Reclaiming Place: The Architecture of Home, Family and Migration

Heather A. Horst *University of California, Irvine, U.S.A.*

Abstract: This article examines the significance of place, home and belonging among Jamaican return migrants. Drawing upon detailed case studies of return migrants who migrated to the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s and moved back to Jamaica to retire over 25 years later, it explores how returnees design and use their homes to attain the dream and realities of return. Through an analysis of the structure and design of homes that returnees spend their lives imagining and building, I reveal that, for returnees, home is not just a place, but also becomes a site for imagining several key relationships in returnees' lives that are ultimately fundamental to the act of reclaiming place.

Keywords: domestic space, place, materiality, migration, West Indies

Résumé : Cet article s'intéresse à l'importance des lieux, de la maison et de l'appartenance chez les Jamaïcains en migration de retour. À partir d'études de cas détaillées portant sur des familles qui avaient émigré au Royaume-Uni dans les années 1950 et 1960, et dont certains membres sont revenus en Jamaïque pour prendre leur retraite 25 ans plus tard, l'article explore comment les migrants de retour conçoivent et utilisent leur maison pour accomplir le rêve et les réalités du retour. En analysant la structure et la conception des maisons que les migrants ont passé leur vie à imaginer et à construire, je dévoile comment, pour ceux qui reviennent, la maison n'est pas seulement un chez-soi, mais devient aussi un site où l'imagination des migrants s'exerce à l'égard des relations-clés de leurs vies qui sont finalement fondamentales dans l'acte de reconquérir un lieu de résidence.

Mots-clés : espace domestique, résidence, matérialité, migration, Antilles

From phenomenological discourses of home to diasporic imaginings of the homeland, the concept of "home" is fundamentally linked to place and a sense of continuity. Return migration, or returning to one's place of "origin," is often viewed as a "natural" process of reclaiming one's material and metaphorical place in the world (Gmelch 1980, 1992; Henry and Plaza 2006; King 2000; Potter et al. 2005). However, the act of return is also a very material act, one that hinges upon the movement of goods, objects and people across borders and spaces. Homes, particularly the purchase of land and the construction of housing in the homeland, represent one of the first visible signs of the intent to return (Gmelch 1980; King 2000). As Russell King observes, among migrants "there is also a consistent picture of an almost obsessive spending on housing. The new or enlarged house, a near-universal symbol of status, is the personal monument to the migrant's success and establishes, in the eyes of the local community, the fact that, at least materially, the migrant is on par with the local elite" (2000:26). While living abroad, migrants often invest considerable time and energy purchasing materials and sending money to build homes in the villages, towns and countries left behind (Bueno 1997; Chamberlain 1997; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Guarnizo 1997; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). It is often common for migrants to discuss and, in some cases, circulate photos of these homes constructed in the land of migrants' birth, the homes "stand[ing] as visible reminders of the rewards of emigration and of the migrants' continuing commitment to return 'home'" (Klimt 1989:47). Whether the construction of a home is motivated by status in the homeland, the recognition of an alternative status system for migrants who may be marginalized in the country and communities of migration, or a desire to embed themselves in the land and kinship systems of their birth, it is clear that homes are undeniably one of the key ways that migrants attempt to claim and reclaim their place in the world.

This paper examines the significance of place, home and belonging among Jamaican return migrants by exploring how returnees design and use their homes to attain the dream and reality of return and draws upon a broader study of 25 return migrants and their families who migrated to the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s and moved back to Mandeville, Jamaica to retire 25 to 30 years later. My aim is to conceptualize returnees' everyday negotiations around their sense of place and belonging, once they have returned to the domestic structures they constructed or designed for their return, with particular attention to how they utilize the materiality of the house to home. As I outline in greater detail elsewhere (Horst 2005, 2006), the returnees represented in this study migrated from Jamaica to England as young adults. Like other West Indians of their generation, they thought they would be home from between three to five years later. Within the community I studied, the time span between their initial migration to England and their return to Jamaica averaged 38 years and, in many instances, corresponded with their children's settlement into their adult lives, the completion of secondary education, acquisition of a relatively stable job or the purchase of a home. Very few future returnees journeyed back to Jamaica for a visit for ten to 15 years after their original departure from Jamaica and, with a few notable exceptions, they visited Jamaica less than five times before making Jamaica their more permanent home, visits that often corresponded with the death of a parent. Participants were predominately in their mid-60s and married, a trend that corresponds with King's (2000) observation that most retirees move abroad as couples. In light of this broader context, I examine how the homes that returnees spend their lives imagining and building continue to mediate the process of returning and reclaiming home, arguing that home is not just a place, but becomes a site for imagining several key relationships in returnees' lives. These relationships may be closely associated with home, such as family, kin and community, or they may be more diffuse, as in returnees' relationships with values or ideals such as respectability and the attainment of success as well as fears of failure and loss. I demonstrate that in contrast to front rooms that are often about claims to status for returnees, the decoration and naming of bedrooms enables many returnees negotiate their relationship with return, kinship and social reproduction (and particularly a sense of loss). Through an analysis of the ways in which certain spaces become more or less material in returnees' lives, I argue that the home, and particularly the scale of returnees' homes, facilitates an understanding of multiple the processes underpinning return, home and the act of reclaiming place.

I begin by focusing upon the material culture of home among returnees and the importance of homes and property in articulating personhood and values such as respectability in the West Indies. Building upon work on house societies and the social reproduction of the household, I then turn to the ways in which children and family who may or may not be physically present in the home become embedded in the structure and design of the returnee home. In the concluding sections I focus upon the relationship between different spaces of the home as they emerge through the project of return, reflecting upon the ways in which these spaces signal success and failure as well as cohesion and loss.

