



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

Vol. 6, No. 3

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This issue is the last for 1995. We enclose a renewal form and ask you to respond promptly so we will not need to send you a reminder. The U.S. subscription rate is \$8, while the non-U.S. rate is \$10. As usual, we emphasize that our finances are precarious. We would be most grateful to readers who are able to make an additional contribution.

Some members have suggested we raise subscriptions considerably—say, to \$15. We have hesitated to implement such an increase, however, because, for at least some readers, *EAP* is peripheral in the sense that it speaks more to voice and point of view than to readers' core professional, academic, or artistic interests.

One of the most encouraging aspects of *EAP* is its wide-ranging readership, which we haven't wanted to erode by introducing a subscription threshold in terms of which some members might hesitate to renew. Instead, it seems to make more sense to ask those who can to contribute more. We'd welcome comments on this issue, pro, con, or other.

This issue includes Margaret Boschetti's notes from *EAP*'s business meeting held at the annual EDRA meeting in Boston in March. We also feature two book reviews—one by poet and critic Chris

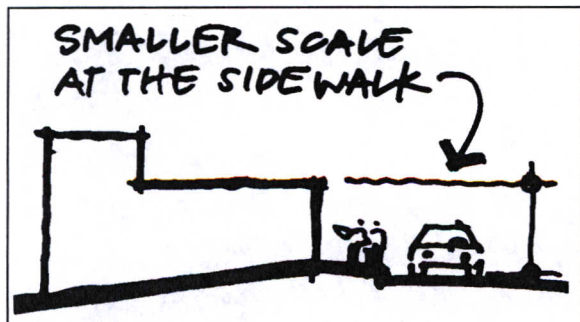
Cokinos, of environmental psychologist Louise Chawla's *The First Country of Places*; the other by geographer Edward Relph, of journalist James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere*.

Finally, this issue includes two essays. Geographer of religion Carolyn Prorok draws on events surrounding a church crucifix in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, that prompted people to talk about a religious miracle. Using the ideas of phenomenologist of religion Mircea Eliade, Prorok uses this event to explore how the sacred can be created out of the ordinary.

We also include a paper by landscape architect Doug Paterson on a phenomenological approach to environmental inventories. A longer version of this paper was presented at EDRA in an *EAP*-sponsored session, "Recovering a Sense of Place," organized by philosopher Ingrid Leman Stefanovic.

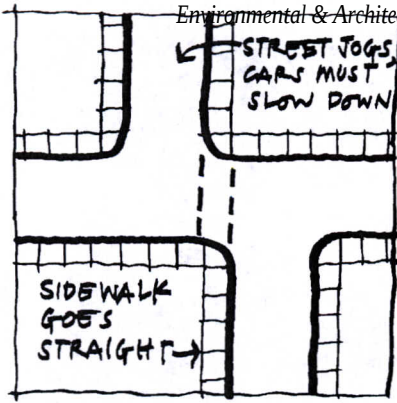
We still hope to produce a special 1996 issue to celebrate the 20th birthday of Edward Relph's influential *Place and Placelessness* (see *EAP*, fall, 1994). Any reader who has not yet let the editors know that he or she would like to contribute a short essay on the book's significance (no longer than 500 words) should contact David Seamon as soon as possible. The deadline for these pieces is January 1996.

"Look Smaller from the Sidewalk": A drawing from David Sucher's City Comforts—see p. 5.



AN EAP INDEX?

One issue that arose at the *EAP* business meeting was the need for a cumulative index to the newsletter. This would help readers find past items quickly and would also provide a useful picture of what *EAP* has been about its first six years of publication. If anyone would like to volunteer for this task, please contact David Seamon or Margaret Boschetti. We would provide a complimentary set of *EAP* volumes from which to work.



A jog to calm traffic: "The street jogs, the car must slow; the sidewalk doesn't and the walker may proceed...." (from Sucher, p. 139)—see p. 5.

EAP MEETING AT EDRA

The Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Network met March 3, 1995, during the EDRA 26 conference in Boston. Twelve members were present, and notes were taken by Co-Chair Margaret Boschetti.

Co-Chair David Seamon reported that there are currently 121 paid subscribers to the *EAP* newsletter, of whom about ten percent are EDRA members [as of late summer, the number is 131, which is down ten from our final 1994 subscription total of 141].

The newsletter, now in its sixth year, circulates to 177 persons or institutions. There are 13 non-U.S. subscribers. Subscriptions and donations for 1994 totalled \$1402 and expenditures were \$1206.

There was discussion about expanding circulation of the newsletter. It was suggested that one way to increase membership was to increase library subscriptions; five libraries are currently on the mailing list. It was pointed out, however, that most libraries face severe budgetary restraints with the result that it is often difficult to order new periodicals. It was agreed that members might consider donating a subscription to their library.

Other suggestions for increasing membership included: posting newsletters on bulletin boards;

going on-line on Internet with an older issue of the newsletter; placing notices in other journals and newsletters; and creating an index of topics covered in the newsletter, 1990-95 [see p. 1].

There was general agreement that a session or sessions was desirable at the EDRA 27 meeting in Salt Lake City in June, 1996. Several ideas were offered about ways of collaborating with other EDRA networks during the meeting. A dialogue on methods and epistemological issues was discussed as a possibility for a plenary session. The importance of continuing an intensive session as a means of addressing members' needs for sharing work was also mentioned.

No plans for EDRA 27 were finalized, however, and anyone who wishes to organize an *EAP*-sponsored program, should contact David Seamon ASAP. Deadline for submissions is early October.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The 14th conference of the **International Association for People-Environment Studies (IAPS)** will be held in Stockholm, July 30-August 3, 1996. The focus is "Evolving Environmental Ideals: Changing Ways of Life, Values and Design Practices." Deadline for paper abstracts is October 31, 1995. IAPS is the European counterpart of EDRA. For further information: Prof. Dick Urban Vestbro, Royal Institute of Technology, Division of Architecture, S10044 Stockholm, Sweden (+46-8-790-8522).

