worse but that it is not home. In fact, I may be all the more attracted to the alienworld precisely because it is not home. It may seem exciting and mysterious, or even more welcoming if my own home is a place of violence or neglect. But this doesn't change the role of home *as home*. The homeworld provides a normative power in that it is familiar and the hallmark by which we measure any other place and where our experiences are typical and are in conformity with our bodily expectations.

## **Homeworld and Normative Power**

Husserl speaks of normativity in terms of the “normal” relation between the lived body and the environing world. On this account, normality is not, as it might be for the sciences, exactly the same for all experiencing subjects. Remember the poet, profiteer, and naturalist and their differing constitutions of the same place. The poet sees the beauty and mystery of the forest. The profiteer sees the business opportunity of lumber. The naturalist sees a habitat to be preserved. Since Husserl

views the lived body as a constituting element in experience, it must play a vital role in what is perceived as normal or alien and abnormal.

This means that the blind person's normal is different from the seeing person's normal and the 5' 1" person's normal is different from the 6' 2" person's normal. Normality is a matter of constitution that includes the lived body of each experiencing subject. How, given this highly individualistic sense of normality, could anything be viewed as abnormal? Abnormality is viewed as a rupture or discontinuity of experience. When I pick up my coffee cup and prepare to take a sip, I first blow on the hot coffee to cool it. As I tip the cup to my lips, I suddenly am startled by the meeting of my lips with a cold liquid. My experience of the coffee cup is disrupted by an unexpected sensation that alters my entire constitution of the cup as a cup of coffee. The experience is discontinuous.

On the other hand, the experience can be disrupted or discontinuous due to an abnormality of the lived body. Again, we are not talking about some kind of idealized body but one's own lived body: When one has a cold, for instance, and can't taste or smell the coffee, or when one has a limb that is asleep and can't grasp things with it or stand up. These kinds of discontinuities can be incorporated into a continuous experience as one's constitution of the enviroing world changes to accommodate these experiences.

So, when the cold liquid touches my lips, I don't determine that I was entirely incorrect in picking up the cup as I do every morning. I simply determine that this morning, something is slightly different. I focus my attention on the liquid in the cup to determine that it is in fact water and not coffee. I set the cup back down and may reach for it again in a minute or two for a sip of water. It has become my "new normal" that allows my experience to be continuous. When I have a cold, my "new normal" is perhaps understanding that I can't really smell things appropriately, or I can't hear myself speak as I would normally do. For a time, these situations become simply the ways in which I constitute my experiences and incorporate them into my normal approach to the world. Usually, my new normal

lasts only for a brief time, and I return to the normality of homeworld soon enough.

In some cases the "new normal" is not so easily achieved, as, for instance, in the cases of the phantom limb and the anosognosia that Merleau-Ponty described in such detail [13]. For the person suffering from either of these syndromes, the incorporation of a drastic bodily change such as a loss or paralysis of a limb becomes exceedingly difficult and something the person rejects, sometimes indefinitely. These individuals still attempt to engage in the same projects they would have engaged in before their loss, or complain of the pain of a limb that they no longer have. But, in most cases, they relearn their bodily engagement in the world without the use of that limb. To what degree this becomes accepted by them as "normal" varies considerably.

What these examples underscore is precisely the way in which the habituated body becomes the foundation for constituting the homeworld and allows us to question to what degree that which is alien can ever be incorporated into home. If we claim that the homeworld is normative, then what transpires for those who are forced out of their homeworld, or who choose to leave their homeworld? What is the experience of the alienworld? Can the alienworld ever become a replacement homeworld? If there is this kind of conception of a "new" normal, then wouldn't that mean that any alien world would be incorporated and eventually would become a new homeworld?

Interestingly, Husserl suggests that, in spite of the multitude of homeworlds, there is still a foundational unified world of perceptual experience—the perceptual world. This is the world of pure perceptual experience and is what he calls the "lifeworld a priori." All homeworlds are grounded in the singular lifeworld. This, for Husserl, is an eidetic structure that functions as that which is neither experienceable nor relative but grounds both the relative homeworlds and the experiences thereof.

It is not as if in going to London, I have been transported to Mars. Even physical environments that are more radically different than London is from, say, the small-town American South still share the lifeworld. If we try to think of the most divergent environments we can, perhaps New York City in comparison to Samoa in the South Pacific where the people live in pole sheds and use sea toilets, we notice that as alien as New

York City would be to someone from Samoa, or as Samoa would be to someone from New York City, elements of a shared life world are still evident. Constitution of discrete objects against a background and other such basic constitutive elements remain the same.

But does this mean that eventually every alienworld simply becomes absorbed into the homeworld? Is that what is happening in our globalized world?

