



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

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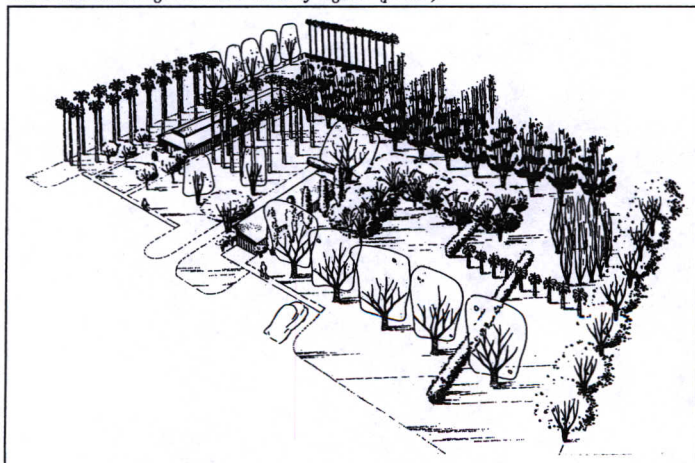
Winter 1994

This issue of *EAP* begins our fifth year of publication. We thank all readers who have renewed their subscription; those who have not yet responded will find a yellow form tucked inside. Please renew. Our 1994 financial situation is not yet secure.

This issue features membership news, including a sampling of the places readers listed when asked to identify their three favorites. In addition, there are reviews of architect Jerri Holan's *Norwegian Wood* and landscape designer Alexander Wilson's *The Culture of Nature*.

Our main features are essays by architect Murray Silverstein and communications scholar Jeffrey Ediger. Please note on page 2 the notice for a special session on phenomenology to be held at the annual Environmental Design Research Association meetings in San Antonio, March 16-20, 1994.

Below: Architect Garrett Eckbo's late 1930's design for a common area in a migrant workers' camp in central California, from Alexander Wilson's The Culture of Nature—see p. 8. Eckbo, says Wilson, "managed to infuse modernist aesthetics with both a social agenda and a sense of region" (p. 102).



As always, we ask for your contributions, whether reviews, essays, poems, line drawings, or something else. As part of his sabbatical ventures, David Seamon has just purchased a summer house in Catskill, New York. Please use his new address for *EAP* correspondence:

David Seamon
11 Prospect Avenue
Catskill, New York 12414
tel. 518-943-5284 or 518-828-6706

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The **Association for the Study of Literature and Environment**, promotes interdisciplinary interest in "literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world." Emphases include nature poetry, nonfiction, environmental fiction, and "other forms of literature that illuminate both human and nonhuman nature." Publications include *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* and *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. Address: Dr. Michael Branch, English Dept, Florida International Univ, Miami, FL 33199.

The **International Listening Association** "brings together individuals who share the common purpose of promoting the study and development of effective listening." The group publishes a journal and the quarterly newsletter *Listening Post*. Contact: Dr. Mary Wise, Center for Information & Communication Sciences, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0535 (317-285-1889).

SPECIAL PHENOMENOLOGY SESSION AT EDRA MEETING

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, philosopher at the University of Toronto, has organized a special intensive session for the 25th annual meeting of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) to be held in San Antonio, Texas, March 16-20, 1994. Entitled "Banking on Humane Design: The Contribution of Phenomenology," the session will involve two half-day segments. Her prospectus follows.

AIMS OF THE SESSION

Phenomenology has found its way beyond the domain of philosopher proper, into other interdisciplinary fields of geography, sociology, psychology and design. The aim of this session is to increase our understanding of the meaning of the phenomenological approach, as well as to show how phenomenology is able to increase our understanding of the meaning of "humane design."

Normally, notions of "value" and "cost" are associated with economic, quantifiable expenditures, but when it comes to human habitats, how do we begin to measure *qualitative*, human costs of inhumane settlement design? Can we afford to bank on inexpensive, yet essentially inhumane, environmental design and construction?

This session seeks to address these questions by illuminating new dimensions of the meanings of "cost" and "value" of humane design. In an era where "sustainable development" seeks to merge economic and environmental concerns, it is incumbent upon designers and theorists to investigate broader interpretations of concepts of "cost" and "benefit" that include economic concerns but that also consider ethical, social, cultural and human implications.

THEMES OF THE SESSION

- *The role of phenomenology in understanding humane design*
 - What is the role of phenomenological method in describing human habitats?
 - How are human costs of low-quality habitat designs to be appraised and balanced with economic costs?
 - What does a phenomenological de-struction offer for understanding historically why the "cost" of poor quality environmental design is primarily associated with financial costs?

• *Humane habitats: Phenomenology at work*

- What examples of a phenomenological description of environments can be offered to illumine the ontological significance of humane design?
- How do philosophers, psychologists and other social scientists seek to persuade builders and developers that they may have an ethical obligation to consider broader human, as well as economic, costs of environmental design?

PARTICIPANTS AND TOPICS

- **Herb Childress**, School of Architecture and Urban Planning University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee: *Environmental Quality and Place Attachment*.
- **Robert Mugerauer**, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin: *Max Scheler's Phenomenology of Values and the Measure of Genuine Costs or Phenomenological Description of Qualitatively Satisfying Environments*.
- **Douglas D. Paterson**, Landscape Architecture Program, University of British Columbia, Vancouver: *The Nature and Value of Phenomenological Ideas for Creating a More Humane Environment*.
- **Fahriye Sancar**, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin, Madison: *Knowledge Integration in the Design Studio: An Investigation into the Phenomenon of Research-Application Gap*.
- **David Seamon**, Department of Architecture, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas: *To Open Feeling: Emotional Experience, Environmental Design, and Humane Habitats*.
- **Ingrid Leman Stefanovic**: *Phenomenology of Environmental Perception*.

FURTHER INFORMATION

We hope that EDRA will allow non-EDRA members of EAP to attend the session for a minimal fee; at press time, however, we have no confirmation. To find out or to receive other information, including specific dates for the session, contact Stefanovic at the Philosophy Department, University of Toronto, 215 Huron Street, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1 Canada, tel (416) 978-2790, fax (416) 978-8703. Or contact David Seamon (518-943-5284).

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The **Timber Framers Guild of North America**, founded in 1984, encourages the art and craft of building construction in wood. The group develops training programs for timber framers and disseminates information about timber framing, including their quarterly journal, *Timber Framing*, which contains both conceptual and practical articles (e.g., see the essay on p. 12 by Murray Silverstein).

