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The Making of Home

Written by Judith Flanders

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THE MAKING *of* HOME

JUDITH FLANDERS

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Home Thoughts: An Introduction

In 1900, a young girl in a strange land was asked by a resident why she wasn't content to remain in their 'beautiful country', but instead longed to return to 'the dry, grey' place she came from. She was astonished. She wanted to return there, she said simply, because 'There is no place like home.' The girl was, of course, Dorothy in Oz, and only someone like the Scarecrow, famed for his lack of brains, would ask something so self-evident. To Dorothy's creator, L. Frank Baum, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, it was a commonplace that home did not have to be beautiful, or luxurious, to be the place one wanted to be.

Two centuries earlier, in 1719, another novel, now known simply as *Robinson Crusoe*, was first published. The full title of Daniel Defoe's book was not merely the name of his main character; instead it enticed readers with promises of adventure, exotic locales, violent death and more: *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates*. The book was a staggering success, going through thirty-seven printings in its first eight months. Over the following century it was translated, adapted for the stage and rewritten for children; there were sequels; there was even a

puppet show. Altogether, there were over seven hundred retellings of this story, in almost every form of entertainment.

Defoe's novel is more than simply a rollicking tale of shipwrecks and pirates, however. It has a deserved place in the literary pantheon, not merely for the quality of its writing, but also as the first true novel in English, and among the first in any European language. It should have another place, too, among historians, for it is the first book to treat the details of ordinary domestic life as though they were as gripping as a disaster at sea or the discovery of a fabled new land. Even in the title, Crusoe is presented as not just a mariner. He is Robinson Crusoe *of York* – a man with a home, a place where he belongs. Once he is shipwrecked, long passages in the novel dwell on the arrangements he makes to provide himself with the necessities of daily life: clothes, a razor, cutlery, even writing materials. On the island, Crusoe's cave receives similar attention; its cooking, eating, sleeping and storage areas are described, as is his next 'house', which is a move upmarket for him – this one is large enough to contain the sleeping and living areas under one roof. Then, 'to enjoy the Comforts I had in the World', the castaway builds furniture, and as a good householder he puts up shelves to keep his possessions tidy: 'everything in…their Places'. When, after two decades, another ship is wrecked on his island, he is thrilled to find, not weapons (he doesn't bother to take the muskets he comes across), or marine equipment to help him sail away, but a kettle, a pot 'to make chocolate', a fire shovel and tongs, 'which I wanted extremely'. (He also acquires that ultimate accessory for his fireside, a dog, which he finds starving on board.) This novel, ostensibly one of 'Surprizing Adventures', and of a man who for twenty-eight years has no home, is nevertheless awash with notions of domesticity. Time and again Crusoe uses the word 'home'. It is how he refers to his 'little tent', and in the first chapter

alone the word is repeated a dozen times; over the course of the novel it appears more than sixty times, recurring like a steady heartbeat.

Home, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is 'A dwelling place; a person's house or abode; the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests'. But more than that, while a house is the physical structure, a home is 'The place where one lives or was brought up, with reference to the feelings of belonging, comfort, etc., associated with it'. It is a state of being as well as the place where one lives or one's place of origin. The word itself is ancient, most likely pre-dating modern European languages and originating in an Indo-European root, *kei*, meaning lying down, or a bed or couch, or something dear: even then, both a place and an attitude. The first known written use of the distinction between house and home in English appeared in a poem of 1275, which mentions separately a man's 'lond & his hus & his hom' [land and his house and his home].

To speakers of English, or the Germanic and Scandinavian languages, or the Finno-Ugric group – the languages of north-western Europe, from Hungary to Finland and Scandinavia, the German-speaking lands, and then descending to the Netherlands and across the Channel to the British Isles – to these peoples, the differences between home and house are obvious. They are two related but distinct things, and therefore they have two words. In the languages of what I will call these 'home' countries, home and house are respectively *otthon* and *ház* (Hungarian), *koti* and *talo* (Finnish), *kodu* and *maja* (Estonian), *Heim* and *Haus* (German), *heem* and *huis* (Dutch), *hem* and *hus* (Swedish), *hjem* and *hus* (Danish), *heim* and *huset* (Norwegian).* Speakers of Romance and Slavic languages,

* German *das Heim* and Dutch *heem* had become obsolete by the late eighteenth century, but then revived, partly as back-formations from English.

