

Leaving Home: Safer Spaces Beyond the Neoliberal Family

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In April 2020, Women's Aid, a domestic abuse charity in the UK, reported the results of a survey in which over two thirds of survivors that they contacted reported an escalation of their abuse and seventy-two per cent said that the advent of Covid-19 and the attendant lockdown had offered an opportunity for their abusers to exert further control over their lives (Women's Aid 2020). In the same month, CBS News reported that three times as many women were killed by men during the first three weeks of lockdown compared to the previous year (Ott 2020, April 15) and, by June, Solace, an organization which manages abuse survivor services across London was reporting that, in the week of May 10th, 2020 when lockdown was eased, it received two hundred percent more calls than during the first week of lockdown. Ninety two percent of these calls were considered 'high risk', ie., 'a risk of high physical harm or homicide' (Ott 2020, June 29). In July, the Counting Dead Women Project reported twenty-six women and girls believed to have been killed by male partners during lockdown, a number corroborated by the New York Times which stated in an editorial that 'The [British] government's overall pandemic plan, published on March 3, include[d] no mention of domestic abuse' (Taub & Bradley 2020), despite recommendations from the United Nations and other agencies that this should be made a priority (United Nations, n.d). While Britain is not the only country to have seen escalating rates of domestic abuse and homicide (Taub 2020), the questions raised by the lack of provision for, or even acknowledgement of, the dangers of the home environment for countless women and girls are particularly acute in the UK context where the government instruction to #StayHome and stay safe was, for too many, a death sentence. In the words of UN Secretary General, António Guterres, 'For many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest. In their own homes' (United Nations, n.d., p1).

My concern in this chapter, then, is to challenge the concept of 'home' as it is understood in the current conjuncture, bearing in mind that it is a space determined by ideals structured through the discourse of the nation state and the family, both of which appeal to notions of 'safety' while constructing particular raced, classed and gendered identities. Beyond this, I am interested in the literal construction of 'home' as an architectural project with deep historical roots. My aim will be to interrogate the ontological entanglement of bodies and buildings and the other objects with which they co-exist in order to expose how violence in domestic space becomes normalized. I want to open a dialogue which takes account of new materialist ideas in accounting for the structural conditions under which domestic violence takes place and which recognizes the gender based violence that is deeply embedded in the built environment itself.

What I hope to demonstrate is one way in which the rupture created by the advent of Covid-19 may be utilized to address an issue that has for too long been explored as, itself, a kind of sickness of the social body, the cure for which is understood to depend on more effective policing of existing institutions. What I want to argue for is a radical revision in how we understand, in particular, the institution of the family and the spaces through which it is realised and how we can challenge the heteronormative, cisgendered and colonial ideas that have, for a large part of our history, determined what we are persuaded to accept as making home.

Gender, Violence and the Family Ideal

Outside the context of Covid-19, while domestic violence is not perpetrated exclusively by males against females, globally women and girls constitute the overwhelming majority of deaths from domestic homicide¹. In the United States 'for every woman killed ... from domestic homicide, nearly nine are almost killed' (Snyder 2020, p.6) and, in Maryland, New York City and Chicago, 'homicide is the leading cause of maternal mortality' (Snyder 2020, p.59). In February 2020, the Office for National Statistics in the UK reported that '80 women were killed by a partner or ex in the year to March 2019 ... an increase of 27% from the previous year'. 'The most common method of killing' according to *The Guardian* website, 'continued to be stabbing' (Grierson 2020). Tellingly, a report produced by the UK Government, covering the years 2014/15 estimated that 87% of all domestic homicides occurred 'in a house or dwelling' (Home Office (UK) 2016, p.6).

Gender ideology as a risk factor for domestic abuse has not been extensively researched. In an overview for the journal *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* in 2013, Parveen Azam Ali and Paul B Naylor found studies considering head injury, neurotransmitters such as testosterone and serotonin, genetic predisposition and the co-presence of infectious illnesses such as encephalitis, meningitis, syphilis, herpes simplex, tuberculosis and AIDS, as well as anger management issues, depression, low self-esteem, lack of both communication skills and general assertiveness and 'attachment' issues as pre-conditions for abuse, none of which were conclusive and all of which failed to account for 'societal attitudes, cultural norms, and structural inequalities' (p.378). A more recent study conducted in the UK and focused specifically on coercive control found that feminist accounts of the role of gender ideology in heterosexual relationship violence had 'achieved a degree of recognition' but 'without explicit links to gender inequality' (Downes, Kelly & Westmarland, 2019, p.270). In other words, the feminist analysis of gender inequality as founded in normative ideas about what constitutes the 'correct' or 'natural' performance of gender has, despite a considerable body of literature dating back to at least the early 20th century, not been effectively linked with the regimes of violence through which women are controlled by men in domestic space.

