



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

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This issue begins our eighth year. We thank readers who have renewed their subscription, especially those making extra contributions. As of early December, we have received 71 renewals. Those who have not responded will find a second notice inside. Many of you have forgotten. Please renew!

This issue includes items of interest as well as news on recent publications. Pat Condon reviews Robert Mugerauer's *Interpretations on Behalf of Place* and Ingrid Stefanovic reviews two books on sustainable design. We also publish two essays, the first of which, by architect Tammeron Francis, explores lessons for environmental design as provided by the earthworks of the Adena-Hopewell, a Native-American group who lived in the region now known as Ohio. In the second essay, architect David Woolf marks the start of a phenomenology of the cellar.

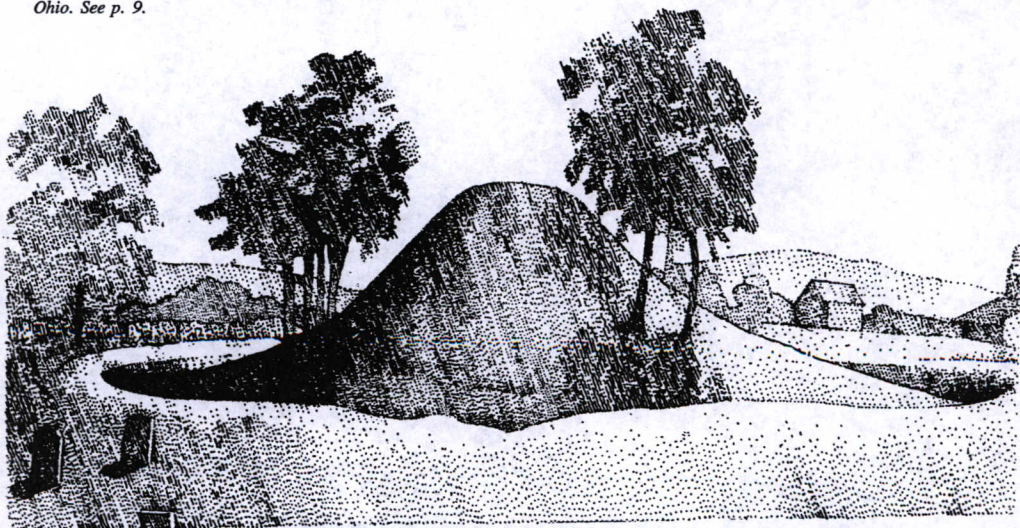
As always we need news and contributions. Send them along!

Below: The Great Mound at Marietta, built by the Adena-Hopewell, a Native-American group who lived in the region now known as Ohio. See p. 9.

CONFERENCES

An international symposium on **Culture and Space in Home Environments** will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, 4-7 June, 1997. Potential themes include: theories, methods and concepts of home environments; cross-cultural studies of housing; and meaning and use of home and neighborhood. Contact: Dr. S. M. Unugur, Architecture Faculty, Istanbul Technical University, Taskisla 80101, Istanbul, Turkey (90-212-293-1300).

The **Conference on Communication and Environment** will be held in Syracuse, NY, 26-29 July 1997, sponsored by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Paper sessions will focus on "how aspects of communication affect our understanding of human relationships with the environment." Contact: James Cantrill, Communication and Performance Studies, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI 49855 (210-381-3583).



EAP-SPONSORED WORKSHOP AT EDRA

Philosopher Ingrid Leman Stefanovic has organized a special EAP workshop, "Rethinking *Place and Placelessness*: Phenomenological Reflections," for the annual meetings of the Environmental Design Research Association in Montreal in May 1997. Her workshop prospectus reads in part:

Twenty years after the publication of Edward Relph's seminal work, *Place and Placelessness*, the themes of the book are critically reviewed in light of the contemporary role of phenomenology in a post-modern world. "Sense of place" is a phrase that has inspired much critical reflection but, at the same time, the concept is not unproblematic. The workshop provides an opportunity to reflect upon both the problems and promise of the notion of place. Presentations will include:

Robert Mugerauer, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin, "Relph's *Place and Placelessness*: the Positive Contribution and a Critique."

A discussion of key dimensions of Relph's work, tracing their trajectories through and differences with the work of other major environmental phenomenologists such as Y. Tuan, C. Norberg-Schulz, A. Buttner, D. Seamon, and K. Dovey.

