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# HOUSE AS A

exploring the deeper meaning of home

# MIRROR OF

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# SELF



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## foreword

C. G. Jung's late-life autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, begins with a personal statement which is then generalized: "My life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole."

In Jung's view the psyche is largely unconscious. The growth of consciousness is what mental life is chiefly about. What is not yet conscious is normally experienced "out there," in projection on the outer world. We find ourselves in other people, things, and places, in experiences felt to come from the outside. Only secondarily, if at all, do we recognize our own participation in our experience. When we do, we have a chance to reclaim the projection, ponder it, own it, and add it to our awareness of ourselves. It is in this way that personality grows—by

"It is thus a concretization of the individuation process. . . . During the building work, of course, I never considered these matters. I built the house in sections, always following the concrete needs of the moment. . . . Only afterward did I see how all the parts fitted together and that a meaningful form had resulted: a symbol of psychic wholeness."

Jung expresses poetically what a dwelling can be psychologically, what Clare Cooper Marcus calls "house as a mirror of self": "At Bollingen I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself. . . . There is nothing in the Tower that has not grown into its own form over the decades, nothing with which I am not linked. Here everything has its history, and mine; here is space for the spaceless kingdom of the world's and the psyche's hinterland. . . ."

We do not usually think of our everyday residence in such grand terms, yet to the extent that they express and reflect the self the language is appropriate. "In modest harmony with nature" (the title of a Chinese woodcut) includes harmony with our own nature. A right home can do that. It can protect, heal, and restore us, express who we are now, and over time help us become who we are meant to be.

We are fortunate indeed that Clare Cooper Marcus was so gripped by her subject and persisted with it through twenty years of research. We as readers become gripped by it also. The interaction between people and their domestic contexts, a subject of overwhelming importance once she calls it to our attention, has been neglected in both architectural and psychological circles. The author moves into this interface, to the profit of both fields of study and to the benefit of the general reader. Through her magical book we can join her in her consideration of human "place-making," and individually resonate to her study of what are universal human processes. She presents fascinating interview material about individuals in relation to their natural and created environments—about the expression and extension of self into the surround, the "personalization of space." She adds her own experiences and profound

reflections about such events. Finally, she provides exercises and guidenotes for the journey, practical ways to go about occupying one's place and coming home to the self.

It seems fitting to draw a parallel between Jung's creation of his Tower and the author's twenty-year creation of her powerful book: "Only afterward did I see how all the parts fitted together and that a meaningful form had resulted: a symbol of psychic wholeness." Home is such a symbol, and this book is such a home.

-JAMES YANDELL, M.D., PH.D.

former president, C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco

## house as a mirror of self

*That people could come into the world in a place they could not at first even name and had never known before; and that out of a nameless and unknown place they could grow and move around in it until its name they knew and called with love, and call it HOME, and put roots there and love others there; so that whenever they left this place they would sing homesick songs about it and write poems of yearning for it . . . and forever be returning to it or leaving it again!*

—WILLIAM GOYEN, *The House of Breath*<sup>1</sup>

Why was Jean so attached to her house that to move away seemed to threaten her very being? Why did Robert buy what seemed like the perfect dwelling, only to spend as much time away from it as possible? How was it that Alan loved their house and Marion felt sick every time she parked in the driveway? Why did Peter choose a run-down apartment in a dangerous neighborhood when he could have lived anywhere? Why did Sara love her cottage, Jeff his houseboat, Michael his city loft? What is behind these profound feelings about house and home? These are the kinds of questions that have

intrigued and fascinated me most of my life. I set out looking for answers and was often stunned by what I learned.

This is a book about people and their homes. It is not about architecture per se, or decorating styles, or real estate, but about the more subtle bonds of feeling we experience with dwellings past and present. Some people have profound memories of a special childhood home and unconsciously reproduce aspects of its form or essence in a house of adulthood. Others find their current dwelling-place curiously uncomfortable, yet know that it has nothing to do with the usual concerns for privacy, security, or personal space. Some people, on experiencing the stress of divorce or death of a loved one, find their bondedness to home to be dramatically changed.