Instructive here is Anne Morris' study of the relationship between violence against women and abuse of children which, as she says, commonly co-occur 'in the intimate space of the household' (2009, p.414). In what she calls an 'abusive household gender regime (AHGR)' (p.415), abusive manipulation of children's perceptions of their mother's behaviour is coupled with coercive control to establish a gendered hierarchy within the space of the home in which the children are complicit in their mother's abuse. This 'maternal alienation', is, as she says, part of a deliberate strategy to 'inflate perpetrators' power and control and utilise gendered behaviours and stereotypes that benefit men' (p.417). The insidious nature of the interlocking regimes of abuse within an AHGR contributes to an environment in which 'violence towards women and children is interwoven through time and intimate space into their daily lives, into their bodily and emotional reactions, into their beliefs and into their relationships with themselves and others' (p.417).

Fundamental to the perpetuation of an AHGR is the use of the masculine voice wielding forms of language which create and re-create femininity as both a defective subjectivity and an ideal against which various forms of lack are measured. The abused woman is cast as a deficient mother through tropes which appeal to prescribed notions of 'correct' parenting while, at the same time, she is accused of, essentially, neglecting to perform her gender in such a way as to secure the perpetrator's masculinity in terms of culturally sanctioned representations (Downes, Kelly & Westmarland 2019). 'Violence in households', according to Morris, 'is not haphazard. While it takes various forms ... it manifests particular configurations of gender dynamics that are already ... embedded within a society at many levels' (2009, p.420). As she points out, '[i]n AHGRs, perpetrators wield those cultural discourses that

service their purpose best' (p.421). These are discourses made available by cultural institutions invested in the hierarchisation of gender to provide for the perpetuation of global power regimes in which economics and the nation state join forces with religion, the family and the media to enforce structural divisions. As Morris points out, gender regimes, 'bridge the intimate and the global' and condition relationships between 'households and organisations' (p.421).

Although Morris is not specifically concerned with the locations in which domestic abuse occurs, what emerges from her argument is a structured equivalence between what she calls 'space for action' and gender ideology. 'Perpetrators', she writes, 'inhabit greater space through their sense of entitlement' (p.422). A number of questions emerge from this which pertain specifically to the conjuncture in which Covid-19 emerged to confine whole populations to domestic space and expose the precarity of women's lives in the spaces in which they have been, traditionally, expected to thrive. Alongside the language of abuse which Morris discusses and which I will return to later, I want to interrogate the notion of the domestic, its relationship to the family ideal and, more pertinently for my current argument, how these are related to notions of space and place and their construction through the concept of 'home'.

'The dominant, legitimate definition of the normal family ...', writes Pierre Bourdieu, 'is based on a constellation of words – house, home, household ... - which, while seeming to describe social reality, in fact construct it' (1996, p.19). As he demonstrates, the family is an institution with considerable discursive power which is itself constructed as an entity through powerful legal, filial, economic, political and, I would add, scientific (biological and medical) and gendered (patriarchal) discourses. The house, as a 'container' of the family, functions as a discursive object which marks out the limits of the private domain while, at the same time, being symbolic of social class, poverty and wealth and functioning as heritable capital. Implicit in the notion of the 'starter home'² is the idea of upward social mobility, coupled with notions of growth. In other words, the ownership of a house confers symbolic capital which establishes the family that it contains as in a state of development towards procreation and the provision of future worker-citizens and thus is implicitly a container also for a prescribed heterosexual partnership. The form that this partnership takes, although in recent years more flexibly imagined is, nevertheless, still implicitly founded in an ideal which makes reference to marriage, a gendered division of labour and the post WW2 nuclear family. Houses then, the form that they take and the living that they presuppose are fundamental to structuring ideas of what counts as 'normal' domesticity and thus, I will argue, in providing for the conditions in which domestic violence takes place.

In what follows, I will look briefly at the history of domestic housing and its relationship to normative ideas of gender and sexuality before turning to an analysis of an image from Dutch photographer Karin Bultje's photobook project *All Pigs Have the Same Face* as a visual reference for the relationship between domestic space, domestic abuse and the significant objects through which household gender regimes are maintained. In line with new materialist analyses of bodies as mutable configurations in dynamic relation with other forms of matter, I am concerned to establish a link between the provisioning of homes in the developed West and the gender anxieties which surface in the vocabulary of abuse. First, however, I want to take a moment to consider the hegemony of architectural form and to propose a conceptual framework through which we might interrogate how the design of homes impacts the performance of gender in domestic settings.