Doug Paterson, Landscape Architecture, University of British Columbia, "'Being There': Behavioral Insideness and Place-Making."

A discussion of educating students in phenomenological "seeing" and in the values and spirit of place-making. "Art for art's sake," the novel, the image, the superficial label and the fragmented self seem to leave the place-making mandate more and more confused in the minds of many students who might be otherwise interested.

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto, "Is Place a Fascist Notion?"

A phenomenological critique of those notions of "place identity" that may imply local preservation of place as protectionist and exclusionary.

Edward Relph is currently on sabbatical and on tour in Europe. It is hoped that he, too, will join the Montreal panel. Audience participation and involvement will be encouraged throughout the Workshop.

For further information, contact:

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

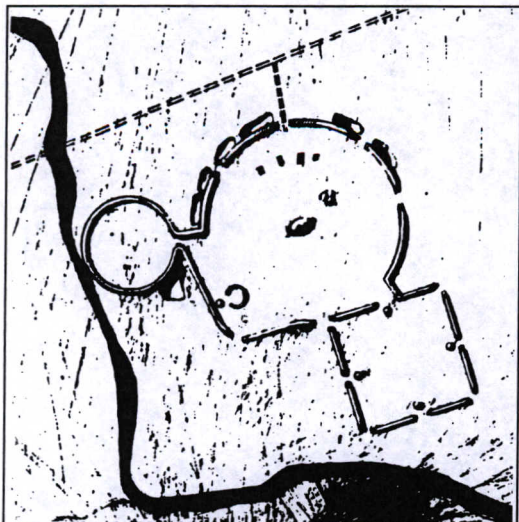
Society, Environment, and Place is a new monograph series edited by geographers Andrew Kirby and Janice Monk and published by the University of Arizona Press. The series "explores the relations between people and the natural environment, and the ways in which people think about, cope with, and shape nature on an everyday basis." Univ. of Arizona Press, 1230 N. Park Ave., Tucson, AZ 85719.

Environment, Culture, and Religion is a new academic journal that examines "the environmental understandings, perceptions and practices of a wide range of different cultures and religious traditions." The journal advocates an "interdisciplinary approach." Editor: Clare A. Palmer, School of Environmental Studies, University of Greenwich, Creek Road, Deptford, London SE8 3BW UK.

Organization and Environment is a new academic journal analyzing the social roots and consequences of environmental problems. The aim is to develop "new perspectives on organizations and organizing, perspectives that encourage environmental sensitive reflection." Editor: John M. Jermier, College of Business, Univ. of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.

Sonic Architecture is a design and research group that seeks to integrate the sound and visual arts. Its directors, Bill and Mary Buchen, have designed sound installations for museums, galleries, and public sites through the U.S. and Europe. The group's latest publication is *Urban Sound Park Design*, a booklet that includes designs for sculpture and sound parks. Write: Sonic Architecture, PO Box 20873, Tompkins Square Station, NY, NY 10009 (212-982-1743).

Science & Spirit is a quarterly journal, sponsored by the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, that examines the relationship between scientific and



The Seip Complex, another earthwork by the Adena-Hopewell and reflecting a geometric pattern—see p. 9.

religious issues. The journal includes short articles, book reviews, conference information, and so forth. S&S, 65 Hoit Road, Concord, NH 03301-1810.

Qualitative Inquiry is a quarterly journal published by Sage that "provides an interdisciplinary forum for qualitative methodology and related issues in the human sciences." The journal is edited by sociologist Norman K. Denzin and educator Yvonna S. Lincoln. Submissions: N. K. Denzin, Sociology Depart., Univ. of Illinois, Urban a-Champaign, 326 Lincoln Hall, 702 South Wright Street, Urbana, IL 61801.

The 19th conference of **Making Cities Livable** will be held in Charleston, SC, March 9-13, 1997. The focus is "Children and Youth in the City." Contact: Suzanne Lennard, IMCL Conference, PO Box 7586, Carmel, CA 93921 (408-626-9080).

Schumacher College announces its 1996-97 program offerings. This adult-learning program was founded in 1991 "upon the convictions that the world view which has dominated Western civilization has serious

limitations and that a new vision is needed for human society and its relationship to the earth." Courses run from a week to six weeks and include "Technology, Society and Globalization," "Traditional Cultures and the Environment," "Consciousness, Painting, and the Environment," and "Goethean Science." Through the University of Plymouth, Masters-level credits can be obtained for many of the courses. Contact: Hilary Nicholson, Schumacher College, The Old Postern, Dartington, Devon TQ9 6EA UK (Tel. 01803-865-934).