## **Alienworld to Homeworld?**

We might object to the notion of the homeworld as having normative power by referring to those who are transported to a new place permanently. Think of immigrants or ex-patriot communities abroad. Surely, those people who have lived in a place for several years have adopted many of the customs and the local language. They have come to respond to the weather, the altitude, the physical aspects of the place much as a native would.

Can we not claim that such a place is a new homeworld? Has the alienworld not taken the place of the homeworld and the homeworld become alien? In some ways, perhaps, yes. But not wholesale. Instead, I would claim (with Steinbock) that due to the co-relative nature of the homeworld and alienworld, the transformation of alienworld into homeworld can never be complete. The fact that both worlds are grounded in the lifeworld a priori is what makes possible the experience of both worlds at all. If the alienworld were not grounded in the lifeworld a priori it simply would not be experienceable as world. The lifeworld makes it possible for me to experience the alien and perhaps even to “feel at home” abroad, but the home abroad will only be measured as “homelike” because of the asymmetry of the originally co-relative relationship between homeworld and alienworld.

Let me give a brief example of how this conflict between homeworld and alienworld is manifest in quite material ways, not just in the narrative, the traditions, and the myths of a cultural world [14]. Having grown up in Nebraska, my alienworld is my current home in the state of Georgia. I have lived in Georgia for over ten years—long enough, one might think, to get used to Georgian ways. And perhaps in

some respects I have. I now drink sweet tea, understand the best way to eat grits (although I still don’t like them), and recognize a good biscuit when I see one. I can occasionally be heard to use the phrase “y’all,” and to focus my ideas for beach vacations on Florida.

But, it’s the surrounding world that still feels alien. In Nebraska I enjoyed digging in the dirt as a child. Each spring we would make tours of the yard looking to see which bulbs would come back, getting excited at the first signs of growth. We did very little in the yard, actually—just enough to keep the rose bushes blooming, a few tomato plants alive, and the irises and lily-of-the-valley in shape.

In Georgia, the climate and landscape are very different. The air in Georgia is alive with growth. It weighs heavily upon one’s skin. Rather than coaxing things to grow in the yard, I am constantly hacking away at bushes, brutally pulling up plants as they sprout anywhere and everywhere. It is impossible to keep things from growing. While this may seem like a mundane example, it points to what is so fundamental about this discussion.

Not only have my approach and my habits had to change, but the very way in which I conceive of myself and the surrounding world has had to change in quite radical ways too. I can no longer view myself as the encourager and caretaker of nature. I am instead virtually at war with nature. Being interested in a sustainable garden requires constant vigilance against the natural tendencies of my garden.

Likewise, the world of nature is no longer constituted as the neutral territory of a Nebraska yard, but is the overwhelming and even dangerous realm of my Georgia naturescape. With a yard full of 70-foot pine trees, we live with the anxiety that a tree will fall in a storm and smash our house or worse yet, kill us in our beds as happened to a neighbor. In Nebraska, trees are a luxury, not a danger. The Georgian world is alienworld in its very landscape, not just as a cultural background.

Will Georgia ever become my homeworld? I think not. I will continue to develop ways to cope, but it will always be in co-constitution with the more primordial and normalizing experience of my Nebraska homeworld. It still does not come naturally to me to constitute growing things as weeds, to pull them up when I find them in the yard. There will always be something a

bit uncanny. The pull of the homeworld will always be there.

And homeworld is not just about the traditions that get translated through the myths and the stories. It is about the embodied relationship to an environment. We cannot so blithely separate the cultural from the environmental, since the cultural is frequently what it is precisely because of the environmental. Skiing is very much a part of the cultural world in Colorado with the equipment, language, and traditional events that surround it. This is not so in Georgia for very obvious reasons of environment, climate, and thus culture. On the other hand, gardening for native Georgians is a mark of one's belonging. Not so in the mountain towns of Colorado, since it is almost impossible to get garden vegetables to grow.

So, I don't think there can be a real fear of alienworlds dissolving into homeworld. Globalization cannot eliminate the diversity of environment, landscape, and embodied life. While some of these elements are perhaps more under threat than others, it is virtually impossible that the co-constitution of homeworld and alienworld could ever be replaced with simple lifeworld.

I want to reiterate that I am not suggesting that the homeworld is better than the alienworld. In many cases, where one *feels* comfortable may in fact be a place completely opposite from the homeworld, but I would suggest that such is the case in large part due to the experience of the homeworld. If the homeworld is a place of danger, anxiety, or abuse, then one may in fact be more comfortable in the alienworld, but the alienworld is still judged on the basis of the homeworld. Generally speaking, homeworld is formative for the ways in which we constitute the surrounding world, since it is formative for one's bodily habits and style of constitution.

## Implications of Homeworld

Having discovered here that the homeworld is so fundamental to the very embodied nature of human existence, to our ways of perceiving and knowing, we naturally wonder what the ramifications of this are. Why should it matter that the homeworld has this kind of normative effect for perceiving and knowing? Who cares?