A home fulfills many needs: a place of self-expression, a vessel of memories, a refuge from the outside world, a cocoon where we can feel nurtured and let down our guard. A person without a fixed abode is viewed with suspicion in our society, labeled "vagrant," "hobo," "street person." The lack of a home address can be a serious impediment to a someone seeking a job, renting a place to live, or trying to vote. Those of us lucky enough to have a home may rarely reflect on our good fortune.

At the base of this study is a very simple yet frequently overlooked premise: As we change and grow throughout our lives, our psychological development is punctuated not only by meaningful emotional relationships with people, but also by close affective ties with a number of significant physical environments, beginning in childhood. That these person-place relationships have been relatively ignored is partly due to the ways in which we have chosen to "slice up" and study the world. Psychologists whose domain is the study of emotional development view the physical environment as a relatively unimportant backdrop to the human dramas of life. Those who *are* interested in people-environment relations—geographers, anthropologists, architects, and the newly emerging field of environmental psychology—have for the most part ignored issues dealing with emotional attachment.

Home can mean different things to different people. Those far away from their place of upbringing may refer to England, or China, or "back east" as home. For immigrants to a new country, there may be a long period of adjustment revolving around the issue of just where home is. In young adulthood, many vacillate between thinking of home as where they now live, and thinking of it as where they grew up. For

many people living in cities, home may be the village where they were born or the cabin they go to on vacation. City dwellers in Nairobi, Kenya, for example, refer to their ancestral farm or village as home and expect to be buried there when they die. Apartment dwellers in Stockholm, Sweden, often consider home to be the second home, where they spend weekends and vacations on the coast or in the forest. Ties to the land and nature, and memories of extended family, prove stronger than the mere number of days spent in a particular dwelling.

Much of my academic career has focused on low-income housing. I was intrigued to discover what the residents of public housing projects felt about the physical environment in which they lived, all the more so when the design of that environment had received an award from the American Institute of Architects. Did professional appraisal and resident experience coincide?

I was interested in this question because most people of low or modest income have little choice about where they live, while the designers of the housing projects rarely have the time, training, or inclination to ask them about their preferences. I authored a couple of books that attempted to fill this gap, using a format that designers could consult at the drawing board.

As I continued this work, I became vaguely dissatisfied. I was learning and communicating a lot about *house* (kitchen design, room layout, privacy needs, inadequate storage, and so on), but little about *home*. During my early years as a graduate student and young faculty member at Berkeley, I moved ten times in ten years. Each time, the actual physical move was followed by weeks, sometimes months, of getting used to the new place. Hanging pictures, moving houseplants around, rearranging furniture, I gradually created a home in each new setting. I reflected on my own feelings about moving and settling into a new place and realized that my door-to-door surveys in housing projects were only skimming the surface of what house and home mean to the human heart. I searched in the library but found little guidance: Psychologists, anthropologists, architects, planners—few had delved into the deeper emotional meanings of home. Novelists and playwrights, filmmakers and poets had more profound insights. Reading Swiss psychologist Carl Jung's autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, was a turning point. Here was a deeply reflective man who had built his own house and linked its form with aspects of his own psychological

development. This was the start of a new direction in my work, which has absorbed me for the past twenty years.

Since the mid-1970s, I have talked with more than sixty individuals about their homes, most of them living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The people I spoke with were young and old, owners and renters, men and women. The dwellings they lived in ranged from urban mansions, rented apartments, cottages, and suburban homes, to converted factories, houseboats, mobile homes, convents, and domes in the forest. Some people were wealthy enough to own two houses but felt at home in neither of them. Others lived in great contentment in a single room or an illegal self-built shack. What all these people had in common was a strong emotional relationship with their homes, either positive or negative. Some felt profoundly at home; others felt distressingly alienated. What I was interested in discovering through the real-life stories of a wide variety of people was why people felt the way they did about their homes.