West Indian Migration and the Material Culture of Home

Whereas a pattern of home-building is prevalent among migrants around the world (see Gmelch 1980), any analysis of contemporary practices around the material culture of home must take into account the particular relationship to homes and property in the West Indies. In the wake of plantation slavery, migration and property ownership have come to represent key ways through which Jamaicans and other West Indians attained status and personhood (Thomas-Hope 1995), a practice that continues today through the maintenance of "family land" that belongs to the collective unit of the family regardless of physical location of its members (Besson 1995, 2000; Maurer 1997; Olwig 1997). Karen Fog Olwig (1997) illustrates the strong connection between "travelling," land, homes and belonging among Nevisian migrants, for example, suggesting that while transnational migrants may only spend a week or two at the house or land each year, sending money or goods for the house materially and emotionally links them to the place they call home. As with family land (see Besson 2000, 2002; Besson and Momsen 2007), it is not the capital gained through the house that is of consequence, but rather the very notion that one owns a home on Nevis. In essence, ownership confers a sense of belonging as well as status and prestige, and represents an "emotional, cultural and social" site of identification (Olwig 1997:28).

Described as going "back a yard" (Brodber 1975; Chevannes 2001; Mintz 1974), many Jamaicans view return migration as the culmination of a life journey.[1] For this particular generation of post-Second World War migrants to the U.K., building a home in Jamaica represents an ongoing commitment to returning to Jamaica. Many returnees initiated their desire to return by saving money to purchase and build a home shortly after their arrival in the U.K. in the 1950s and 1960s. Even when

having children and raising a family, purchasing a home,[2] economic constraints, or other life circumstances derailed their original plan to return, many of the Jamaican migrants I interviewed described how the aspiration to return to Jamaica never dissipated.[3] Indeed, it was not uncommon for returnees to store items intended for return—curtains, furniture and other decorative objects—in closets, luggage or even in a separate room waiting months and years before they would be shipped in a container to Jamaica (Miller 2008).

Front Rooms, Respectability and Display

> Respectability at its material level, at its level of signification, is a show of luxury. It is a grand, well-furnished home, well equipped with modern appliances, fine furniture, china and linens, good stylish clothes, an expensive education, manners and deportment. [Wilson 1973:226]

As work on migration, return migration and transnationalism continues to reveal (Cohen 2008; Davison 1968; Gmelch 1980; James 1993; Louie 2008; Malkki 1995; Olwig and Hastrup 1997; Taylor 1976; Thomas-Hope 1999), the very notion of home as a site of belonging remains contested terrain (Fortier 2000; Olwig 1999, 2007; Pessar 1996; Rapport and Dawson 1998; Tsuda 1999). Because return and retirement coincides with geographic relocation and the purchase of a new home, return also signals the potential for a re-evaluation of self (King 2000; King et al. 2000). Designing and decorating enables returnees to reconstruct themselves through the aesthetic world of the home (Miller 2001). As Clarke observes:

> Home decoration, though tied to key life cycles and events, is the principal means by which members of the household attempt to invert, re-invert, or perpetuate their material worlds. The physical act of "decorating" requires the household to draw on (or negate) both traditional and contemporary cultural, social, aesthetic and technical knowledge to varying degrees. But crucially, it also requires a process of envisaging and imagining even at its most basic level. [2001:26]

As many visitors and local residents in Mandeville observe, large, spacious homes are the most visible evidence of returnees' presence in Jamaica. In contrast to their dwellings in the U.K.—at first bedrooms and bathrooms where they either accessed a shared kitchen or devised makeshift kitchens (Byron 1994; Horst 2006), and later, small flats and semi-detached homes in the major urban centres in England—most returnee homes were one to two storey dwellings and contained an average of eight rooms, including three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, living room and dining room. Many homes included additional spaces for laundry and sewing facilities, a bar, multiple verandas, garage or carport, storage and walk-in closets. Doorbells, electric gate openers and security systems as well as modern kitchens with refrigerators, stoves, ovens, microwaves and freezers represent just a few of the other amenities returnees integrated into their new homes. For most returnees, the home is a rite of passage that embodies the crowning achievement of a lifelong dream, the freshly painted white exteriors, neatly trimmed yards and gracious proportions which visually express "how far we come."

Trekking up the steep hill and some 30 steps to the front door of Thomas and Marilyn Mitchell's stately home, there is a sense that you have arrived. An energetic, fit couple in their early 60s, the Mitchells sustain a busy schedule, with early morning walks, community and church activities as well as entertaining friends and family. In fact, the only day one can reliably find Mrs. Mitchell at home is when her helper comes to clean. Mr. Mitchell is often busy about town looking for things for the house and taking care of household business as well as visiting with friends and family throughout greater Mandeville. The Mitchells returned to Jamaica in 1995 after almost 30 years working in the healthcare (nursing) and transport industries in south and north London. Their last home was a three-bedroom semi-detached house in north London. Although they never thought of themselves as people who pined for home, they returned with particular images of their future property. They wanted acres of land near nature and animals, tucked away from the rest of the world but in a place where they could still participate in cultural and social activities. When the couple started to consider their return, Mrs. Mitchell decided that she did not want a "pokey" house that was "shut off like a dark cavern." Rather, she wanted a large, open house that was light and spacious. When she started looking around and talking to developers in the area, she did not see anything appealing so she started designing her home on her own. Mrs. Mitchell initiated her design by thinking about her home in London and what was lacking. She sat down and sketched the dimensions and design with the help of her eldest son who lived in Jamaica and, in fact, spent most of his childhood in Jamaica being raised by his grandmother. For a time, Mrs. Mitchell literally dreamt about the house each night, waking up in the middle of the night to scrawl ideas down with the paper and pencil she kept habitually by her bed. She desired a large spiral staircase and a twelve-foot hallway for a grand entrance. Despite her initial aspirations, the space she visualized for a downstairs

bedroom was ultimately too small, a planned den never materialized and the twelve-foot hallway and large crystal chandelier leading to the front room diminished in size as did the home, from 7,000ft^2 square feet to 4,000 ft^2, in the process of paring down at the expense of "empty space." Even with the reduction in space, Mrs. Mitchell explained that when their container arrived from England, they were easily able to furnish the entire house by simply "spreading out" what they had in their London home.