The seminar, **Ornament of Classical Architecture**, will be held October 21-22, 1995, in New York City. Sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture, this seminar emphasizes "the use of classical ornament in traditionally detailed buildings, gardens, and interiors" with a recognition that "classicism is not a rigid set of rules but, rather, a flexible set of principles that permits modern, innovative, and creative design within a traditional context." Contact: Donald Rattner, ISCA, NY Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St., NY, NY 10013 (212-570-7374).

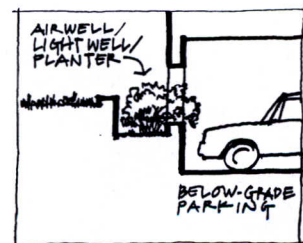
Tonhaus is a "building conceived to be a transmitter of sound through its own structure, a place to experiment with sound perception." Developed by Madrid audio-artist Francisco Lopez and Berlin architect

Klaus Schuwert, the intent of Tonhaus "is for the sound to become part of the building and the building to become part of the sound." A sound recording produced at Tonhaus is available as a compact disk, *Tonhaus*. Contact: F. Lopez, *Huades Arts, Apartado* 39032, 28080 Madrid, Spain.

Terra Nova is a new journal to be published quarterly by MIT Press. Subtitled *Journal of Nature and Culture*, the publication will include "interdisciplinary, accessible but penetrating, analyses of all issues on the human-nature connection." Contact Editor David Rothenberg, Dept of Social Science & Policy Studies, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ 07102 (201-596-3289).

EarthLight is a national monthly magazine that addresses the relationship between ecology and spirituality. The emphasis is on the belief that "the abuse of the earth is rooted in the failure to treat it as sacred." Address: 1558 Mercy St., Mountain View, CA 94041 (415-860-1767).

Cairns of Hope is a newsletter produced by Paul Krapfel, the author of *Shifting* (see *EAP*, 3, 2). Hope refers to "hands-on phenomenological ecology," and one of the newsletter's aims is to see the natural world and ecological principles in new ways by *shifting* taken-for-granted perspectives. The newsletter is free, but it's requested that would-be readers send a self-addressed stamped envelop to Krapfel at: 18080 Brincat Manor, Cottonwood, CA 96022.



Using air wells as gardens: (Sucher, p. 122)—see p. 5.

Dreamtime Talkingmail, published twice a year, is a journal that presents "information and images concerning the becoming of dreamtime village, a rural experiment in combining the ancient technology of permaculture with the unlimited possibilities of hypermedia arts." Some examples of topics of interest: dreams, eccentricity, plants, ecovillages, utopias, roadside attractions, chaos, gourds, renewable energy, nature, time machines, herbs, towers, movement, and fantastic architecture. Subscriptions are \$12 for three issues. Rt. 1, Box 131, LaFarge, WI 54639 (608-528-4619).

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Matthew Day, a doctoral student in Psychology at Duquesne University, is using an "empirical-phenomenological research method to explore the lived-experience and the eidetic structure of 'at-home-ness.'" He writes: "I continue to enjoy the newsletter very much. It offers news, information and research that is otherwise hard for me to access. It has been inspiring for my research on the experience of 'being at home.'"

"I continue to write my dissertation from a lakeside cabin on Mount Desert Island in Maine. I'm finding a fair amount of research and discussion on my dissertation topic but am so far surprised that there have been few attempts to explicate the structure of home in a relevant and meaningful way." Address: HCR 61, Box 223, Mt. Desert, ME 04660.

Andrew Cohill, architect and computer specialist, sends word that he is teaching a course, "Time, Space, and Presence on the [Inter]Net." He writes: "It has been quite interesting to expose liberal arts students to the classical notions about space and form rooted in traditional architecture and then try to get them to transfer those ideas to World Wide Web pages on the Internet. So far, we've not made much progress in answering the questions 'What happens when everyone in the world can publish whatever they want cheaply and easily from their home?' and 'What will a world of information look like?'"

"Interested *EAP* readers can use a Web browser to look at the class syllabus and student pages at the Internet address here: URL:<http://www.bev.net/project/people/cohill/Honors/syllabus.html>." Address:

Blacksburg Electronic Village, 1700 Pratt Drive, Blacksburg, VA 24060-6361 (703-231-7855).

Tom Erickson writes: "I work in Apple Computer's research division (I'm one of those telecommuters you hear about—my job is in California, but I live in Minneapolis), in a small group called the User Experience Architect's Office. We worry about how to design systems that will fit gracefully into people's lives. Computers ought to enable people to focus on their work, rather than on the technology, and ought to simplify life, rather than adding complexity and stress. Obviously, we have a long way to go.

I work by studying ordinary people and their work environments, identifying their problems, needs, and work practices, and then translating these observations into design prototypes. Among my research interests are ethnography, urban design, real and virtual communities, everyday routines and rituals, geography and the sense of place, and the sociology of human-human interactions, all of which inform my approach to systems design.

"My basic goal is to understand what makes real-world environments rich and inviting places (or impoverished and forbidding places), and to apply that understanding to the design of virtual environments. Current projects include the design of a publicly accessible, 3-D spatial interface to internet gopher, and investigation of the structure of everyday life in the office." Address: Tom Erickson, 3136 Irving Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55408-2515.

CITATIONS RECEIVED

Doug Aberley, 1993. *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment*. London: New Society.

This book looks at "textiles, ceramics, photographs, writing, paintings, and songs" as a way to help people map features of their communities. At a time of rapid social and geographical change, author argues that "it is important that the feelings of local people about the places where they live are taken into consideration."

David Appelbaum, 1995. *The Stop*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. ISBN 0-7914-2382-4.

This philosopher examines "the secret turn of awareness by which we pass from ignorance to knowledge. The stop is "the

spark of initiation, intense enough to arouse consciousness from its slumber and to motivate the difficult journey to higher understanding." An important contribution to the phenomenology of looking, seeing, and understanding.

Mitchell Thomashow, 1995. *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist*. Cambridge: MIT Press. ISBN 0-262-20100-3.