The people I talked with were from a range of backgrounds, but all had a number of things in common: They all had strong feelings about where they lived and were able—and willing—to share these feelings with me; and they all had some degree of economic freedom about how and where they lived. In this particular study, I was interested in people who had a certain amount of choice: Given some degree of freedom, where did people select to live? What kind of dwelling did they choose? How did they relate to their furniture and possessions? If they disliked where they lived, what would be an ideal home? I did not talk with the very poor, with residents of housing projects, or with homeless people; for some of them, my questions might have seemed strange, superfluous, even insulting. Nor did I talk with the very rich, or those who employed professional interior designers. I was interested in the average, middle-of-the-road house- or apartment-dweller who had created their own homes, whatever they might now feel about it. Each story is unique, and yet there is a touch of Everyman/woman in all of them.

It is not necessarily comfortable to talk about feelings with a relative stranger. Two things made this easier for the people I spoke with. First, I made no attempt to select a random sample, so people were not contacted via an unexpected phone call or formal letter. All of them volunteered to speak with me, having heard of my work, either through a friend or through a lecture or informal talk where I spoke about it. Thus,



if people knew they would be very uncomfortable talking about feelings, they didn't volunteer. Those who did—regardless of gender, educational level, or socioeconomic status—had some capacity for expressing their feelings.

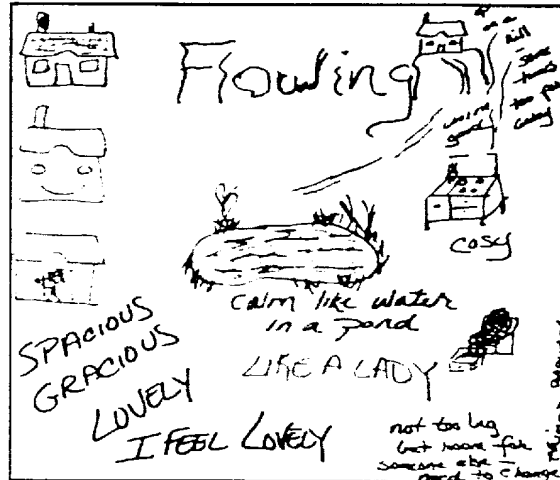
Another reason why people were able to talk freely—often emotionally and poetically—about their feelings for home was, I think, the particular method I used. Even with the best rapport, it is not easy for people to launch into an answer to the question: How do you feel about your home? How I stumbled upon a better approach is a story in itself.

In the early 1970s, I wrote a paper entitled "The House as a Symbol of the Self." It was a "think-piece," partially inspired by the work and theories of Carl Jung, and was published in several academic readers. While I was gratified by letters from people telling me that they had been inspired by this article, I was impatient to move on, to find out from "real people" whether some of the ideas in this paper had validity. Academic colleagues tried to make helpful suggestions regarding controlled experiments, but that was not the route I wanted to follow. Meanwhile, I was busy raising two small children and put the project on the back burner.

By the mid-1970s, I found myself going through the emotional turmoil of a divorce. For support and guidance, I joined a women's group run by a therapist using the Gestalt approach. A year later, two Roman Catholic sisters, Pat and Joanna, joined the group. Pat had recently moved to California from Tucson, Arizona, where she had lived in a convent close to the desert. One evening, she began to talk about how much she missed the desert where she had gone each day to pray and meditate. Since a basic technique of Gestalt therapy is role playing, the therapist running the group suggested that Pat talk to the desert and tell it her feelings. The resulting dialogue between Pat and the desert was poetic and deeply moving. Scales fell from my eyes! If Pat could speak so eloquently to—and as—the desert (an inanimate setting), why couldn't I ask people to do the same with their houses?