In conversation with couples like the Mitchells and others, front rooms were particularly important spaces to communicate and cultivate the sense of having "arrived," literally and figuratively. Akin to the home itself, front rooms and living rooms often "act as the interface between the private and the public world" (Money 2007:358). Another couple, the Edwards, returned to Jamaica in 1995. More pragmatic in their retirement home aspirations than their middle-class English lives as public and private school teachers might have afforded, when they decided it was time to sell their home in the suburban outskirts of north London and return to Jamaica, they drove to a real estate agency in Brixton in south London and looked at brochures with pictures and drawings of home designs. The visit to Brixton also corresponded with two visits to Jamaica where the couple drove throughout the island deciding where they wanted to live, the options being relatively open as most of their families lived off the island. Mrs. Edwards stressed that the most important aspect of the house itself was that it have "decent sized rooms" that, once they returned, became filled with their entertainment centre and shelves exhibiting their collection of floral china plates and animal figurines, as well as cabinets displaying antique plates, cups and other place settings that Mrs. Edwards described as family heirlooms. Atop the cabinet sits a small floral display, candles, a lantern and pictures of their children and grandchildren, especially a granddaughter who visits almost every summer and shares an interest in family history and heirlooms.

The décor of many front rooms exhibits returnees' desire to achieve respectability. Among Jamaicans and other West Indians, enacting and asserting a lifestyle of respectability often entails the ability to control space (Abrahams 1983; Wilson 1973).[4] Families aspiring to and demonstrating respectability maintain homes that ideally include communal indoor space, such as a living room or a proper table at which to dine, as well as distinctive spaces for sleeping, bathing and eating. Women overseeing respectable homes also hire helpers to mop floors, handwash laundry and other activities associated with cleanliness (Austin 1984; Brodber 1975; Chevannes 2001; Douglass 1992; Olwig 1993; Wilson 1973). These values associated with respectability also travelled with Jamaican migrants and emerged in their domestic practices in England. In a study of Jamaicans in London in the 1970s, Nancy Foner (1978) observed that Jamaicans crafted a domestic space associated with white-collar workers in Jamaica that included carpets, coordinated furniture sets and stereos. Foner also notes that "quite a few owned encyclopedia sets and had books on display" (1978:97) in front rooms—a display that often signalled education and educational aspirations. Miller suggests that for many West Indians living in London, the front room often became a sacred space in the home because it signalled "precisely the form of respectability that they had been excluded from, and now aspired to, in this new London context" (2008:201). This form of respectability, he argues, reflects working class English aspirations rather than those of Jamaican middle and upper classes. Among Jamaican returnees in Mandeville, I found that front rooms embodied aspirational trajectories that often combined English working class and middle class Caribbean aesthetics, and I encountered a range of décor in front rooms, including (most notably) a large, 15 by 20 foot painting of Prince Charles and Princess Diana carefully preserved from the 1980s. Whereas the Mitchells articulated their desire to design a large, palatial home, the Edwards defined their aspirations as building a home with "decent sized rooms" where they could place on display their collections—china, movies, art and books—and thus evince their sense of taste and respectability. Such concerns with demonstrating status and success often dominate discussions of returnee homes. However, even in the case of the Mitchells who were explicitly status conscious, status and respectability do not fully capture the ways in which returnees value the ample size and numerous rooms that constitute their new homes. In the following section I focus upon how other spaces in the home, particularly the bedroom, reveal returnee's alternative desires and aspirations to reclaim place.

Bedrooms and the Materiality of Family

Anthropological analyses of architecture, homes and domestic space focus on drawing analogies between the home and the order and structure of society. Beginning with Levi-Strauss' (1983, 1987) seminal work on house societies as well as subsequent work by Bourdieu on the Kabyle house and the habitus[5] (Bourdieu 1977, 1984), research on domestic architecture has looked at the relationship between property, homes, kinship and the creation of continuity or lineage over time (Bloch 1996). As

Carsten and Hugh-Jones suggest in their critical introduction to Levi-Strauss' concept of house societies, the house is a key institution in society precisely because it "links the transitional quality of houses as a social form with the claim that they 'subvert' the language of kinship by using it to 'naturalize' rank differences and competitions over wealth and power" (1995:10). Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) and the other contributors to the volume stress the dynamic relationship between homes and their inhabitants and, in turn, demonstrate the mutuality of the construction of homes and the construction of individual or collective identity. Moreover, social and structural changes in the house shift focus from ordered depictions of homes to the processes of change, particularly in relation to establishment of and transformations within the household—a concept intended to mediate the social and material meanings of the house (Moore 1986; Wilk and Netting 1984). In this section, I look at returnees' efforts to materialize their children's presence in their new homes in Jamaica.