Vitruvian Mantology

The quintessential template for spatial design is Vitruvian Man, the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio's figure within a circle describing the limits of a square, iconised in the famous drawing by

Leonardo da Vinci. Although most of the buildings with which we are familiar in the world of late modernity are more likely to refer to Le Corbusier's Modulor Man, the principle is the same. Both are based on a static and standardised male body. As Mónica Arellano notes, 'the Modular's measurements allude to that of a 6'0 (1.83-meter) Caucasian man like the ones found in Hollywood movies, magazines, and across television screens' (Arellano 2018). Although principles of movement and projection have since been incorporated into architectural epistemology (Sennett 2018, pp.187-189), the fact remains that what might be called the body of architecture is fundamentally white, able-bodied and male. Or, as Aaron Betsky puts it, 'Men rule, and their power is made real through architecture' (1992, p.xii).

Betsky's *Building Sex: Men, Women, Architecture, and the Construction of Sexuality* is one of the very few full length studies of the relationship between building, gender and culture. As he recounts the history of built space in relation to normative understandings of gender and sexuality in Western culture, what becomes clear is how much assumptions about what counts as correct expressions of masculinity and femininity are factored into the designs of both buildings and cities. Furthermore, assumptions of gender intersect with race and social class to provide for a particular ideal of dwelling exemplified, in general, by the design of middle class homes to accommodate an ideal, also, of family life. Indeed, Vitruvius himself considered social class to be important in the design of houses, at least in that the rooms should reflect the occupation of the (male) householder (Pollio, lxxxiii). A great admirer of Greek architecture, he recommended their custom of including 'men's apartments, since in them the men can stay without interruption from the women' (Pollio, lxxxvi), a custom which, in attenuated form, seems to find contemporary expression in garden sheds (Malkin, 2017).

Central to Betsky's study is the correspondence between the building of both family homes and public space and the division of labour by gender. Built space presupposes that women are more concerned with interiority, both in the sense of being responsible for the psychic and emotional health of the family and with providing for the material comfort of both men and children. In this sense, femininity is expected to be expressed in greater emotional sensitivity and a concern with the minutiae of everyday life while masculinity is associated with a broader range of interests and an investment in the world exterior to the home. The argument that the cultural construction of gender depends on dichotomies of inside/outside and nature/culture which then map onto determinations of correct gender functioning is as old as feminism (Rosenberg, 1982). But what Betsky makes clear is how the principles of gender hierarchy have determined both the form and functioning of built space. Furthermore, because the persistence of Vitruvian ideology ensures that the home has remained significant in determinations of social class, the advent of modernity produced a new iteration of femininity of vital importance to the development of consumer capitalism. 'It is important to realize', writes Betsky, 'that the cult of the domestic interior fixes the modern definition of femininity':

Often enclosed in the interior, the woman made a place for herself. Men then associated this space with femininity. Women had no choice but to accept this role. Beyond that a capitalist economy developed a *raison d'être* for this space: It was the place of reproduction and education, as opposed to the male place of production and action, and it was the place of consumption, as opposed to production (p. 143).

Betsky, among others (Nava, 1997) has detailed how shopping arcades and later the department store became places where women were able to engage in the life of the city and how these establishments thrived by catering for the new femininity which expressed itself not only through the design and furnishing of interiors but through a corresponding concern with personal appearance and fashion. The women that enjoyed these new freedoms were necessarily married and disposing of their husbands'

income in a such a way as to reflect his social status. Thus their freedom was qualified and dependent on a performance of gender appropriate to the role of wife. The furnishings, devices and adornments that they purchased and, indeed, the act of purchasing itself, thus functioned performatively to establish both the fact of gender and the mode of its expression. In this way, femininity was, and still remains, both heavily circumscribed and dependent on a particular mode of consumption. A woman, sanctioned by the legal fiction of marriage is invited to, literally, make herself at home in architectural space. In doing so, she forges an identity which promotes an achieved masculinity. Like femininity, masculinity is not a biological given but something which depends on adhering to specific conventions but, under the terms of modern marriage and its intimate association with making home, it is the body of the woman that carries the burden of both genders. The wife is the mark of masculinity achieved, not only in the fact of her marriage but in her appearance and her skill in practices of consumption through which she makes a place for herself which is also the place in which she is, ultimately, confined.

While monuments may be symbolically demolished and the meanings that they support challenged, built space is part of an environment which endures and is most clearly represented in Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias. These 'other spaces' are representative of the culture as a whole and do much to secure and perpetuate the meanings of all the other structures or enclosures that they represent. Foucault's examples are schools, graveyards and prisons (Foucault, 1986). I would add to this the suburb, described by Betsky as 'a world ... turned in on itself ... organized ... around the annexes to the culture of consumption and reproduction – namely the school and the shopping area' (p.145). Suburbs describe a fantasy of domesticity, at a remove from the 'men's apartments' of modernity³ and are thus heterotopias of both gender conformity and the control to which Vitruvian ideology refers. As Jeremy Till points out, Vitruvius' programme had less to do with making beautiful buildings than with currying favour with the emperor Augustus. The *Ten Books on Architecture* are a prescription for 'imposing order ... taking the unruly and making it coherent'. Thus, 'under the more-or-less benign cloak of aesthetic codes, Vitruvius ... slip[s] in a distinctly nonbenign association with social reform and imperial power'. And he continues '[T]he mistaken (and dangerous) conflation of visual order with social order continues to this day' (2009, p.28).

