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DWELLING AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BURGLARY

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Abstract

This study attempts to define the fundamental dimensions of the home experience through its dramatization, in this case, when one is burgled. It is based on thirty-six interviews conducted with middle-class urban dwellers who had been burgled a year prior to the interview. The analysis of the data was mainly thematic and hermeneutical. It shows that the dwelling experience is the experience of boundaries, the door being a limit between inside and outside, and also a limit within oneself. Moreover, the uncontrolled access by another person to the hidden/secret subspaces of the dwelling incites reactions which reveal the importance of the dweller's visibility. Lastly, the re-appropriation processes which take place after the burglary show that dwelling is essentially a sum of future-orientated actions.

Introduction

This study deals with the experience of being burgled and is based on the observation that, in Western industrialized societies, the home represents a profound psychological and affective investment. This investment is polymorphous. The home thus constitutes a fortifying shelter, (Bachelard, 1969) which nonetheless remains open to others (Becker, 1977; Hayward, 1977; Ravis-Giordani, 1978; Kron, 1983). Because the family lives there, it is a social space which establishes dialectical relationships with other social spaces such as the street or the neighbourhood (Palmade, 1970; Altman and Chemers, 1980). The home provides a place where social and personal identity may be anchored (Lauman, 1972; Becker, 1977; Duncan, 1982; Pratt, 1982; Kron, 1983; Korosec-Serfaty, 1984*b*). Perhaps for all the reasons we have mentioned, the home has an economic value, i.e. it is a merchandise; and lastly it is a symbol of status and social 'dignity' for which considerable psychological and financial sacrifices are made (Bauer, 1976; Korosec-Serfaty, 1984*a*).

The degree and nature of attachment to the home, as observed in our societies, is perhaps not universally shared. This is suggested by cross-cultural analyses which greatly qualify the idea of the home as a symbol of self (Cooper, 1976) or view it as the preferential, if not exclusive, place for the assertion of identity (Petonnet, 1979; Duncan, 1982; Pratt, 1982; Rapoport, 1982*a*).

Moreover, the degree of this investment can be determined historically and linked to the organization of work in specific places (Ion, 1980) and to the evolution undergone by the values underlying the uses of public spaces such as the street, the square or the garden (Barel, 1975; Massin, 1978; Korosec-Serfaty, 1982; Leguay, 1984). Other factors are linked to the new emerging conceptions about the coexistence of the groups which constitute a society (Ariès, 1973; Lofland, 1973; Foucault, 1975; Shorter, 1977; Sennett, 1979), as well as to the interactions which take place in public settings, and the family-orientated values formulated and circulated by the

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middle-class (Guerrand, 1966; Gauldie, 1974; Murard and Zylbermann, 1976; Barbey, 1980).

Our hypothesis here is that the home is over-invested while public places are under-invested and that this phenomenon is particularly apparent among the urban middle-class. The aim of this study is to attempt to discern as accurately as possible this present-day experience of dwelling. What are its dimensions? Can its core be described in terms other than those used by novelists or poets?

The Method

This study is based on data gathered during interviews with sixteen men and twenty women, all of them adult town-dwellers, living with their families and belonging to the well-off sections of the middle-class. They had all been burgled at least once, a year prior to the interview. The size of the sample is due to the fact that our aim is not a quantitative assessment of the respondents' statements, but a qualitative analysis (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1980). It was made up at random from the official file of burgled homes. On our request the initial contact with the victims of burglaries was made by the Strasbourg Urban Police Force, who arranged appointments for us by phone. Of the forty-six people thus contacted, four refused to be interviewed from the outset and six others withdrew their initial agreement. This proportion of refusals was somewhat lower than we had expected, in view of the dramatic nature of the event under consideration here. This may be accounted for by a combination of different factors: the police represents a known, official authority, which in itself is a means of reassuring the people we contacted. The latter are familiar with the campus and, as we observed during the interviews, often consider that in agreeing to be interviewed they are helping the researcher. Lastly, the burglary happened a year before the interview and the dweller generally had had the time needed to recover from the shock occasioned by the event.

The interviews were non-directive and as such pre-supposed an attitude of empathy in the interviewer (Rogers, 1959) as well as the use of reformulation techniques, which encourage speech and the development of ideas.

This situation engenders both spontaneity and constraint insofar as it defines the framework of the statement, since the subject is introduced by the interviewer, while allowing at the same time a certain freedom in the respondent's elaboration of his statement (Bardin, 1977).