The group sponsors annual meetings and design competitions. In addition, it regularly participates in public service, e.g., donating timber frames to Habitat for Humanity or restoring timber-frame structures like the Cabildo in New Orleans. Address: PO Box 1046, Keene, NH 03431 (603-357-1706).

The 13th **International Transpersonal Conference** will be held May 22-27, 1994, in Killarney Co., Kerry, Ireland, with the theme of "Toward Earth Community: Ecology, Native Wisdom and Spirituality." The central question of the conference is "How can we learn to live in ecological balance on the Earth while maintaining spiritual integrity and respect for diversity?" Speakers include Arne Naess, Rupert Sheldrake, and Thomas Berry. Contact: 10 Sunnyside, Suite A257, Mill Valley, CA 94941 (800-533-3641).

Northern Lights is a quarterly journal that presents the character of the Rocky Mountain West "by examining its politics and culture and featuring stories about the individuals who shape this extraordinary place." The publisher is the **Northern Lights Research and Education Institute**, which "analyzes issues concerning the future of the Northern Rockies for the benefit of citizens who want to develop and implement responsible public policies." Address: PO Box 8084, Missoula, MT 59807 (406-721-7415).

The **Dallas Institute** is a center of creative thought dedicated to the awakening of a sense of sacred in the world through studies in literature, art, spirituality, psychology, architecture, city planning, and economics. The aim is to stimulate "an inspired imagination of tradition, culture, and community in order to draw from these sources value and meaning in all dimension of human life and to strengthen the capacities of soul to create the institutions of a new culture." See the report, box right, on the Institute's recent "What Makes a City" conference. Address: 2719 Routh Street, Dallas, TX 75201 (214-871-2440).

WHAT MAKES A CITY CONFERENCE

The Dallas Institute sponsored the 10th annual "What Makes a City" conference on May 14, 1993. Speakers included three figures familiar to many EAP readers—Jane Jacobs, Daniel Kemmis, and Christopher Alexander. With permission of Director Gail Thomas, we reprint portions of an account of presentations published in the Summer 1993 Dallas Institute Newsletter.

"Jane Jacobs cast a spell over everyone. As David Dillon, Architecture critic for the Dallas Morning News, expressed it: 'Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage, 1961), told her audience...to be content with gradual, incremental changes and to concentrate on adding things that are missing now, rather than try to imagine the future.' In short, Jane Jacobs admired Dallas, reminded us of what we have, and encouraged us to build on it, supplement it, humanize it, but 'don't tear another thing down.'

"Daniel Kemmis, Mayor of Missoula, Montana, and author of *Community and the Politics of Place* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), emphasized that great cities are built on passionate citizenship. Kemmis invoked the founders of Greek and American democracies for whom the word 'politics' evoked thoughtful dedication, not emotional cynicism. He described...how he and others have gathered the diverse and conflicting leaders of their own community to discuss and explore ideas together, enabling them to engage in political discussion with a deeper respect for one another.

"Christopher Alexander (*A Pattern Language, A New Theory of Urban Design*, Oxford, 1977, 1987) recollected our thinking at the end of the day by inviting us to think of the sacred as that which makes us feel more fully human. He reminded us of our common sense: how most of us can gaze upon an object as simple as a thermostat or a space as grand as the Dallas City Hall Plaza and feel our humanity rise or fall. This is not theory or ideology, Alexander asserted, but the empirical reality of most thinking people."



FAVORITE PLACES

As readers will remember, the 1994 EAP survey included a question about "favorite places." Here, we provide a sample of responses so far received.

- Interior of Chartres Cathedral; Ute Mountain, Ute Reservation cliff dwellings; Isle of Mull.
- The Cosmos; the desert area of Arizona; my home—an apartment building built just before the depression.
- My office; my home; Spanish American Plaza.
- My office at the University of Toledo; the UCLA library; secret plungepools on Cheju Island, Korea.
- Old Faithful Lodge; my family farm near Henryville, Pennsylvania; Piazza del Republica, Urbino, Italy.
- Rio Caliente in the mountains near Guadalajara, Mexico; where I live—my home in a countrylike setting near the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia; the Lama Foundation—its prayer buildings and landscape.
- Salt Point, northern California coastal park; Lake Merritt in Oakland, California, an urban oasis; any small bowling alley.
- My back room, where I "unwind"; my office, where I "wind up"; any coastline, although particularly wild ones or old resort towns.
- Charleston, South Carolina as a whole and various places within it; St. Anton, Austria, in the Alps in early summer; New York City on a cool autumn night.
- Screened porches, the fireplace hearth, the woods.
- My apartment in Washington, DC; my neighborhood in St. Paul, Minnesota; downtown, San Luis Obispo, St. Paul, or Rochester, New York—wherever there is a real downtown.
- My desk, the beach, Stockholm.
- Madison, Wisconsin—the farmers' market around the state capitol in the fall; Central Park in New York City; the north shore of Lake Superior, near Gran Marais, Minnesota.
- Wisconsin River valley around Spring Green; Goze's Ravine on the Appalachian Trail in Massachusetts and Connecticut; a secret.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS & COMMENTARY

Betsy Behnke is Director of the Study Project in Phenomenology of the Body. Focusing her research and life on the phenomenology of body, she publishes a newsletter that *EAP* readers interested in the bodily dimensions of experience will find most useful. She writes: "To be bodily is always to be somewhere; hence phenomenology of the body is essentially linked with environmental and architectural phenomenology. In addition, because I do concrete descriptive phenomenological research, I value concrete descriptions worked out by others."

"I appreciate the work that goes into the *EAP* Newsletter and think—from what I see as Santa Cruz slowly rebuilds from the 1989 earthquake—that there is still an enormous need to educate architects and planners to the *experiential dimension* so that they could build places for human dwelling and sojourning, rather than erecting three-dimensional drawings that invite no one to live, move, breathe."

For information about her institute and newsletter, write: SPPB, PO Box 0-2, Felton, CA 95018.

Linda Day teaches urban design in the Department of City and Regional Planning at California Polytechnic, San Luis Obispo. She writes: "My research interests center on the mutual influence of people and place. I have studied downtown redevelopment from the perspective of place making [e.g., "Placemaking by Design: Fitting a Large New Building into a Historic District," *Environment and Behavior*, 24, 3 (May 1992), 326-346].