This book deals with environmental studies as taught from a perspective informed by personal reflection. "What do I know about the place where I live? Where do things come from? How do I connect to the earth? What is my purpose as a human being? These are the questions that Thomashow identifies as being at the heart of environmental education."

Anthony Weston, 1994. *Back to Earth: Tomorrow's Environmentalism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. ISBN 1-56639-237-3.

This philosopher "goes beyond the 'environmental ethics' approach to argue for the reinstatement of our age-old connections to Nature and other animals: what Vice President Al Gore refers to as a sense of the 'vividness, vibrancy, and aliveness of the rest of the natural world'."

Ingrid Leman Stafanovic, 1994. Temporality and Architecture: A Phenomenological Reading of Built Form. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 11, 3 (Autumn): 211-225.

This article examines "taken-for-granted time perspectives recorded in contemporary architecture" and includes phenomenological readings of Toronto's modernist CN Tower and ancient Greek Sacred precincts.



The most crucial consideration: buildings in relation to sidewalk (Sucher, p. 10)—see p. 5.

NOTEWORTHY READINGS

David Sucher, 1995. *City Comforts: How to Build an Urban Village*. Seattle: City Comforts Press. ISBN 09642680-0-0.

It is wonderful to see the growing number of books that seek to understand and foster, *realistically*, an urban sense of place. On the one hand, we have larger-scale efforts, like Bill Hillier's, to understand the city, as a whole, in terms of its network of circulation (see *EAP*, 4, 2). On the other hand, we have a study like Sucher's, interested in smaller urban elements that make the city lively, friendly, and safe—for example, building to the sidewalk, opening storefronts to the street, reclaiming and peopling parking lots, allowing uses to overlap, etc.

Sucher's way of working is to look at real-time city life and to use words, photographs, and diagrams to record places, designs, and situations that contribute to environmental vitality. *City Comforts* is a summary of his discoveries organized roughly from larger to smaller urban scale. The first several key topics include, for example, "bumping into people," "knowing where you are," "children in the city," "feeling safe," and "little necessities."

In turn, these broad themes are each followed by a set of design directives illustrated with a photo and, less regularly, a drawing. For example, the directive "look smaller from the sidewalk" describes a supermarket looking considerably smaller than its 30,000 square feet of shopping area because much of its bulk is below street grade and its entrance wall at the sidewalk is only one story high. There is also a drawing illustrating the principle in general terms (see p. 1).

Sucher briefly mentions his debt to Christopher Alexander's pattern language, and one immediately sees the influence in the format and arrangement of topics. In this sense, the book is a smaller-scale pattern language of the city, though it is important to emphasize *smaller scale* and recognize that a thorough understanding of urban-design needs also must consider more complicated issues like primary and secondary uses, layout of pathways, concentration of people, and patterns of wholeness. In this sense, the book needs to be complemented by the broader urban ideas of Hillier, Alexander, Jane Jacobs, and Paul Murray, among others (see *EAP*, 6, 2).

FROM CITY COMFORTS

We are too harsh on our architects and builders. We somehow expect each new work to be novel and full of surprise. This point of view does not help to create amiable cities. It looks at the wrong things. People—architects included—often speak of a building and decry it as *derivative of nothing special*. When questioned further, they will readily admit that the building isn't bad, really, but it's not a "great work."

To wonder if a particular building is a great work is to hold it up to a flawed standard of review on two counts.

First, such an approach tends to overemphasize the purely visual; one examines the building as if it were a photograph on a wall and one talks of balance and composition...

Secondly, the very nature of the question asks one to view the building as a discrete object—isolated on its own lot—not as a piece of a city landscape.

Both aspects play into the misuse... of architecture as a tool of social aggrandizement, posturing and pomposity. Such an attitude may feed the hungry maw of the architecture and design press but it does little to nourish the eye or body of the would-be urban villager (p. 17).

The book's lively text and intriguing photographs should help to engage laypeople and undergraduate students to look at their city more closely and to see what works and what fails. As Sucher explains early on, his aim is to illuminate "small things... that make urban life pleasant: places where people can meet, methods to tame cars and to make buildings good neighbors, art that infuses personality into *locations* and makes them *places*" (p. 3).

Mathias Buess, 1992. Getting to Know the Landscape: The Gobenmatt. In *Awakening to Landscape*, J. Bockemuehl, ed. Dornach, Switzerland: Goetheanum Research Laboratory.

Most striking for its use of tree silhouettes, this essay seeks to understand a Swiss mountain valley--

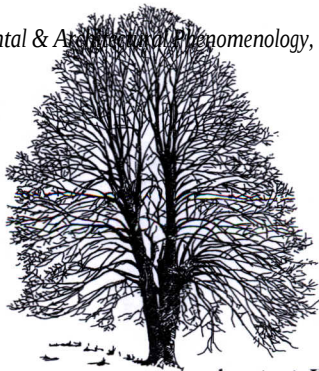
the *Gobenmatt*--through a phenomenological reading of plant form. Buess's aim is to "find a way of consciously appreciating the qualities of place" (p. 35).

The essay is short and marks only a small beginning in carrying out this aim. What is most interesting are Buess's efforts to show how an integral part of the valley's sense of place is the differences in vegetation of north and south slopes.

For example, he points out that, conventionally, one thinks of the European lime tree as having a roundness of crown and gently curving branches, as illustrated by the lime-tree silhouette, above, right. Experientially, "the tree has enveloping qualities and invites you to rest" (p. 36).

Buess also emphasizes, however, that trees can only give expression to their full form when people provide them with an open environment. Otherwise, they are surrounded by other trees and woodland plants and must adapt themselves accordingly.