The interviews took place at the respondents' home and on average lasted about two hours. It should be noted from the outset that since the statements were collected several months after the event, they constitute in fact an evocation of memories. What we are dealing with is a kind of secondary elaboration (Freud, 1967) that is a reorganization of the experience of the phenomenon, and is thus far removed from a direct and immediate report. The respondents thus talk not only about the feelings associated with the burglary, but also about the theories they developed about it. Moreover, this time-gap makes the interview possible, which it would perhaps not have been while the respondents were still in a state of shock.

All the statements were tape-recorded, thus affording the interviewer greater freedom and availability towards the respondents. However, the use of a tape-recorder is not without consequences for the material obtained. It may represent 'the

ear of society' which passes 'judgement' (Grelon, 1978). To record is to capture the spoken word, as one of the respondents clearly formulated: 'once it is on tape, you can no longer . . . well, it's done' (woman, aged 65). In fact, the interview frequently went on quite animatedly on the door-step, once the tape recorder had been switched off.

But the fundamental advantage of this method of investigation lies in the temporal opening of the relationship. The statement obtained thus does not represent a sum of information, but a structure: the reconstruction of a personal experience through speech, as well as an act of communication (Lejeune, 1980). This position refers to the 'life-story' method, which is concerned with personal experience. The emphasis is laid on the individual's speech and on the personal organization of the subject.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and subjected to a qualitative analysis of the contents, i.e. the individual and present (i.e. in action) aspect of language (Bardin, 1977). Content analysis is a search, through messages, for other realities. We are thus attempting to define the connection between semantic and linguistic structures on the one hand and psychological and social structures on the other hand. Unlike a linguistic analysis, this analysis of the spoken word aims at highlighting the psychological conditions governing the production of speech (Henri and Moscovici, 1968). It has a heuristic function, which, in our case, focuses on describing the dimensions of the dwelling experience, and is a semantic approach based on the idea that any individual variation in expression contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon as a whole and makes it possible to obtain a holistic configuration of the phenomenon under consideration.

This analysis is thematic and cuts across the material (i.e. the whole of the respondent's statements) in order to obtain a cluster of themes regrouping categories constituted by semantic units. In so doing, we have two purposes. On the one hand, we intend to describe as exhaustively as possible the multiple facets observable in the experience of burglary. On the other hand, we wish to show how these facets interconnect.

In order to reach these ends, we start with a preliminary 'open' reading of all the interviews. By 'open' reading, we mean one which aims at making us familiar with the general meaning of the interviews as a whole. But since the content analysis cannot be relevant unless it is orientated towards an aim, we carry out an additional reading in function of the aim we set ourselves. It is, here, the *experience* of burglary, i.e. this theme will determine on the one hand, the identification, on the other hand, the naming and lastly the interrelation of the themes.

Our criteria of categorization (i.e. identification and naming of themes) are semantic. We mean by this that a category is made up of meaningful units (sentences or fragments of sentences) describing a particular aspect or dimension of burglary. Therefore it is neither a linguistic pattern, nor the recurrence of a phrase which constitute the inner unity of a category, but the general meaning conveyed by all the regrouped units. For instance, when we identify a category which we entitle 'fear after burglary', we include in this title all that *refers* to the fear experienced after the burglary and not only the direct expression of the fear as it might for instance be conveyed by statements containing phrases such as 'I'm afraid of'.

This thematic reading therefore implies, for the researcher, not only a full awareness of its aims, a sensitivity to the statement's meaning, as it emerges from the

context, but also the ability to 'cut up' a text, while keeping in mind the inner unity given to it by the speaker himself.

However, this inner unity inherent in each respondent's statement is not our chief concern. In that, this method differs from the psychoclinician's, for whom this unity of an individual's discourse is crucially important. In fact, as we said above, our chief aim is to describe the various aspects of a single experience. As long as we are engaged in this description, we give up evaluating the importance of this or that aspect in relation to this or that other one, and we emphasize none of them. But, in a second stage, we carry out a new reading of all the categories which are then regrouped in a few major themes.

This re-reading of categories precisely aims at identifying the *connections* between the themes, i.e. to identify these *moments* when, in the speech flow, the meaning conveyed by one or more sentences is suddenly *modified* (altered, enlarged, restricted, for instance) by one or several references to something (an event, the expression of a feeling, an analogy etc . . .), which explain, order the motivations of the subject or constitute an attempt to get at the heart of things.