The **Society of Heritage Planning and Environmental Health** seeks to advance the study of heritage resources in the light of environmental health and healing. Key emphases include deep ecology, pilgrimage tourism, sustainability, and peace through pilgrimage. A bi-annual journal, *Sacred Earth and Environmental Healing* will begin in 1997. Address: Dr. Rana P.B. Singh, Reader in Geography, B.H.U., No. B29/12A (II Flr), Lanka, Varanasi, UP 221005 India.

AltaMira Press "exists to bridge the humanities and human sciences, publishing a high-quality list of books and other publications, in print and other media, to scholars, students, professionals, and serious avocational readers." The Press is interested in manuscripts and proposals. Address: 1630 North Main Street, Suite 367, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Matthew Day teaches at the College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME, and is finishing his dissertation on "home" through the Psychology Department at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. In August, at the International Human Science Research Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, he presented "Home in the Postmodern World: An Existential Phenomenological Study." We provide the abstract below. Address: PO Box 1249, Southwest Harbor, ME 04679, or day@ecology.coa.edu.

Home, particularly in the past 100 years, has become an important, if not central part of human experience. The idea of home is at the core of our traditions and a mainstay of popular

culture. Yet in our ever-increasingly mobile and technological society, "home" is taking on new and more ambiguous meaning, while our unique experience of it is in danger of becoming lost.

This paper examines home from historical, psychoanalytic and phenomenological perspectives, then focuses more explicitly on *at-homeness* as revealed in the everyday world. I then present my own research and a general phenomenological structure of what being at home means. I propose an "ecohermeneutic" approach to interpretation based on an existential-geographical understanding of *at-homeness*.

CITATIONS RECEIVED

Anderson, E. N., 1996. *Ecologies of the Heart: Emotion, Belief, and the Environment*. NY: Oxford University Press.

"Diverse but in many ways analogous approaches to a wide range of traditionally based societies in their approaches to their home environments."

Barrie, Thomas, 1996. *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture*. Boston: Shambhala.

This book "offers an in-depth survey of religious buildings and sacred sites around the world." The author "highlights common elements found in these sites and suggests ways that contemporary architects can learn from the sacred architecture of the past."

Baruss, Imants, 1996. *Authentic Knowing: The Convergence of Science and Spiritual Aspiration*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

This mathematician and philosopher asks readers to consider "the authenticity of their own lives as they relate to issues of internal and external knowledge."

Goin, P., 1996. *Humanscape*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

This photographer "asks us to intelligently consider the far-reaching ways in which we are reshaping nature on a planet-wide scale." Text and over 100 photographs.

Jackson, M., 1996. *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*. Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press.

A collection of 13 essays by ethnographers who seek to demon-

strate "the importance of phenomenological and existential ideas for anthropology." Includes "Space and Sociality in a Dayak Longhouse" by C. Helliwell.

Lewis, C. A., 1996. *Green Nature/Human Nature: The Meaning of Plants in Our Lives*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

This horticulturalist examines "the psychological, sociological, and physiological responses of people to vegetation in urban and forest settings." A key question: "How is green nature intertwined with human psyche?"

McHugh, K. & Mings, R., 1996. The Circle of Migration: Attachment to Place in Aging, *Annals, Assoc. of American Geographers*, 86 (3): 530-550.

These geographers examine the experience of mobility and place in aging, drawing on "biographical portraits of five couples who circulate between summer and winter homes." The authors describe a "circle of migration" in terms of three phases: separation, experience, and return.

Mitchell, C. Thomas, 1996. *New Thinking in Design: Conversations on Theory and Practice*. NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Discussions about design with 13 leading, international practitioners who all emphasize a user-focused approach. Designers include John Seely Brown, Lucien Kroll, Francis Duffy, Kiyoshi Sakashita, and Edwin Schlossberg.

Sinclair, C., 1994. *Looking for Home: A Phenomenological Study of Home in the Classroom*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

This educator examines "the range of learning possible for children, teachers, and parents when the classroom is viewed as a place for becoming at home in the world, not solely as a place of instruction."

Wong, Eva, 1996. *Feng-Shui: The Ancient Wisdom of Harmonious Living for Modern Times*. Boston: Shambhala.