"At present, I am studying suburban residential neighborhoods. "My current study, 'The View from Within: Enhancing the Perception of Privacy in Small Lot Residential Subdivisions,' is an empirical investigation of the assertion that people feel they have more privacy when at least one of their living spaces looks out on a long vista.

"I think *EAP* fills a real void in what material is readily available on the topics. I particularly appreciate the integration of graphic and written material." Department of City & Regional Planning, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 (805-756-1592).

Rich Haydon has a B.S. in Forestry and has worked 14 years as a seasonal wilderness ranger for the U.S. Forest Service. Recently, he began the M.S. program in Resource Management at Central Washington University. He plans to center his thesis project on

ecosystem restoration, both from bio-ecological and phenomenological perspectives. He writes: "In my work with the USFS, it seems we have too long ignored the phenomenological aspects of wilderness; likewise, the concept of intrinsic values." PO Box 632, Leavenworth, WA 98826 (509-548-4387).

Theano Terkenli Koop is a cultural geographer who has just completed his dissertation, *The Idea of Home: A Cross-Cultural Comparison*, at the University of Minnesota. His interests are Europe, Africa, human geography in general, everyday perception and behavior, and the sense of place and the idea of home. He writes that he employs "humanistic (and phenomenological) methodologies a lot in my research and teaching. I always enjoy the newsletter." Address: 518 12th Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414 (612-625-2084).

Michel Lincourt is an architect from Quebec working on his doctorate in Architecture at Georgia Institute of Technology. His interests are architecture, urban design and policy planning. Presently, his research focuses "on the formulation of an architectural theory at the service of practicing architectural and urban designers." In his dissertation, he will assess the relevance of architectural schemes in regard to urban design, drawing on a phenomenological approach. The tentative title of his thesis is: "The Search for Elegance: Toward a Theory of Architecture and Urban Design." Address: Doctoral Program, College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA 30332-0155 (404-894-7667).

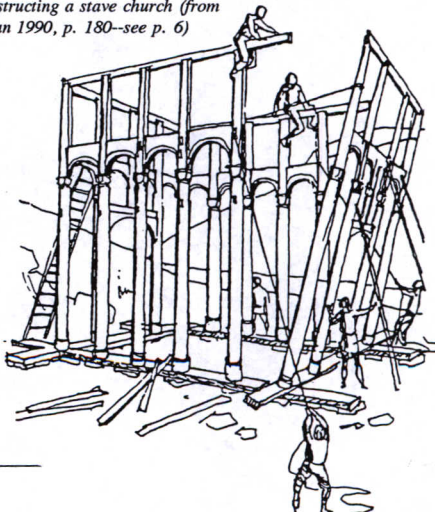
Warren Potas writes in regard to Mike Brill's recent *EAP* essay (fall, 1993) on designing a permanent warning for a nuclear waste storage facility in Carlsbad, NM: "While the proposed design concepts may represent the very best solutions conceivable at the present time..., the rationale underlying the design program is fundamentally flawed. The record of human evolution and development to date cannot possibly provide a sufficient base to predict what sensory mechanisms or cultural concepts may exist among *life forms* on this planet 10,000 years from now. Our "best efforts" now are fundamentally incapable of "protecting" nuclear trash passing

through time..." Address: 4601 Connecticut Ave, NW, #408, Washington, DC 20008.

Nick Salmon is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Architecture at Montana State University. He teaches primarily in the first year of the architectural program. He also teaches electives on Christian Norberg-Schulz and human behavior and advises thesis students who have an interest in experience, place, and behavior. He writes: "I have been working on 'Creating Architecture from Experience'—a 40-page pamphlet of photographs and essays that study place and architecture in the Gallatin Valley." Address: 160 Cheever Hall, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717 (406-994-4255).

Justin Winkler, soundscape researcher and editor of the European edition of the *Soundscape Newsletter*, writes: "On September 17, 1993, a time sculpture took place in northwestern Switzerland's Biel-Benken. The event was designed after the ideas of the Italian composer and time designer Albert Mayr as well as on the group's own practice from dusk to dawn of 24-hour soundscape observations. The ten participants, from different disciplines and arts, were asked to involve themselves in phenomenological assignments that included listening, watching, walking, and acting." Address: Akroama Editions, Hammerstr. 14, CH-4058 Basel, Switzerland.

Constructing a stave church (from Holan 1990, p. 180—see p. 6)



CITATIONS RECEIVED

Jessica Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, eds., 1992. *American Home, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. ISBN 0-87049-759-6.

Eleven essays that explore such topics as "The Decline of the Memory Palace: The Parlor after 1890," "Children in the Home, 1890 to 1930," "A History of American Beds and Bedrooms, 1890-1930," and "Parlor Piety: The Home as Sacred Space in Protestant America," and "Coal Stoves and Clean Sinks: Housework between 1890 and 1930."

Roger Bolton, 1992. 'Place Prosperity vs People Prosperity' Revisited: An Old Issue with a New Angle, *Urban Studies*, 29, 2: 185-203.

This geographer suggests that sense of place is relevant to policies that attempt to assist persons and places that are economically depressed: "sense of place is a factor in regional and local identity and is an important form of intangible capital that has positive externalities" (185). The paper, Bolton explains, is "a result of my curiosity as to whether one can justify some place-specific policies on the grounds that they help preserve a sense of community in places where it already exists"

BOOK REVIEW

Jerri Holan, 1990. *Norwegian Wood: A Tradition of Building*. New York: Rizzoli. ISBN 0-8478-0955-2 (pbk).

Jerri Holan is an architect, carpenter, and former student of Christopher Alexander. Her book, a study of traditional Norwegian wooden buildings, promises much. Through written interpretation, photographs, and architectural drawings, she aims to present "how craftsmanship leads to beauty as exemplified by the Norwegian buildings" (p. 9).

To focus her study, Holan examines the three major wooden vernacular forms in Norway: the *stue*, or dwelling house; the *loft*, or storehouse for crops; and the *stave church*, built between 1050 and 1350 and an example of some of the finest wooden buildings in Europe. Rather than examining each building type separately, Holan chooses instead to discuss the three buildings together in terms of three themes--site, buildings, and building details.

This threefold division, arranged larger to smaller in terms of environmental and architectural scale, is

(p. 189). A useful effort to translate phenomenological insights into planning and policy possibilities.

Narayan S. Poluvan, 1992. "An Interior Analysis of the Des Moines Art Center as a Means to Generating a Space-Responsive Furniture Form," master's thesis, Dept. of Art & Design, Iowa State Univ., Ames, IA.