These moments are traced in all the interviews, i.e. they help highlight the interdependences between the themes, as well as the one or several themes which constitute the 'keystone' of the others. Then, of itself, there arises the need to regroup the numerous categories and to keep only a few whose links are particularly perceptible. We had, in the case we are dealing with, 28 categories, which we reduced to four major themes ordered around a single theme, which constitutes the major result of our study.

This tightening of themes makes it possible to reach the two aims which we had assigned ourselves. More particularly, it implies on the one hand no exclusion of the infinite variety of the nuances which mark, for each person, the experience of a single event. On the other hand, it makes it possible to go beyond the mere description of this experience by uncovering the psychological and emotional mechanisms underlying it. Lastly, these final categories guarantee a framework for discussion and analysis which remains open to the results that other means of investigation (for instance a direct phenomenology of burglary, a questionnaire etc . . .) might bring.

It is now necessary to make a crucial methodological point. Any research presupposes that the researcher is wholly aware of his/her theoretical affiliations. This is especially so when an analysis is made of what is said in terms of themes and meanings. Our theoretical orientation is a phenomenological one. The following developments do not constitute, strictly speaking, a phenomenology of burglary, and we do not aim to go through all the 'steps' of the phenomenological method (Spiegelberg, 1975). But we are keeping its various tasks in mind, and foremost among these the method of describing all the facets of phenomena. This description being based on taped material, one can speak of phenomenology through vicarious experience (Spiegelberg, 1975, p. 35). Our various and brief analyses of the meaning of some key-words used by the respondents and our attempts to circumscribe the core of the dwelling experience are indications of our reliance on the phenomenological methods known as hermeneutics and the eidetic approach.

The Analysis

The world in confusion

Burglary is a widespread phenomenon, as is readily acknowledged by the respondents. Yet the victims describe 'their' burglary as a rupture in the social balance. For instance, the burglar is seen to be 'helping himself while others work' (woman, aged 28). The burglar thus creates an impression of the world in confusion. He comes in the daytime, while crime is commonly associated with night: 'I really didn't expect it, just that day, and in full daylight, too' (woman, aged 35). The burglar came on an 'ordinary' day, while the dweller was out working or shopping: 'you expect burglaries when you come back from a holiday, or during the week-end, but not in the middle of the morning of an ordinary day' (woman, aged 35). He dresses like you or me, he does not try to hide: 'they could pass for Mr. Anybody, those people' (man, aged 35). He manages to get the neighbour's help and thus turns them into innocent accomplices: 'they get other people in the building to hold the door open for them' (woman, aged 56). In other words, the burglar, through his mastery over his manners, personal appearance, through his cold planning, presents himself as a person who masters his hidden and inner self, commonly designated in French by 'for intérieur', i.e. interior.

By his action, he renders one's home negligible, which the French language also designates as an 'intérieur'. (Cocâtre *et al.*, 1977).

All the respondents point out that we live in the belief that 'burglaries only happen to other people' (woman, aged 65). When this belief is contradicted by reality, the question 'why us?' arises. It is then an enquiry about oneself, about what, in one's home, might be coveted by others, about one's image and the messages of vulnerability emitted by the house itself.

The symbolic value of the strong and protective home breaks down as the hesitant speech of one respondent shows: 'the apartment is not untouchable, I mean, not untouchable, that's not what I mean, but let's say that the appartment isn't necessarily respected' (woman, aged 35). For instance, the door which symbolizes the boundary, the inviolability of the inside, as well as hospitality, is suddenly desecrated, as one respondent acknowledges: 'it's a fact that 95% of the burglars break in through the door' (man, aged 35). The burglar reduces the door to its basic role of material boundary which, in order to be properly dissuasive, must be surrounded by a great number of self-protective devices.

Attempts are therefore made to explain this vulnerability: the respondents mention that the house was empty, that trees in the garden make the burglar's work easier, that the house has lots of windows and balconies, etc. After the burglary the house is perceived as fragile. This modification in the image of the home concerns essentially its values as a shelter for people and things: the home which used to protect becomes the home which needs protection.

But the protective actions are the harder to carry out, not only because they are known to be inefficient, but also because they give evidence of a new way of dwelling: chains, locks, armoured doors, etc.—all these point to the lessened amount of trust in the relationships with the neighbours and with strangers in general. As to what ought to be done: suppressing visible signs of wealth, avoiding provocation through singularity (Newman, 1972), etc., would mean considerable sacrifices. For all these

singularizing and personalizing actions are essential to the dwelling 'function'. People install locks and chains and explicitly say they are expensive and ugly. There is a struggle, then, against what the burglar symbolizes, i.e. the exterior world which might brutally invade one's interior. But this struggle is always concerned, despite all appearances, with the respect of territorial symbols and markers: 'I've put in a small chain, well, I don't know if it gives any more protection . . . in fact the door might as well be open' (man, aged 30).