Sister Mae, a former nurse, and her husband, George, moved back to Jamaica in 1998. George, who spent most of his 37 years in East London doing construction work, designed the house and collaborated with the developers and individuals who he later hired to build the five bedroom, four bathroom home in a neighborhood with other returnees. The master bedroom, occupied by Sister Mae and Brother George, had an attached bath and walk-in closet. Down the hallway, they placed three additional bedrooms and on the ground floor the final bedroom was built which included an attached bathroom with a shower. Brother George's vision was to create a comfortable living space for the couple as well as for each of their children when they came to visit. Indeed, after the basic structure was erected, children came one-by-one to help select and claim their room. Their son Dwayne was the first to arrive and selected a room with a view on the first floor. Their youngest daughter Victoria appeared next and selected a room on the also first floor directly adjacent to her older sister Marcia. This worked well because they could share the bath that is also equipped with a bidet. Their eldest son Henry turned up last and agreed to take the more substantial room located on the ground floor with the attached bath. This room, they reasoned, was large enough to be shared with their grandson, Mario, who spent most of his childhood living with his grandparents. When Dwayne's two children came to visit their grandparents, Dwayne's rather precocious pre-teen daughter decided that rather than using one of her auntie's beds she wanted "in" on this claim to space. Sister Mae reached a compromise with her granddaughter: Michelle could have her own "bed" in the room that, in practice, doubled as a laundry room filled with piles of un-ironed shirts, jeans and sheets. Dwayne's room became the standing guest room when other relatives came to visit and the rooms of the two daughters, who tried to visit annually, stayed relatively untouched aside from the weekly dusting and cleaning carried out by their helper.

Henry's room was another story. Henry, whose income was less stable than his siblings, has not come to visit since first claiming his bedroom space and his room reflected his absence. In contrast to the rooms of Dwayne, Victoria and Marcia, which are fitted with full sized beds, dressing tables and finished closets, Henry's room was decidedly unfinished. His headboard rested against the wall as did the washbasin and shower tiles which had not been fully fitted, although Sister Mae decided to hang curtains on the windows to avoid prying eyes. Brother George often lamented this unfinished project, noting that he always intended to finish it with Henry; "finishing" Henry's room includes building a closet, affixing tile to the wall and putting together the bed. Henry's tenuous economic status has prohibited his visit and, in turn, his ability to materialize his presence in his parent's new family home.

For many returnees, there is status in being able to devote, and confer ownership of a space, to each member of the family. However, bedrooms are often the spaces where returnees are most aware of the lack of presence and loss of their family. For instance, on a warm spring afternoon, I decided to pay a visit to Sister D, a 67-year-old woman who returned to Jamaica with her husband in the mid-1990s after living 36 years in London. While living in London Sister D worked as a nurse's aide and Brother D worked as a supervisor at a retail store in east London. When I arrived at her house, all the signs of her presence appeared in order. The shutters on the four bedroom, three-bathroom home were open and Sister D's husband had unlocked the front gate. Like other returnees, Sister D's pace had slowed over the years, but on this particular occasion she took a little longer than usual answering the bell. Just as I was turning around to leave, Sister D called down from the upstairs veranda and requested that I open the gate and come in. After greeting each other, we went inside and sat on her settee in the front room to talk while she fanned herself with a folded up piece of paper. Apologizing for her haphazard appearance, she explained to me that she had been upstairs in "Peter's room" resting. "Peter" was Sister D's only son who, at the time, I had not met in person but recognized through the photos, diplomas and certificates Sister D and her husband proudly displayed on the tables and walls

of the front room. Over the course of our visits, I heard many reports of his achievements—a new job and promotion and his engagement to his long-time girlfriend—as well as stories about his childhood and the challenges of raising children in London. Sister D also made a point of introducing me to "Peter's room" when she took me on a tour of their new house. "Peter's room" was one of her favourite spaces in her new home in Jamaica, a place that she often returned to when she wanted to relax and reminisce about her life in London and feel close to her only son. As Sister D's home reveals, returnees insist upon their children's presence by etching it into the structure and organization of the home.

Yet, for many returnees it was clear that bedrooms were not necessarily envisioned as "containers" where an individual's possessions would be preserved. In her examination of nomadic Mongolians use of display cases to initiate and maintain social relations through the separation and containment of objects, Empson notes that objects are not significant because "these things 'stand for' people"; rather "objects, like humans, contain another dimension of the visible world and something of the essence of the person is thought to adhere to their belongings" (2007:114). George and Sister Mae reserve the inscription of presence in the bedrooms to the children themselves. Dwayne's room, for example, contained only an old book that he left behind on a trip and a radio that he liked to listen to, a radio, which stayed in the room largely because Sister Mae rarely set foot in it. Their other daughter Victoria left behind her Jamaican clothes and her sister Marcia left perfume and powder on the dressing table. Here then, and as we see through the failure to finish Henry's room, the physical presence of their children in these rooms is critical; returnee children must assume responsibility for making their presence more material by shifting, sorting and leaving behind objects in "their" bedroom space.

