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**“INSIDE IS REALLY LOVELY...ONCE YOU GET INTO IT”**

**Conflicting narratives of home ‘either side of the wall’ in Basil Spence’s Claremont**

**Court housing scheme**

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## **“Inside is really lovely...once you get into it”**

### **Conflicting narratives of home ‘either side of the wall’ in Basil Spence’s Claremont Court housing scheme**

This article interrogates the articulation of architecture and home through the lens of residents’ domestic narratives in Claremont Court housing scheme (1952-62), Edinburgh. The Scottish tenement, a housing form underpinned by the Victorian domestic model, is the backdrop for the exploration. While Claremont Court dwellings are a representation of the modern home, the spatial arrangement of the scheme builds on Victorian working-class tenements. Such paradoxical conflation of domestic images within the design of Claremont Court serves as a framework for the exploration of the domestic narratives of five households through the use of semi-structured interviews. In revealing conflicting narratives of home ‘either side of the wall’, the findings problematize the wall as domestic boundary and contribute by showing the spatial relation between housing and its context as a culturally specific device in the construction of home. This, the article expands on the symbolic meanings of the home’s ‘interior’ and ‘front’.

Keywords: architecture and home; Scottish tenements; modern domesticity; home boundary; Basil Spence; gentrification.

### **Exploring the tensions between narratives of home ‘either side of the wall’.**

This article highlights the tensions between the narratives of home ‘either side of the exterior walls’ through the case study of Basil Spence’s Claremont Court housing scheme (1959-1962) in Edinburgh. The exploration unfolds around the residents’ negotiation between ideal and lived homes (Wright 1991; Blunt and Dowling 2006), with a particular focus on the role of the spatiality of housing forms in supporting (ideal and lived) notions of home. Within this framework, I build on Steiner and Veel’s (Steiner and Veel 2017: 2) proposition that the exterior walls may be approached as mediating agents that allow “culturally specific connecting procedures”, instead of just the boundaries within which the home is imagined and lived. In order to do so, the

article reaches beyond material culture studies that focus on the symbolic aspects of the interior and the front of the house (Rapoport 1969, 1982; Burnett 1978; Madigan and Munro 1991; Ravetz and Turkington 1995), by looking instead at the spatial relation between the interior and the exterior of housing forms as a connecting device in the making of home.

The spatiality of home, used here as underpinning theoretical framework, hinges on outward and inward aspects. These aspects have been theorised as the spatial notions of 'front' and 'back' respectively (Goffman 1959; Ravetz and Turkington 1995; Darke 1996; Madigan and Munro 1999). Although the modern departure from the front/back distinction has been noted in various studies (Attfield 1989a, 1989b; Crow 1989; Lloyd and Johnson 2004; Dowling 2008), these have overlooked how the spatiality of home permeates through the dwelling's exterior walls, and how such permeability can result in conflicting narratives of home.

I use the case study of Claremont Court housing scheme in Edinburgh (1959-1962) to illustrate the uneasy permeability of the spatiality of home. I propose that the relevance of the case study is based on the fact that the space either side of the exterior walls represents conflicting ideas of domesticity. Although the interior of Claremont Court dwellings was designed as an architectural representation of modern domesticity (\* and \* 2018; \* et al. 2018); I show here that the exterior layout of the housing scheme draws from spatial structures common to Victorian working-class housing, despite what the modern aesthetic of Claremont Court's façades may suggest.

I then draw on current residents' domestic narratives to argue that the spatial articulation between the interior and the exterior of the dwelling plays a pivotal role in the spatial construction of home, acting as a culturally-specific connecting device in the

construction of domestic narratives. In doing so, this article expands on the body of work on the articulation of architecture and home (Rapoport 1982; Attfield 1989a, 2000, 2002; Crow 1989; Ravetz and Turkington 1995; Chapman 1998; Busch 1999; Miller 2002; Llewellyn 2004a, 2004b; Lloyd and Johnson 2004; Jerram 2006; Blunt 2008; Dowling 2008; Jacobs and Cairns 2008; Munro 2013).