As I have suggested elsewhere (2018), Vitruvian Man as an enduring cultural icon perpetuates notions of control, not only of the visual landscape but of both the social and individual body. Furthermore, he represents the abstract idea of the human as a condition to be achieved, rather than a description of an existing biological or ontological state. He is often discussed this way in posthuman theory (Braidotti, 2013. Haraway, 1997) but I have extended this idea by putting him back into his original, architectural context in order to demonstrate how the built environment itself yearns towards a perfected ideal of the human. This is an ideal that, as Till also points out, is most clearly expressed in modernist architecture's 'pure forms, elimination of decoration, and white walls. And it is not for nothing that this cleanliness is so often associated with some kind of moral order' (p.30). Thus, the ideal body and the template for architectural design is the perfectly proportioned Caucasian male whose physicality represents both moral and corporeal cleanliness and is the only body that can comfortably occupy architectural space. The city, as a 'human' environment is thus inimical to *all* bodies or, as Betsky puts it 'we are all women trying to make ourselves at home in a world of men' (p.xiv-xv). However, I would go further here and suggest that the way in which different bodies make themselves 'at home' in built space differs radically and is governed by degrees of proximity to the Vitruvian ideal. The burden of cleanliness as an expression of adherence to standards of moral propriety falls disproportionately on women and people of colour, both of whom have historically functioned as domestic servants in Western culture and both of whom have traditionally been represented as unruly, chaotic and in need

of control. The conditions of their being at home are therefore governed by how well they exhibit the ability to maintain a clean and controlled space.

To make sense of this, I want to propose a concept through which we might read the relationship between history, built space and the violence of gender which brings together the ontology of human being as it is seemingly determined by architecture as well as its cultural expression and representation. This idea, which I am calling Vitruvian Mantology, arose from trying to conceptualise the relationship between the body in space as determined by Vitruvian discourse and the sense in which we conceive of ourselves as human. I needed a term to stand for the way in which the idea of Vitruvian Man governs our sense of ontological distinctiveness, while promising a future in which the perfection that he models will be achieved. And so I invented, or thought I invented, Vitruvian Mantology.

What I discovered is that there is nothing new about Mantology. It is, in fact, a very old word which refers to the act or art of divination or prophesying and is therefore entirely appropriate to describe the way that built space presupposes bodies and their function in the world while perpetuating a notion of futurity which takes for granted that naturalized social institutions like marriage and the family will continue in perpetuity. As Mark Augé has pointed out, nineteenth century utopianism seems to share the faith of the monotheistic religions that ‘something in the past ... authorize[s] a projection into the future’ (2014, p.79). This is, as he points out ‘a short-circuit of thought, an intellectual fait accompli placing the unknown in the domain of the known through recourse to such notions as prophecy, annunciation or revelation’ (p.80). This is what is suggested in, for instance, Le Corbusier’s idea of a house as a ‘machine for living in’ (1986, p.107) and its association with a utopian ideal of human flourishing, taking for granted the persistence of Vitruvian Man as an image for what Braidotti calls ‘the humanistic ideal’ (2013, p.23) as well as the way that the ideas that he stands for will continue to structure the built environment. He is the figure for the ‘something in the past’ that divines the mode in which bodies will inhabit the future expressed through a strategic architecture with an arrangement of rooms and living spaces which has become hegemonic. Vitruvian Mantology then accounts for how we conceive of the relationship between architecture, social order and the family and it is also a powerful conditioning factor in the gendering of bodies under the terms of patriarchal capitalism.

Betsky’s proposition that the architecture of the ancient world evidences a gradual subsumption of the natural world under a system of grids and towering forms, representing the rational order, control and hierarchy associated with masculinity goes some way to supporting my argument here (1992, p.20-43). Although I am uncomfortable with the ascription of nature to femininity and culture to masculinity (which is what Betsky seems to imply), with corresponding spatial forms, I am nevertheless persuaded that gender is mapped onto built space in ways that may not be immediately apparent but which are constitutive of the gendered hierarchies which are played out through cultural tropes. Mirjana Lozanovska, for example, points to Gary Cooper’s portrayal of Howard Roark in the 1949 film of Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* as a classic portrayal of the master architect, the ‘solitary figure acting against the grain’ who ‘believes in his own creativity and his own vision, and will not negotiate this with others or with the context within which he must function’. ‘The body of the master architect’, she writes, ‘is a determinate body; it permeates the architectural community at a level of identity and idealization’ (2006, p.66). And she continues, this is the master architect as ‘always already masculine’ and, furthermore, ‘Eurocentric, white and privileged’ (p.67). Another way of putting this is that Cooper as Roark establishes the form of Vitruvian Mantology for the post-WW2 world, suturing a new conception of American manifest destiny with the expression of a fully heteronormative, white, liberal humanism in which the masculine architect colonises space to re-make the world in his own image. At the same time, he colonises, also, the body of woman which is confined to the place of procreation, nurture and social

reproduction. Evidence for the persistence of this idea is given in Lozanovska's assessment of the body of celebrated female architect Zaha Hadid as inherently transgressive. The identification of architecture as both the product and representation of a particular and circumscribed masculinity positions not only women but transgressive and different masculinities as what are to be controlled in the rational ordering of space that it mandates.