living in 'house' countries, have by contrast just one word for both meanings. When an Italian goes home he *sta andando a casa*, goes to the house, while the Frenchman *rentre à son foyer*, returns to his hearth, or *rentre chez lui*, returns to his, with where he is returning to only gestured at by the word *chez*, which derives from the Latin *casa*. The French *maison* is also from Latin, *mansio*, staying or a stopping-place, and it follows the Latin in referring to both a building and those who occupy it: someone from *une grande maison* is from an important family. (English has this usage, but confines it to the very grandest of families – the House of Windsor, or of Atreus.) Slavic languages are similar in folding house and home together: Russians and Poles live in a *dom*, and return 'housewards', *domoi* and *do domu*, when they go home. In Russian, the nineteenth-century word for house, *dvor*, encompassed not merely the house and the people who lived in it, but any stables, workshops or other farm buildings, and even the measurement of human labour. Linguistically, the house was inseparable from those who lived in it, united by kinship and economic ties, and from the labour and land it took to maintain them.

The existence of what I will call home and house languages suggests something about the societies in which they developed. There are societies where the community space, the town, village or hamlet, is the canvas on which life is painted, and where an individual house is only a more private area within that primary space. Then there are societies where the house is the focal point, while the town, village or hamlet functions mainly as the route through which one passes in order to reach the essential privacies of the houses. The reason for such differences is frequently put down to climate, and it is certainly more pleasant to spend an autumn afternoon in a market square on the Mediterranean than it is in Oslo. But while the weather is an

element in the distinction between home and house countries, it is, as we shall see, only one element among many.

Ask a western European or North American child to draw a house, and the odds are good that the result will be a picture of a detached building with some or all of the following: a pitched roof, a chimney belching out a friendly plume of smoke, a front door at the centre or at the house's gable end, from which a path runs through a garden that is surrounded by a fence. I did not grow up in a house that looked like this, yet as a child I drew plenty that fit this description. Most western European or North American children did not and do not grow up in houses that looked like this. Yet for at least a century and more this was, and for many still is, the platonic ideal of what home looks like to many – the archetype of 'homeness'.

As adults, we have more elaborate notions of what that archetypal home looks like than the children's drawings, but these notions are no less works of imagination. It is just that, for the most part, we are unaware of their equivalent disconnection from reality. We believe instinctively that 'home' is a concrete thing, unchanging through time in its essentials. Our ideas are, in part, based on books and images, which, even if we haven't read or seen them ourselves, have been used by designers as the basis to create later domestic spaces, which we have seen; or they have formed the basis for re-creations in film and television, which in turn have been used by others, filtering through to popular consciousness at large. A primary component of this source material is what we consider to be the very epitome of homeness, Dutch seventeenth-century paintings. These works, by Vermeer and de Hooch, or Metsu, or Maes, or ter Borch or de Witte, show the typical bourgeois interiors of the Netherlands of the time, and say 'home' like no others. Emanuel de Witte's *Interior with a Woman at a Clavichord* (1665; see plate section, no. 2) is, to modern

eyes, obviously and primarily designed to show off the beauty of a middle-class Dutch house. Contemporary reports from travellers to the Netherlands seem to back this up: the houses of even people of 'indifferent quality' – that is, what today would be called the ordinary middle classes – were, one English visitor wrote, filled with 'Costly and Curious' furniture, porcelain, paintings and other items to adorn and display. But today we fail to realize that, while the travellers for the most part reported faithfully on what they saw, faithful reportage was not the aim of the painters of the same date. There is little in de Witte's painting that any seventeenth-century Dutch citizens would have thought of as typical of their own houses, or of any house they knew.

Modern scholars have analysed thousands of seventeenth-century inventories of personal possessions and household goods, and have examined the sale details of properties that changed hands in the period.* From this evidence it has been possible to build up a very detailed picture of what the Dutch middle and upper classes actually owned. And what these documents show is that these painted rooms, these rooms we know so well from art, never existed. It is easier to say what was realistic in the de Witte *Interior*, than what was not. A Dutch householder would have recognized the curtained bed in the reception room, the mirror and the map on the walls, as well as the dumpiness of the woman's figure, which suggests she is wearing many layers of clothes as protection against the cold. And

* Much of what is known about ownership of possessions in earlier centuries, not only in the Netherlands, comes from inventories that were compiled on the deaths of their owners. Depending on the country and date, inventories might be taken for the poor as well as the rich, although they were more common among the prosperous and wealthy. While they tell us what was owned, they do not always indicate how many items were owned, or where in the house they were found, which would guide us to their usage. Still, these records are frequently all we have, and they are very useful in comparing actuality to what books and journals – or paintings – present as the norm.

that's all. Almost everything else in the picture, and in the hundreds of other surviving pictures from the same period, were constructions of painters' studios.