### **Domestic transformation in post-war Scotland: Basil Spence's Claremont Court housing scheme.**

Housing programmes, like the Scottish housing drive, provide narratives of domestic “transformation” (Wright 1991: 219) and insights into the wider discourse of housing reformers. In the mid twentieth century in Scotland, policymakers initiated the steady transition from Victorian domesticity to modernity by means of new housing guidelines (Department of Health for Scotland 1956) that set the spatial standards for the Scottish housing provision. The two main objectives of the Scottish housing drive were ‘controlling overcrowding’ and dealing with ‘unfit houses’ (Secretary of State for Scotland 1953, 1956; Sub-Committee of the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee 1977), as a result of the housing shortage that forced large families to live in one-room “single ends” and two-room “room-and-kitchens” in obsolete tenements (McCrone 1995: 1268).

Tenements represented Victorian domesticity in Edinburgh “for a wide range of social classes” (Clark and Carnegie 2003:14). But it was the run-down working-class tenement that policymakers condemned as ‘unfit’ given its “lack of distinction between bedrooms and living-rooms” (Daunton 1983: 54). A relevant aspect of tenement domesticity was that the home “extended onto the stair, the back court and the street” (Clark and Carnegie 2003: 35). Although this idea of home was responsive to economic

hardship, given that help with food, childcare, housework or money came primarily from households in the same close (Faley 1990); the spatiality of the tenement played a role in extending the home beyond the house's walls. 'Houses' in a typical four-storey working-class tenement were accessed through a communal close, which in Edinburgh remained closed or locked to the street (Worsdall 1989); they shared toilets and a back court with a drying green. The "togetherness of the close" (Faley 1990: 93) was enforced by observing the rotas that dictated the use and cleaning of these shared areas, and indicated by the custom of leaving house doors unlocked on the communal stair.

The interior space of the working-class 'single-ends' and 'room-and-kitchens' followed the Victorian front/back spatial dichotomy, but they were just a "mimic in miniature" (Muthesius 1982; Markus and Cameron 2002: 49) of the middle-class tenement. In both 'single-ends' and 'room-and-kitchens', the back was represented by a kitchen of consistent layout and significance as "the focus of life" (Faley 1990: 31). Featuring the only water tap in the house and a recessed 'hole-in-the-wall' bed, the kitchen was the main living, washing, bathing, cooking, eating and sleeping space (Burnett 1978; Faley 1990). The 'room-and-kitchen' also featured a front room facing the street, which should be "reserved for the reception of visitors" (Clark and Carnegie 2003; Munro 2013: 217). However, the housing shortage was such, that even middle-class couples often had to begin married life living with relatives or as lodgers (Rogan 1997) in a neighbour's front room. Using the front room for sleeping, instead of keeping it for 'best', involved transgressing traditional codes of use and blurring the public/private boundaries.

Couples in this situation were "regarded as homeless" (Rogan 1997: 69) by Edinburgh Corporation and moved to the top of the waiting list regardless of their income. As a result, joining the waiting list for a Corporation house was quite

aspirational for working-class households (Hole 1959). However, such was the urgency of rehousing tenants living in Edinburgh's overcrowded tenements, that priority households still had to wait an average of seven years for a Corporation house (Rogan 1997). Scottish policymakers saw the pressing demand for housing provision as an opportunity to displace disagreeable domestic practices which blurred public/private boundaries. At the time, the modern discourse objected to the Victorian front/back distinction on the grounds that it was primarily aimed at stressing class and gender divisions (Burnett 1978; Forty 1986; Murdoch 1986; Markus and Cameron 2002), by making the back of the home the domain of women and servants. The new housing guidelines (Department of Health for Scotland 1956) developed by Scottish policymakers drew on the modern concepts of "functionality and labour saving" (Attfield 2002: 252) as a response to the growing number of working women, and the middle-class households losing their servants (Ravetz 1984).

Housing developments commissioned by Edinburgh Corporation were, therefore, instrumental in the transition from Victorian domesticity in Scotland. Claremont Court housing scheme was one of the Corporation's commissions in 1959, intended to rehouse two hundred persons (City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh [Corporation] 1957). The commission was given to the architectural office Basil Spence & Partners. Basil Spence's work has been defined as eclectic (Campbell et al. 2012); but notwithstanding his lack of a clear theoretical agenda, Spence played a significant role in questioning the Victorian front/back spatial distinction. Back in 1946, Spence had led the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition, where the 'modern kitchen' was presented to a socially-mixed audience as a space for family living (Woodham 2004). Spence's stance explicitly criticised the social stigma attached to cooking and eating in the same

room (Jeremiah 2000), practice which was commonplace in the working-class tenement (Burnett 1978).