It is worth reiterating here that Vitruvian Mantology is based in a myth of geometric harmony which no body is able to approximate; it sets an impossible standard for inhabitation where the act or performance of inhabiting is given as that which secures the positioning of bodies in the hierarchy and which also ensures that the majority, if not all, bodies will fail the test. Thus, in the absence of the perfected body which Vitruvian Mantology predicts, all bodies inhabit built space only precariously and always in terms of difference. This precarity of inhabitation in the context of late capitalism is expressed through anxieties about security as evidenced by the growth of the market for surveillance devices which watch over spaces both within the home and its near environment. Fear of racial others and an unspecified but ever threatening criminality linked to social class stereotypes is therefore tacitly encouraged by the industries that thrive alongside home ownership which also include those that profit from the imperative to make homes attractive within specified codes of maintenance and decoration in order to succeed in attracting buyers in the home ownership market. There is also (particularly in the UK) an implicit policing of standards connected to social class and its expression in home design. As I will continue to argue, these things are not peripheral to or merely the setting for, domestic abuse but form the context through which it is expressed. They provide the conditions for the performance of family life which is equally, as I will demonstrate, a performance of domination, separation and control.

Domestic Space and the Feminine Ideal

Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh's *The Anti-Social Family*, first published in 1982, remains the most trenchant critique of the nuclear family as both an oppressive institution and an ideology. Written in the early years of Thatcherite ascendancy in the UK, it provides an analysis of family ideology as central to the rise of neoliberalism, both as an economic policy and a cultural formation. "The family" ..., they write, 'is not merely an economic unit, nor merely a kinship structure; it is also an ideological configuration with resonance far beyond these narrow definitions' (p.130). The quote marks around 'the family' in this statement indicate the monolithic function of the idea in both political rhetoric and the popular consciousness such that it stands as guarantor for the truth of gender, sexuality and social class as well as providing an alibi for both moral regimes and fiscal policies. Their analysis of family rhetoric as serving to universalise and naturalise a specific idea of family in the service of social control remains highly relevant. As they point out, '[t]he category of 'the natural' plays a part in many contemporary institutions and is used in many social situations ... But nowhere is this category so constantly invoked precisely to sanction and strengthen the existing social arrangement, as is the case of the family' (p.34-5). While recognising that, for example, Engels (pp.70-72) and the Frankfurt School (pp.28 & 35) had included a critique of the family as necessary to anti-capitalism, they make clear that familialism as an ideology is invested in the maintenance of gender as well as social class. '[T]he family', they write, 'remains a vigorous agency of class placement and an efficient mechanism for the creation and transmission of gender inequality' (p. 29). At the same time, they point to the way that the private nature of the family is emphasised in neoliberal rhetoric and how the terms of contemporary marriage ensure an 'endless proliferation of separate little households [which] has been an ideal ally in the constant capitalist effort to expand consumption and keep up the demand for ever more commodities' (p. 64).

Additionally, architects Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici have demonstrated how primitive accumulation, while inaugurating the conditions under which capitalism flourished was also continued and continues to this day in the gendered division of labour within the home where the ownership of a home confers a set of expectations that are played out in consumer behaviour. Although the demarcation of space within the home according to gender roles was not formalized until the 15th century, it was informed by the securing of exchange value through domestic labour. In the writings of the 15th century architect Leon Battista Alberti, Aureli and Giudici find that 'the house becomes a terrain of primitive accumulation where the systematic exploitation of waged servants and unwaged wives has to be managed, as well as staged, represented and later celebrated as a 'labor of love' (2016, p. 116). This is what the Italian feminist Leopoldina Fortunati calls 'the fundamental work contract of the female labor force' (1981, p. 59), ie., the home based labour that she contracts to perform as a condition of her status as a wife, the reward for which is cast in terms of emotional fulfilment rather than wages. And this is a contract that pertains, despite the entry of greater number of women into the workforce. Studies conducted during the early stages of lockdown in 2020 have revealed that not only had women become more vulnerable to unemployment but that there had been little change in the already stark imbalance in how domestic labour is shared with women labouring up to 15 hours per week longer in the home than men (Savage, 2020).