The burglar

'I wish I could see those guys, I'd really like to see them, to get to know them' (man, aged 60). Identifying the burglar means knowing him in turn, having a minimal hold over the person who initiated a relationship and created an imbalance between the two parties. Because this identification is perceived as necessary, although it cannot, however, take place, it is the stereotyped image of the brutal, dirty, immoral, greedy and cunning thief which prevails. All the observations made by the dwellers are assessed in relation to this image and increase the aura of mystery which surrounds the burglar. For instance, the respondents are surprised when the burglar steals either nothing, or very little, or leaves things which they themselves value: 'the great uncertainty lies in not knowing who it was that didn't vandalize, didn't steal anything, because there were things to be had' (woman, aged 65).

In such cases, the dweller is not only confronted by the devaluation of things he attaches value to, but also by an intrusion which then seems gratuitous, a 'pure' intrusion in a way. If the burglar is neither greedy nor brutal, he becomes an enigma: 'I've never understood it, he took all my dish-cloths, old dish-cloths, it's quite amazing' (woman, aged 40). The burglar may, however, be a vandal. But the full significance of vandalism is unbearable for the dweller. It cannot be consciously acknowledged for what it is, i.e. pure aggression directed against himself. Vandalism is thus explained by referring to a stereotype: 'they're lunatics, they're sick, they break things, they're stupid' (woman, aged 62), to such a degree that it seems more sensible to treat them as animals, as shown by the use of the word 'bait': 'you ought to leave them a bait when you go away' (woman, aged 60). Thus the questioning about the burglars and the impossibility of articulating a rational answer leads the dweller to reformulate the events in his own way, to structure them in a process of secondary elaboration needed to assimilate the trauma.

Victimization

'That's really what's most unpleasant, it's them that make the decisions . . . right, you're made to play the role of victim, it's true, when you think of it, you're powerless, you haven't got any hold on the situation' (woman, aged 28). The dweller is then confronted with the brutal reality of his powerlessness. This fact clashes with the image the dweller has of himself, as being capable of influencing, managing or mastering, up to a certain point at least, the events in his life. This conception is correlative to any positive image of self and therefore to the sense of identity (Tap, 1980; Codol, 1980; Boesh, 1980; Margolis, 1976). The devaluation of the victim by the burglar is then integrated by the dweller to feelings of guilt: 'you've been had' (woman, aged 28). They turn against themselves, because they have failed to see the world as a world of conflict where one must have the upper hand.

In general, the dweller believes himself to be protected by the symbolic value of

the home as a private sanctuary, by the symbol of the closed door, as well as by insurance and the law. But in all cases, it is the victim who must prove his resistance to aggression, and who must prove his losses: 'it's almost as if, in the eyes of the insurance companies, you're no more than a thief yourself' (man, aged 40). The victim becomes exposed to the scrutiny of strangers, the police also ask for a description of his possessions and habits: 'I mean, after all, it's an inquisition too, they ask you ever so many questions' (woman, aged 28). One must thus flaunt one's weaknesses in order to assert one's innocence.

Burglary especially gives rise to self-doubt about one's authority as a parent. The dwelling constitutes the primary territory for the exercise of the parental role. It therefore contributes to parental authority and parents believe that the child sees the two as being related. They therefore find themselves led to start a dialogue or a reflection with or directed towards the children. Thus, a 28-year-old woman's statement reveals the difficulty she has in distinguishing between the harm done to her possessions and the harm done to their owner. It is through the description of her son's attitude that she attempts to convey what she has not yet fully mastered herself. She speaks haltingly, because she attempts to define the boundaries of identity (Boesh, 1980; Korosec-Serfaty, 1984*b*, 1985): 'I think they [the children] can't make the difference between themselves and what belongs to them, after all, the things we own are part of us . . . it's as if they meant harm to us . . . in fact . . ., I don't know if they manage to dissociate in fact . . .'. The children's attitudes, as described by their parents at any rate, vary greatly. But in all the cases, the parent's statements reveal their concern of being seen as victims by their own children.