Although the (middle-class) Victorian spatial segregation between cooking (back) and eating (front) was abandoned by official Housing Manuals from the mid 1940s onwards (Ministry of Health 1944; Ministry of Health and Ministry of Works 1949; Scottish Housing Advisory Committee 1944; Department of Health for Scotland 1956), Spence's role in the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition was fundamental in overcoming social attitudes towards these established spatial boundaries. Spence displayed a streamlined functional kitchen with labour saving appliances, where the spatial division around water/dirty and heat/clean (Forty 1975) was substituted for the organization of work around efficient "work centres" (Ferry 2011:16).

Spence further developed the idea of the modern kitchen in Claremont Court housing scheme by challenging its traditional association with the back of the house (Sparke 1995). A provision of communal laundry rooms allowed Spence to organise the Court's kitchens around two work centres (a sink unit under the window, and a cooker unit next to a water-heater) and space for a table near the door. The architect also merged the space of the kitchen and the open-plan living-dining room by means of a serving hatch, following the modern strategy of connecting the kitchen with another rooms (\* and \* 2018). Spatially, the modern open-plan living-dining room removed the wall between the public 'front' room and the family room at the 'back'. In symbolic terms, the spatial merging of 'front' and 'back' challenged the hierarchical segregation of domestic space according to class and gender (Attfield 2002), at the same time that it changed the traditional meaning of 'front' (Attfield 1989).



It has been argued that the domestic space became the battlefield where the “dirty Victorian past” and the “clean, modern, civilized future” encountered each other (Leach 2017: 143). It is worth noting that “the notion of ‘opening up’ space for health (presumed to come from light and air)” (Leach 2017: 147) extended also to the urban design of modern housing schemes. However, while Scottish housing regulations provided guidelines for modern domestic spaces (such as the ‘multifunctional kitchen’ or the open-plan ‘living-dining room’), Edinburgh Corporation’s 1957 *Development Plan* was less prescriptive of modern urban design. The *Plan*, which set the framework for the commission of Claremont Court housing scheme, identified Site 67 (East of Claremont Street) as a high-density ‘new housing area’ within the Broughton district (City and Royal Burgh of Edinburgh 1957), where a biscuit factory had been until the mid-1950s.

Apart from setting the density of the site, the Corporation gave the architectural office a “relatively free hand from the design point of view” (Ferguson 1958b), as shown by personal communications between Ferguson, the partner in charge, and Spence. Still, the urban design of Claremont Court housing scheme produced a modest example of modernism (Historic Environment Scotland 2011; Campbell et al. 2012). While Spence’s Gorbals regeneration project for Glasgow Corporation (1959-1962) involved modern high-rise housing, his Edinburgh (Canongate, Newhaven, Claremont Court) housing development projects related to the urban strategy of “modestly scaled contextual infill” (Glendinning 2007: 91; Watters 2010) that prevailed in Edinburgh. In the mid-1950s, Spence pioneered urban interventions characterized by an overlap of modern and traditional architecture. These interventions, described by Watters as “contextual modern” (Watters 2010: 34), materialized in Edinburgh and other historic Scottish towns under the “uneasy tension between traditionalist architectural solutions

[...] and the Modern Movement” (Watters 2010: 33) as a response to campaigns for preserving the historic character of towns.

The ‘contextual modern’ is particularly useful to understand the urban design of Claremont Court. The urban strategy was driven by Ferguson’s initial idea of arranging the housing scheme around a courtyard as a way of “hiding the surroundings” (Ferguson 1958a), which he described as “beastly” (Ferguson 1958a). The development of this idea resulted in two blocks of cottages and four mid-rise rectangular slab-blocks arranged around two landscaped courtyards, providing a total of sixty-three dwellings (Figure 1). A key aspect of the strategy was that one of the mid-rise blocks continued the alignment and height of the streetscape of middle-class tenements and upper-class terraced houses on East Claremont Street (Figure 2). A second important aspect was the courtyard arrangement: the position of blocks and cottages around it allowed maximum sunlight for balconies and gardens, at the same time that the courtyard minimised the views of what Ferguson considered ugly surroundings.