Materiality, Return and the Life Project

In his now famous article on refugee possessions, David Parkin (1999) examines the meaning of objects for individuals who have been forcefully displaced and, in turn, the key role that mementos play in the reconstruction of life and personhood post-exile. He argues that mementos and other such transitional objects are used in to help individuals tell stories about themselves that enable refugees to articulate a severed trajectory of personhood. Parkin further contends that, in the face of trauma and social exclusion, these portable objects often take the place of personal relationships; later, when those who have been displaced reach a point of settlement, individuals may use these same objects to "reverse the process by which they have objectified themselves in their most private possessions, formulaic acts and dreams and re-enter social relations" (1999:318). Marcoux (2001) describes the divestment associated with moving house (the *casser maison* ritual) for negotiating one's sense of self as well as relationships with others through the process of sorting, giving away or choosing to bring particular possessions due to their ability to stand as mnemonic devices or hauntings (see also Miller 2001). In the cases I have presented, we see that in the formal, status-oriented spaces of the home, mementoes play an important role in helping returnees tell stories about themselves and their families to narrate achievement and success. Returnees decorate their homes as the expression and imagination of a particular type of lifestyle that can be realized through the structure and decorative order of the house. In particular, the idea of the home is one that expresses their status as successful returnees. This is exemplified by Mrs. Mitchell's statement of wanting a large non-"pokey" house, the original blueprint nearly twice the size of the fully finished home, as well as Mrs. Nelson's sensitivity about using the space of their large home. In addition to the large stove, refrigerator and other modern appliances in the kitchen, homes are furnished with settees and matching chairs as well as stereo systems and televisions. Dining tables play a prominent role in the house and are often accompanied by china cabinets filled with glassware of varying degrees of quality. Ornamented lighting, fixtures and artwork also exhibit returnees' material status, as does the fact that the master bedroom includes a walk-in closet. These tend to be less associated with the intimate relationships that constitute their family. Here designating spaces for family members—a practice that only becomes possible through the attainment of the home and the status conferred with it—literally and figuratively situates members of the family.

In living rooms, portraits of family members are part of the project of attaining a respectable return. Beds, decorations and other portable objects placed in the respective rooms were rarely used by the named "owner" of the particular room, and almost all of the pictures, cards, magnets and other objects associated with specific individuals were kept in the more visible spaces of the home, such as the living room, kitchen and dining room. In effect, kitchens and living rooms became the parent's space to display, remember and resituate their relationship to their children in a familial public. In such contexts, pictures and other objects possessed the potential to trigger memories, but their purpose was to stand for a person in the presentation and display of the family. Importantly, these

pictures and objects were also not possessions in the sense that they leave "traces" (Marcoux 2001). Rather, many of the objects located in the living room—pictures, china and glass trinkets—served as mnemonic devices. While such objects were familiar and, in some sense, signalled an intimate relationship, they did not foster the intimacy associated with trinkets and "clutter" in other contexts (Makovicky 2007).

Like the shifting and sorting in living rooms Garvey (2001) documented in Norway, very few returnees spent time rearranging the pictures and decorations in their home. Rather, returnees strived to get it "right" so the front room captured the look they imagined. Indeed, many returnees refused to become actively involved in church or returning resident associations before their house was, to their mind, finished.

Bedrooms in the returnee home play a dual role in mediating a sense of place and belonging for returnees. Looking at the relationship between architecture and memory, Bahloul observed that, "the remembered house is a small-scale cosmology symbolically restoring the integrity of a scattered geography" (1992:28) among members of the Algerian Diaspora. In her case, families were thus returning to a memory where a material space reflects, albeit in an idealized manner, a lived reality that had been transmitted over generations. But in contrast to Bahloul's depiction of homes and families which reflect a lived reality that was transmitted over time in a concrete space, the returnee project, remained tied to aspirations and ideals associated with the house and family, aims which were not feasible or ever "lived" in the same way during their time in England. The process of claiming and naming a bedroom is an attempt to create order and the image of an ideal house and nuclear family.

As becomes apparent, inscribing children and (in a few instances) grandchildren in the structure of the home presents an ideal image of the structure of the transnational family. The naming of rooms, such as that of the Edward's granddaughter, not only places the individual as a member of the household but also provides the person with a sense of ownership. Naming confers possession that, in turn, possesses the potential for a person to enliven the space and objects in the room through presence and, eventually, absence. Through possession, traces and essences can emerge and thus be contained in the space. Because Peter had claimed the room and left behind a magazine and a used phone card on "his" dresser, "Peter's room" became a haven where Sister D could relax and feel his presence. And although Peter had in fact only slept in the room the equivalent of three times since they had returned to Jamaica, his participation in the process of enlivening the room made Sister D somehow feel closer to or more connected to him than sitting in the living room looking at photographs. Perhaps the most compelling example of this commitment to their (grown) children's possession, or materialization, of bedroom space was revealed in a discussion of Henry's room. When George's grandson came to visit and suggested that they set up the bed in Henry's room so it could at least be used, his grandfather made it clear that the room belonged to Henry and no one was to use it until Henry could finish it.

While the cultivation of the living room and bedroom to reclaim a sense of place represents a shared norm and expectation among returnees, the notion of "failure" and loss dominate many returnees' experiences and discourses of return. For example, Miss Thomas, a single woman in her 60s who worked as a housekeeper, returned to the Mandeville area in 1997 from a small English town in the middle of England. With her one child grown, married and living in the U.S., Miss Thomas was swept into the early 1990s euphoria of returning home to Jamaica, certain that Jamaica would feel like a real community with all of the other returnees from England. As a result, she decided to sell her council estate flat in England to come home to the island she left in her early 20s. She paid one of the Jamaican building societies from the profits from the sale of her English flat, purchased a plot of land in Mandeville and arranged for builders to construct her home. When Miss Thomas moved to Jamaica, the frame of the house was completed and some of the fixtures (doors, sinks, etc.) fitted, but much of the house remained incomplete. She paid extra money to have utilities connected on the street as the area was undeveloped, and she lived for a year without electricity and television. Because she did not have enough money left to advance a legal case against the construction company for bad workmanship and breach of contract (a common occurrence among returnees, particularly those who did not have a local family member in Jamaica supervising the project), she transformed two rooms into self-contained rental flats, which allowed her to earn additional income so that she might one day finish the landscaping of the front yard, dirt driveway and carport, now scattered with tools, cement blocks and other supplies. Due to the alterations, however, Miss Thomas' living space was significantly curtailed, her movements and possessions confined to a living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Miss Thomas' dining table with chairs and place settings for six sat only three to four feet from the front door and her many photographs, picture art, pieces of china and glass, and flowers were packed into these rooms, giving the interior a dark, closed-off feeling. She spent most of her days