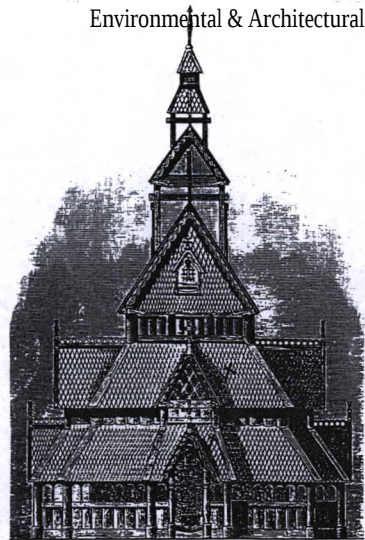
This thesis designed a free-standing three-dimensional furniture form with reference to its architectural context--the Des Moines Art Center (DMAC), a building that has been added to incrementally and incorporates the work of three different architects (Eliel Saarinen, I.M. Pei, and Richard Meier).

While the author's emotional response to the DMAC forms the core of the analysis, the final design was also guided by other interpretive foundations that include Thomas Thiis-Evensen's *Archetypes in Architecture* and Francis D.K. Ching's *Architecture: Form, Space and Order*. Ching's framework provided a base for understanding the interiors spatially; and Thiis-Evensen's, experientially.

A series of annotated analytical drawings were used to synthesize the author's observations with the information gained from the other interpretive sources. This analysis was then used as a foundation for designing and constructing the free-standing furniture form.

the same format that Christopher Alexander used to organize the 253 patterns--built qualities that contribute to a sense of place--in his *Pattern Language* (NY: Oxford, 1977). The reader expects that Holan chooses this framework to develop a "pattern language" that will clarify the wooden buildings' aesthetic and practical powers tacitly expressed in the book's excellent photographs and drawings.

Unfortunately, this clarity never appears. After an enticing introduction that draws on the phenomenological language of Christian Norberg-Schulz (who, in fact, provides a foreword to the book), Holan falls back into a conventional vernacular interpretation grounded in cultural geography and architectural history--for example, the geographical distribution of different *stue* and loft types, descriptive typologies of floor plans and roof forms, a mini-history of stave church construction, and so forth.



Gol Church,
ca 1170

Though this artifactual approach is informative and well illustrated (the book includes 25 color plates), there are at least two problems that are troublesome. A first difficulty is Holan's incorrect presentation of Alexander's notion of patterns, which she defines as archetypal buildings that "provide a functional base from which to initiate the building's process" (p.21) and that "express a specific way of life" (p. 61).

The result is that Holan defines each of the three wooden building types as a single pattern when, in fact, a correct reading of Alexander would argue that each building is a physical shell that supports and has arisen from some set of *several* patterns that Holan's

descriptions give some inkling of but no precise identification. For example, the dominant presence of the Norwegian winter would suggest patterns like "winter much of the year," "getting as much from the sun as possible," clustering buildings for shelter, "winter sky as embracing cupola," and so forth.

Rather than seek to unravel the underlying life-worlds, lifeways, and pattern languages that evoked the *stue*, loft, and stave church, and then use these interpretive themes as a way to explore geographical and building-type commonalities and differences, Holan falls back into a conventional historical, stylistic and aesthetic analysis.

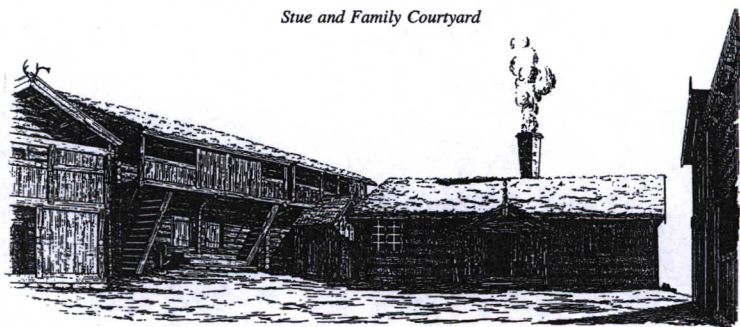
In itself, this analysis is generally well organized and presented, but it does not provide the real-world support for the implicitly phenomenological statements that Holan makes in her introduction and in following sections of the book. For example:

- "the use of beauty gave the Norwegians a coherent and integrated environment" (p. 9);
- "A stave church had a living identity, independent of its creator, derived from its own particular functions..." (p. 10);
- "The wooden buildings in Norway are an expression created directly from the raw material of a land's soul" (p. 23);
- "the buildings belong so completely to their sites that one almost cannot imagine the countryside without them" (p. 27);
- "A person within such a traditional space is more centered in the world, more alive, and the whole idea of beauty seems to be deeply rooted in the question of what it means to *be* in a certain place" (p. 144).

Certainly, these statements may be true. The problem is that Holan hasn't really provided evidence and explication that convinces the reader, and he or she must therefore trust her word. Rather than *showing*,

Holan *tells*. After a time, these broad declarations sound more like an empty, nostalgic chant than a convincing demonstration of real-world presence in the past. Holan's interpretive conclusions do not adequately flush out the architectural wonder and magic that her photographs and drawings so wonderfully intimate.

David Seamon



Stue and Family Courtyard

BOOK REVIEW

Alexander Wilson, 1992. *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. Soft cover, \$21.95. ISBN 1-55786-336-9.

The past decade has seen a welcome turn toward studies of meaning as a vital part of environmental experience. Hermeneutic studies have revealed just how integral our interpretation of places are to our experience of them. These discussions of meaning, however, often raise as many questions as they answer. Are meanings revealed or consciously defined? By whom are meanings created? How are they communicated to others? And who are those others for whom the messages are intended?

Alexander Wilson addresses these questions directly in his *The Culture of Nature*, a broad analysis of the manipulation of nature--both in its environmental forms and as a cultural construct--in North America since World War II. Wilson, an American-born landscape architect living and working in Toronto, argues that "our experience of the natural world--whether touring the Canadian Rockies, watching an animal show on TV, or working in our own gardens--is always mediated. It is always shaped by rhetorical constructs like photography, industry, advertising and aesthetics, as well as by institutions like religion, tourism, and education" (p. 12).