I interviewed a few members of the women's group who had strong feelings about their homes, using this role-playing approach. The results were more than I had hoped for. I had finally found a method with which I could proceed. In order to learn to use this approach in a responsible way, I went into training with Anita Feder-Chernila, a Gestalt counselor leading the women's group referred to above. My motivation was not

Each dialog began with the person recording his or her feelings about home in a visual image—in this case, a young woman who loved her newly purchased home.



to become a therapist, but to utilize role playing as a means of uncovering feelings in a way that would not be damaging to my informants.

Each story in this book was told to me while sitting in the person's own home. I found this to be a necessary part of putting people at ease. In order to have them begin to focus on their emotions. I first would ask that the person put down his or her feel-

ings about home in a picture; I supplied a large pad of paper, crayons, and felt pens. If they objected with "Oh—I can't draw," I reassured them that this was not a test in drawing, but rather an opportunity for them to focus on their feelings without speaking. Some people did childlike house diagrams with words or colors indicative of feelings. Others produced mandala-like symbols, semiabstract images, or artistic renderings. For most people, it seemed that this experience of beginning to explore feelings in a visual image while I absented myself from the room was extremely helpful in allowing them to focus before starting to talk.

While this was going on, I would wander around the house or apartment, taking photos and notes about how the setting seemed to me. Then, after fifteen to twenty minutes, I would return and ask the person to describe, somewhat objectively, what they had put on paper. For example, a young woman who was happy with her recently purchased woodsy house described how she had first drawn an image of a pond with the phrase, *calm like water in a pond* and then had added small, smiling houses and the words *cozy, spacious, gracious, and lovely*.

After the person had described what they had put down, I would place the picture on a cushion or chair about four feet away and would ask them to speak to the drawing as if it *were* their house, starting with the words, "House—the way I feel about you is . . ." At an appropriate moment, I would ask them to switch places with the house,

to move to the other chair and speak back to themselves as if they were the house. In this way, I facilitated a dialogue between person and house, which often became quite emotional, sometimes generated laughter, and occasionally brought forth statements beginning, "Oh, my God . . .," as some profound insight came into consciousness.

A recently divorced woman, for example, spoke to the house she had left and had never liked; the house, in turn, was glad she was gone, since it had never felt cared for. A retired man shared his feelings of profound attachment to a home which mirrored that of a beloved grandfather. A woman who lost her home to fire grieved as if for a deceased lover. A middle-aged man rejected home, family, and job as he went through a crisis of identity.

If, as sometimes happened, the dialogue aroused deep emotion or unexpected insights, I made sure before I left that the person had a close friend, partner, spouse, or therapist with whom to continue the conversation. In some cases, I did two or three interviews with the same person over a seven- to ten-year period; in this way, particularly fascinating insights were gained as to the different meanings of home at different stages in a person's life. For example, a professional woman who hated the house her husband had remodeled reflected very different feelings about home when I interviewed her in her own cozy apartment five years after a divorce.

To protect the privacy of those I interviewed, some requested that I not use their real names. In a few cases, details of location have been changed for a similar reason. The many extensive quotes throughout this book are the verbatim words of those I talked with, tape-recorded, and transcribed. Many interviews lasted two hours or more, hence the quotes represent a small proportion of what any individual actually said. I have attempted to recount these stories as accurately as possible. Where a sentence or two has been omitted from a particular quote in order to facilitate smooth-flowing text, I have *not* observed the standard academic practice of three-dot ellipses (. . .) to indicate that something is missing.