confined to the house. Because she could not afford to employ a helper like most other returnees, she cleans and tends to the back vegetable garden most mornings. Her afternoons and evenings consist of resting and dozing on her cornflower blue sofa as she watches the evening news and the daytime soap opera, "The Young and the Restless." Miss Thomas' adult daughter helped her select the fluffy blue couch adorned with white, partially crocheted headrests and pillows. While Miss Thomas finds the couch aesthetically pleasing, she has also come to feel suffocated by it. She now feels she was too hasty in buying the couch and, if she had thought about it a little more, she might have realized it was too soft. Miss Thomas complains that when she sits down on it, she sinks into the cushions, which makes rising from the sofa somewhat difficult. This, she suspects, is also the reason that she spends so much time lying on the sofa watching television. It literally engulfs her body forcing her to struggle to make her way out of it; some days she just cannot muster the energy to move and ends up sleeping in the giant blue flytrap.

Because Miss Thomas is unhappy, she seems to be constantly talking about the merits of England and the possibility of returning there. But after a long conversation with her sister, she surmised that she could no longer afford to do so without ridding herself of her current Jamaican home. Not unlike her decision to purchase the sofa, Miss Thomas feels that she made the wrong decision and was misled by the hype surrounding return, epitomized in the many advertisements in U.K. edition of the Jamaica Gleaner encouraging Jamaicans to "come home" because "Jamaica is calling you." She is also disappointed because she "expected to enjoy my homecoming." Instead, she thinks that her return has been "worthless" and she is "bored of it." In effect, Miss Thomas believes that her "place" is in England where she feels she has family (a sister), friends, purpose and, importantly, the potential for economic stability even as a single, unmarried woman. Because the sense of place through return migration is so closely tied to the negotiation of self through the house, certain people come to feel less material, less of a person, due to their inability to attain this life project. If the expectation is that return involves the performance of respectability and status, Miss Thomas and others like her may lose out on their claim to place. The tyranny of an unfinished house comes to embody this unrealized potential or failure.

Conclusion

In this article, I demonstrate the ways in which homes define how and where returnees claim their sense of self and place in the world upon return. Very few returnees move back to the island with children and they rarely relocate to land shared between family members (Besson 2000). While return represents the realization of a lifelong aspiration, return may also be felt as an experience of loss, both in terms of the Jamaica that they remember and the family—children, grandchildren and others—they left behind in England. Moreover, many returnee women, who were often less committed to the masculine dream of building a retirement home (Chamberlain 1997), confess ambivalence over their changing status upon return, particularly the loss of involvement in the everyday lives of their children and grandchildren and the related status as matriarch of the family (Goulbourne and Chamberlain 2001). Others, such as Brother George, are only reminded of their children's resentment of being left behind in England or other tension points through the unfinished rooms and projects that lay scattered behind closed doors. A number of returnees, particularly younger returnees in their 50s and in good health, try to accommodate by continuing to travel between the U.K. and Jamaica, becoming what Dwaine Plaza (2000) terms "transnational grannies." But the cost and distance often makes this untenable for many returnees. Others construct a sense of family in the physical structure of the home since, given the relative newness of the house, adult children are often not able to leave traces which could be contained or separated for preservation. Traces exist through photographs and other objects in the room, but these objects often belie returnees' ultimate desire for continuity and connectedness. While the house structure and front room may lead to the attainment of the aspiration to return to their homeland and live the life of a respectable returnee, it is also quite evident to many returnees that this comes at a cost—the loss of daily interaction with their children and grandchildren. Moreover, homes are built without any certainty of what will occur after their deaths, due to the fact that their offspring continue to live in England. Making evident the struggles to insert family and thus continuity and connectedness challenges the assumed relationship between size and status so widely acknowledged in Jamaican popular discourse as well as the academic literature on migration and transnationalism.

Viewing the home as a location, a house, social relations and as a particular cultural form and logic, my approach to understanding the everyday experience of migration and belonging is tied to the tension concerning the processes of rooting and movement. As Basu and Coleman have recently noted, "the materiality deployed [by migrants] can indicate the changing status of a given migrant over time—the transformation of their place

within the 'world' they have entered, willingly or not" (2008:324). Part of the process of asserting family through domestic forms of material culture revolves around the organization and naming of the home space. For many returnees, questions surrounding how many rooms to build, how each room should be decorated, where to store pictures and other objects present returnees with dilemmas over how to negotiate their changing relationship to their children and grandchildren. For individuals like Sister D, the loss of her son is clearly one of the unpleasant and unanticipated side effects of realizing a dream of return. "Peter's room" and the other spaces and objects I encountered in Jamaica that were named after return migrant's children and grandchildren residing in England signalled the importance of family in the process of returning and claiming (or more aptly reclaiming) a sense of place. Focusing upon the ways in which returnees place objects and inscribe these items and spaces their everyday lives in Jamaica, I examined how family continues to be valued among many returnees and what these practices suggest about the ways in which presence and absence are negotiated among the transnational family. Homes thus become important for return migrants because they are both the central product of and the spaces for reclaiming place.

Heather A. Horst, University of California Humanities Research Institute, 4000 Humanities Gateway Building, University of California, Irvine, CA 92697-3350, U.S.A. E-mail: hhorst@uci.edu.