This is a strong claim, but Wilson does an excellent job in gathering widespread evidence to support it. He visits, both literally and through his reading, dozens of landscapes: the physical, interpretive and fictional landscapes of tourism, technology, recreation, planning, agriculture, and--above all--consumption.

His first chapter, "The View from the Road," sets the tone for the book. Wilson demonstrates how the medium of the car, the highway, and the controlled points of vehicle access limit and restrict our view of nature, and allow planners and designers to script out our experiences. His description of the Blue Ridge Parkway in the southern Appalachians shows just how carefully formed these "natures" can be:

The planners encouraged split-rail fences, grazing cows, or sheep but not abandoned cars or, for that matter, weeds.... They screened inappropriate views. They designed curves that restricted speeds to thirty-five or forty miles an hour,

and placed those curves in a way that organized the long looks.... The road allows no trace of commercial society, save for the occasional nostalgic glimpse of a farm or mill, the shadow of economies that have given way to the single economy of tourism (pp. 36-37).

Through these and other manipulations, Wilson argues, direct experience of nature has been made virtually impossible. Nature is defined and previewed before the fact through education, advertising and entertainment; nature is packaged and presented in controlled segments; nature is anthropomorphized, romanticized, and dehistoricized (or, perhaps more often, *re-historicized*). In each of his examples, Wilson uses both the place and the texts that surround it to explore the artificial division between the environment and the social, political, or economic setting in which it exists.

Wilson skillfully shows the strength of language and image as shapers of experience and argues that the *experience* of nature has largely been replaced by the *discourse* of nature. This has been done both consciously--"In the mid-1980s, for example, the Agricultural Chemicals Association changed its name to the Crop Protection Institute, thus shifting attention away from its work and toward a hackneyed construction of nature as adversary" (p. 77)--and less consciously, as in the case of a school nature curriculum which claimed to be neutral toward hunting but referred to animals in terms of "game," "sustained yield," "resources," and "harvest,"--words which are "laden with the imperatives of corporate capitalism" (p. 64). He loads the text with quotation marks, reminding us that words are never innocent or transparent but actively applied, and that words always have cultural connotations.

Wilson brings an excellent sense of description and humor to his work. He employs images from advertising and promotion, quotes environmentalists, industrialists and government agencies, and recounts his own experiences in order to bring these landscapes to life. He is at his best, in fact, when he leaves his thesis temporarily aside and describes

specific places, places as diverse as EPCOT Center, the Heritage USA park and development, the West Edmonton Mall, and the North Carolina coastal wetlands. Those chapters which are more theoretical and general suffer from the author's distance.

If any charge can be aimed at this book, it is that Wilson attempts to be too inclusive and that his argument is less cohesive because of it. In less than 300 pages, he attempts to cover the development of the suburb, the Interstate highway system, the national park systems of the U.S. and Canada, the growth of tourism, the history of nature films, and the immense modifications of the landscape created by mining, lumber and energy firms and the military. Wilson covers none of these in depth, for they are not really his topic; he simply uses them to discuss how we come to our constructions of nature. The enormous scope, however, is at times overwhelming, and sometimes seems to get away from him.

These, however, are small complaints about a strong, illuminating, and accessible book. For *EAP* readers, *The Culture of Nature* has several important strengths. First, Wilson explodes any seemingly objective standards we may have about what a natural landscape is and does so in a clear, crafted manner. Second, for students of environmental meaning, he demonstrates that the experience of any place is not isolated from other places, from one's past or from the culture of which we are part. Finally, and perhaps most important, he offers what amounts to a checklist of the ways that language and image can modify and hinder our attempts to gain a full and clear vision of places as well as our attempts to express such experiences to others.

Herb Childress

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SELECTIONS FROM WILSON'S *THE CULTURE OF NATURE*

Nature Tourism

Regardless of who participated, the rapid development of a recreational infrastructure brought about a new set of relations between humans and everything we call nature. While the places visited might all have existed before, people experienced them in new ways. Nature tourism catalogued the natural world and created its own spaces out there among the trees, lakes, and rocks. It sold us nature-related products, and indeed it began to sell us natural space and experiences too.

All of these activities served to fragment the land: here we have a sunbathing beach, over there a nature trail for the blind, further along there's an RV (recreational vehicle) campground or a petting zoo or a "singles' crosscountry weekend."

Nature tourism differentiates our experiences of the natural world, with several consequences. The most obvious is that this differentiation makes it easier to package and sell nature as a product. It also means more people can enjoy natural areas. It means that it's now more difficult to experience nature as a whole, as the total environment that for centuries and centuries has been our *home*—which is, after all, a very different kind of space from a "recreation resource." (pp. 27-28)

A Better Understanding of Place

I remember a long and pleasant chat with an interpreter at the information centre at Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina one brisk grey day in February in the mid-1980s. I was curious about a few things, like the diet of pelicans and the presence of subtropical plant species in the freshwater marshes behind the dunes.

It's always a treat to talk to someone who really knows those kinds of things first hand, and the woman I talked to was such a person. But best of all, her knowledge was not confined to the natural history of the locale. She told me a wonderful story about the creation of an adjacent park, Cape Lookout National Seashore. When the U.S. National Park Service proposed a second park for the Outer Banks in the 1970s, they included the Shackleford Banks in its boundaries.

The Shackleford Banks are a series of sand-spits that have been used for centuries by local fishers who have built shacks on the dunes to store equipment. At the time, U.S. national park ideology didn't allow for shacks on dunes; the park was to be a pristine nature reserve. In the early 1980s the park administration bulldozed the shacks and built a small interpretive centre.

The local people were outraged and some of them promptly torched the park building. The interpreter was clearly aware of the ironies of this unconventional environmental history, and I came away with, as they might say in the profession, a better understanding of the place I was visiting. (p. 60)

LISTENING THROUGH THE DOOR

Jeffrey Ediger

Jeffrey Ediger teaches in the Speech-Theatre Department at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. His research interest is the phenomenology of communication, specifically listening. He recently completed his dissertation, *A Phenomenology of the Listening Body*, at the University of Illinois' Institute of Communications Research. Address: Speech-Theatre Department, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057 (507-663-3240).

"If the doors of perception were cleansed," wrote poet William Blake, "Everything would appear as it is." Blake's reference to "doors," rather than "windows," is an appeal for an *active openness*. While the window also mediates between person and world, it acts in a less unified way: through the window, the look of the eye passes but, through the door, one's whole being emerges. In this sense, the active capacities of human being, which determine the possibilities for decisive gestures, are more fully realized in the movements of the door as experienced.