Despite Claremont Court’s modern aesthetic, its urban strategy resonated with the traditional spatial dichotomy of ‘front’ (the street) and ‘back’ (the yard or green) that was common to traditional Scottish domesticity. The communal spaces of the Court also showed an overlap of modern and traditional concepts. Claremont Court’s communal laundries, drying flat roof, basement cellars and landscaped courtyard seem like a modern-coated continuation of Scottish tenement housing, in which communal facilities such as a ‘drying green’ in the back court, a ‘wash-house’ and coal ‘cellars’ in the basements (Worsdall 1989) were usually provided. In the same way, the ‘open deck’ was rooted in traditional Scottish working-class tenements. Despite ‘open deck’ conjuring up images of high-rise housing that followed the Smithsons’ concept of ‘streets in the air’ (Scoffham 1984; Pendlebury et al. 2005), this type of access was

common in low working-class tenements in Scotland. The deck ('balcony') was used in 'houses' for the poorest because it meant that "twice the number could be provided if the balcony system was used" (Worsdall 1989: 107).

The 'courts' of houses for the poor that Glasgow Workmen's Dwellings Company built at the end of the nineteenth century are well-documented examples of this type of tenement housing. The 'courts' consisted of five- and six-storey high blocks around a courtyard, and featured 'washing-houses', 'drying-ground' on the flat roof, and even a 'dust shaft' from each house communicating it with a bin on street level (Worsdall 1989). Although these features may seem modern in outlook, the interior space of the 'houses' conformed to the Victorian spatial dichotomy, with a 'room' facing the front, and a 'kitchen' facing the balcony at the back. I expand on the concept of the 'contextual modern' to show that alongside the modern stylistic influence on "tenement elevations" (Worsdall 1989: 119), Victorian tenement domesticity also had a spatial influence on modern housing schemes like Basil Spence's Claremont Court. While the modern interior space of the dwellings challenged the front/back segregation of Victorian domestic space; the urban strategy of the housing scheme rehearsed the spatiality of working-class Victorian domesticity.

### **Methods.**

To explore and reflect on narratives of home either side of the wall, this article draws on some of the empirical data generated by research undertaken in 2016-2018<sup>1</sup>. The research was primarily aimed at elucidating how constructions of home and community were afforded by the architecture of Claremont Court housing scheme<sup>2</sup>. Fieldwork was carried out in Edinburgh between 2016 and 2017, with seventeen participants from twelve households, once ethical clearance was granted by \* University's Ethics

Committee (RE-EE-15-160310-56e19543c0f97), and all participants had signed an informed consent form. In order to protect the participants' anonymity, pseudonyms were used.

Claremont Court is in the Broughton area, on the edge of Edinburgh's New Town, West of Leith Walk, and East of Stockbridge. The Court's location is therefore very central, but without the housing prices of the affluent New Town. At the time of the research, a nearby listed Edwardian building was being converted into high-end co-living apartments aimed at trendy urban dwellers. This evidences the gentrifying process that Leith has undergone since the 1980s, while areas such as Stockbridge are already completely gentrified (Doucet 2009). Residents in the Court belong to various socio-economic groups, ethnicities and household sizes; they form a balanced mix of tenures, including (former) council tenants, private tenants and owner occupiers. The fact that Edinburgh Council owns around a third of the dwellings protects low-income tenants from rents rising as a result of gentrification (Freeman and Braconi 2004).

When we explored 'home' and 'community' in Claremont Court, we found that this post-war modern housing scheme afforded ambivalent narratives of home (\* et al. 2018). One of the dimensions of home that we explored was the 'reciprocal spatiality' of receiving the modern 'model home' (\* and \* 2018). In this article, I aim to expand on the spatiality of home by focussing on how residents mediate the images of home evoked by the spatiality of the housing scheme either side of the wall. In order to do that, the article focuses on five households who live in maisonette flats accessed through open decks (Type E shown in Figure 3). My decision is deliberate, as Claremont Court open decks often triggered conflicted narratives (\* et al. 2018).

In the first household, I find Jack, who lives with his wife Susan. This middle-aged couple own the maisonette where they have lived for sixteen years. She is a

middle-class professional; Jack is no longer working. Carol owns the second maisonette; she is a middle-class single woman in her early thirties who works in an office. Calum, a professional, and Elizabeth, an entrepreneur, bought the third maisonette five years ago. This middle-class couple in their mid-thirties live with their daughter Lila. In the fourth household, we find Lucy and Adam, a middle-class couple of professionals in their thirties who bought their maisonette over a year ago. Finally, household five belongs to Kate and George, a working-class middle-aged couple who bought the maisonette eight years ago, although they lived here twenty-six years, originally as council tenants. George is employed and Kate is the home-maker; they both live with daughter Estella.