The result is that the lime trees on *Gobenmatt*'s north and south slopes are considerably different. On the north, as shown by the forms on the left in the illustration below, the trunks are tall, straight and



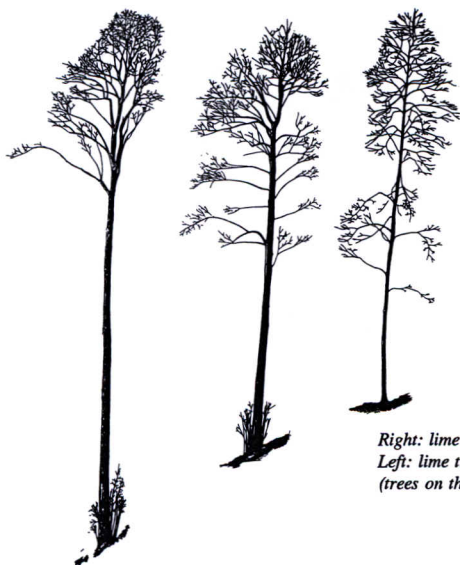
unbranched, with the crown relatively small and limited to tree tops. On the south, in contrast, the limes are almost all crown with no clear main stem. Their growth is crooked and bushy (right, below).

Buess examines several other trees in terms of their north- and south-slope patterns. Using drawings, he then discusses how the appearance of the north and south woodlands as woodlands compare

and contrast. He points out that woodland of southern slope is marked by three distinct areas (an upper part where the canopy has a knobby texture, a middle part where the texture is smooth and even, and a lower part of shapely crowns), while the north woodland is uniform and less rich in texture.

Unfortunately, Buess provides little explication of how these vegetative differences might become pointers to understand *Gobenmatt*'s wider sense of place. He does say that, at least for the south slope, the gnarled trees at the top indicate "an environment where maturity and age are quickly reached," while "pace of life is slower on the valley floor" (p. 53). We are not told, however, how these insights contribute to the lived-sense of *Gobenmatt* as a whole.

Buess's work is part of a larger collection of essays and illustrations, originally a travelling exhibition, that seeks to explore plants, animals, and landscapes through a qualitative, interpretive approach. Many of the drawings and paintings are striking, but the written explications are regularly incomplete or unconvincing. What the work provides is some intriguing indications of the kinds of topics and methods on which a phenomenology of landscape might eventually shed light.



Right: lime trees on the south slope;
Left: lime trees on the north slope
(trees on this page all drawn at same scale).



One of the most interesting illustrations in *Awakening to Landscape* (see preceding page) is from an essay, "Gesture in the Landscape," by Jochem Bockemuehl. In discussing how the static forms of trees reflect living gestures toward earth and sky, Bockemuehl discusses differences between a tree's trunk and branches:

The trunk is almost vertical, while the branches spread out, going upward at an angle and appearing fairly straight near the top of the tree but curving downward more, with only the ends turning upwards, lower down....

The way in which branches grow from a trunk, growing up at an angle, sometimes steeply, bending down or breaking off, shows the different effects that gravity or the wind have from outside and also tells us something about the elasticity or brittleness of the wood (pp. 231-32).

As an exercise in becoming more familiar with branches' directional gestures, Bockemuehl provides three examples of branches *not* in their correct growing position. Intriguingly, one finds it relatively easy to sense the correct orientations. See the next page for the branches in their correct position; also, a silhouette of the tree from which the branches were drawn.



Peter Freund and George Martin, *The Ecology of the Automobile*, (Montreal, New York, London: Black Rose Books, 1993).

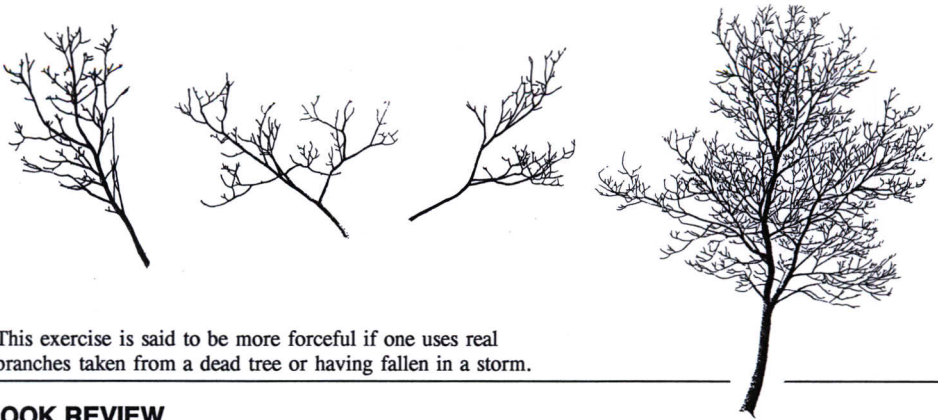
This book deals with social and political implications of auto-centered transport, but it also looks at the car from the perspective of phenomenology. Part II addresses "Deconstructing Auto Hegemony." Chapters addressing "The Ideology of Automobility" and "Auto Space" will be of special interest to EAP readers, as will especially Chapter 6, entitled "The Phenomenology of Automobility."

The authors present a deconstruction of the "subjective experience of driving the auto, and the subjective experience of placelessness that resonates from automobility" (p. 97). Discussion ranges from the

grand prix, physiologically arousing quality of driving, to "carcooning"—a term describing the "ways in which drivers turn their cars into electric nests" (p. 103). The placelessness evoked by the experience of *passing through* spaces is described in some measure, but the phenomenon of mobility is also viewed in terms of the possibilities of a freedom from tyranny of place.

Some of the ideological foundations in individualism and technology are described, and in a chapter, "Auto Space," there is an interesting discussion of the impact of the automobile on "The Dispersed City." Much of what is said in this work has been said before by others, but it is helpful to have it gathered together in this very readable book.

Solution to branches on preceding page; tree from which the branches were drawn, right.



This exercise is said to be more forceful if one uses real branches taken from a dead tree or having fallen in a storm.

BOOK REVIEW

James Howard Kunstler, 1993. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*. NY: Simon and Schuster.

I found this book annoying. It is a popular account of the state of the cultural landscapes of America, written by a novelist and sometime reporter for *Rolling Stone*. It is easy to read, but the arguments are simple, one-sided, and riddled with cliché judgments. The gist of them is that everything is getting worse, there is a crisis of place in America, cities and small towns have been messed up, and sense of home and community have been destroyed. The culprits are automobiles, planners, large corporations, television, the home improvement industry, the collapse of local economies, modernism, postmodernism, materialism, and Disney World.