Here, I apply Blake's insights about perception to a closely related domain of human experience--the act of listening. What Blake says about perception is also true for listening: passivity is not a fact but a weakness. This act of communication is purified as active capacities of receptivity are collected and directed into decisive engagement with the voice of the other.

This is not the naive door of openness, left unattended so as to allow any voice to come and go as it pleases. The gesture of listening poetically expressed in the door involves a complex gesture in which the proper tension between yielding and resisting creates vigorous attention. Beware, unscrupulous speech when knocking on the door of the attentive ear!

This gesture of listening is not learned easily. The fragility of proper listening is similar to the delicacy with which a good hostess receives guests. Restraint is as important as availability in achieving this attention, which is a kind of fragile openness. So many things can disturb its delicate ease, creating hesitation or excess, that phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard (1958, p. 222) describes the person as "half-open being."

By exploring the "ear as a door," I elicit various features of resistance and openness as they help us to recognize several central qualities of listening. Specifically, I attend to symbolic representations of

lived-doors that have become a part of our everyday language through four clichés that, though made commonplace by mindless repetition, contain a poetics that infuses our daily lives.¹

"OPEN SESAME"

In the *Arabian Nights* tale, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," there is a secret cave with a magical door that opens and closes on the commands, "Open sesame" and "Close sesame." In the cave, a band of thieves hide their stolen booty. One day, by chance, a poor man named Ali Baba learns the secret of the door and helps himself to the treasures inside. In our language, "open sesame" has come to represent a "magical opening" that enables access to some desired treasure.

The door is an archetype--both a barrier and opportunity. A door that refuses to open or that slams in one's face is an obstacle, but an open door is a possibility. One who meditates on the value of life's opportunities soon finds himself or herself keeping a more dutiful vigil of the various openings that appear, often only as brief and sudden doors, in the otherwise walled-up passageways of the daily round.

Openness, however, is not a sure thing. If one recollects experiences either of courting an ear or of having one's ear courted, one realizes that achieving and sustaining openness is a delicate, unstable venture. There is a regularity to some listening that renders it predictable; openness is fixed within routinized forms. For instance, we listen predictably enough to conventional language.

When, however, a deeper understanding is sought, one must reach beyond routine availability. Here, an open ear is unpredictable and unavailable to regularization. To subvert the mysteries involved in this realm, one who would court an unpredictable ear sometimes searches out magical devices by which this

mystery of openness might be rendered automatic. This is the desire for an "open sesame"--the desire for an entry that magically opens to the sheer weightiness of one's presence.

Consider, for instance, that another word for magic is charm. Flattery is one of the most fluid forms of speech that seeks to charm an opening. The fluidity of flattery attempts to soften resistance in listening so that the speech is received in an unhindered way. In that it seeks compliant rather than decisive availability, flattery is crucially different from appreciative speech.

Flattery has learned a great deal from the hand. As a tactile form of speech, it synesthetically translates the mesmerizing capacity of the caress into vocal form so as to soothe manipulatively the inner ear of the other, thus relaxing the tension of an inward resistance to an appreciative but automatic attention. Flattery is a form of intimate speech that draws near to the other, near enough to caress. But it is not the caress of love but of possession.

Appreciative speech, on the other hand, is a form of praise that maintains its distance. To show appreciation, we step back. From the distance of respect, appreciation grows. An attitude of appreciation is one corrective to the domineering praise of flattery.

The risk of appreciative speech is not being heard at all. If the distance of appreciation is too great or too cold, the other may not recognize the voice knocking. Appreciative speech that seems calculated to contain no enticement might be interpreted as veiled disdain rather than sincere appreciation.

Somewhere between the heat of flattery and the coldness of appreciative speech lies the possibility of courting attention while resisting invasive tactics. This, I suggest, is the realm of the threshold--this borderland realm of liminality where the self might achieve the intimate distance of drawing near while still respecting the otherness of the other.

"AN OPEN DOOR"

The "open door" of listening happens when a person faces no barrier in regard to an effort underway. When we say "opportunity knocks but once," we attest to the brevity of such availability.

These open doors are rare, but not as rare as one might think. We so often beat our heads against

closed doors that will never open, yet we remain oblivious to others that would gladly offer welcome if we would only knock! From the other side of the door, we often fail to realize when it would be to our advantage to develop openness toward the voice of the other--for advice, for comfort, for correction.

"SNEAKING IN THE BACK DOOR"

The front door is heavily guarded, and one passes through only by complying with formal expectations. Strangers are meant to come to the front door so the dweller can decide whether or not and how far they should be admitted inside. The back door, on the other hand, is an informal door--the everyday door of work and more relaxed welcoming.

Listening can also be considered in terms of front and back doors. We listen differently to things spoken formally and informally. One example is the effort to gain informal availability from someone with whom we have established only a formal relationship.

For instance, consider the situation where a "third ear" works as mediator. Person A clashes with person B, but their situation is such that they must maintain a formal, "front-door" relationship. Both person A and person B have an informal, "back-door" relationship with person C. Person A is determined to overcome the barrier with person B but feels a direct confrontation--a knock on the front door--will only meet with a resistant ear. Person A therefore relies on person C to carry person A's voice through some back-door availability that person C enjoys with person B.

"CLOSING THE DOOR"

To conclude is to close the door. For example, mental-health counselors are particularly sensitive to the need for what is called "closure." The client is engaged in a dialogue that frequently challenges aspects of self-composure as a way to change or strengthen character. At the completion of this work, a good counselor recognizes the need to facilitate the client's recovery of composure, which is a process of "closure." After having allowed an inner life to be exposed to scrutiny, this period of closure is meant to help the client recover a protective distance.

Composure is an aspect of character that, in the

tension between openness and closure, is more associated with the latter. To have character is to achieve integrity in the sufficiency of one's own means.

To the extent that it is creative, communicative interaction is a mode of openness that constitutes, however subtly, a challenge to the self-sufficiency of composure. Achieving and sustaining intimate distance within interaction is important to achieving creative, transformative engagement. But even this respectful courting can be sustained only for a time, after which the listening ear needs restful silence.

Just as doors are for coming and going, so persons need to come home to themselves after having faced the speaking world. As important as it is to learn how and when to approach and open the door, a good guest knows when to say good night.