In concluding, I want to raise a few issues for which this investigation is important. There are ethical concerns that could come under scrutiny given this framework. For instance, how might we deal differently with those persons who are displaced from their homeworld by war or famine? In attempting to place these people, we might take into consideration the environment and climate, the environmental landscape where these people could be most "at home" in the alien world, all the while knowing that no alienworld will ever be homeworld for them.

We might also reconsider policies regarding adoption of children from one country to another. Is it right or proper to remove a child of two or older, for instance, from its homeworld and bring that child to a place that is utterly alien in landscape and tradition? Think of the lost boys of Sudan who were taken to Minnesota, Pittsburgh, New York City and several other American cities. These places are so utterly unlike their homeworld in climate and landscape and tradition. Is such a move justified by the "good" it will do those boys? Is there no other alternative?

Finally, I do wonder whether it is inherently conservative to preserve notions of homeworld and alienworld in this era of time-space compression where the world is shrinking. I think the answer that Husserl has helped us to see is that, regardless of how small the ground-earth is, the homeworld will always arise in conjunction with an alienworld and that the preservation of these differences is not to be viewed as negative or hostile but as necessary for the transference of culture and tradition.

So, while it may seem simple enough to suggest that our aesthetic taste is in large part dictated by the landscape in which we grew up and which carries our cultures and traditions within, it is a much bigger thing to suggest that the landscape carries more than aesthetic norms with it. It carries the very normative power of constitution of the world at all. The very way in which I move my body and the very elements of the landscape salient to me have everything to do with the normative power of my homeworld. Or perhaps, to return to Heidegger, we can see that the desire for home calls us to be attentive to how building and thinking belong to our dwelling.

## Notes

1. The concept of normativity will be explained throughout but, in general, I use the concept with respect to a foundational standard to which other places are compared in terms of our embodied constitution of world. It is not meant to reflect an average or an optimum but that which serves as a foundation for one's typical constitution of the world, one's style of being in the world.

2. For more on their notions of body, see Husserl 1989, vol. 2, especially sections 36–44, pp. 152–170; Heidegger 1962, pp. 79–80; and Merleau-Ponty 1962, especially part I, pp. 90–92.

3. Vycinas 1961, p. 84, as quoted in Relph 1976, p. 39.

4. As quoted in Relph 1976, p. 41.

5. See for example Price 2002.

6. For a more contemporary perpetuation of this kind of Bachelardian view, see Jacobson 2009. Jacobson describes the home in terms of daydreaming, security, and relaxation. I do not claim such to be the case. Familiarity does not necessarily mean comfort or security. The home does write itself on the body in terms of the body's development of habits and a style of being in the world, however, and on this point Jacobson and I agree.

7. What this also draws into question is the predominant view of home as a place of refuge, a place “inside” that fends off the “outside.” By using notions of embodied normativity, we can recognize that what becomes normal, habituated, embodied being for one is not at all the same for another and it may not be at all a secure “inside.” The language of “inside” and “outside” leads to misunderstanding as does the language of security and refuge when speaking of the home place. It is home through its normative power by being the foundation that is most primary for our embodied habitual being in the world. It is a position of familiarity, but this does not equate to refuge, safety, or other romanticized notions.

8. Husserl (1966) explains that “pre-given” refers to those things that exercise an affective pull upon us, while that which is “given” is such that we are attentive to it in a more active way. We focus on a thing, we pay attention to its meaning given to us. See Husserl 1966.

9. Notice that homeworld can equally apply to those who are homeless, those who are nomadic, or those who have varying degrees of static home life. It does not only refer to the semi-permanent structure of a house. Military children, for instance, who do not stay more than two years in any one place have a kind of moving homeworld since, for them, we could say the built environment has a certain precedence because it is more static—the military base remains largely the same even though the bases may be in various corners of the world.

10. Husserl does not mean “normal” and “abnormal” to carry any ethical significance. They carry normative significance simply in terms of one's habituated engagement with the world.

11. Gesell 1950, p. 121, as quoted in Tuan 1977, p. 210.

12. Again, homeworld is not necessarily a place of comfort in the usual sense of the term. In cases of abuse or neglect, the body is habituated to the abuse and neglect such that a place of safety, a place devoid of abuse, feels strange or fragile as opposed to the “usual” feeling of anxiety or fear or pain.

13. See Merleau-Ponty 1962, pp. 84–02.

14. In *Crisis of European Sciences* (1936), Husserl focuses precisely on this notion of narrative and language in the transference of homeworld across generations. There are also elements in that text, however, that allude to the primacy of place. Those elements have generally not been the focus of secondary-source commentary and are the elements I would like to focus upon.

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# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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## Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Published three times a year, *EAP* is a forum and clearing house for research and design that incorporate a qualitative approach to environmental and architectural experience.

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