The beams on the ceiling are typical of Dutch domestic architecture, but they appear to run the wrong way – not parallel to the façade of the house, but placed decoratively, to frame the painting's space for the viewer. The house's floorplan – three rooms leading out of each other, rather than along a corridor, and with windows on both sides (visible on the right, inferred from the shadows on the left) – was an architectural implausibility in this country of terraced housing. These deviations from what would typically have been seen in Dutch cities may be attributed to the requirements of art, the desire for a harmonious composition.

But many other elements in the painting also bear no resemblance to Dutch housing of this time, without any obvious pictorial dictates. The black-and-white marble floors so familiar to us from these paintings were well known in the Netherlands, being found in many public spaces, including government buildings and courthouses. They were, however, vanishingly rare in private houses. Just nine of 5,000 houses sold between 1750 and 1811, almost all large, luxurious properties, had marble floors in their reception rooms. Even the rich generally had wooden floors. Where marble did, exceptionally, appear, it was almost always laid in the *voorhuis*, the public room on the ground floor, and it was customary to see small wooden platforms, called *zoldertjes*, under the chairs (one can be seen in Metsu's *Woman Reading a Letter*; see plate section, no. 3). There are no *zoldertjes* in de Witte's painting, nor are there any of the mats that were to be found laid in crisscross strips in many of the houses of the period. It was not that de Witte alone ignored these domestic commonplaces. Jan Steen sometimes included the mats; otherwise they were rarely painted.

Instead, as in de Witte's painting, artists concentrated their painterly skills on Turkish carpets, even though the inventories of the time make almost no mention of them. Oriental rugs were rare and costly items, and, from Renaissance Italy on, had been used as display pieces, placed over tables rather than left to be scuffed underfoot. But it was another twenty years after de Witte casually placed a Turkish rug on the floor of this middling household before an inventory listed one, and then it was in the house of one of Amsterdam's richest men. In Leiden, no householders on one of the city's most prestigious canals owned carpets of any kind, floor or table, until thirty years after de Witte's picture; the first floor carpet in Leiden is recorded nearly another decade after that. Carpets for tables were also relatively unusual: only a quarter of the better houses inventoried in The Hague included any; a few did in Delft; and about half the houses in Leiden. The lack of carpets in inventories, together with the evidence of Vermeer, who reproduced the same carpet in three of his works, strongly suggests that most of the carpets in these paintings were artists' props.

As marble floors tended to be confined to public spaces, so too were the brass chandeliers that are among the most frequently depicted objects in Dutch genre paintings. This form of lighting was used in courts, in civic buildings and, especially, in churches, but not in private houses. The inventories list just five such chandeliers in Leiden throughout the entire seventeenth century, one in The Hague and none in Amsterdam. Nor did most households possess a clavichord, as painted by de Witte, nor the virginals or spinets that also regularly appear: the Delft inventories list just one from this time.

And even as the paintings suggest these scarce objects were routine, numerous other items that were common in Dutch houses, like the mats, are as regularly missing in art. The paintings rarely

depict candlesticks or lamps, and very few fireplaces or stoves, the standard forms of lighting and heating. There are also fewer display items and luxury goods in the paintings than the inventories reveal was the case in the houses of the day. Many householders owned porcelain, especially Chinese, and delftware, and patterned fabrics covered their tables as well as walls, and were also used to cover chairs, and for bed-hangings and (more rarely) for windows. Also missing are the multitudes of paintings that every traveller reported: 'All in generall striving to adorne their houses, especially the outer or street roome, with costly peeces, Butchers and bakers not much inferiour in their shoppes…yea many tymes blacksmithes, Coblers, etts., will have some picture or other by their Forge and in their stalle…' There were thousands of painters in the Netherlands between 1580 and 1800, who may between them have produced over 10 million paintings.* Given a population that numbered just under 2 million in 1700, and even allowing for a large export market, most walls must have been covered almost frame-to-frame to house this quantity of paintings. It may be that seventeenth-century Dutch dollshouses (see plate section, no. 4) are more realistic than paintings of the same date (although just three of these dollshouses have survived: how typical they were, therefore, is unknowable).