Notes

1 Given the extensive documentation of transnational practices and movement among return migrants, there remain debates surrounding the extent to which return migration should be analytically described as the end or culmination of a migration journey (see for example, Gmelch 1980; Pessar 1996). As Thompson and Bauer (2006) and Horst (2007) suggest, the length and experience of migration among migrants to the U.S., Canada and England distinctly shape the expectations around return and migrants' interpretation of return.

2 With the difficulty of paying high rent and accommodating their growing families, West Indians exemplified a high rate of home ownership relative to their status position. Through a combination of partner schemes, savings, bank loans and sublets, nearly half of all the West Indian households in Britain lived in owner-occupied accommodation by 1975. Other West Indian immigrants, around 25%, became council housing tenants in the 1970s; many West Indians took advantage of national schemes to purchase their council flats in the 1980s (Byron 1994).

3 Byron's (1999) study of the first generation of Caribbean migrants (who will have reached retirement age by 2001) focuses on the decisions affecting their potential return to the region. Byron argues that potential returnees weigh economic factors, such as acquiring a home, managing the cost of living at home and negotiating sources of income, alongside socio-cultural issues, such as the (re-)establishment of social networks (local and transnational), care or welfare in their old age, obligations to extended family in Britain (a particular concern of women), and returnees potential reception at home.

4 Although the performance of respectability should always be understood as contested, respectability is associated with proper manners, education, church membership as well as the institution of marriage. The values associated with contemporary respectability emerged during the transition from plantation slavery to emancipation when the church took on a key role in cultivating individuals and families who would embody law, order and a moral system more broadly.

5 From a different theoretical lens, Bourdieu (1977) in his classic study of Kabyle homes makes the case that homes structure how individuals view and come to know the world. Implicit or explicit rules about who belongs in particular spaces of the home, what time of the day certain portions of the home are used, as well as how homes are used seasonally, are just a few of the examples Bourdieu employs to understand the relationship between the house, belonging and identity.

References

Abrahams, Roger
1983 The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Austin, Diane J.
1984 Urban Life in Kingston, Jamaica: The Culture and Class Ideology of Two Neighborhoods. Caribbean Studies, 3. London: Gordon and Breach.

Bahloul, Joëlle
1992 The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937-1962. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Basu, Paul, and Simon Coleman
2008 Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures. Mobilities 3(3): 313-330

Besson, Jean
1995 Land, Kinship and Community in the Post-emancipation Caribbean: A Regional Overview of the Leeward Islands. *In* Small Islands, Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean. Karen Fog Olwig, ed. Pp. 73-99. Studies in Slave and Post-Slave Societies and Cultures. London: Frank Cass.
2000 The Appropriation of Lands of Law by Lands of Myth in the Caribbean Region. *In* Lands, Law and Environment: Mythical Land, Legal Boundaries. Allen Abramson and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, eds. Pp. 116-135. London: Pluto.
2002 Martha Brae's Two Histories: European Expansion and Caribbean Culture-Building in Jamaica. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Besson, Jean, and Janet Momsen
2007 Caribbean Land and Development Revisited. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Bloch, Maurice
1996 How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory and Literacy. Boulder, CO: Westview.
Bourdieu, Pierre
1977 The Berber House. *In* Rules and Meanings: The Anthropology of Everyday Knowledge. Mary Douglas, ed. Pp. 98-110. London: Penguin.
1984 Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Brodber, Erna
1975 A Study of Yards in the City of Kingston. Working Paper, 9. Mona, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies.
Bueno, Lourdes
1997 Dominican Women's Experiences of Return Migration: The Life Stories of Five Women. *In* Caribbean Circuits: New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration. Patricia Pessar, ed. Pp. 14-60. New York: Center for Migration Studies.
Byron, Margaret
1994 Post-war Caribbean Migration to Britain: The Unfinished Cycle. Aldershot: Ashgate.
1999 The Caribbean Population in 1990s Britain: Who Will Return? Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 25(2):285-301.
Carsten, Janet, and Steven Hugh-Jones, eds.
1995 About the House. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Chamberlain, Mary
1997 Narratives of Exile and Return. New York: St. Martin's.
Chevannes, Barry
2001 Jamaican Diasporic Identity: The Metaphor of Yaad. *In* Nation Dance: Religion, Identity and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean. P. Taylor, ed. Pp. 129-137. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Clarke, Alison J.
2001 Setting Up Home in North London: Ambition and Actuality. *In* Home Possessions: Material Possessions Behind Closed Doors. Daniel Miller, ed. Pp. 23-46. New York and Oxford: Berg.
Cohen, Jeffrey H.
2008 Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development, and the Household. American Anthropologist 103(4):954-967.
Davison, R. B.
1968 No Place Back Home: A Study of Jamaicans Returning to Kingston, Jamaica. Race 9:499-509.
Douglass, Lisa
1992 The Power of Sentiment: Love, Hierarchy and the Jamaican Family Elite. Boulder, CO: Westview.
Empson, Rebecca
2007 Separating and Containing People and Things in Mongolia. *In* Thinking through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically. Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell, eds. Pp. 113-40. New York: Routledge.
Foner, Nancy
1978 Jamaica Farewell: Jamaican Migrants in London. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Fortier, Anne-Marie
2000 Migrant Belongings. Oxford: Berg Press.
Garvey, Paulette
2001 Organized Disorder: Moving Furniture in Norwegian Homes. *In* Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors. Daniel Miller, ed. Pp. 47-68. New York and Oxford: Berg.
Glick Schiller, Nina, and Georges E. Fouron
2001 Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. Durham: Duke University Press.
Gmelch, George
1980 Return Migration. Annual Review of Anthropology 9:48-63.
1992 Double Passage: The Lives of Caribbean Migrants Abroad and Back Home. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Goulbourne, Harry, and Mary Chamberlain, eds.
2001 Caribbean Families in Britain and the Transatlantic World. London: Macmillan.
Guarnizo, Luis
1997 "Going Home": Class, Gender and Household Transformation among Dominican Return Migrants. *In* Caribbean Circuits: New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration. Patricia Pessar, ed. Pp. 13-60. New York: Center for Migration Studies.
Henry, Frances, and Dwaine Plaza, eds.
2006 Returning to the Source: The Final Stage of the Caribbean Migration Circuit. Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
Horst, Heather A.
2005 Landscaping Englishness: The Postcolonial Predicament of Returnees in Mandeville, Jamaica. *In* The Experience of Return: Caribbean Perspectives. Robert Potter, Dennis Conway and Joan Phillips, eds. Pp. 207-224. Aldershot: Ashgate.
2006 Building Home: Being and Becoming a Returned Resident. *In* Returning to the Source: The Final Stage of the Caribbean Migration Circuit. Frances Henry and Dwaine Plaza, eds. Pp. 123-144. Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
2007 "You Can't Be Two Places at Once": Rethinking Transnationalism through Return Migration in Jamaica. Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power 14(1):63-83.
James, Winston
1993 Migration, Racism and Identity Formation: The Caribbean Experience in Britain. *In* Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain. Winston James and Clive Harris, eds. Pp. 231-288. London and New York: Verso.
King, Russell
2000 Generalizations from the History of Return Migration. *In* Return Migration: Journey of Hope or Despair? B. Ghosh, ed. Pp. 7-55. Geneva: International Organization for Migration and United Nations.