After so many popularized, uncritical books on the topic, it is encouraging to find a work that looks at this Chinese art of landscape placement in a more thoughtful, in-depth way. The author grew up in Hong Kong and apprenticed to a feng-shui master at the age of 15.

BOOK REVIEW

Mugerauer, Robert, 1994. *Interpretations on Behalf of Place: Environmental Displacements and Alternative Responses*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. ISBN 0-7914-1943-6 [a volume in the SUNY series, "Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology"].

Robert Mugerauer has written a book clarifying what other writers often intentionally obscure: deconstructivist theory. Also known as "deconstruction" and "post-structuralism," this conceptual approach has been discussed in design circles for over twenty years--and still the fog thickens.

In an evenhanded and remarkably clear way, Mugerauer explains what key proponents Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault had in mind when they spoke of "opening up ruptures" and "revealing power relations." He also explains why the ideas of Derrida and Foucault are often set in opposition to the more "traditionalist" ideas of thinkers Mircea Eliade and Martin Heidegger.

Finally, and with characteristic grace and equanimity, Mugerauer shows how these two opposed positions are not really an irresolvable dichotomy but, rather, a dialectical "dance of gathering and disassembling" where design participates in the millennial rhythm of tradition and change--of innovation and retrieval.

DERRIDA AND FOUCAULT

Mugerauer begins the book with the hardest topics: Derrida and Foucault. They are hard because they both say that all meaning is illusory--a fiction maintained by established power elites. These thinkers want to tear down regnant paradigms, leaving the wreckage strewn about, making no attempt to reassemble the broken pieces into a new edifice.

The argument is that distortion, destruction, and transgression of accepted codes (what a "house" should be, for example) free us from the tyranny of the power elites. When all our comfortable assumptions are wrecked, do not dismay! Our reward is a clear view into the empty void of existence and a true freedom from capitalist hegemony. Marxist and existentialist at the same time. A *radical* view.

Mugerauer makes the hard, if not easy, at least *easier*. He carefully points out the value of such a radical challenge to our complacent "taken for

granted" view of the world. He explains how these challenges can reveal the way culture controls us. He explains how these challenges can provide a pathway to power for marginalized groups. He illustrates his point with a number of real-world examples, ranging from the familiar--Tschumi's *Le Parc de la Villette* in Paris--to the surprisingly obscure--the Acree Carlisle door-numbering system as used at the University of Texas.

ELIADE AND HEIDEGGER

Mugerauer continues the book with a more comforting topic: Eliade and Heidegger. Their work is more comforting because, for them, all human beings share meanings that are stable and "true." The intention of both thinkers is to rebuild the original structure of our shared human experience from the wreckage left by technology run amuck.

Clarifying, reinvigorating, and respecting common codes (what a place of worship should look like, for example) is, they argue, a worthwhile endeavor. These codes, they say, link us to what it means to be truly human on the earth. Our reward for sticking with these conventional codes is an environment that is, presumably, made to the measure of people.

This second view is liberal and romantic at the same time. It is a conservative, preservationist view, as opposed to the radical disassembling view of Derrida and Foucault.

POINTS OF COMMONALITY

But Mugerauer makes the easier more challenging. He stresses the points of commonality between Eliade/Heidegger and Foucault/Derrida. He explains that all four thinkers grow out of the "phenomenological" tradition that begins with philosopher Edmund Husserl at the beginning of this century.

Mugerauer points out that all four thinkers are deeply skeptical of science as a pathway to the "truth," and that all four fear that capitalism, science, and technology, whatever their interrelated benefits,

severely restrict our human capacity to understand our own experience.

Mugerauer is unique for his attempt to connect rather than to separate. He also examines the difficult question of how Heidegger and Eliade's conservative views can be incorporated into xenophobic and potentially racist "rules" for the design of place.

This question is made even harder by Heidegger's own ambiguous relationship with National Socialism prior to World War II, a relationship that Heidegger never explicitly renounced. Mugerauer includes a lengthy discussion on this topic—a discussion made all the more poignant when he recounts his own long struggle to resolve this question to his own satisfaction, a struggle that is still ongoing.