The shock

The accounts of the first reactions cover a wide range of attitudes, from the self-possession shown by some, to the trauma described by others. Shock causes physical reactions (Lazarus, 1966) such as insomnia, nervous breakdown, loss of appetite, anger and tears: 'when I came back home, I saw that, I . . . I had . . . I started to cry' (woman, aged 40). The memory of the stress is thus very vivid, and is reported in detail. The most extreme situation is described by a 60-year-old woman: 'I left straight away, within a week, first I visited this apartment, I took it at once, just as it was, afterwards . . . I had . . . well I had to go to hospital for eight days'. This dweller does not manage to uphold her confidence in her ability to master a space which has been momentarily dominated by the burglar. The breaking-in thus reveals that a subterranean process has taken place: her home, formerly an appropriated space, has, in a dialectical process, turned into an appropriating one (Villela-Petit, 1978). This dweller is now unable to make future projects about her capacity to live elsewhere than in the place she had made. The fact that she has to run away from her home as soon as it had been burgled demonstrates that she is alienated from her own territory (Korosec-Serfaty, 1985).

Disorder

Order, as it is socially defined, implies a norm or a cluster of cultural conventions that each individual relates to in his own way. But each individual's personal order indicates a way of dwelling, and what may be called 'disorder' in reference to social conventions, may in fact correspond to the 'natural' state of things for the dweller.

To put it differently, the disorder caused by the dweller himself remains within his own order (Korosec-Serfaty, 1985). It is still part of the 'normal' arrangement of things. The dweller expresses his world, which is thus familiar to him. Therefore this ought to be referred to, not as order, but as the personal configuration of the objects around oneself.

After a burglary, the initial shock is due to the discovery of 'real' disorder i.e. the annihilation of this personal and familiar configuration. The disorder created by the burglar is made up of elements known to the dweller, but in a chaotic configuration which creates strangeness and evokes the threat of breakdown. In order to cope with this threat, the individual alienates himself from a 'coherent' exterior (Lacan, 1966; Baudrillard, 1968; Adorno, 1983). The disorder created by others proves to the dweller that his familiar universe has been apprehended in each element rather than as a 'consistent whole'. Usually, it is only when sorting out or arranging things that the dwellers rediscover, in a way, the 'components' that their world is made up of. Burglary forcibly imposes this rediscovery. The dweller attempts to reinstate his order and finds out, sometimes months later, that some item is missing: 'one does not know what one's got, there's lots of things one doesn't think of, it seems silly to say so . . . some of the things three months later, I said to myself: "they're missing"' (woman, aged 28). The individual lives with the holistic feeling of his coherence, but the burglary makes him realize that he has been, this time, victimized by the illusion of his coherence (Lacan, 1966). He is thus made to acknowledge the vulnerability of the construction of self.

The losses

Moral prejudice. This is shown first of all by the need to redefine the home as a private place. In this process, some dimensions of the dwelling are over-emphasized, thus producing a state of disequilibrium between them: 'I've reinforced the gate, the locks, these security devices, they're expensive, but I'd rather have them' (man, aged 60).

This imbalance between the various dwelling dimensions is compounded by the erosion of social trust and results in a systemization of distrust: 'if people come to buy used furniture, second-hand dealers, well, I don't let them in, because once they're inside, they'll see . . . one can't afford to be trusting' (man, aged 45).

Burglary highlights the lack of adjustment between the psychological control of space and its physical and social control (Altman, 1975; Proshansky, 1978) and thus modifies the perception of home as shelter: 'I don't want to go on about it, but still, it bothers me a bit, when I come home alone at night, . . . still, I try not to think about it' (woman, aged 25). Finally, the moral prejudice is shown by the disillusionment about neighbourliness, which implies not only living close by, but also sharing something, in this instance a certain kind of conviviality (Basmadji, 1978). The neighbourhood refers to a familiar area whose spatial limits are clearly defined (Keller, 1968), where one walks daily and has informal exchanges with other residents (Hallman, 1984). It is by definition the place where the dweller is recognized, identified even if only superficially through his routine actions, his comings and goings, etc (Jacobs, 1969; Appleyard, 1981; Lynch, 1982). But the respondents say: 'one can also not want to be indiscreet, one can't rush out to the landing to see [if there's anything wrong] every time a bottle has been broken, it makes no less noise than a pane of glass. Sure, sometimes we say that people don't bother enough about

their neighbours, but it's a bit hard, there's the side of you which holds you back because you don't want to pry' (woman, aged 40).

