Reading Response #45– “Home: Territory and Identity”

J. Macgregor Wise’s essay explores the concept of home, including contributing factors, meanings and components. Macgregor initially discusses music in terms of how melody aids in the construction of a home; “the song marks a space, the repetition of the phrases structures that space and creates a milieu...the song begins a home, the establishment of a space of comfort” (pg 297). The space of home is physically demarcated with borders of wall and fence, which organize and order the spaces of homes. However, this does not mean space is enclosed; on the contrary, space is “always multidimensional, resonant and open to other spaces” (pg 298).

Macgregor goes on to describe territory as created by an accretion of milieu effects, as “each milieu affects the space, bends it, inflects it, shapes it” (pg 298). He goes on to discuss the marker of home as not simply the inanimate object, but rather something which include the presence, habits and effects of others dwelling within the space (pg 299). ‘Culture’ is considered by Macgregor as the sum total of singular iterations/spaces; thus, home is not individualistic.

He continues with the discussion of habits as simply repetitions of behaviour that no longer involve conscious thought, but instead reflect a process of learning, as a “contraction, a synthesis of a series of actions” (pg 302). For Macgregor there is no fixed self, rather only the habit of looking for one; similarly, there is no home, but instead only the process of forming one (pg 303).

1) What effects constitute the milieu which informs territory?

2) Can home be individualistic if the number of individuals dwelling in the residence is limited to one? Then, wouldn’t the presence, habits and effects of ‘dwellers’ would be limited to a single person (an individual)?