#### **Discussion: narratives of home ‘either side of the wall’.**

The following discussion of narratives of home is structured around three topics, namely the tenement as a point of reference in the spatial construction of home, and the (conflicting) notions of home either side of the wall in Claremont Court dwellings.

#### ***Home: the tenement as a reference in Scotland***

Residents often relate to their experience of tenements in order to discuss Claremont Court as ‘home’ (Jack; Carol; Calum; Lucy and Adam). However, experiences of living in tenements in Scotland are not uniform: they share recognizable understandings of domesticity (Faley 1990), but they vary across time, place and social class. Thus, drawing spatial distinctions between domestic life in Claremont Court and domestic life in a tenement can constitute either a positive or a negative appraisal. Jack grew up in a working-class tenement in the 1960s, so he remembers when people “were used to outside toilets, tenements and back courts”. Tenements conjure up images of Jack’s difficult domestic life: “coming from a tenement, when I moved [...] it was like a

weight being lifted off the shoulders”. Jack sees the modern architecture of Claremont Court as a clear departure from tenement domesticity “cause most of the buildings around here are tenement [...] you know, and I know that’s a weird thing to say that it felt fresher, it just felt different from what you were used to”. This spatial departure has given Jack the opportunity to construct a different type of home: “it was a blank space [...] it was almost like inviting you to put your mark on it”.

For Adam, life in Claremont Court suggests “a much better sense of community” than life in a tenement, where he has experienced little neighbourly contact: “in a tenement you never..., you hardly ever know who lives in your block”. He believes that this is, in essence, an architectural difference:

It differs because it’s so architecturally different. [...] And, you know, people have their gardens out the back of the tenements but they’re actually only ever used by the ground floor flat and no one..., I’ve never been in a flat where other people have used that space other than the person that lives on the ground floor.

Despite Adam’s belief, tenements in the Victorian city were built on the principle of sharing spaces, thus resulting “in a set of relationships [...] both between and within families” (Daunton 1983: 54). What Adam’s assertion indicates here is the fact that the upward class transformation of gentrified tenements may not only involve the transformation of the working-class ‘back court’ into the middle-class ‘garden’, but it also involves changes in norms, values and behaviours (Doucet 2009).

While all flats in the gentrified middle-class tenement still share the ownership of the back garden, the ground floor flat is perceived to claim a more meaningful ownership over it. Gentrifiers are likely to show different behaviours to the lower-income community (Doucet 2009), who used the back court as a private

and communal space for neighbourliness (Daunton 1983). This explains why some residents, such as Calum, qualify (middle-class) tenement living as more private than in the Court: "...living in a tenement, I don't know why, you sometimes just live in your own little..., you know, your own little bit...". Calum's perception of tenement flats as insulate dwellings is shared by Carol: [she] "stayed in a really nice [gentrified tenement] flat, [but she] didn't speak to anybody".

Calum sees the neighbourly contact in the Court is a positive thing. While Adam, Calum and Carol praise the fact that Claremont Court is more successful in affording a sense of community than tenements, they are also very aware of the mix of people (\* et al. 2018). A *nice community feel*, a *mix of people*, and a *diverse and friendly* atmosphere have been identified as key aspects of living in a gentrified area (Butler 2003). Calum refers to Claremont Court's aura of *diverse community* to build a hesitant narrative of why he chose to live here: "it's a very different type of living I think from tenement living. It's, erm, it is a... yeah. No, it is, it's definitely..., definitely a different..."

Despite the appeal of living in Claremont Court, Calum misses living in a tenement: "so I do miss..., you know, the previous flat was a big tenement, even though it was a one bed flat it was incredibly bright". Calum refers to the tenements with large rooms and high ceilings that were abandoned by the middle classes and taken over by working class tenants during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since gentrification took hold in the 1980s, living in an upgraded tenement is aspirational for "people from all over Edinburgh" (Doucet 2009: 312). Nevertheless, although the experiences of tenement life from Jack, Carol, Calum and Adam span forty years, and relate to different social backgrounds, their accounts provide them with a

vivid reference upon which to measure domestic life in Claremont Court. Jack, for instance, shows awareness of this:

In terms of my previous experience of living in flats, I used to live in a [tenement] flat [...] where the fights would start on one wall and you could hear them and the fights would start the next wall and then start above you, depending on what week it was. And so [Claremont Court] is relatively quiet, you know...