This refusal to hear what is going on points to a neighbourliness based on a given conception of privacy which people usually expect to see respected. When an exceptional event takes place, a mediator is called, i.e. the police, thus obeying other social rules connecting with the conception of each person's role in his/her neighbour's life: 'I mean, one doesn't move, I mean, when it comes down to it, I don't even know if I'd have made a move myself, or perhaps I would have called the police' (man, aged 36).

When referring to the closeness of neighbours, the respondents say it affords them a sense of security. But this presence is found to be figurative. Ultimately, it amounts to the presence of the 'neighbouring object'. Burglary uncovers a masquerade and therefore initiates a doubt about the values of privacy as they are ordinarily experienced. It initiates self-questioning about one's own inertia and that, so frequently observed, of one's neighbour (Holahan, 1977; House and Wolf, 1978).

Burglary moreover forces the dweller to reconsider the limits of the respect due to others' privacy: at which point should one interfere? The study of territorial markings made by students in residential neighbourhoods (Brown and Altman, 1983) elicited only slight signs of curiosity from the inhabitants, thus allowing us to hypothesize, together with Médam (1977) a connection between the quest for family identity and the distance maintained in the relationships with neighbours. 'The overall decodification that the family is undergoing tends, by projection, to make it experience its environment as the most immediate place of the hostile uncertainties which assail it; hence the family's withdrawal into the dwelling, against the neighbourhood' (Médam, p. 68).

Material losses. 'The function of dwelling is to make the connection between the full and the empty' (Bachelard, 1969, p. 133). The home is full of objects, and each dweller justifies this in his own way: 'in homes which go back a long way, there's lots of things' (woman, aged 65). The respondents' statements evoke retention, the need to master a large number of objects. But each person insists upon their sentimental value, so as to adjust to the widely accepted idea that people and feelings are more important than objects, in terms of a somewhat lowly 'materialism'. Thus the respondent who first repeats several times that 'if someone means harm to the things you own, it's just as if they meant harm to you', then goes on to correct herself by saying: 'this has to be kept in the right perspective, after all things remain just things'. Burglary checks this kind of regression represented by the accumulation of and attachment to objects (Baudrillard, 1978). This is why expressions such as 'it hurts' may be heard about the loss of objects. The process of accumulation is cut short, ruptured. The dwellers vocabulary then denotes bereavement and grief, to such an extent that we hear statements such as: 'I was relieved to know that they had only taken the money' (woman, aged 65), i.e. something which can be replaced, something which is in a way abstract (Simmel, 1950). What is dreaded is the theft of the objects which express something, like social status, as in the following case where a social marker disappeared: 'what really annoyed me was losing the army gun I had when I was a reserve officer' (man, aged 65). Similarly, the theft of the objects which symbolize the continuity of generations is dreaded: 'in fifteen minutes, there goes all that connected you to your grand-parents' (man, aged 40).

However, it is the investment in the object, rather than the object itself, which is of concern here. Insofar as man symbolizes, the confusion of individual and object is a sign of alienation. This is why the loss of objects must be overcome. This process is, as we shall see, an integral element in the experience of burglary: with the exception of one person only, all the respondents referred to the way they got over their sense of loss and bereavement.

The violated privacy

The Frence words commonly used to refer to burglary may be literally translated by 'rape', 'rape of privacy', 'rape of one's universe' (in French, *'viol'*, *'viol de l'intimité'*, *'viol de son univers'*). They underscore the connections between the home experience and the body-as-self (Freud, 1953; Anzieu, 1974; Korosec-Serfaty, 1985). Thus, it is not the analogy between the experience of the body and the experience of the home which is developed, but the idea that the dwelling experience is interlinked with and anchored in the immediate experience that any being has of his own inner processes and by definition of himself, or rather of this inner self: 'the fact of knowing that someone has penetrated into, well, an apartment, a house, they are private . . . and then, some stranger lets himself in and, in a way, violates this privacy, it's terrible' (woman, aged 45).