Connected with this is the increased focus on the body as the locus and site of consumption practices. Angela McRobbie has discussed this in terms of the contemporary *dispositifs* which structure femininity and its associated representations. In what she calls the *p-i-r* (perfect-imperfect-resilience) (2020, p. 54) nexus, the call to 'perfect' both the body and its relationship to the world is both contradicted and supported by the exhortation to embrace imperfections as part of the 'authentic' self. At the same time, the discourse of feminism is subverted towards the achievement of a meritocratic femininity which promotes resilience through developing strategies of self-care in order to effectively compete in the neoliberal market place, both for jobs and sexual partners. 'The perfect', writes McRobbie, 'marks out the contours of female competition as inscribed within the mundane features of everyday life ... the young working mother, getting up at 5 a.m. for her work-out, preparing healthy breakfasts for the children with help from her feminist-friendly husband, heading off for work while also scheduling in a hair appointment at lunchtime' (p. 48). Needless to say, the 'feminist-friendly husband' is given as part of achievable perfection, the 'reward' for correct self-presentation and aspirational dating.

Endlessly rehearsed through social media, the 'perfect' works to separate and individualise, provoking envy and competition 'while also providing role models for those lower down the social ladder' (p. 50). As McRobbie demonstrates, the *imperfect* simultaneously appropriates the discourse of feminism, incorporating both the critique of 'the perfect' and outrage at sexism and sexual violence into a vocabulary of injustice which promotes individual resilience 'without aiming to dismantle or even profoundly disrupt the prevailing gender regime' (p. 56). Fundamental to *p-i-r* is consumption oriented towards both displaying achieved perfection and exercising resilience through purchasing self-care products and techniques. The effect of *p-i-r* is to make abject women's lives which do not conform to its competitive ethic as evidenced in the wholesale condemnation of those women who rely on state benefits or in other ways appear to have failed or been reluctant to engage in competitive femininity. Thus the always already abjected bodies of working-class and non-white women are marked as undeserving while, at the same time, providing an oppositional other to achieved post-feminist subjectivity. Important here is the re-establishment of the nuclear family and a re-investment in 'marriage, motherhood and domestic life as a benchmark of successful femininity' but now with the emphasis on the family as 'a small business' (p. 30). What McRobbie calls 'the Facebook world of happy nuclear families' (p. 79) promotes the 'well-run 'corporate family' [which] endorses the 'intensification

of mothering' as a mode of investment in the human capital of infants and children' (p. 31). Thus, '[t]he idea of the perfect hinges on a fantasy of middle-class futurity' (p. 49).

Three things emerge from this which throw considerable light on the relationship between Vitruvian Mantology and domestic abuse. First of all, the setting for the Facebook family is the family home which needs to be, above all, photogenic and appointed in such a way that the consumption practices associated with achieved perfection are on constant display. Secondly, in the discourse of neoliberal feminism, domestic abuse is either relegated to the realm of the other or expected to be dealt with through resilience techniques and is certainly disavowed in the happy Facebook family. And finally, the *p-i-r* is caught up in the discourse of investment supported by the house building and home making industries in which gender based fulfilment is promised in conformation with the achievement of cultural capital in the form of home ownership.

Thus homes for sale encode the promise of 'middle-class futurity' through spatial arrangements that strategically appeal to both the achievement of gendered conformity and the expected trajectory of family life. In Tony Chapman's analysis of middle-class show homes in the UK in the late 1990s, he notes in particular a 'shift from the notion that 'collective family life leads to happiness', as was prevalent in the 1930s and 1950s, 'to one which asserts that 'individual self-fulfilment' for all members of the family is vital within the communion of the family' (1999, p. 52). Aside from the proliferation of bathrooms indicating 'endless opportunity for body celebration' (p. 45), there is an emphasis on privacy, both in protection from the outside world and within the house itself. Notable is the strategic separation of the parents' (still called the 'master') bedroom from the children's and the careful arrangement of intervening rooms and corridors to ensure parental privacy 'promising potential buyers the kinds of sexual opportunities in the marital bedroom that was for several decades available only in hotels'. In one show home that Chapman visited, this was made explicit through carefully placed props: fluted champagne glasses, a casually draped slinky female nightgown and 'a pink hand towel ... tied into an elaborate knot from which a single silk rose protruded' (p. 54). The Vitruvian 'men's apartment' is provided by the study which, as Chapman notes, has been newly reintroduced into the ideal home along with the 'drawing room', 'dining room' and 'family room' (p. 52). The study is 'used in show homes as a definitive masculine space to raise men's expectations of renewed status in the family and the opportunity of splendid isolation' and is 'decorated in restrained masculine style ... to give the impression of scholarship and cultural distinction' (p. 53). Thus, as Chapman concludes, 'capital projects images of family life as it 'ought to be lived'' (p. 48).