### ***Home: this side of the door***

Residents' discussions of Claremont Court as 'home' also feature reflections on the architectural space of their dwellings. The emphasis that modernism placed on sunlight (Scoffham 1984) is perceived vividly by residents who lived in tenements, such as Jack or Carol. Carol instantly liked her flat when she first saw it: "I really, really liked it. I really liked the space and the light when I came in". The bright nature of the space makes Carol reluctant towards living somewhere else: "to think of a room like with like a square of a window makes me feel a bit claustrophobic now, or like depressed, you know, like it's too dark". The 'bright' space is perceived by Carol as full of energy; and the 'open-plan' layout "just creates that like flow of energy" and connectedness which is enhanced by the kitchen hatch:

You can talk to people through it, you know. You can be..., you're kind of connected to what's going on in this room, so if you..., for instance, you're having dinner parties, you know, it's not like I have to be in the kitchen and everyone's through there. I can make dinner and then chip in on the chat when I hear something interesting.

Carol uses the idea of 'flow of energy' to articulate how the open-plan undermined the Victorian segregation of domestic space and released the kitchen from the everyday domain of the 'back'. In a similar vein, Jack argues that "the



*openplaness* of the living room and the stairs off the living room” create “a flow when you come in”. But I also find in Jack’s account a tacit association between the aesthetics of the open-plan (which he describes as “light and airy”) and the narratives of well-being that were attached to modernism through the provision of light and air (Reed 2002; Leach 2017). This is particularly meaningful for Jack because it represents a rupture with his negative memories of tenement domesticity:

[His flat has a] very clean and crisp feel, all the kind of angles, very clear defined angles if you know what I mean, there wasn’t like old style kind of three shaped windows, you know, there wasn’t the curves and there wasn’t the..., for me it was very ‘60s and very angular and it felt very clean.

Although the symbolic value that Jack and Carol place on the modern open-plan of their dwelling in the Court may not be the same, in both accounts, Jack and Carol assert that the space of their dwelling, in contrasting with traditional housing, plays a pivotal role in making a ‘better’ home than what they previously experienced.

Claremont Court residents perceive their dwellings’ spatial deviation from Victorian housing and from its “scaled down version” represented by parlour houses (Madigan and Munro 1991: 123). Some residents receive the difference with resistance, ‘accommodating’ (Miller 2002) it to a more familiar space. This is the case of Kate and George, who didn’t like the open-plan character of the (original) living-dining room. George blocked the hatch because “it wasn’t practical”, and changed the layout of the kitchen so that he “could get a table to sit at”. Thus, they made the kitchen into their central space for everyday life, and kept the living room for less regular occasions.

Kate’s dislike of the living room’s open-plan circulation (because she can “hear every footstep going up”) indicates that the meanings attached to a space are related to norms, values and class (Daunton 1983). While the open-plan space can

liberate Jack from Victorian norms; it can also feel confusing for Kate and George. The open-plan challenges their received spatial distinctions (front 'room'/ back 'kitchen') because the (original) living-dining room does not feel like a proper 'front room', given that it sits at the opposite end of the dwelling's entrance. As George admits: "we call that the front, but it's really the back end." Although residents' resistance to the modern open-plan has been theorised through material culture (Attfield 1989a; Madigan and Munro 1991), Kate and George's example shows how this resistance is also spatially mediated.

Conversely, residents can also compromise their ideal of home and be prepared to 'accommodate' (Miller 2002) their domestic life to suit a space that offers other valuable aspects, such in the case of Lucy and Adam, who find their home 'cool' and unique. The unique character of the space was evident to Adam as he walked through the door: "and then when I walked in, yeah, just light, bright and it kind of just like oh great 'cause tenements can be dark..." Being "so not a tenement flat" is a distinctive aspect of the home for Lucy, and for Adam: "I do like the fact that it's not [...] a tenement flat. That's quite..., it's cool". The distinctive character of the space won them over, despite its layout not being ideal: "'cause we'd like both wanted..., 'cause it was a compromise with the kitchen 'cause, like, we did want like a big kitchen-diner area which obviously this doesn't have but, yeah." For this urban-seeking middle-class couple, not only the inner-city location of Claremont Court is very appealing, but the interior space of the dwelling gives their lifestyle an air of exclusivity (Butler 2003; Hamnet 2003).