Also missing is a vast quantity of furniture. Visitors reported that cupboards were the pride and joy of prosperous Dutch housewives, both as repositories of wealth, measured in quantities of bedding, clothes and linen, and as display spaces for china and silver, which were placed on top (see plate section, no. 4). The inventories bear this out, with cupboards in all ranges of price and style being matched by great quantities of other furniture. De Witte's room is by contrast

* It is thought that less than 1 per cent of these paintings have survived, so our knowledge of the genre is, by any definition, a very partial one.

sparely furnished – a bed, a clavichord, three chairs and a small table. If the painting included the furnishings that the inventories suggest was the norm, we would see at least two tables, half-a-dozen chairs and several chests. The man's working tools would also be in the room, as well as his wife's spinning wheel, and basic household items such as pewter dishes and tankards, pots and pans.

The painters and their customers in the seventeenth century naturally knew that these images did not reflect reality. The assumption that they do is a misapprehension that arose only later, when the genre was rediscovered in the nineteenth century.* Some of the objects were probably included for aspirational reasons: the marble floors and brass chandeliers, being found in grand public spaces, made private houses appear richer than they were. Others, such as the many paintings or pieces of furniture, were likely to have been excluded to create a visually lucid composition. But most of the pictorial deviations from typical households were for an entirely different reason. Central to our misreading of these paintings is the fact that the symbolic references with which these pictures abound are no longer immediately apparent. Images of children feeding cats or dogs were not intended as depictions of charming household scenes, but as warnings against profligacy and waste; cats also represent ignorance, or, when painted together with girls or women, love or sensuality. Women making lace are undertaking a good housewifely task, but *naaien*, to sew, was (and is) also Dutch slang for sexual intercourse, which turns the lace into an emblematic web that ensnares unwary men. Vermeer's *The Concert* (1658–60) shows a man between two women, one playing

* Throughout the twentieth century, and even today, many Dutch people cover their tables with carpets, assuming it is a tradition handed down from the seventeenth century. In fact, the custom emerged when the paintings were rediscovered in the nineteenth century, at which time it was thought to be a return to a seventeenth-century custom.

the harpsichord, the other singing: to modern eyes a gracious social occasion. But the man holds a lute, a symbol of erotic love, as were most musical instruments. Pictures and maps on the walls routinely reinforce the meanings of scenes in front of them. Here Vermeer chose *The Procuress*, a then-famous work by Dirck van Baburen, a Utrecht artist of an older generation, which indicates that the relationship being played out in front of it is one that has a financial basis. In other pictures, biblical scenes on the walls of the rooms provide a moral counterpoint to the episodes in front of them: shipwrecks and other disasters are warnings; mirrors symbolize vanity; maps, worldly temptations. The characters in the rooms, too, can be symbolic: women sweeping represent the overthrow of Spanish rule, as the hated oppressor was seen to have been swept out by the Dutch Revolt of 1568–1648. Children sometimes embody the birth of the new republic, although more generally they represent the follies of mankind. Jan Steen's rowdy tavern scenes, filled with drunks, lechers, loose women and broken crockery, were not intended only as faithful representations of tavern life, but also as symbols of the vanity of human existence. Still-lifes of tables loaded with expensive foodstuffs, porcelain, pewter and silver were, in part, pictorial reimaginings of the wealth that their owners either had or aspired to. But even when the representation was so faithful that the precise place of origin of the porcelain can be identified, or its factory pattern named, the essential message of the paintings was the same as in the Steen tavern scenes: food rots, porcelain breaks, but God's truth is eternal.

Maids sweeping, as in the de Witte painting (at the very rear, in the back room), are as much a product of aspiration and imagination as the black-and-white marble floors. Less than 20 per cent of Dutch households employed maids, and it is unlikely that this middling house in the painting was one of them. While English travellers

marvelled at how 'wonderful Nett and cleane…within doors, as in their streetes' the Dutch were, this cleanliness was comparative. Dutch houses had no running water, and there were no public bath-houses: however clean the rooms may have been, the people who lived in them were less so. Some Dutch almanacs included reminders that if the annual bath were taken in springtime, the larvae in their readers' hair would be killed off before they were due to hatch. And, just as plague beset England in 1665, the year of de Witte's painting, in the previous twelve months it had killed one in every eight Amsterdammers.