King, Russell, Tony Warnes and Allan Williams
2000 Sunset Lives: British Retirement Migration to the Mediterranean. Oxford: Berg.
Klimt, Andrea
1989 Returning "Home": Portuguese Migrant Notions of Temporariness, Permanence and Commitment. New German Critique 16:47-70.
Levi-Strauss, Claude
1983 The Way of the Masks. London: Jonathan Cape.
1987 Anthropology and Myth: Lectures 1951-1982. Oxford: Blackwell.
Louie, Andrea
2008 Re-Territorializing Transnationalism: Chinese Americans and the Chinese Motherland. American Ethnologist 27(3):645-669.
Makovicky, Nicolette
2007 Closet and Cabinet: Clutter as Cosmology. Home Cultures 4(3):287-309.
Malkki, Lisa
1995 Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Marcoux, Jean-Sebastien
2001 The "Casser-Maison" Ritual: Constructing the Self by Emptying the Home. Journal of Material Culture (6):213-236.
Maurer, William
1997 Fragments of Blood on Fragments of Soil: Capitalism, the Commons, and Kinship in the Caribbean. Plantation Society in the Americas 4:159-172.
Miller, Daniel
2008 Migration, Material Culture and Tragedy: Four Moments in Caribbean Migration. Mobilities 3(3):397-413.
Miller, Daniel, ed.
2001 Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors. Oxford: Berg.
Mintz, Sidney W.
1974 Caribbean Transformations. Chicago: Aldine.
Money, Annemarie
2007 Material Culture and the Living Room: The Appropriation and Use of Goods in Everyday Life. Journal of Consumer Culture 7(3):355-377.
Moore, Henrietta
1986 Space, Text and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
Olwig, Karen Fog
1993 Global Culture, Island Identity: Community and Change in the Afro-Caribbean Community of Nevis. Reading: Harwood.
1997 Cultural Sites: Sustaining a Home in a Deterritorialized World. *In* Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object. Karen Fog Olwig and Kirsten Hastrup, eds. Pp. 17-38. London: Routledge.
1999 Caribbean Place Identity: From Family Land to Region and Beyond. Identities 5(4):435-467.
2007 Caribbean Journeys: An Ethnography of Migration and Home. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Olwig, Karen Fog, and Kirsten Hastrup, eds.
1997 Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object. London: Routledge.
Parkin, David
1999 Mementoes as Transitional Objects in Human Displacement. Journal of Material Culture 4(3):303-320.
Pessar, Patricia, ed.
1996 Caribbean Circuits: New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration. Staten Island, New York: Center for Migration Studies.
Plaza, Dwaine
2000 Transnational Grannies: The Changing Family Responsibilities of Elderly African Caribbean-Born Women Resident in Britain. Social Indicators Research 51(1):75-105.
Potter, Robert, Dennis Conway and Joan Phillips, eds.
2005 The Experience of Return: Caribbean Perspectives. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Rapport, Nigel, and Andrew Dawson
1998 Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of "Home" in a World in Movement. New York: Berg.
Smith, Michael P., and Luis Guarnizo
1998 Transnationalism from Below. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
Thomas-Hope, Elizabeth
1995 Island Systems and the Paradox of Freedom: Migration in the Post-Emancipation Leeward Islands. *In* Small Islands, Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean. Karen Fog Olwig, ed. Pp. 161-178. Studies in Slave and Post-Slave Societies and Cultures. London: Frank Cass.
1999 Return Migration to Jamaica and its Development Potential. International Migration, 37(1):183-208.
Thompson, Paul, and Elaine Bauer
2006 Jamaican Hands Across the Atlantic. Kingston: Ian Randle.
Tsuda, Takeyuki
1999 Transnational Migration and the Nationalization of Ethnic Identity among Japanese Brazilian Return Migrants. Ethnos 27(2):145-179.
Wilk, Richard, and Robert M. Netting
1984 Households: Changing Forms and Functions. *In* Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group. Robert M. Netting, Richard R. Wilk and Eric J. Arnould, eds. Pp. 1-28. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Wilson, Peter
1973 Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean. New Haven: Yale University Press.