The more stories I listened to, the more it became apparent that people consciously and unconsciously "use" their home environment to express something about themselves. On a conscious level, this is not a new insight. We have all had the experience of visiting new friends in their home and becoming aware of some facet of their values made manifest by the environment—be it the books on their shelves, art (or the lack

of it) on the walls, the degree to which the house is open or closed to the view of visitors, and so on. All of these represent more or less conscious decisions about personal expression, just as our clothes or hairstyle or the kind of car we drive are conscious expressions of our values. What is more intriguing and less well recognized is that we also express aspects of our *unconscious* in the home environment, just as we do in dreams. Adolescents may leave their rooms in disarray as an unconscious gesture of defiance against their parents. A woman may buy a home, unconsciously emulating the style of a much-loved deceased relative. Or a man may be mystified as to why he rented a house that is completely inappropriate to his needs, only to discover later that it is a copy of a childhood home that is still reverberating in his unconscious.

For Sigmund Freud, the unconscious was like some dangerous wilderness, and symbols manifested in dreams contained impulses or conflicts the conscious mind needed to conceal. Carl Jung had a very different perception of the unconscious. For him, it had both a personal and a collective component and was "like the night sky, an infinite unknown, studded with myriads of tiny sparks of light that can become the sources of illumination, insight, and creativity for the person in the process of individuation."<sup>2</sup> Jung postulated the notion of individuation, or striving toward inner wholeness. Learning to read messages from the unconscious made manifest in dreams, waking insights, and creative endeavors assists us on our journey toward integration. There is no doubt that Jung's view of the unconscious and of our psychological development has deeply influenced my work.

A core theme of this book and the stories within it is the notion that we are all—throughout our lives—striving toward a state of wholeness, of being wholly ourselves. Whether we are conscious of it or not, every relationship, event, mishap, or good fortune in our lives can be perceived as a "teaching," guiding us toward being more and more fully who we are. Although this has been widely written about, especially by Jungians, what this book adds to the debate is the suggestion that the places we live in are reflections of that process, and indeed the places themselves have a powerful effect on our journey toward wholeness.

In the course of our lives, other people enter, and sometimes leave, the field of our psychic awareness. We pay attention to some, invest deep emotion in some, and selectively pay little attention to others. This seems so obvious; we know we could not

survive without this selectivity. The world is too populated and too complex.

What is less obvious is that the same thing happens, I believe, with the objects and places in our lives. We selectively pay attention and invest them with emotion as it serves the deeper, largely unconscious process of individuation,

or becoming who we truly are. Objects, like people, come in and out of our lives and awareness, not in some random, meaningless pattern ordained by Fate, but in a clearly patterned framework that sets the stage for greater and greater self-understanding. We all play roles in each other's dramas: sometimes as lead, sometimes as supporting actor. To continue the theatrical analogy, a play or drama also needs a set and props. In our own lives, we select the sets and props of different "acts" (or periods of life) in order—often unconsciously—to display images of ourselves and to learn by reflection of the environment around us.

The key seems to be in the personalization of space: More and more I found in the stories I heard, that it is the movable objects in the home, rather than the physical fabric itself, that are the symbols of self. Even the prisoner, shut away by society because of a crime, is permitted to bring into prison certain effects that are personally meaningful (posters, pinups, family pictures). Even when stripped of all symbols of self-hood, all possibilities of choice, we do concede that the personalization of place is an inalienable right. Conversely, when society wishes to mold a group of individuals into a whole (military personnel), or the attention of the group is deliberately focused away from personal needs (religious orders), the personalization of space is consistently precluded.

Several generations ago, most of us might have inherited a house from our parents or grandparents; or moving with the frontier, we might have fashioned a dwelling out of Nebraska sod or woodlot logs in Illinois. Nowadays, we seek a home to rent or buy



**For many people, their furniture, pictures, and other moveable objects are more powerful expressions of self than is the house-structure itself (Priscilla's house).**

from what is available. Our motives for choosing a particular place are driven by what we can afford, its neighborhood location, and its style and level of upkeep, but also by the symbolic role of the house as an expression of the social identity we wish to communicate. We have become more self-conscious about home as a vehicle for communication and display. The neighbors, our visitors, and ourselves are the intended recipients of this communication. If you have any doubts about the extent to which homes communicate, think about the number of TV shows that began with the camera panning over the exterior of a home—*Dallas*, *Dynasty*, *All in the Family*, *The Waltons*, *The Cosby Show*, *Roseanne*, and the list goes on. Though barely conscious of it, we are always making judgments about who these people are, their probable income, place in the society, cultural values, and so on.