More recently and in the context of Covid-19, Jilly Boyce Kay has noted how '[u]nder conditions of lockdown, the private home has become hyper-visible' (2020, p 884) with celebrities and influencers reinforcing Government instructions to stay home by posting images of their own, necessarily well appointed, domestic spaces on social media. The exhortation here is not only to stay home but to experience it as both a place of safety and self-discovery. In short, 'the class privilege of home-love is being reframed as civic virtue' (p. 885) where home-love is, due to the aspirational homes on display, framed as attention to 'correct' strategies of consumption in the service of family life. As Boyce Kay points out 'the capitalist housing market makes "home" in its current historical form unequal and unsafe by definition' (p. 887) but the Covid crisis has enabled Governments worldwide to employ strategies which not only confine people to their homes but which do so by drawing heavily on the discursive force of Vitruvian Mantology. The family home, long associated with viable futures secured through conformity to raced, classed and gendered ideals now becomes a space where achievement of the happy Facebook family is associated with the preservation of life itself.

Pigs, Presence and the Posthuman

With this in mind, I want now to turn to a discussion of an image from Karin Bultje's photobook *All Pigs Have the Same Face*⁴ which comprises fourteen images of staged scenarios depicting forms of domestic abuse, accompanied by captions which reproduce the verbal assaults experienced by Karin, herself an abuse survivor, and other women in her support group. In every image, a simple latex pig mask renders the perpetrator both anonymous and abject. The function of anonymity here is both to deny the abuser the privilege of personal identity and to establish the remarkable conformity which marks domestic abuse scenarios. Bultje's title is taken from a remark made by one of the women in her support group and refers to the monotonous regularity with which the same language and controlling techniques are employed by abusers, as if they are all reading from the same script. Most chilling are the indirect insults, posed as questions, like 'You back on your mental pills?' and 'When did I say that?' which are designed to throw doubt on the woman's ability to identify her own state of mind. More straightforwardly, statements of supposed 'fact' like 'Women are no good after a certain age' alongside the well worn 'You are a whore!' are examples of what is, among the self-styled 'men's rights' groups studied by Sarah Banet-Weiser, called 'negging' (2018, p. 117); essentially lowering a woman's confidence until she, supposedly, is distraught enough to succumb to what is essentially rape.



I don't suppose
you think you are
in any way toxic?

One of Bultje's images captioned 'I don't suppose you think you are in any way toxic?' depicts a scenario in which a woman sits meekly, her plate empty, next to the pig who is enjoying a plate of roast meat. Significant here is the way that the shot emphasises not only the food but the serving dishes, matching cutlery and serving utensils which, in this context, represent not only conformity to established practices of domesticity but point also to the commodification of family life and the specifically gendered consumption practices associated with provisioning a home. The empty plate, with its tasteful leaf pattern on display adds a further dimension to the argument in that it emphasises not only that this is a scenario in which the pig eats while the woman starves but also the way that the normalisation of relations within the family in late capitalism is organised around specific objects. As Debra Thimmesh has pointed out 'it has historically been the task of the mother to function not only as a consumer in the domestic sphere, but to accumulate and preserve objects that affirm the family's place in the larger context of capitalist society first by provisioning and then by archiving material goods that lend themselves to the compilation of an evolving history of family life' (2016). Objects in the home then stand in for a political economy in which the logic of exchange governs familial relationships. Equally, as I have suggested, these objects are integral to Vitruvian Mantology which makes a place for them to exist while they, in turn, assure the integrity of domestic arrangements. Or, as the architect Matthew Allen has pointed out 'Modern individuality, compelling objects, and cultural life all belong together; you cannot have one without the others' (2017/18, p. 124).

I find this notion of compelling objects persuasive in that it draws attention to the way that we determine our sense of self in relation to, in Julia Kristeva's words, what is 'opposed to I' (1982, p.1) but which threatens, at the same time, to dissolve the boundaries that we erect as part of the process of ego formation. This fear that the self can be lost, dissolved or made indistinguishable from something wholly other is expressed as revulsion or horror. This is what Kristeva has famously termed 'abjection' which arises from encounters with radical otherness in the form of objects which recall the fear of death or the anxiety of reincorporation with the body of the mother; dirt, disease, decay and, in Kristeva's well known example, the skin that forms on the surface of heated milk. But, as she points out 'it is ... not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules' (p. 4). Abjection, then, is culturally determined through our entry into the Lacanian symbolic in which borders, positions and rules are performatively maintained through the circulation of signs. Revulsion associated with objects 'out of place' is thus intimately connected with the requirement to expel what is other to gender designation while keeping it close in order that it may be controlled. In Bultje's image, the abuser, in emulating the behaviour of the pig stereotype, crosses the line into animality and thus transgresses the border between the order of the domestic world and the disorder with which it is constantly threatened and which, I would suggest, is precisely what he fears. As Kristeva points out '[t]he abject confronts us ... with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal' (p. 12).