THE VOID IS NOT EMPTY

In the end, however, Mugerauer convincingly argues that Heidegger, in his later work, was able to "transcend metaphysics" and thus find a solid common ground for human meaning:

Heidegger advances the interpretation of truth as the disclosure of the dynamic granting of the natural, human, and sacred dimensions of the cosmos. Further, according to Heidegger, it is possible to establish a genuine belonging with what is given to us, rather than an ironic or disassembled relationship with it.

In short, says Mugerauer, Derrida and Foucault missed something. The void is not empty but is suffused with nature's immense light. Mugerauer also convincingly demonstrates that Heidegger was not a hopelessly romantic technophobe, as his detractors would have it. Rather, intensely aware of technology's power, he was merely seeking a way to preserve human authority over its demands.

But Mugerauer does agree with one important criticism of Heidegger. He was so attached to the notion of *particular* places that he could not understand how situations different from his own experience could involve a sense of integrity and dwelling.

For example, Heidegger appears not to have been able to see that a mobile, nomadic lifestyle may have authentic, genuine experiences of the world. In this, he fails to assimilate the obvious examples of the nomadic tribes of North Africa and Australia, whose members are firmly rooted to place, albeit a vast one. Heidegger also dismisses the characteristic nomadism

of North Americans, seeing it as nothing more than a symptom of cultural sickness. Fortunately, Mugerauer fills in this gap in Heidegger's understanding by explaining how inhabitants of vast landscapes with mobile nomadic populations can still be deeply attached to their world.

STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

So ends the theoretical first half of the book. What of the second half? With Derrida, Foucault, Eliade and, especially, Heidegger providing the theory, and with hermeneutics providing the method, Mugerauer gives the reader practical and philosophically defensible ways to make the world a better place.

More precisely, he suggests strategies for coping with the technological landscape, including "expressing," "retreating," "camouflaging," "wrapping," "displaying," "unifying," "attuning," "designing for well being," and "designing for homecoming." He presents over a score of built examples to illustrate these strategies, ranging from the expected, like the "high-tech" work of the Rogers Partnership, to the unexpected, like the lovely Atkinson and Associates project for Sierra Alta in Monterrey, Mexico.

Overall, Mugerauer's book provides clarity in a field noted for obscurity. I would, without hesitation, recommend it for students. My only frustration is with the second half of the book. It was here that I waited for the "answer," the *rules* for appropriate environmental design.

Instead, Mugerauer provides a set of *possibly productive directions*. Certainly this reluctance to formulate "absolute" rules for design is in keeping with Mugerauer's fair and evenhanded comparison of the many disparate points of view covered. It is hard to imagine this man, so capable of seeing all the different sides of an issue, ever attempting to impose a design or planning dogma.

And yet, I am still left with the feeling that a tighter taxonomy or framework of design responses, appropriate at different scales and in different contexts, could have made the book more useful. Such a tool could help designers and design students organize their thinking when confronted with complex design problems involving ethical and aesthetic difficulties.

Having made this criticism, however, I will

conclude on the more important point. Mugerauer has successfully sorted out the various strands of place and anti-place theory into a consistent fabric. He explains how the deconstructivist vs. traditionalist debate is not really a war but an ongoing dance between a charged pair. He tells us that we don't have to choose sides in this debate, but we do have to think carefully, clearly, and without illusions or

false concepts when carrying out our design or planning.

I thank him for the gift. I will treasure it.

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BOOK REVIEW

- Sim Van der Ryn and Stuart Cowan, 1996. *Ecological Design*. Washington, DC: Island Press
- David Wann, 1996. *Deep Design: Pathways to a Liveable Future*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

These two books both argue for a sustainable design grounded in a holistic, ecological foundation. While not explicitly phenomenological, both books show how the study of underlying patterns and contexts is the key to an empathetic, non-positivist experience and understanding of a variety of phenomena within the natural and built environments.

DEEP DESIGN

In the Foreword to *Deep Design*, Paul Hawken rightly notes how Wann's book responds to "the bankruptcy of traditional linear thinking," attending instead to "the emergence of cyclical-systems thinking using integrative design approaches" (p. xi).

Wann's volume is a compendium of case studies of what he calls "not only 'smarter' but wiser" Deep Designs. (p. xv, xii). Citing architect-writer Gyorgy Doczi, Wann examines the difference between what he calls wisdom and knowledge. While wisdom seeks synthesis and integration, knowledge analyzes, differentiates and takes apart. Wisdom seeks to understand phenomena "with the eyes of the mind" by envisioning relationships, wholeness and unity. Knowledge relies on verification by the senses and "grasps only the specific" (p. 31).