With all this information, de Witte's painting becomes a tale not of domestic tranquillity, but of erotic upheaval. The daylight indicates that the man glimpsed behind the bed-curtains is not the husband of the woman playing the clavichord, while her musical pastime confirms it, as do his clothes, evidently hastily removed, for they are on a chair, not put away in a cupboard. The maid in the background is thus the moral counterpoint, as with her broom she sweeps away sin, the bucket of clean water waiting in the symbolically bright sunlight.

For the last century and a half, however, the symbolism of these paintings has been overlooked, and instead we have read the works as a tracing-paper reproduction of a lived reality, a pre-photography photograph. The people who painted these pictures, the people who bought them, who displayed them on their walls, knew that this was not the case – did not expect it to be the case. They were untroubled, therefore, by the presence of goods they did not possess, and the absence of yet others, of pots and pans or crisscrossed mats, in their art. Today, those missing mats, or household implements, are examples of what I term 'invisible furniture'.

Invisible furniture can be found in all countries, in all times. In the seventeenth century, the English naval administrator Samuel

Pepys frequently ended his daily diary entries, 'And so to bed': he wrote a version of the phrase almost once a week over the nine and a half years that he kept his diary. In the twentieth century, it became a punchline, so familiar that in Britain it is even the name of a chain of shops selling beds. What is less familiar is how he continued that sentence on 21 November 1662: 'At night to supper and to bed – this night having first put up a spitting-sheet, which I find very convenient.' Pepys wrote no further of his spitting-sheet, and most editions of the diary pass it by silently, or indicate puzzlement – '??' is all that one editor of the diary has to say about it. My suggestion is that it may have been a piece of fabric pinned to the wall behind a spittoon, so that the wall, which in affluent seventeenth-century households was frequently covered by an expensive hanging, was protected from a spitter's poor aim.

Spitting-sheets are certainly invisible furniture – today we have never heard of them, and don't know what they were. Spittoons, however, are also invisible furniture.* We have heard of them, and we know they existed, but as they were barely ever, or never, depicted in art or mentioned in literature or even in much non-fiction, it has become easy to overlook their ubiquity: they have become invisible.

The knowledge that many people habitually spat is perhaps not hugely important. It didn't change the course of history. But spittoons can be a reminder of how easy it is to imagine that 'then' was just like 'now', that people of one century behaved exactly as people of another, or ours, do. People in the west today do not customarily spit, so we do not notice that spittoons, and spitting, are missing from accounts of daily life in the past, when people in the west did

* Spittoons, also called spitting-basins or spit-boxes in the UK, and cuspidors in the USA, were bowl- or vase-shaped metal or earthenware receptacles that sat on the floor, some having an insert with a shaped hole for the spit to run down.

in fact spit. Yet if we look, if we begin with a search for invisible furniture, we can see how behaviour changes over time. And changing behaviour marks changing attitudes. And changing attitudes *did* change the course of history.

Searching for invisible furniture is not straightforward. To continue with spitting as an example, literature is generally silent on the practice, while diaries and letters are more revealing. Pepys, with his endless interest in other people, gives some of the earliest views of spitting as a habit, and its, to us, astonishing ubiquity. Today the common assumption is that whatever spitting occurred was a by-product of chewing tobacco, and the majority of Pepys's references to spitting do also mention tobacco. But one night at the theatre, he reports, 'a lady spat backward upon me by a mistake, not seeing me. But after seeing her to be a very pretty lady, I was not troubled at it at all.' Women did not chew tobacco, so this must have been nothing but phlegm, and was, from Pepys's equanimity, something that women as well as men did both routinely and publicly. A few years later, a Frenchman living in Leiden reported to his compatriots on the curious habits of the Dutch: no one 'would dare to spit in any of the[ir] rooms…those who are phlegmatic must be in great discomfort'. It appears that in France, too, spitting was seen as the obvious, and necessary, way to clear one's throat, indoors as well as out.