NOTE

1. This essay is part of a larger project that explores what I call "the architecture of mediation." I argue that a philosophical

anthropology of architecture as symbolic representation of the human condition would suggest that human being is, paradoxically, "most at home on the way." This phrase, architecturally, can be explored in regard to all transition elements—doors, windows, stairs, bridges, and so forth.

My project is informed by what Paul Ricoeur (1967, p. 390) describes as an "intimate disproportion" in the substance of human being, this disproportion being the consequence of a duality of directedness toward both finitude and infinitude. This disproportion accounts for what he calls "the fragility of human being" (1967, p. 391) such that the balance which human beings strive to achieve between these opposites is tenuous and easily destabilized. A right relationship between the two is maintained only by an active involvement that sustains a stasis in motion—the primordial tightrope walker who maintains balance only by attention and continual shifting.

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Ricoeur, P., 1967. The Antinomy of Human Reality and the Problem of Philosophical Anthropology, in *Readings in Existential Phenomenology*, N. Lawrence and D. O'Connor, eds. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pp. 390-402.

IS PLACE A JOURNEY?

Murray Silverstein

Murray Silverstein is an architect and partner in the Berkeley architectural firm of Jacobson, Silverstein, Winslow. His most recent book is *The Good House*, written with firm partners Max Jacobson and Barbara Winslow (Taunton, 1990; see *EAP*, 2, 2, 6-8). A slightly longer version of this essay first appeared in *Timber Framing*, the journal of the Timber Framers Guild of North America (see p. 2); note Silverstein's frequent reference to timber framing and place. We thank editor Ken Rower for permission to reprint. Address: 3106 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705.

When I began studying architecture in the 1960s, the word *place* had specific connotations. It was used to describe a valued quality of the human-made environment, a quality that was being destroyed by modern processes of development.

Certain regions, towns, neighborhoods were seen to possess a sense of place—that is, an identity forged over time by adaptive growth, nicely balancing traditional ways of building with local circumstances of climate, subculture and materials.

In contrast, modern architecture was regularly criticized as an enemy of local identity. Its quest for elegant "universal" space seemed antithetical to the unique historical and regional conditions whereby each community found its sense of place.

As students up-in-arms, we naturally sought ways of designing and building that were attuned to qualities of place and regional identity, and this of course meant that we were anti-modern—or, more accurately, anti-modernist.

The touchstone for our studies and visions was *vernacular* architecture. There was far more to be learned, we thought, from traditional Japanese farmhouses than from Mies's Farnsworth House.

In 1964, Bernard Rudofsky's Museum of Modern Art exhibit on vernacular architecture celebrated the extraordinary "fit" achieved in pre-industrial cultures between people and places, and the resulting *Architecture Without Architects* (Doubleday, 1964), made the rounds. Christopher Alexander had just published

Notes on the Synthesis of Form (Harvard University Press, 1964), analyzing good fit in vernacular architecture and proposing methods by which it could be achieved in a "self-conscious" industrial world. Charles Moore and company were putting the finishing touches on what was to become the great icon of self-conscious vernacular, the first Sea Ranch condominium in Northern California.

Vernacular architecture was the real stuff, it seemed, where the quality of place resided in its purest form. And by sensitively observing (like Rudofsky), analyzing (like Alexander) and designing (like Moore), it could be achieved once again.

A LANGUAGE OF PLACE

This was the intellectual context in which we developed and wrote *A Pattern Language*.¹ We had come to understand that vernacular architectures were created by shared languages of place; and that, throughout the world, such languages had been (and were being) lost in the press of modernization.

Our book, then, had a double purpose. First, we sought to show what a language of place was like—that it was made of spatial patterns; that the patterns were linked in a characteristic way; and that, like the hypotheses of science, these patterns could be based on empirical data and therefore open to debate, refutation and improvement by others.

Our second purpose was to present a language of place whose contents were so clear and so compelling that anyone, reading it now, could use it to shape the built environment, at whatever scale. In short, we were trying to plant the seeds for the growth of a "new" vernacular architecture grounded in the realities of place, yet appropriate to an open, dynamic, industrialized society.

TIMBER FRAMING AND PLACE

In working on the pattern language, we came to view timber framing as a particularly potent symbol of this attitude toward place. Timber framing was central to a great many regional traditions; its designers and builders clearly possessed and passed on craft-based pattern languages; and these languages produced gorgeous, soulful places at a variety of scales, over many centuries.

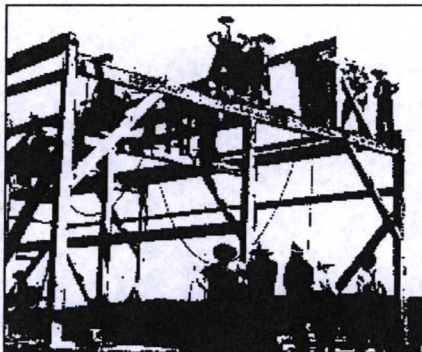
Hoping to convey this message, we chose the image of a just-raised frame to use as a medallion on the front cover of the book.² And while we were not proposing (in the early 1970s) the resurrection of timber framing as a North American building system *per se*, we were certainly learning from it, hoping

that the building systems we did envision would contain some of the character and meanings of timber framing. In the last section of the book particularly, images of timber-framed buildings appear repeatedly to invoke various patterns of place.

In recent discussions with timber framers, it became clear to me that the notion of place that informed our work on pattern language was, by and large, shared by the founders of the Guild.

They, of course, were interested in far more than the symbolic properties of frame buildings. They were trying to revive framing itself as a realistic building system, one that embodied important and neglected attitudes toward place and community. Some of this group apparently found *A Pattern Language* compatible with their early efforts and used it in various ways.

In short, this idea of place and of buildings that create and sustain place seems to have been central to both our efforts. It provided an ideological basis for our work: as makers and caretakers of place, we fight the good fight, in opposition to the destructive forces in our society. Our work as place builders can be understood as part of the general attempt to envision and create a better world.



But it's eighteen years since *A Pattern Language* was completed; eighteen years since Max Jacobson and I launched our practice, theories in hand. And although we're still at it, still trying to make places that people love, our idea of place has changed. Practice has brought a shift. What was once an idea, clear as a bell, now seems more ambiguous, and, in unsuspected ways, more substantial.

PLACE REVISITED

Our original idea of place existed fundamentally as a wish—a wished-for fit between ourselves and some piece of the physical world. Reality, it turns out, is a different kind of place—a place that includes our wish, but is larger, more spacious. There is the longing for Place and there is the place within which this longing is experienced.