While the house as symbol of our place in society has been discussed and researched by social scientists, the house interior and its contents as a mirror of our inner psychological self have received much less attention. It is *this* that is the subject of this book.

Thus, throughout our lives, whether we are conscious of it or not, our home and its contents are very potent statements about who we are. In particular, they represent symbols of our ego-selves, for in the first half of life, our primary psychological task is to develop a strong and comfortable personality with which we meet and function in the world. Starting with childhood, our explorations in and around home allow us to develop a sense of self as individuals. A child constructing a den or clubhouse under the hedge is doing far more than merely manipulating dirt and branches. He or she is having a powerful experience of creativity, of learning about self via molding the physical environment.

In adolescence, posters fixed to the bedroom wall, photos displayed, clothes left in disarray—all may make a statement to parents: This is who *I* am! I am my own person, even if I'm not quite sure yet what that is.

Moving into young adulthood, relationships and career may be at the forefront of our consciousness, but in the establishment of our first home-away-from-home, we begin to express who we are as distinct individuals, apart from our family of birth. Some people have a hard time doing this, and unconsciously repeat some unresolved conflict with mother or father in the ways they do—or do not—create a home for themselves.

Marriage or a decision to live with a partner raises many issues of potential conflict as barely conscious values regarding privacy, territory, self-expression, and so on, come to the surface. Problems within a relationship may be acted out via the domestic environment, since focusing on issues of decor or use of rooms is—for some people—less threatening than direct confrontation. If a relationship ends in separation or divorce, all kinds of emotions come to the surface regarding possessions, furniture, house, and property, since statements about the marriage have often become concretized in these material objects.

As we mature psychologically, particularly in the second half of life, pressing questions other than those surrounding relationships, family, and success begin to emerge. Why am I alive? What is my purpose? Is there a meaning to my life? In beginning to address such questions, some people experience subtle, and then profound, changes in their feelings about home or in their connection to possessions. The acknowledgment of our relationship to a higher Self, or soul, has begun to take hold. Throughout this book, 'self' in lowercase refers to the ego-self, while 'Self' in uppercase refers to the higher or transpersonal self.

So far as I was able, I attempted to approach this material via what philosopher Martin Heidegger called "pre-logical thought." This is not "illogical" or "irrational," but rather a mode of approaching being-in-the-world that permeated early Greek thinkers at a time before the categorization of our world into mind and matter, cause and effect. in-here and out-there had gripped and mesmerized the Western mind. I firmly believe that a deeper level of person/environment interaction can only be approached by means of a thought process that attempts to eliminate observer and object. If I dared, I would communicate what I have learned via a poem; I would let this work be dreamed through me. But because I don't yet have the courage to leap from academic to poet, I must perforce attempt to communicate in linear, verbal thought, a relationship (self/dwelling) which I sense is preverbal, almost mystical. While I have attempted to approach this work in a state of meditative thinking, I have also attempted to facilitate a comparable state of being in my informants. Perhaps a better word would be co-researchers, since my insights—such as they are—emerged from a resonance between their words and my thoughts. I allowed what they wanted to articulate to come forth.

After many years of conducting these dialogues, it has become clear to me that I

am doing more than collecting data on people/environment feelings; these encounters were to a greater or lesser degree therapeutic for the informants. Some people registered an "A-ha!" experience as something they said helped them understand an aspect of their life for which the house-self dynamic provides a clue or metaphor.

Anita, for example, was looking for a house to buy. She had lived for fourteen years in a rented cottage in a modest neighborhood, where she raised two daughters after a divorce. The landlord decided to sell the cottage; the family had to move. Anita searched for a house and, although there were plenty on the market and she had the money for a down payment, nothing "clicked." She asked me to do an interview with her to see if that would help.