The wisdom of Deep Designs, Wann believes, is that they are aligned with nature, rather than being above it (p. xiv). They are superior to shallow designs because they "look at the big picture" (p. 5). Deep designers "see patterns rather than fragmented pieces" and they ask "qualitative questions within a broad context" (p. 6, 9).

Wann provides a number of examples of what he feels are sustainable, deep designs. For instance, he describes the substitution of petroleum-based inks

with benign, vegetable oil-based inks in America's newspapers. He explains how experiments with cornstarch in the production of nylon combs offer the exciting possibility of eliminating the need for benzene, a dangerous intermediate chemical carcinogen. He uses California wind generators as an example of efficiency and renewable energy, offsetting the emission of more than 2.5 billion pounds of carbon dioxide and 15 million pounds of sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide annually.

A subsequent chapter deals with community design. Citing planner Peter Calthorpe's work, Wann summarizes principles that include holistic planning of integrated, mixed-use communities with activities within easy walking distance or near transit stops; a diversity of housing types for a range of socioeconomic backgrounds; ample open space; lively public spaces; well-defined edges and natural wildlife corridors (p. 120).

Altogether, Wann advocates identifying the optimal, individual components for a design, which then can be integrated into the larger system of which they are part. *Deep Design* is an enquiry into root causes:

If a packaging manufacturer used fewer acids and caustic materials in an industrial process, it would result in less hazardous waste. But it wouldn't address the more essential question: Do we need that packaging at all?...Many environmental problems can't be effectively controlled; they have to be prevented by whole-systems understanding & care-taking (p. 193).

ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

While *Deep Design* comes across as an upbeat inventory of sustainable designs, *Ecological Design* is a more thoughtful analysis of actual principles

sustaining the planning and design process. Once again, sustainable development is hailed as a "holistic" response to the environmental crisis.

The authors recall, however, environmental educator David Orr's distinction between *technological sustainability* and *ecological sustainability*. The former term suggests that every environmental problem has a technical or market solution. Yet, it is precisely the Faustian, high-handed technological and consumerist approach that has brought on the current state of environmental degradation in the first place. The alternative to technological sustainability is seen to be ecological sustainability, and the principles that define this concept are the subject of the volume.

Van der Ryn and Cowan define ecological design as "any form of design that minimizes environmentally destructive impacts by integrating itself with living processes...[It] is the effective *adaptation* to and *integration* with nature's processes. It proceeds from considerations of health and wholeness" (p. 18). As a way to integrate "human purpose with nature's patterns and flows," ecological design "brings us back home" and "deepens our sense of place" (p. 24).

According to the authors, five principles define the ecological design process, and each principle is the subject of a separate chapter and detailed discussion:

1. Solutions grow from place: "out of specific site conditions and limitations, as well as the values of users" (p. 54);
2. Ecological accounting informs design: "no design is executed without a careful accounting of all economic costs" (p. 55);
3. Design with nature: "by working with the patterns and processes favored by the living world, we can dramatically reduce the ecological impacts of our designs" (p. 55);
4. Everyone designs: "the best design experiences occur... when the solutions grows and evolves organically out of a particular situation, process and pattern of communication" (p. 55);
5. Make nature visible: "as nature has receded from daily life, it has receded from ethics...By making nature visible again, favoring technologies without hidden consequences, our imaginations are again enfolded in nature" (p.162).

EVALUATION

Both books have many strengths. Their optimism is refreshing and validated, to some extent, by numerous instances of successful, sustainable design. Advancing a theoretical framework that is non-reductionist, non-positivist in spirit and overtly integrative and holistic is welcome in any endeavor,

but particularly in studies of environmental policy and research.

On the negative side, I have two criticisms that apply to both books, although perhaps less severely to Van der Ryn and Cowan. First, both books have an astounding lack of references for a number of claims that they advance with no real substantiation.

My second criticism relates to the fact that significant terms are employed without sufficient inquiry into their deeper meanings or implications. For instance, Van der Ryn and Cowan begin their volume by criticizing "design epistemologies" that are "incompatible with nature's own" (p. 9). The authors explain that "philosophers call a filter that determines what counts as knowledge an *epistemology*" (p. 8).