These accounts support the view that the tenement remains strong in the imagery of home in Scotland (Madigan and Munro 1991). But they also bring to the fore the tenement as an ambivalent image which nevertheless acts as a benchmark.

### *Home: the other side of the door*

Residents not only refer to Victorian interior spaces in their accounts, but they also reflect on the arrangement of the Court's blocks around the landscaped courtyards. Calum recalls the first time he came to Claremont Court: "I do remember seeing the courtyard and thinking..., and realising..., and seeing the balconies and thinking... [...] amazing, that looks incredible." Although Calum was familiar to the street, he had not noticed the courtyard until he came to view the flat. Because of the modern aesthetics of the housing scheme, residents do not relate the Court to Victorian balcony tenements; instead, they speculate with the space being closer to a different cultural context. Jack argues that Claremont Court has "a European feel to it", while Lucy remembers that when she first "saw it, it kind of reminded me [her] more of like London flats and, yeah, kind of, yeah, like a bit like being in France or somewhere."

When George says that the courtyard "looks more like you see in Europe, [...] if you are in Spain and places" he is drawing a parallel with 'patio' houses, where the courtyard plays a relevant role in the social life of the household. Implicitly, George is saying that the landscaped courtyard *looks more like* the 'front', instead of the *actual* front of their dwelling. He talks about the *actual* 'front' (the open deck) with disappointment:

The way I look at it, that's just the way into your house, that. That's why I get that in my mind, that's just the way in. It's basically you're coming home, close the door and you are in your house then.

George thinks that this is not caused by the architectural design: "The design looks as okay [...] it looks nice out there." Rather, their frustration comes from the neighbours' lack of engagement with the common areas, as Kate indicates: "I think

you see outside and then you come into the house and you think, they're actually nice houses, they're just that..., like their verandas are filthy ken. It's just when you're outside, it's filthy." However, Kate explains that this has not always been the case: neighbours would keep Claremont Court cleaner and tidier, whereas "people don't do that now." Jack agrees with Kate and George, and even speculates that not everyone in the Court understands that their home extends beyond the door, therefore not taking part in the upkeep of the open deck:

But nobody cleans the walkways, it's me. [...] I think that's a lack of recognising your own space, whereas I come from the tenements in [a Scottish city] where if you didn't do your stairs, you know, [...] the neighbours would come and tell you.

Here, Jack is referring to spatial uses and behaviours which were not physically determined by architecture, but related to cultural meanings attached to particular spaces. Traditionally, the distinction between the house's 'front' and 'back' was "reflected in the different functions of front street and back lane" or court (Daunton 1983: 280). The street represents a public space to be traversed; this is how many residents, like Carol, see the courtyard nowadays: "the court itself is lovely too..., like I'll cross through it several times a day, you know, and it's..., yeah, I mean, it's lovely." Conversely, the back lane extends the home by being used and kept by common agreement. I argue that the residents' disengagement in the upkeep of the open deck indicates a lack of clarity about the private ('back') or public ('front') character of that space, in a similar way to the "confusion" over the ownership of the deck-access in contemporary housing built in Sheffield in the 1960s (Moran 2012: 176).

This ambivalent perception of the open deck is shared by Calum, and by Lucy and Adam. Although Calum says that Claremont Court is "a really, really great piece of

design”, and that the space of the open deck “is quite nice”, he reflexively negotiates with external narratives of stigma:

I think the deck access..., actually I know deck access gets a lot..., gets a lot of stick and people think, you know, it’s got sort of..., it’s just people associate it with high rise buildings and big blocks of flats... [...] and lots of social problems tend to go with those.

Lucy and Adam also feel conflicted in relation to the open deck, to the extent that they were apprehensive about how other people would perceive their home. Maybe because “the sort of deck access there [Lucy] think[s] that’s got quite a nice feeling”, but it also feels like “a bit more cosmopolitan than, yeah, like traditional Edinburgh flats.” In feeling nice, but cosmopolitan, or out of its cultural context, the Court is not a comfortable presence. Adam explains the uneasiness he felt when they were thinking about buying the “ex-social housing deck...access”:

So when you look at it from the outside I think people..., well I certainly felt nervous about it just ‘cause it looks..., it’s like the ghetto chic as I refer to it, it looks a bit worse than it is but... [...] I guess it’s an inherent throwback to deck access social housing, has maybe a stigma to it.