After some discussion of her wishes for a new house, I sensed that the problem had something to do with her not having acknowledged her feelings for the house she was living in. I asked her to close her eyes and took her on a tour of her living room, touching all her favorite things. She started to cry. I asked her to tell the house what it meant to her. A dialogue ensued in which she expressed her happiness of the past fourteen years and her grief at leaving. Through her tears, she laughed as the house replied that it would be happy to have various repairs carried out, which Anita had not been willing or able to do.

When it seemed appropriate, I asked Anita to describe the house she'd like to move to. She described it in some detail. A week later, she called in some excitement to say she had found a house just like the one she had described and was in the process of buying it.

This is an example of an interview being unintentionally therapeutic. Just as with the loss of a relationship or a job, the loss of a house needs to be acknowledged and grieved before our consciousness opens up to new possibilities.

When I began this work, I had no idea what I would discover. All I sensed at the beginning was that there were multiple layers of meaning in our feelings of attachment to house and home. As I listened to story after story, themes began to emerge and repeat themselves. It became clear that some kind of developmental explanation made sense; that from childhood to old age, our relationship to the physical environment of home goes through subtle shifts and changes, mirroring shifts of attention from outer accomplishment to deeper inner concerns.

Starting with our early years, chapter 2, "The Special Places of Childhood,"



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recounts the memories of young adults thinking back to their first experiences of “house making” in the dens, forts, cubbies, and clubhouses they found or created in those magic years of middle childhood between the ages of six and twelve. Older adults, having established homes, reflect on how they have re-created some patterns from a much-loved home or homes of childhood in their current environment.

In chapter 3, “Growing Up: Self-Expression in the Homes of Adulthood,” I explore the accounts of people who have learned to truly express who they are via their choice of a house: by remodeling a dwelling as family needs change; by building, buying, or refinishing furniture; by changing the decor after the end of a relationship; and by coming to terms with the inevitable tensions between clutter and tidiness.

In chapter 4, “Always or Never Leaving Home,” we encounter several people who have become more or less stuck in their relationship to home, either by seemingly excessive bonding to one house or its contents, or by never being able to settle down in one place. In both situations, it seems that an unresolved issue regarding their relationship to home in childhood, or to one parent in that home, is at the core of this adult dilemma.

“Becoming More Fully Ourselves: Evolving Self-Image as Reflected in Our Homes” is the subject of chapter 5. Here we encounter the stories of people who, finding themselves in a home environment that no longer reflects who they are, make a dramatic change and move to a setting in which they feel more comfortable. These moves range all the way from a shift from a suburban to an urban location, to leaving a religious institution, to selling a house and moving abroad. All represent attempts to surround the self with a setting that is reflective of newly emerging values.

The next two chapters deal with the often complex and emotional issues that revolve around two people establishing a home together. In chapter 6, “Becoming Partners: Power Struggles in Making a Home Together,” we meet several couples who have come to terms with differing preferences regarding furnishing style, decor, or house type, and several others who have separated or divorced over these same issues or over what they symbolize. In particular, the issue of traditional gender roles is discussed, for many “house conflicts” come down to the issue of who has the power to make decisions, who is considered the primary homemaker, and what each individual feels about this. (See *Color Plate 1*.)

Many people now are working for a full- or part-time salary in the home. This adds another dimension to the issue of sharing a house with a spouse, partner, or children. Also fraught with emotion is the situation in which one person moves into a house or apartment where his or her partner has been living alone or with a previous spouse. In chapter 7, "Living and Working: Territory, Control, and Privacy at Home," questions of how space in a home is divided up and who has access to, or control over, which rooms is explored via the stories of several couples who have grappled with these problems.