The idea of place, in effect, is a structuring absence. It is experienced as something missing, which by good work we hope to restore. Vernacular architecture is one clue that this missing harmony between self and world once existed and could again.

The bother, of course, is that we experience vernacular environments as *outsiders* looking in. We are not natives. For better or worse, as adult residents of the industrialized world, we are, in varying degrees, only tourists of the vernacular. It is as tourists that we admire "the real thing," feel its lack in our own lives, long to have it again. For post-industrial outsiders, pre-industrial vernacular architecture becomes the occasion to project onto the world the wish that place can be experienced, in an enduring way, from the inside.

I remember bicycling with my wife through the Cotswolds in 1970. The English villages were stunning, seen by bicycle especially so. We were outsiders trying to break the code. Coming upon the crest of one hill, wind in my face, farmhouses and barns, walls and streams all parcelling the world into one marvelous quilt of positive space, I fell into a swoon: good fit, a shared language of form, community! The lemonade springs, I felt certain, must be just around the bend.

The experience reminds me now of the Austrian poet Rilke's meditation in the *Duino Elegies*, a remarkable discourse on place and placelessness, on the bliss of tiny creatures who carry their birth shells

with them. "O happy gnats," says the poet, a perennial outsider, "forever inside."

LEAVING PLACE

What we miss in our romance with place, I now believe, is this: deep inside (so to speak) the very nature of place, along with its obvious pleasures, is the desire to leave it. And this desire for individuation is experienced in a very primitive way as a destruction of place. The first place, embryo-in-womb, is destroyed by the push of birth; and a whole series of next-best-places are, in turn, destroyed by the push for exploration and separation. The place left behind may be left standing, but with each leaving-taking (and life provides many, in all shapes and sizes) a fundamental harmonic between self and place is experienced as broken, never *quite* to be regained.

This experience, which we all share developmentally, reaches a historical watershed with the industrial development of Western-style democracies and their stress upon domains of individual freedom as against the stabilities of place. And once introduced into the world as a historical force, the heady taste of free space is hard to ignore.

For those leaving place behind, writes Rilke (and he's speaking to us) "all is distance; back there it was breath." Then he notes, "And after that first place, the second will always seem ambiguous and drafty."

Rilke has captured precisely what it is we love (and hate) about "second places." Thank God they leak! It's the fresh air we're after, when we leave place behind. The medieval peasants who migrated to city states like Florence coined the phrase, "City air is free air." Within the walled cities there was, per capita, less space than back in the countryside, but the fit between person and place (at that historical moment) was looser.

Remember that the word *vernacular* derives from the Latin *verna*, meaning a slave born in the house of his or her master.³ In Classical times, according to J.B. Jackson, it meant a native, one whose existence was confined to a village or estate and who was devoted to routine work.

The vernacular way of life, while it produces exquisitely adapted forms, is ruled by tradition, and assumes limits on thought, work, movement, and relationships that are in tension with many of the

rights and freedoms we take for granted.

Standing before the vernacular landscape, we tend to see only the camera shot. But from the inside, the same place may be experienced as a confinement, producing as much pain (through restriction of freedoms) as pleasure (through the communion of self with place). Our experience as vernacular outsiders may also contain a touch of the voyeur; it's fun to love the Cotswolds with the wind in your face and a round-trip ticket in your pocket. It's a kinesthetic sensation: *we're not stuck in place.*

Americans have a particularly restless relationship to place. By and large it's a tale of journeys. I came to the Bay Area from Los Angeles, where my father had come from Ohio, where his father had come from Eastern Europe. The key American novels that mythologize our spatial imagination are journeys: *Huckleberry Finn* is the story of a kid and a runaway slave who escape the confinements of place for life on the river, while *Moby Dick* tells the tale of an obsessional father figure who pulls up roots to chase a whale across several oceans.

MODERNISM AND PLACE

The early modernist architects grasped this restless energy very clearly, and tried to work with it. Their strongest buildings sought to destroy conventional European images of place altogether. Walls gave way to the "free plan"; roof frames gave way to flat spans; well-defined hierarchies of place gave way to a flow of light, ambiguous space.

In some of these works, like Scharoun's 1933 Schmunke House, the building seems poised to sail across the landscape. Indeed, it's hard to clearly *leave* such places; one feels they might come after you.⁴

But it's easy to criticize Modernism. Its failures are legion, not the least of which is a serene disregard for vernacular solutions. More interesting, however, is to learn from Modernism what it knows best—the pleasures of fluid, ambiguous, free space.

In the end, the Farnsworth House may have less to teach us than the Japanese farm house, but it may have *something* to teach us. The users of our buildings, after all, do not live vernacular lives. Timber frame clients don't live like Elizabethan freeholders. People who are excited by pattern language imagery

or timber frame buildings want certain qualities of vernacular places, but without their limitations. They want vernacular architecture within which to live modernist lives.

And this is true for us as well. We are all exiles, and what we seek, with varying degrees of awareness and sophistication, is not the reality of place, but its illusion. This room in which I sit—with a shaped ceiling and columns at the corners, with light at dusk from two sides and a fire and soft window seats—I live in this place as if it were the center of the world. I know it's not; intellectually I'm post-Copernican. But willingly and daily, I'm eager to suspend disbelief. This is the center and I'm inside—that's the illusion of place. Living as if at home in the world, when all the while we are *en route*.

Here is Rilke again:

*Who has twisted us around like this, so
that
no matter what we do, we are in the
position
of one who is going away? Just as, upon
the furthest hill, which shows him the
whole valley
one last time, a man stops, lingers, turns—,
so we live here, forever taking leave.*

Imagine a building that could express our longing for place and our desire to leave it behind, a building that, like a canny mother, could both hold us *and* let us go: equal parts place and journey, pattern language meeting early modernism inside and around a timber frame. Certainly it would be an interesting raising.

NOTES

1. The book was written at the Center for Environmental Structure in Berkeley, between 1967-74, and published by Oxford University Press in 1977. The authors were Chris Alexander, Sara Ishikawa and myself, with Max Jacobson, Shlomo Angel and Ingrid King.
2. The image, a detail from a photograph of a barn raising, is used to illustrate Pattern 212, "Columns at the Corners."
3. J. B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
4. This is no joke. Now that modernist space is everywhere and one region like the next, the sense of leaving places behind or coming back to them is often flattened.

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