

Home

Home

Home implies both rest and settlement, and movement. Home is the place from which things originate (**hometown, home country**) and to which they return, or – where movement is blocked – a place of imagined return. It is a place of belonging, involving a sense of family, intimacy, or affinity among those who live close to each other, surrounded by movement. It is a place to which others come when we are at home to receive them and a place from which things flow to others: for colonial administrations, instructions, like parcels for migrants, always came from home. Home can also be found at the other end of travel and movement – a **home away from home**, or, in colonial histories, a home planted in another's land, as in **home station**. And home can be a beckoning destination, a place of final rest and return: "Til we end in dust, our final rest and native home" (Milton, 1667).

To take things home is to make them safe, to take them out of circulation – as in the **home base** of a game: **home and dry** – just as to **strike home** is the most brutal of blows in denying an opponent the sanctuary of home. To **come short home** is to fail to reach home, or come to grief: "They very often came short home, for the Germans had the better of them" (Defoe, 1722). Homes for **the homeless**, the afflicted, the destitute, and the infirm are places of rest provided against the insecurity of life on the streets, just as **homeland security** aims to place a protective shield around the nation. And it is **at home** that things are properly themselves, where a person's true identity resides.

These various meanings of home accrued a particular symbolism in the C19 through their association with the middle-class household. Defined increasingly in terms of the nuclear family of cohabiting adults and their children, the home acquired marked gendered characteristics as a private, largely feminized domestic sphere separated off from the male-dominated worlds of work and public life. As a "haven in a heartless world," home was, ideally, a place to which the male head of household could retreat for security from, and renewal for, the lacerating rigors of industry and competition. Home is "the place of peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division," but only when there is a "true wife" at its center (Ruskin, 1868).

The relationships between rest and movement, private and public, home and away, give rise, in this formation, to unstable and contradictory evaluations of home. Home is devalued as limiting and confining compared to the challenges of risk and danger, and the opportunities for mobility, that are reserved for men outside the home. And home is sentimentally overvalued as a sequestered zone, a place of stable tranquility, where male movement, in coming to rest, is readied to be once again set in motion. At the same time, in the emergence, from the IC19, of domestic science, campaigns for rational and scientific **home management**, and, into the C20, the explosive growth of domestic technologies, the home – an "invaded haven" – is integrated into the world of industrial production and management to which it imaginarily

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stands opposed. The related development of **home economics** signals the exclusion of women's work in the home from contemporary definitions of the public economy.

The relations between home, rest, settlement, belonging, and movement have had fatal consequences for peoples whose practices of home are not spatially centered in this way. In early contact histories between the old and new worlds, the nomadism of hunter-gatherer societies was interpreted as an index of their savagery. To wander aimlessly without a fixed point of departure and return indicated a lack of civilization, which legitimated colonization as a process of civilizing the savage, and a failure to permanently settle and so effectively own the land, which justified its expropriation.

In later histories, the values invested in the home have been creatively reworked in the process of being translated from their C19 Euro-American white and middle-class origins across a range of class and racial divides. The home, and women's place within it, played an important role in nurturing the development of Indian nationalism as an inner sanctum in which a distinctive culture and identity were preserved from violation by the colonizer. "In the world, imitation of and adaptation to Western norms was a necessity; at home they were tantamount to annihilation of one's very identity" (Chatterjee, 1993: 121). Home often played the same role in histories of slavery and racial oppression: "one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issues of humanization, where one could resist" (hooks, 1990b: 42).

The ambiguity of the values that are attached to the place of home are evident in the literature that has emerged in the context of feminist, gay, and lesbian critiques. Donna Haraway summarizes how home values are now contested:

Home: Women-headed households, serial monogamy, flight of men, old women alone, technology of domestic work, paid homework, re-emergence of home sweat shops, home-based businesses and telecommuting, electronic cottage, urban homelessness, migration, module architecture, reinforced (simulated) nuclear family, intense domestic violence. (Haraway, 1985: 194)

Yet home can also remain a haven in a heartless world, a place to which the true self can retreat and find expression: "not ever being *your whole self* except obviously *in the home*" (Stacey, English lesbian, *cit.* Johnson and Valentine, 1995: 108).

The relations between home – whether understood as place of domicile, hometown, or home country – rest, settlement, belonging, and movement are also being revised in light of new ways of living associated with increased labor mobility and migration. In place of home as "a fixed point in space, a firm position from which we 'proceed' . . . and to which we return" (Heller, 1981: 239), new uses (home as "a mobile, symbolic habitat, a performative way of life and of doing things in which one makes one's home while in

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movement [Morley, 2000: 47]), encompass a broader and more fluid set of relationships between traveling and dwelling.

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See: *COUNTRY, NATION, PRIVATE, PUBLIC.*