Chapter 8, "Where to Live? Self-Image and Location," discusses the notion of "settlement identity," or how we carry with us, often from childhood, a preference for a particular type of location. This is not about preference for a particular style of house or type of furniture, but about *where* we prefer our home to be—in a rural area, a new suburban subdivision, an old established suburb, an inner-city neighborhood, a small town, and so on. Sometimes a person becomes very dissatisfied with his or her home but doesn't realize that it's the location, rather than the house per se, that is the problem. Occasionally, a person will place himself in a highly unsuitable location as if to force into consciousness a psychological problem which is symbolized by this dissonance. Or a couple will separate because the chosen location reflects the inner needs of one but not the other. Although much has been written on the social status and symbolism of different kinds of neighborhoods and locales, the focus in this chapter, as in the whole book, is on the psychological or inner meaning of the issue.

In chapter 9, "The Lost House: Disruptions in the Bonding with Home," we hear accounts of people who have lost their home through divorce or have stayed on in the family home without their partner; feelings about home when a partner dies; the traumatic experience of loss of home through natural disaster; and the profound experience of home-memories in old age.

Finally, in the last chapter, "Beyond the House-as-Ego: The Call of the Soul," we hear the stories of a number of individuals who have, to varying degrees, moved beyond the need to express some aspect of ego-self in the style, furnishing, decor, or location of home. Having involved themselves in meeting the demands of family, marriage, child rearing, work, and society, they find themselves turning more and more inward to focus on the process of individuation. Now begins in earnest the process of integrating the

excluded parts of oneself—unacceptable impulses and feelings (*the shadow* in Jungian terms)—and the “other” as manifested in attributes of the opposite sex (in Jung’s terms, the man opening to his feminine side or *anima*, the woman to her masculine side or *animus*). Above all, this turning inward and journey toward wholeness involves creating a bridge to the higher Self, or soul, which has always been there at the core of our being, but whose presence has often been overlooked in our hastiness to make our way in the world.

If the stages of our life and psychological development are best expressed as a journey, this state of reconnection with soul is best described by the metaphor *coming home*. People who have spoken or written about this transformative process have often likened it to waking up, returning from exile, returning to a place they once knew, or coming back to their true home. Ironically, this awakening may come about by leaving an actual home and finding our inner home symbolized in the interconnectedness of nature, in the natural processes of the seasons, or the behavior of other animal species. Thus, for some people, this process of soul-awakening is nurtured by time outdoors, away from the ego-symbolism of the home environment. For others, however, a newly awakened sense of the higher self may be nurtured by contemplation or meditation within the house, contacting that still core of the psyche where time and space are seemingly transcended. Whatever the outer setting for these transformative experiences, the house as a mirror of the ego-self takes on less importance. Stating who we are in the world retreats in importance; seeking answers to the meaning of life becomes more pressing.

Having listened to many, many accounts of people’s feelings about their homes—positive, negative, and ambivalent—there is no doubt in my mind that we all, to some degree, display in the physical environment messages from the unconscious about who we are, who we were, and who we might become. Unable to comprehend all that is encapsulated in the psyche, we need to place it “out there” for us to contemplate, just as we need to view our physical body in a mirror. To assist the reader who might like to learn more from their own house or home, brief do-it-yourself exercises appear at the end of each chapter. The house is indeed a mirror of the self if we can learn to interpret what we see, comprehend what it means, and act on what it seeks to communicate.

“Make yourself at home,” we say to the guest whom we invite into our dwelling. In this world of busyness, overscheduling, and external pressures, it is an invitation we need also to extend to ourselves: Make yourself at home. In British English we have an expression—“And what is *that* when it’s at home?”—meaning, what is that when it is most truly itself. Perhaps, too, we all need to ask that question of ourselves: Who am I when I’m at home? When I am feeling most grounded, most centered, most at peace, most “at home”? Who is the “I” who lives there? This book will guide you toward an answer. It is intended to inform, to inspire, to raise questions, to raise consciousness. Enjoy the process—and welcome home!