The image of rape is rendered by a series of expressions and verbs, such as 'to penetrate', which connote sexual intromission. When the word 'rape' is used, it provokes some uneasiness. One of the respondents thus only manages to utter it after lengthy hesitations: 'it feels like an intrusion of privacy and then it's kind . . . well in fact . . . it feels a little like an entry . . . well, an invasion of privacy, but then this is a bit strong . . . a kind of rape, if you like, of the universe, your universe' (man, aged 42). This feeling cannot be easily expressed since it symbolically affects the victim in his/her person. And one cannot but be struck by the complexity of an experience which simultaneously integrates the symbolic wounding of the body, and the attack on property, freedom and self as shown by the following quote: 'what troubled me most was . . . the interference with property, with my own personal self, let's say that I no longer felt at home, it was an interference with my freedom . . . I couldn't take it mainly because of that, it really upset me a lot' (woman, aged 28). This interconnection between what one is used to considering ordinarily as separate experiences is obviously so complex, that we have mentioned it more to indicate a direction for reflection than to explain it. But still, the interviews give us the means to trace it to the level of sight on the one hand and to the level of touch on the other hand.

Reification. The respondents say that they have been watched by the burglars. By this they mean that the burglar has appropriated a certain amount of knowledge about them. In ordinary relationships, others see and know a number of things about ourselves, but we can also see a number of things which reveal their being. It is in the balance of this interaction that social relationships, and in particular the experience of privacy does not become a burden, that of loneliness or of invasion by others (Simmel, 1950; Kruse, 1980). The burglar's gaze, however, because it is alien, imposed and deceitful ('I'm sure we were spied on', man, aged 60), pries into what the respondents describe as 'none of his business'. In French, this expression is rendered by *'ce qui ne le regarde pas'*, which contains an explicit reference to the gaze ('regard'). People also refer to the burglar looking into what is usually kept

closed: boxes, safes, drawers, cupboards and 'the bedside table where there's lots of odds and ends' (woman, aged 60), 'the letters, the papers, the photos, the addresses, the nooks and crannies, and really the most private places' (man, aged 60). This gaze is the harder to endure as it gives permanence to what the person knows is in perpetual motion and therefore hard to grasp, i.e. his personal experience, his sense of being. The gaze of others insidiously taps the information contained in one's mask, in the façade one presents to the outside world and infers a spurious continuity between what he sees of oneself and one's inner self (Sartre, 1980). This process of reification implies a loss of power over what is learned about oneself by others and considered by them as the whole of one's being.

Knowledge about oneself. Reification through the gaze of others is also made more difficult to bear because it implies that secrets have been divulged: 'what they can tell about us after they're gone! (laughter)' (woman, aged 35). Not only does the individual no longer have any control over these secrets, but they might, at any moment, be re-used to compound the reification: 'I mean, they're people one might meet in the street, they can recognize us, but we can't' (woman, aged 40). Secrets allow the individual to believe that he diverts attention from his identity, love objects and from the models he identifies with (Margolis, 1976; Smirnoff, 1976). Their function of distanciation (Erikson, 1950; Simmel 1950) as well as their function of protection from others (Margolis, 1976) turn secrets essentially into an experience of the dialectics between what is said and what is not said (Korosec-Serfaty, 1984), i.e. an experience that cannot be dissociated from the development and the evolution of the feeling of identity.

Finally, the rape, the alien gaze and secrets are blended in the dwellers' statements: 'they've violated our privacy, those people who came here, we feel a bit frustrated, we think, but . . . hey, they've seen . . . seen things which belong to us, which are, if you like, our little secrets, that's nobody's business, we don't talk about them to anyone . . . that's it, it's this side of it, rather than what they took off with, I'd say' (man, aged 35).

Defilement. The experience of burglary contains a specific dimension which might be described as a feeling of recoil from an imposed, gross and insolent contact, as shown by the words the respondents use to refer to the burglars: 'those people who sniff in corners', 'put their noses into everything' or 'put their paws everywhere'. The burglar's body is repulsive because it imposes a shared appropriation of what, by 'nature' it might be said, is appropriation by a single individual or by a limited circle of familiar people.

The burglar 'touches' the dweller by appropriating the many small gestures with which any subject appropriates his dwelling and his body: 'the apartment had been visited in all its nooks and crannies and really in the most private of places. What got me the most was when I realized the bathroom had been searched, that really got me, it was the . . . the . . . my cosmetics . . . that' (woman, aged 35). The same feeling of defilement is experienced when the cupboards containing bedsheets and clothes, i.e. the things in which the dweller can snuggle, have been rifled through. The bedroom and the bed also elicit remarks which all emphasize this feeling of having been subjected to a particularly painful invasion: 'my daughter had a rather striking reaction, she said: "Oh, I hope he didn't lie in my bed"' (woman, aged 40).

Similar terms are used about those burglars who used the toilets or ate food from the refrigerator, because the burglar's behaviour desecrates the significance of shared

food (Douglas, 1966) and, by using the toilets in the house, refer to one's home as to a public place.