I have no idea as to which philosophers they are referring, nor can I support their superficial discussion of epistemology that runs the course of several pages. Epistemology refers simply to the theoretical study of the nature of knowledge--most typically, human knowledge. One wonders, then, what is, properly speaking, "nature's own" epistemology?

A similar example occurs when the authors cite "conservation" as a critical strategy for ecological design--completely ignoring the important debate between conservation vs. preservation (p. 21). In fact, I think that they would probably support preservation over conservation, so these terms are important for the authors' cause.

The most important term that recurs in both texts is "holism." Wann never really attempts any serious discussion of the meaning of this concept, although Van der Ryn and Cowan deserve some credit because they devote some rather fascinating descriptions of the holism of nature's geometry as *scale-linking*.

I recommend the authors' discussion to those readers interested in the meaning of holism, although, once again, the book cries out for a deeper, phenomenological discussion of these issues.

Overall, although I find these books more journalistic than academically convincing, they bear witness to some progress toward sustainability and attest to a growing awareness among the general public of the need for a non-positivist approach to environmental issues. That testimony, to my mind, is a great accomplishment in itself.

--Ingrid Leman Stefanovic

PLACE, LAND, AND MEANING: LESSONS FOR MAKING ARCHITECTURE FROM THE ADENA-HOPEWELL

Tammeron Francis

Francis is a Midwest architect who, until recently, was living in Aztec, New Mexico. He writes that he moved there "for the same reason that many others come—to experience something of the magic of Mountain time. I wanted to be in a region where people have made a commitment to place, land and its meaning for a very long time. While this landscape is uniquely beautiful, it is littered by sprawling shanty towns like Farmington and Cortez. These towns, built for the 'jobbers' who service the oil and gas fields, bring an uncanny contrast to what many people, including the Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache, hold to be a landscape charged with meaning."

This essay is drawn from Francis' master's thesis, done in the Architecture program at the University of Cincinnati under the direction of architect David Saille, who has written on similar themes in regard to Pueblo architecture. In his original version of this essay, Francis provides extensive documentation of specific mythological and anthropological claims. We do not have the space to include these references here; the interested reader may refer to Francis 1995. Francis has recently returned to the Midwest. Address: 32870 Brandingham, Franklin, MI 48025.

Some two thousand years ago, in the region now called Ohio, existed the homeland of an extraordinary Native American culture called the Adena-Hopewell. With an architecture made of carefully shaped ditches and mounds of earth, these people observed the sky's oceanic course and made apparent the hills, plants, animals, and humanity that lived, died, and re-emerged in that landscape.

Today these earthworks inspire awe by the immensity and perfection of their geometries. Yet their architectural achievements do not lie in this aesthetic power but, rather, in these people's participation with the drama of the places in which they built.

The craft of building is a principal means for articulating the appearance of a place. Through crafting, in the context of our already established mythic patterns, we can think things—a building, road or song—into existence and thereby call attention to the world-drama in which we participate. In this sense, crafting is a mode of thought and a primordial verb equivalent to a mode-of-being. In turn, buildings, more than a product of thought, are themselves thought. Great builders, like the Adena-Hopewell, recognized this possibility.

MYTH AND CULT

The mode of thinking with which the Adena-Hopewell brought their earthworks into existence was myth and cult. Of importance to all building is the emergence of mytho-cultic meaning from a tribal geography—a place that grows in clarity toward its center and has limits that can be experienced by the

members of its community. As a result, the land and its life have a tremendous weight in meaning.

Myth is a creative act and its pursuit is the concealment of a complex network of world appearances in a particular place. Every myth is an expression of a primeval event. The main function of myth is to establish the models of all significant human and ritual acts (Eliade 1974, pp. 410). While myth is discursive—sung or written word by word—it is intimately linked to all other crafts.

Cultic meaning is bound to myth, and the methods of both cult and myth negotiate meaning. While the method of myth functions to articulate significant patterns of the world, the method of cult lies in the focus on particular elements in that world. These elements may be an aspect of a tribal geography's flora, fauna, sky, or any other aspect of the entire range of things, events, and behaviors. Mytho-cultic meaning is uncovered through an experience of place in the context of myth and often in the context of ritual. This experience of place is the methodology of mytho-cultic knowledge and thinking.

By crafting in a mytho-cultic way, the Adena-Hopewell constructed a home and ceremonial earthwork in a way that participated in the world-drama of life appearances. This kind of building was a cosmogonic activity. Therefore, to set a building upon the ground helped to reveal the beginning, end, and rebirth of the world.