If you share Kunstler's prejudices against everything modern, especially cars, you will probably read this book muttering "Yes! Yes! Yes!" at every cliché and negative remark. If, however, you see landscapes, even suburban ones, as ambiguous and often subtle manifestations of individuals and groups trying to make the best of their lives, you will be irritated by the simple, self-righteous tone of the arguments.

This tone is manifest in chapter titles: "The Evil Empire," "How to Mess up a Town," "The Loss of

Community," "Capitals of Unreality" (Disney World, Atlantic City and Woodstock, Vermont). It is also apparent in the writing. Some examples:

Eighty percent of everything built in America has been built in the last fifty years, and most of it depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy and spiritually degrading (p. 10);

Highway strips...boulevards so horrible that every trace of human aspiration seems to have been expelled, except the impetus to sell (p. 121);

Americans...had more meaningful relationships with movie stars and characters on daytime television shows than with members of their own families...they preferred fantasy. They preferred lies (p. 169);

The average citizen would not recognize a building of quality if a tornado dropped it in his backyard (p. 245).

In short, Kunstler has no respect for the sensibilities of his fellow Americans. J.B. Jackson and Peirce Lewis are specially identified for a smear because they lack "critical faculties" (p.122). Instead of making unqualified condemnations of commercial

strips and galactic cities, they have the temerity to try to understand them as complex expressions of social processes and individual efforts.

Nevertheless, *The Geography of Nowhere* does provide an easily-read history of the landscapes of America, from the pilgrim settlements, through the development of the gridiron survey and the designs of Downing and Olmsted, to the automobile suburb. There is little that is unfamiliar to someone with a reasonable knowledge of urban history, and no illustrations, but the account is concise and comprehensive.

There are also short case-studies of the landscapes of Detroit (judged a failure), Los Angeles (failure) and Portland, Oregon (success), Saratoga Springs and Schuylerville, New York (both failures), and Seaside, the Andres Duany fake town in Florida (success).

Kunstler's method for these case-studies, as far as I can gather, was to drive around in a rented car (he is repeatedly specific about how it is rented), talk to a few people on the street and others such as architects, and then write about the place. The result is sometimes informative.

The final chapter offers proposals for making "Better Places". It is based on what can be galled "we logic": "We will have to rebuild our towns and cities...we will have to reacquire the lost art of town planning... we shall have to give up mass automobile use...." (p. 248).

BOOK REVIEW

Louise Chawla, 1994. *In the First Country of Places: Nature, Poetry, and Childhood Memory*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994 [a volume in SUNY's "Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology" series]. ISBN 0-7914-2074-4.

Drawing on psychology, literature, phenomenology, philosophy, and feminism, environmental psychologist Louise Chawla argues for a "recollective psychology" that moves away from sterile empiricism to a "new paradigm of productive collaboration between mind and nature," one that "attend[s] to qualities of human experience" (p. 193).

The qualities of adult interaction with childhood memories of place are at the core of Chawla's investigation, which analyzes five contemporary American poets in order to better understand our present alienation from nonhuman nature and how we may move beyond paralyzing mechanistic attitudes.

I have difficulties with such invocations of communal cooperation, especially in a book that interprets most recent American history as a decline of community spirit. The examples that Kunstler invokes to show how we are beginning to get together are Christopher Alexander's pattern language, the proposals of Andres Duany for building traditional neighborhoods, cluster development, and the Vermont land trust.

Kunstler is, he admits "ashamed of his civilization" (p. 200). He certainly seems deeply ill at ease in the late 20th century, and this is presumably why his criticisms of its landscapes are so uncompromising. I find his comments unremarkable because they have been made so many times by others, and I find them irritating because they are so one-sided.

Yet I also must recognize that it is important not to dismiss this book too quickly. Precisely because of the strident way it is written, it is likely to attract a far wider audience than a careful academic interpretation. Such widespread attention to the quality of landscapes is probably a prerequisite to effecting the political and social changes that will enable better places to be made.

Edward Relp
Division of Social Sciences
Scarborough College/University of Toronto

This review was originally published in the Journal of Historical Geography and is reprinted with permission.

Increasing academic specialization makes books like Chawla's somewhat rare, though it is clear that multidisciplinary work is critical if we are to grasp the enormous complexities and complications of our self-induced environmental crisis.

Chawla's book is, therefore, a valuable contribution to the vital task of breaking down false boundaries among fields, as we attempt to renew a more organic relationship with the nonhuman world. Further, this book is a model of what such work should be: accessible, sophisticated, and humane.

Nonetheless, any work that ranges across numerous endeavors and disciplines, will disappoint, at

times, one who is perhaps more expert in a certain area. As a poet and critic, I was thrilled, on the one hand, that Chawla uses contemporary poetry as a source for wisdom. On the other hand, I found several of Chawla's close readings of poems somewhat too insistent in their emphasis on ideas about place and memory. The relationship of content to craft--sound, rhythm, and so forth--is rarely an issue.

I also think Chawla may have overrelied on the advice of one writer, Allen Mandelbaum, who directed her to the poetry of several of his friends. This explains the absence of other important poets who would have been fascinating to consider, such as Louise Gluck, Mary Oliver, and Philip Booth. Had Chawla's work moved further into the past, she could have fruitfully explored the nature poetry of Robinson Jeffers, a complex figure deeply rooted in place who did not explore his childhood and past in poems until late in his life.

That said, I was often impressed by Chawla's lucid discussions of British Romanticism and William Wordsworth and by her treatments of David Ignatow and Audre Lorde, the most important poets in her study. Her treatments of Marie Ponsot and William Bronk are sometimes fascinating as well.

Chawla's analysis reveals that the women writers have a far greater (and more positive) attachment to childhood memory and nature than do the men. Indeed, psychologists have wondered over "a long-standing puzzle of memory research: in study after study, women have reported more childhood memories than men...they also rated the quality of childhood memories significantly higher than men" (p. 155). Women show no "pattern of disengagement," as men often do, from childhood memory (p. 156).