In the eighteenth century, spittoons are mentioned in a German magazine as an 'object of ease' among wine-coolers, clocks, foot-warmers, adjustable writing tables and shaving tables with integrated mirrors, all items to make the elegant consumer's life more comfortable. In the nineteenth century, they can still occasionally be spotted, clearly common but rarely mentioned. An American mother writes in 1851 of her toddler's precocious doings as he imitated the adults around him, '*halk[ing]* and *spit[ting]* in the spitbox, and…a good

many other funny things.' Yet at the same date, contemporaneous images reinforce the earlier lesson of Dutch art and reality. There are many thousands of nineteenth-century drawings and paintings of parlours, drawing rooms and sitting rooms, by professionals and amateurs alike, of households across Europe and North America of just the type this toddler lived in. Not a single one I have ever seen shows a spittoon, although inventories from the same period list them as a matter of routine.

By the twentieth century, a new understanding of disease transmission had made spitting seem downright dangerous, and references to spittoons tended to be used as indicators of more primitive times, even as other, less literary, documents tell the continuing story of this piece of invisible furniture. The US government's *Railway Sanitary Code* of the 1920s has whole pages devoted to regulating the places where people could or could not spit, not only in trains, but in their offices, waiting rooms and on station platforms. Mail-order catalogues too continued to advertise spittoons in the 1940s, three or four decades after spitting had, according to literature and memoir, been eradicated from daily life. Spittoons were sold, but had become unmentionable.

Invisible furniture is not confined to history. Houses photographed for lifestyle magazines today ostensibly record the houses we live in. Even ignoring the lack of wear and tear, the absence of the stains and scuffs and marks of daily life in those photographs, their resemblance to real houses is merely superficial. Where are the toothbrushes? The power sockets bristling with hedgehogs of electric flexes? Where are the children's plastic toys, or the drain-sieves to catch hair in the bath? The brush to clean the lavatory? If magazine images were all that were to survive of our houses, future generations might not know that most people in the twenty-first century brushed

their teeth, just as few today are aware that spitting was, until quite recently, routine.

The ability of the amateur, the non-professional, to take photographs in the twentieth century altered our views on what things looked like; in the twenty-first century the invisible is routinely made visible on Facebook and in images captured with a phone, while websites such as TripAdvisor make a sport out of comparing the reality of hotel rooms against the idealized publicity images of professional photographers. Those professional images are like the novels of the past, or Dutch Golden Age art: their purpose is not fidelity to life as it is lived by most people. Television or film, seemingly more 'real', is also an unreliable marker of daily life. In 200 years' time, a historian who relied on the television programmes of 2014 to understand our daily lives would never know how much time is spent watching television. No matter how grittily realistic a programme sets out to be, it is impossible to imagine a police-procedural where the characters come in after a hard day's investigation and slump down in front of the television, to sit without speaking for the rest of the evening. They don't because it doesn't fit the genre, just as photographs showing celebrities' lovely homes never show overflowing rubbish bins. It is not what the images are for. That is obvious when discussing contemporary source material. The past is, however, a different country, both because the absences and the omissions are less easily identified, and because these sources are, frequently, all that we have.

As with the spittoons, and spitting, invisible furniture can highlight aspects of behaviour that have altered. But we need prompts to remember that how we use our dining tables is not necessarily how everyone always did, even if we are sitting at the very same table. In 1853, a cartoon by John Leech for *Punch* magazine imagined a gender-reversed world, one where the men retire to the drawing room after

dinner, leaving the women to drink and smoke and discuss pheasant-shoots. The dining room is in disarray. The tablecloth is rumpled, the chairs pushed back. The women, instead of sitting sedately, behave like men after a meal: they turn their chairs away from the table to chat in comfort; one woman has pulled up an empty seat so she can put her feet up. Many nineteenth-century novels contain scenes of men-only after-dinner drinking, but most concentrate on the conversation, with few descriptions of the participants' physical comportment, and not even a handful of illustrations exist where men use furniture in a similar way. By default, strangely enough, Leech's upside-down cartoon world is what we have to confirm that men did indeed behave in the manner suggested by those other few images. His assumption that the magazine-readers of the day would recognize stereotypical male behaviour, even when applied to women, tells us that such behaviour commonly existed.

THE DINING ROOM.

Lady of the House. "Now then, Girls! Fill your Glasses! Bumpers! Here's just one Toast which I am sure you will all drink with pleasure. The Gentlemen!!"