Burglary as work

All the fear of defilement, breaking in and reification is revealed by the way in which the dwellers describe burglaries where there has been neither breakage, nor dirty marks, nor sometimes much disorder. When there has been no vandalism at all, the burglary is called 'work': 'So the people who burgled me did something . . . I almost want to say it was a good piece of work, the guys did something almost logical when you think of it, from the point of view of burglary' (man, aged 36). Saying that the burglar 'did his job' (man, aged 65) amounts to saying that he searched the house to find things which have, in a way, an 'objective' value, he did not search the house to harm the dweller's integrity Similarly, putting burglary on a professional level, to call it 'work' and moreover a 'clean job' is an attempt to reintegrate it in a system of familiar relationships. It is then better tolerated because the range of the burglar's gaze and touch has been controlled and limited to the 'necessary', meaning that the dweller's secrets and his identity have not been affected.

Re-establishing boundaries

The long questionings about the burglar's personality, identity and motivations, about the reasons why he chose you personally, point to an anxiety which makes the dweller question his own identity and his relationships with others. Each action which aims at improving somehow the security of the house is a sign of the determination *to do* something in order to overcome the feeling of powerlessness. This reappropriation, at once concrete and symbolic, also takes place through the mental construction of a logical scenario retracing the events and explaining the burglary through objective reasons: the windows of the house are low down, etc. Describing the burglary as 'work' is also part of this mental construction as is the word 'visit' frequently used by the respondents as well as by the French press to designate burglary. Someone who 'visits' one's home is not (or cannot be) hostile. Rationalization, the use of euphemisms, all are forms of the *denial* and *de-dramatization* which the dweller needs to experience in order to go on living in his home. They aim at re-establishing the symbolic boundaries between the home and the outside world, as does another element, ever present during the interviews: laughter. It is here a means of catharsis and reduction of tension (Freud, 1930; Victoroff, 1952; Bergson, 1959). Burglary is a relationship, as a 35-year-old woman says: 'it creates relationships [laughter], direct ones even, but you remain on the outside'. Since links exist, it becomes necessary to reintroduce, at least symbolically, the distance and separation between the hidden and the visible, to curb the gaze of others so that this relationship can be lived with. 'When my son doesn't want to tidy up his room, I tell him that he ought to, if only for the sake of the burglars [laughter]' (woman, aged 37).

Thus on a verbal level, a ritual interaction is reintroduced (Goffman, 1974) which 'civilizes' the relationships and reinstates the burgled dweller in his dignity, as one respondent says: 'I said to myself, oh, after all, he might have left some flowers for me! [laughter]' (woman, aged 28). Thus, just as rape is not only a crime of lust, but one of violence and power, (Brownmiller, 1975) burglary is not simply the theft of objects but also the defilement of and domination over the private aspects of identity.

This is why it questions the relationships with others, hospitality of the dweller, the opening up of the house or, to borrow Lévinas' term (1961) the 'proximity' of others.

Conclusion

In examining the experience of burglary, we aimed to define its fundamental dimensions and hence describe what it vitally affects when the dwelling is broken into.

1. *The dimensions of the experience of sharp rupture in the inside/outside boundary shows that these boundaries constitute one of the essential features of the dwelling experience.* The door has symbolic value as a boundary to the outside, but also as a boundary to the inner self (Korosec-Serfaty, 1985). On the other hand, the progress from public to private which is indicated as much by territorial arrangements (Korosec-Serfaty, 1978; Rapoport, 1982*b*) as by the words and gestures linked to the social rituals of entrance and exit, does not stop at the front door, but goes inside the dwelling through the dialectics between the visible and the hidden as well as through the hierarchy from the most 'public' to the most 'private' of the home sub-spaces. During the burglary, the intrusion is continued inside with a total disregard for this hierarchy and thus leads the dweller to experience total visibility, that is, unprotected exposure to the gaze of a stranger.

2. Secrets are situated within the scope of self-assertion, but they carry their own risk of alienation when they become a value per se. Their very existence implies communication. *In that sense it may be said that the other dimension of dwelling is that of hospitality and hence of visibility.*

3. The efforts made to overcome the experience of burglary show that *any dwelling action contains a vision of the future, the confidence in one's ability to make and remake one's home, to appropriate one's space by acting on what is given.* Thus the time dimension makes the dwelling first and foremost a *movement* towards the future and towards others rather than a withdrawal.

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