Chawla's explanation for women's greater sensitivity to memory and place is that women tend to feel stronger bonds to their own childhood because they carry their children--and, often, are most responsible for raising children. Women with role models interested in nature, as both Lorde and Ponsot had, also feel a greater connection to place, environment, and earth. Time and rhythm are also crucial factors.

Despite these assertions (and they are well-reasoned), Chawla does not lapse into an essentialism that excludes men from the possibilities of connection. She is describing contemporary conditions, as

she charts paths for understanding a deeper, non-gendered foundation from which we can better understand ourselves and our memories, men and women alike. That foundation is the biosphere.

Here is where the work of Swiss phenomenologist Jean Gebser looms importantly in Chawla's study. Gebser's structures of consciousness, his notion of "a renewal of relationship with nature as process," and his tenet that individuals, at the most fundamental level, live either in "trust" or "anxiety" concerning "our embeddedness in nature" (p. 178), play critical roles in Chawla's project not only to describe a "recollective psychology," but also to link disparate fields into a new "practical wisdom" (p. 192) that can help heal our psyches and the damage done to nonhuman nature. I had not known of Gebser's work prior to reading *In the First Country of Places*; Chawla's discussion indicates that his *The Ever-Present Origin* is of singular importance to our crisis in nature.

Chawla's opening two and concluding two chapters are the most challenging and exciting. It is in these chapters that she charts the displacement of an organic relationship to the nonhuman by a hyper-rationalist, mechanistic construct. Her analysis of phenomenology's relevance to the human crisis in nature is powerful.

Specialists in psychology and philosophy may have their own quibbles here, but *In the First Country of Places* is so humanely argued and so intensely wide-ranging that I would not want the wider importance of this book to be missed: that empiricism should be imbued with a sense of non-doctrinaire spirituality in order to reclaim environmental relevance for a human endeavor (psychology) and that we should renew attention to healthful childhood relationships to place and to nonhuman nature. To do so could invigorate our species' relationship to the earth with sanity, respect, and humility.

This vision may never be realized, of course, given the rapaciousness of our economic activity and the intensity of our (mostly unacknowledged) spiritual disconnection with a wider, transhuman context. Still, for the time we are here, it is crucial and worthwhile to begin the hard work of trying. This valuable and insightful book will help us do so.

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CREATING THE SACRED FROM THE ORDINARY: THE CASE OF AMBRIDGE

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Throughout history and around the world, common places have been transformed into sacred ones. Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, was a church much like others in the United States until Good Friday, 1989, when a "miracle"—as many people called it—occurred and was interpreted by believers as a sign that God was pleased with them. The people's belief set the stage for their ordinary place of worship to become extraordinary—for thousands of pilgrims to duplicate an ancient process for reaffirming faith.

How does a place take on sacredness? Why do people treat a place as extraordinary? How is sacred significance sustained? The events surrounding a crucifix at Holy Trinity Church in Ambridge provide a unique opportunity to observe the transformation of an ordinary church into a place of pilgrimage.

AMBRIDGE AND THE MIRACLE

The world *miracle* comes to English from Old French and before that from the Latin *mirari*—"to wonder at." At Holy Trinity Croatian Church, it was events surrounding a crucifix that prompted people to talk about a miracle.

Ambridge is a town of about 10,000 people 20 miles north of Pittsburgh. At one time, the Aliquippa Works, one of the largest steel plants in the region, employed 14,000 people but, today, is practically closed. Unemployment has been high for over a decade, and the town's population has declined.

Holy Trinity's life-size crucifix has been in the church for 58 of the church's 60 years. It was unusual in that it showed a still living Christ with eyes and mouth partially open and had long hung on the wall behind the altar but was moved several times after the church was remodeled in 1965.

When Father Vincent Cvitkovic became pastor of Holy Trinity in 1985, he decided to have the crucifix

repaired. An artist, Dominic Leo, refurbished the crucifix, and in January 1989, it was suspended 22 feet above the altar.

No one actually say the eyes of Christ's image close on the memorable day. It is significant, though, that the miracle occurred on Good Friday, the day commemorating Christ's death. During the evening Mass on Good Friday, March 24, 1989, the four young men serving at the altar thought the eyes of the crucifix were different.

After the Mass, the priest found the four young men crying. As the parishioners were filing out of the church, Father Vincent got a ladder and looked for himself. He remembered that the Dominic Leo had been at Mass. He asked the artist to look at the crucifix. Mr. Leo concurred that the eyes were indeed closed.

Parishioners began to speak of a "miracle." Many of them returned to pray at the altar late into the evening. One young man, a member of a prayer group, believed that he received a message from Jesus. He wrote the message on paper and gave it to Father Vincent:

I have given this sign for all those who have faithfully come to me... offering up their sorrows, joys, many sufferings and crosses. It pleases me to see so many people converted through this prayer group. Truly, my presence is within this church. You must be prepared, for within the weeks and months to come, many will flock to see what I have done. Many will doubt. However, though your example and faith, they will be converted. Have patience. Welcome them with open arms....

Once the story of the crucifix spread, thousands of people came to see for themselves what was happening. The Pittsburgh Catholic Diocese, administered by Bishop Donald Wuerl, was compelled to investigate the miracle.

Commission members based the report on interviews with witnesses, "before" and "after" photographs, and videotapes of the crucifix from different

angles. The commission concluded that the eyes of the crucifix did not miraculously close. Soon after, Father Vincent resigned his post as Holy Trinity's priest, much to the disappointment and chagrin of family members and parishioners.

Despite the commission report, parishioners and many of the pilgrims to Ambridge believe that something unusual is happening at Holy Trinity. Mr. Leo, the artist who refurbished the cross, indicates that, as a good Catholic, he will not challenge the commission's findings, but he will not accept them either. "I know what I saw," he says. "I was there. They're telling me their decision is based on what they saw in pictures. What God made happen in that church was the real thing. Those photographs don't mean anything to me. I worked on that crucifix. I know what I saw."