While reconstructing the physical surroundings in which people lived is not easy, establishing how they inhabited those physical surroundings, how they used them in daily life, is even more complex and multi-layered. There is what was; there are the perceptions of those who lived at the time, which may or may not reflect what was; there is the information that those who lived then chose to record, or failed to record; and there is how that information has been interpreted over time. None of these elements are stable, or have only one simple reading. The standard story of domestic life tells us, for example, that from the eighteenth century sleeping quarters in more prosperous houses in Britain became increasingly segregated, with divisions being made by gender and age (separation of parents from children, girls from boys), and by class (servants no longer slept in the same rooms, much less the same beds, as their employers, but were moved to separate quarters in attics or basements). Yet two court cases in London illustrate the more complex reality. In 1710, in one house the physical separation between servants and their masters was rigidly enforced, right down to who used which set of stairs; in the same decade, the niece of another householder shared an attic bedroom with their female servant, while their titled lodger and his footman slept in the lodger's room. These were two houses at the same date, with residents of much the same social background and financial status. In one, servants and masters were entirely intermixed, in the other, almost entirely segregated. What was 'done' on the evidence of fiction, or conduct manuals, or architectural treatises, was not necessarily what was actually done from one house to the next. Yet our assumptions, whether it be our belief that the Dutch paintings reflect real houses of the period, or our modern amnesia regarding the ubiquity of spitting, are so taken for granted that we barely know we hold them. They just seem to be eternal truths.

The Making of Home is intended to be like the *Punch* cartoon, making invisible patterns visible. In Part One, I will outline the changes, political, religious, economic and social, that produced the circumstances in which 'home' grew and flourished in the houses of northwest Europe, and spread in time to the USA; in Part Two, I will describe how innovations in technology created the infrastructure that has become part of our commonly held notions of 'home', from comfortable furniture to plumbing. Many of these changes began in the early modern period, and *The Making of Home* touches on how those ideas were first established, before they gathered pace in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it will, for the most part, end in the early decades of the twentieth century, when modernism – the movement that has been dubbed 'not-at-home' – presented a radically altered mindset. It is not the style of chair that is my primary concern, but how people sat on it; not what the magazines said was in fashion, but how many people followed that fashion. Not how houses were decorated *per se*, but how the decoration reflected the behaviour of the people who lived there, and how that behaviour, in turn, was guided by their beliefs and values, and the beliefs and values of the society to which they belonged. Ideas of what makes a home are generally distinct from ideas of what makes a house. Yet the notion of home, and its history, has been relatively under-explored. There are books on architecture, on interior décor, on domestic life, on social and economic history. But how homes came to be seen as special places is frequently overlooked.

And just as descriptions of physical surroundings need to be disentangled from the behaviour that was caused by, or altered, those surroundings, so too do we need to separate the realities of the physical surroundings from how people thought about those surroundings. In 1596, Ireland was, said the poet Edmund Spenser, 'wylde, wast[e]

and vast': its people, thought this transplanted Englishman, 'care not for pot, pan, kettyl, nor for matrys, fether bed, nor such implementes of houshold. Wherfore it is presuppose that they lak maners and honesty, and be untaught and rude.' That is, by the end of the sixteenth century, those who didn't have – or had, but didn't attach importance to – kitchen utensils, bedding, or other household goods could be dismissed as uncultivated. Nearly three hundred years after Spenser wrote this, an inquest was held in 1865, to investigate the circumstances of a man who had died of starvation. Despite their financial desperation, said his widow, he had refused to go into the workhouse because he couldn't bear to give up 'the comforts of our little home'. The middle-class inquest jury, seeing nothing but a bare room with a heap of straw in one corner, questioned her explanation. The widow, it was reported, 'began to cry, and said they had a quilt and other little things'. Centuries separate these households bereft of 'pot, pan, kettyl…matrys, [and] fether bed', yet there is no reason to believe that the Irish of the sixteenth century cared any less for their 'little home' than the Victorian widow.

Because the word 'home' has stayed the same, and its residents' love for their homes has also been constant, it is too easy to simplify home until it is like the child's picture, a clear, detail-less outline. Home, as an idea, and as that idea played out in reality, changed and developed over the span of modern history. It is the idea, and the change, that we will look at here.