Adam uses the idea of “ghetto chic” to capture the conflicting narratives of ‘coolness’ and ‘stigma’ that they feel in relation to their home in the Court.

Worthy of note is the fact that these conflicting narratives originate either side of the dwelling’s exterior walls, although they are not removed from each other. As Lucy argues, the somehow troubled aesthetics of the outside have an impact on how the home is perceived, “’cause it’s much nicer inside than you think it is”. This indicates certain frustration with the elusive ‘front’ (public face) of their home. It also indicates that the outside does not anticipate the experience of home, and that

the door is not a threshold but a passage. As Adam suggests: “inside is really lovely, [...] once you get into it”.

**Conclusion: conflicting narratives of home ‘either side of the wall’.**

Throughout this article, Victorian domesticity permeates residents’ narratives of home, bringing to the fore the tenement as a dominant house form that is still relevant as a reference. The tenement as reference in contemporary home constructions is mediated by residents’ experiences and also by wider socio-economic processes such as gentrification, which are dependent on time and social background. Thus, the Scottish tenement can be seen to be both an idiosyncratic and a diverse domestic image, with undertones of social class. While for Jack the (obsolete working-class) tenement represents a childhood of hardship; Calum misses having the generous and bright space that he had when living in a (gentrified middle-class) tenement.

The discussion also shows that the spatial dimension of the tenement can co-construct current narratives of home in Claremont Court, making them more vivid. While the modern design of the Court’s dwellings spatially departed from the tenement’s front/back dichotomy by bringing the front room and the family room together in an open-plan space, the modern dwelling is perceived by residents in relation to the spatially segregated tenement. I have shown that for some, such as Jack, Carol, and Lucy and Adam, in ‘not being a tenement flat’, the modern design of the maisonette affords the spatial conditions for the making of home, by being bright, open-plan, or simply ‘cool’ and unique.

However, the article is mostly concerned with exploring how different (conflicting) narratives of home may appear either side of the dwellings’ walls. I previously unpacked how the architecture of the housing scheme can be read as a

‘contextual modern’ urban intervention, within which modern dwellings and aesthetics coexist with traditional working-class housing forms that point towards notions of ‘front’ (the street) and ‘back’ (the courtyard). As residents are highly aware that the interior space of their dwelling departs from traditional housing, it is not surprising that the Scottish ‘court’ as an image remains silent in these narratives. In failing to recognise Claremont Court as a familiar housing form, residents perceive the Court as culturally displaced (described as having a French, European or Spanish feel by Lucy, Jack and George respectively). These constructions coexist with images of the open deck as belonging to low income housing (Adam, Calum) and perplexity about what the ‘front’ of the Court is (George), resulting in feelings of uneasiness about how the home is represented outside the door (George, Kate, Adam, Lucy, Calum).

The narratives explored in this article show how Claremont Court residents *spatially* evoke and construct a sense of home, building on their own imagery, and reflect that the Scottish tenement remains highly symbolic. But most importantly, what these narratives show is that in making sense of what home is, residents *spatially* mediate images that originate both inside and outside the exterior walls. And, although these images originate either side of the wall, they are culturally specific, intertwined, maybe conflicting, but still integral to ‘home’. More broadly, what these narratives provoke are questions about the extent to which meanings of home can be understood through explorations of the domestic interior space only, disregarding the exterior wall’s role as *mediating agent*.

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2. Although the data used in this article was collected as part of the \* project, this article's exploration is concerned with different (although somehow related) research questions to those explored in \*.

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Figure 1. Edinburgh, East Claremont Street. Photographic view of Claremont Court from courtyard, c. 1962. Spence, Glover and Ferguson Collection, SGF/1950/13/6/8. Edinburgh: CANMORE, National Record of the Historic Environment. © Historic Environment Scotland (Spence Glover and Ferguson)

Figure 2. Edinburgh, East Claremont Street. Photographic view of Claremont Court street façade, c. 1962. Spence, Glover and Ferguson Collection, SGF/1950/13/6/9. Edinburgh: CANMORE, National Record of the Historic Environment. © Historic Environment Scotland (Spence Glover and Ferguson)

Figure 3. Edinburgh, East Claremont Street. Ground floor plan, foundation plan, basement plan. Spence, Glover and Ferguson Collection, SGF/1950/13/1/7. Edinburgh: CANMORE, National Record of the Historic Environment. © Historic Environment Scotland (Spence Glover and Ferguson)