THE PILGRIMS

At the end of March 1989, a week after the miracle, visitors at Holy Trinity numbered in the thousands. By early April, attendance at daily Mass was about 600, and the church was kept open 15 hours a day. In early May, some local residents were complaining about the crowds.

By June, the visitation rate had slowed. Most people were now visiting Holy Trinity on the weekends. Survey forms left by the author in the church's lobby from June 16 to July 13 included questions about the origin and ethnicity of the pilgrims, their reasons for visiting Holy Trinity, their means of transportation to the church, and their way of learning about the miraculous events. The survey does not, of course, represent a random sample and can offer only a glimpse into some characteristics of modern American pilgrims.

Over 1600 people from 12 nations responded to the survey. Since this represents only a fraction of the total pilgrims, the number of people visiting Holy Trinity in such a short period of time is phenomenal by modern American standards.

Despite this wide distribution, few pilgrims traveled great distances to the shrine. The majority of pilgrims came from within a 100-mile radius. Nearly 99 percent of the pilgrims said they had traveled to the shrine by car or chartered bus and returned home

the same day.

Holy Trinity's pilgrims came from ethnic groups traditionally regarded as Catholic. More than a third of the pilgrims were Slavic, while nearly another third was of Italian and Germanic descent. Few French and Spanish-heritage Catholics visited the shrine. Small numbers of pilgrims came from ethnic groups that are traditionally non-Catholic.

THE PILGRIM'S FOCUS

Once the news of a miraculous event travels beyond the individuals who first report it, potential devotees have to determine the event's and the teller's believability.

One woman calling Holy Trinity from New York City soon after the miracle wanted to know if what had happened was a "real miracle," because she did not want to drive a great distance for nothing. The question this woman raises is crucial to the formation of a pilgrimage shrine.

In my survey, Holy Trinity pilgrims identified at least 14 categories of reasons for visiting the church. Nearly 100 visitors stopped at Holy Trinity in passing, out of curiosity. About 60 percent of the survey respondents said they needed to be close to the miracle for inspiration and for reaffirmation of their faith. Such phrases were used as, "I wanted to pray here," "I wanted to be close to a real miracle," "I love Jesus" or "I wanted to praise God."

The need to be physically close to an extraordinary thing or place—close to the supernatural—is best captured by the response, "I wanted to visit Jesus," or "I wanted to visit Mary." Although fewer than ten percent of the pilgrims made that statement in the survey, many other comments imply such a need.

Many pilgrims came to Holy Trinity because they believed their requests might be answered. A few pilgrims said they came to ask for God's grace, but four times as many said they had come to pray for the cure of a loved one's illness or for a family member to find a job.

Such responses are typical of pilgrims at other times or other places. The degree to which pilgrims believe their needs are met by the pilgrimage is the degree to which a formative shrine will sustain its new-found extraordinary sacredness.

HIEROPHANY

That which is sacred, scholar Mircea Eliade (*The Sacred and The Profane*, NY, 1958) says, "manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane." Eliade uses the term "hierophany"—something sacred showing itself to us—to indicate an experience of the sacred.

For Christians, the most powerful hierophany is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, while an elementary hierophany is the manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object. Christ's image on the crucifix is an ordinary object in Christian communities, and for that reason, the miracle at Ambridge can be thought of as an elementary hierophany.

The hierophanic nature of the event at Ambridge is understandable in three principal ways—as a *paradox*, as a *fixed point*, and as a *symbol of group experience*. Eliade explains that a hierophany is a paradox because an object becomes something else through the manifestation of the sacred, yet remains itself. This paradox gives power and integrity to the believers because they must be able to accept the paradox and then transcend it through their faith.

Devotees who continue to visit Holy Trinity's crucifix have transcended the paradox implicit in the miracle, and once transcended, the paradox of the miracle need not be questioned or refuted. The Church's investigation solves the mystery of what happened at Ambridge only for non-believers and for those who doubted the miracle from the beginning.

Eliade also emphasizes that a hierophany "reveals an absolute fixed point." Such a nexus orients the faithful and gives them direction. For Christians, the absolute fixed point is the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ at a specific time and place.

Over time, however, believers' orientation may falter, so signs are needed to assist devotees in re-directing their faith. If a sign does not occur, it is provoked. At Holy Trinity, the prayer group needed such a sign, and the altar boys were a valid and reliable means for recognizing the hierophany.

A hierophany is a symbol, Eliade concludes, through which people find their way out of situations particular to themselves and open themselves to the general and universal.

If the young man serving Mass had considered his experience with the crucifix peculiar or unreasonable, he probably would not have related it to the others, or if he did, he would have discounted his belief in his own experience.

But the young man's experience had the best possible context—a Good Friday Mass with the prayer group, a group intellectually and spiritually prepared to receive a sign. Without the group's participation, the hierophany would have been only a young man's personal experience.

When, however, his experience was recognized, accepted, and exalted, it became the group's experience and was raised to the status of myth or miracle. It is because of group acceptance that this place takes on its sacred significance, a significance that can be sustained only if individuals are continually able to integrate their personal world with the world symbolized by the miracle.

SUSTAINING SACREDNESS

The events at Holy Trinity may be part of a series of miraculous events like the 1989 apparitions in Lubbock, Texas, and Tickfaw, Louisiana. Such events have been reported in greater numbers in the United States since the phenomena of Medjugorje [the Croatian town where visions of the Virgin Mary have attracted millions of visitors since 1981]. This wave of extraordinary events may be only a temporary phase in American Catholic life. It may weaken and be forgotten. But it may be the beginning of a new era in shrine formation.

If a shrine like the one in Ambridge is to sustain its new sacredness, people must continue having extraordinary experiences there, and they must share those experiences with others who will then wish to visit the site.

Lack of ecclesiastical toleration affects modern pilgrimage shrine formation. Over 200 reports of apparitions have occurred in Western Europe since 1931, but only a few have gained recognition by the Church. Many apparitions attracted attention and pilgrims for a short time but did not become an enduring place of pilgrimage.