Furthermore, when abjection is evoked, we are confronted by the structuring of our ontology in relation to the objects through which our bodily integrity is maintained. This is what Sara Ahmed (following Husserl) calls 'orientations' which 'are about how matter surfaces by being directed in one way or another' (235). In other words, bodies, by being oriented to things in the world shape and are shaped by compelling objects. Proximity is important here, and familiarity, which Ahmed locates as an effect of history, and family history in particular. Objects in the home then (and the home itself), are familiar enough to be unnoticed and the force that they exert becomes unremarkable, just as the force of bodies in keeping objects in their place is unremarked. Or, as Ahmed puts it, '[i]f orientations affect what bodies do, then they also affect how spaces take shape around certain bodies' (250). In Bultje's image which, because of the Covid lockdown was shot in the only space available; the private home, the

potential for disorientation; for a perception of the relationship between domestic objects (in this case, the table and the dining materials) bodies and the shaping of space is revealed. Ahmed points to the tables that constantly appear in the writings of philosophers and the significance of the table as an object in women's lives. She offers the table as an object which needs to be made to 'reappear'; to be considered as an object of significance in feminist politics. The table then 'becomes a disorientation device, making things lose their place, which means the loss of coherence of a certain world' (254). This, I would argue, is what is at stake in Bultje's image. At the same time as we are forced to witness the violence of starvation, we are arrested by the 'reappearance' of the table and its associated domestic crockery. The pig mask, itself a disorientation device – an object out of place – draws attention to the significance of compelling objects in the composition of the domestic and the abjection that they obscure. I want then to suggest here that although this image is deliberately shocking, it opens up a line of flight which destabilizes precisely that which the abuser attempts to stabilize through violence.

Further, I would propose that Covid-19 itself is a disorientation device which has equally destabilized the boundaries that we have relied on to keep human beings human. I am not at all surprised by the fact that significant numbers of people consider it to be a hoax; a myth perpetuated by unscrupulous governments to exercise greater control over populations or an excuse for enhanced surveillance. Covid denial, I would suggest, is prompted by the same fear which motivates the verbal abuse that captions Bultje's image; the fear of toxicity - of pollution of the carefully maintained body by something radically other, alongside a suspicion that what is feared is also what we have ourselves created or made room for.

Viruses are quintessentially posthuman. In the Covid era, we have all become fluent in immune system discourse which, as Donna Haraway pointed out in a paper written during the height of the AIDS crisis, compromises tropes of recognition and misrecognition; self and other which have characterized the languages of sexuality, race and gender in the modern era. An invading virus is an affront to the maintenance of the carefully constructed boundaries through which we have kept things apart in order to conserve a pristine ontology. As she says 'it is a chilling fantasy, whether located in the abstract spaces of national discourse, or in the equally abstract spaces of our interior bodies'.

Covid has forced a reconstruction of sociality and an engagement with other modes of living. It is impossible to maintain the home as defensible space when its status as a haven for a specified living is destabilized by the requirement to make it porous in order to continue to work or to educate children. And this is where I see the potential for change; for a shift in how we conceive of our understandings of what constitutes a safe space. Contemporary homes are only safe for the imaginary families promoted by real estate advertising. To imagine living without the violence provided for by Vitruvian Mantology, we need to think safety differently and entertain the idea of uncertainty as a pre-condition for living otherwise. We need to recognize that our investment in the impermeability of boundaries is founded in notions of bodily integrity mapped onto architectural space and maintained by the compulsion exercised through the objects by which we mark out our environment. Armed with the knowledge that bodies and buildings are mutually constitutive, we need to fight for a radical revision in what we think of as home with the clear understanding that we can no longer maintain the fiction of human distinctiveness founded in an ontology of radical separation. We need to recognise that the violence of separation that we see played out on the global stage in wars, genocide and dispossession is reproduced daily on the home front in the spaces that we have designated as safe but, as recent events have proved, are far from it.

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¹ Rachel Louise Snyder estimates that, in 2017, the victims of 'about 85%' of domestic homicides were women and girls (Snyder 2020, p6).

² The concept of the 'starter home' originated in the US in the years following World War 2 and was originally conceived as a means of enabling young families to purchase a home without paying more per month than they would to rent. The British government has recently (Feb 2020) withdrawn advice to local planning authorities aimed at encouraging first time buyers under 40 to become home owners by

permitting houses to be built on 'exception sites ... land that has been in commercial or industrial use, and which has not currently been identified for residential development'(Gov.uk, 2015).

³ Offices, factories, men's clubs and, until very recently, parliament.

⁴ Many thanks to Karin for allowing me the use of her image. The full project can be found here <https://karinbultjephotoographer.co.uk/projects-1.html>