Will the miracle at Ambridge endure? If it does, it will be one of only a few places of pilgrimage in the United States. This formative shrine certainly has the potential for enduring, despite the lack of ecclesiastical toleration. At the very least, the miracle will hold fast in the minds and hearts of local devotees, and the possibility exists that the new shrine will become a center of extraordinary sacredness in a modern desacralized world.

MAKING PLACES: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF ■ THE INVENT{ING}ORY ■

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INVENTORY: 1. an itemized list or catalogue of goods, property, etc.; especially, such a list of the stock of a business, taken annually. 2. the store of goods, etc., which are to be so listed; stock."

Very few cities know much about their place. The inventories they do are either pragmatic (e.g., man-hole invert elevations) or legal (e.g., tax assessments). Often as not, these inventories are more a perception of what the city is thought to be rather than what it really is. Indeed, most cities are profoundly ignorant of their place.

This lack of "good" inventories is one reason for placeless environments and for the designs, plans, and policies that "encourage" such placelessness. If place is to come alive, its elements and qualities must be seen in all their possibilities. The "phenomena" of place must be sought out, described, and inventoried. Each and every item "in place" must be seen as possessing "phenomenal" possibilities.

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INVENT: (in-vent'). v.t. [ME. *inventen*; OFr. *inventir* < L. *inventus*, pp. of *inventire*, to come upon, to meet with, discover; *in-*, in, on + *venire*, to come].

Inventory shares its etymology with *invent*. In this sense, the inventory is an identification and listing of possibilities—much more than a simple tabulation of items. In the inventory of a city, every street, tree, back yard, small stream, old building, and all the rest are sources for new inventions.

To "see" such possibilities, however, requires a phenomenological awareness of inventorying. In this sense, the inventory can be seen as *information*, where the word shares its roots with the word *inform* and is ultimately about describing *form*.

■
INFORM: v.t. [ME. *informen*; OFr. *enformer*; L. *informare*; see **IN-** (in) & **FORM**]: to give form or character to; be the formative principle of; to give, imbue, inspire with some specific quality or character; animate; to form or shape the mind; teach; to give knowledge of something to; tell; acquaint with the fact.

In each act of inventorying we attempt what Heidegger calls "the splendor of the simple," seeking to look upon things as if we saw them for the first time. We try to make "the strange, familiar and the familiar, strange."

We require an almost child-like pursuit of places and their objects, and the almost infinite number of possibilities those places and objects can awaken in our imagination if we are open to their presence.

While we are, as adults, regularly severed from our former child-like, wide-eyed view of the world, we can nonetheless teach ourselves to remain open to the possibilities. One way to do this is to talk to children and get them to take us on tours of their places.

In addition, we can use such creative tools as idea exaggeration, ideal reversal, reassembling the parts, identifying and recording the patterns, visual-visual

and verbal-visual transformations, clashing opposites, using metaphors and allegories, scale changes, thickening, and the like.

Such creative tools can and must be brought to the inventory process because they help us to understand places and objects in terms of their infinite possibilities. When we begin to see things in this way, we realize there are an endless number of things, ideas, places, and patterns that *never* get inventoried--everything from junk to handicrafts, inventors to story-tellers, stacks of wood, buried streams, cliffs, cloisters, parade routes, portages, rain barrels, and clever canopies.

What is needed is a new perspective and process for undertaking and re-undertaking place inventory. This also implies a major change in the way urban, municipal, state, and provincial governments go about their business of planning and managing cities and landscapes.

If we are indeed serious about improving our environmental interventions then we must begin with a change in the invent{ing}ory of place. I conclude by postulating several "rules" that might help to provoke that change.

1. EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT: too often, we tend to think of things as insignificant because, at the moment, we can't "see" their relevance; we can't see them as clues for new directions and possibilities.

2. MORE IS MORE: Place and city are rich, highly diverse, and dynamic. To ignore any items, ideas, and energies of a place eventually means that the place is invariably and irrevocably altered, often in unintended ways.

3. GOOD INVENTORY ASSUMES MANY DIFFERENT FORMS: Any information that is inventoried must be presented in as many different ways as possible so that the possibilities inherent in the information is revealed fully.

MAPS	PHOTOGRAPHS
LISTS	WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS
DIAGRAMS	NUMBERS
DRAWINGS	AERIALS
STORIES	POEMS

4. GOOD INVENTORY INFORMS ACTION: The purpose of any inventory is to inform subsequent possibilities and actions and *not* to justify intended actions.

5. THE USER IS THE BEST PERSON TO INVENTORY: The user of the information is ultimately the person most interested in being informed. It is invariably difficult, if not next to impossible, for that user to grasp the full physical, spiritual, and intellectual meaning of materials compiled by others.

6. INVENT{ING}ORY IS A CREATIVE ACT: The people who do good inventories are "creators"; they know that an open and enriched inventorying of place can energize.

7. INVENT{ING}ORY MUST BE REPEATED: Inventories must be done again and again. Each new individual or group seeking information needs to undertake the inventory themselves. While some data can remain as suitable abstractions for future analyses and comparisons, a full understanding of environment only arises from a total immersion in place.

8. INVENTORY IS NOT STOCK: If inventories are seen as "boring" or "stock" information, their role and importance will be devalued.

9. INVENTORY SYSTEMS OFTEN DISTANCE THE USER: Geographical Information Systems and other computerized schemes often hide, ignore, or confuse the nature of inventory--especially the underlying values and biases it assumes.

10. GOOD INVENTORIES FAVOR THE PARTICULAR OVER THE UNIVERSAL: Good inventories lead to more site-specific, place-related solutions.

11. GOOD INVENTORIES EMPHASIZE VALUE OVER FACT: Good inventories provide understanding of all the values in play in any situation and help to keep the facts "in line" with those values.

12. GOOD INVENTORIES ARE POWERFUL: The individual who really knows the territory can fight the good fight.