WORLD APPEARANCES

The overarching concern of Adena-Hopewell

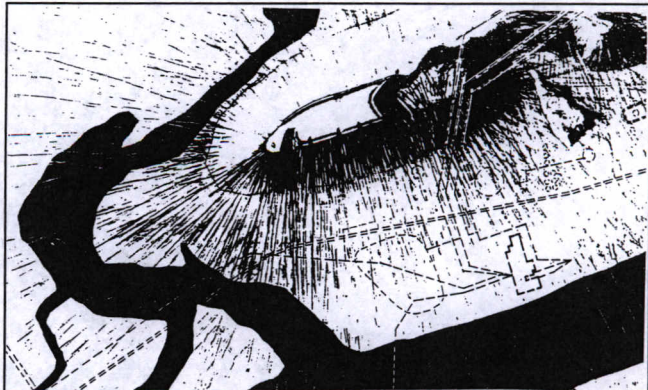
ceremonial building was the illumination of the understanding that humanity was a participant in the world-drama motivated by sky and land. The intent of recognizing appearances in the sky brought the cyclical nature of world-life to the fore. The intent of recognizing appearances in the land was to establish a bounded place from which to understand the world.

The most important of these appearances were recognized through the origin myth. The origin or cosmogonic myth of the Adena-Hopewell was probably the Earth Diver. This myth is found in many Native North American cultures. Common to all variations

of the Earth Diver myth is that some creature dives to the bottom of the sole existing sea--the primordial ooze--and returns with a bit of soil. That soil grows until the entire earth reaches its present size. Sometimes the new earth may be too weak, shaky or wet. In this case, it is steadied by fastening the earth to the cardinal points with stakes, vines, or tree roots.

Some earthworks such as The Seip mound, The Cincinnati Mound, and the Great Mound at Marietta have been sculpted in such a way that they recall the Earth Diver myth's original earth-island rising out of a primordial sea. What is common to these mounds is a kind of skirt or collar, a ditch inside that collar, and a mound rising from the collar's center. If the ditch is understood to be the primordial sea out of which the earth-island grows, this pattern exactly mimics the Earth Diver myth.

While top soil, clay, and gravel were the primary earthwork building materials, clay, marl and water, all having a connection to the primordial ooze, were used to build symbolically-charged elements of the earthworks. Puddled clay was shaped to construct cremation basins, and marl was often used to line or cover graves (Hall 1979, pp. 260). Water was used in some earthworks at interior moats and entry elements and served to bring meaning to the threshold between the sacred areas of the earthwork and the outlying profane world. The role of water in the



Fort Miami, a partially restored site illustrating a smaller organic or "fort"-type earthwork. The hatched lines mark highways and Cincinnati's major electric power plant.

earthworks reflects both the cyclical experience of life and emergence from chaos (Eliade 1974, p. 88).

The very process of obtaining those materials probably contributed to their meaning. Martin Byers (1978, pp. 331-36) suggests that a mythic connection can be drawn between the veneration of the soil used to build the earthworks and the heavens in the Hopewell world. He proposes a dualistic relationship between the sun and the moon and differences of soil procurement appropriate to each. He believes that soil procurement for an earthwork element relating to the sun was evenly scraped from the surface. On the other hand, soil for elements relating to the moon was collected by digging into the earth and creating what remains as barrow pits.

To sustain life in the world of the North American woodlands, it would behoove one to know the reoccurring patterns of the emergence and recession of the local flora, fauna sky and earth. These patterns parallel the life of humankind and the transitions, or "gates," from one state to the next. The world breathes in the meter of cycles punctuated or defined by gates marked and embodied by important environmental events such as the solstice, equinox, melting ice, returning rain clouds and so forth. The importance of recognizing these cycles is the fundamental ground and message of the Earth Diver myth.

THE HOPEWELL MORTUARY CULT

Through rites of death and the earthworks the Adena-Hopewell articulated the relationship between their lives and the world-dramas of fertility death and re-creation. Hopewell mortuary rituals probably began by placing a dead body on a platform. After two to six months, the leader of the mortuary ritual returned to the platform and stripped the flesh from the body. The bones were then cremated and bundled. Next the bundle was placed either in a pre-existing mound or in a building that was intended to be burned. Finally, the body was covered with earth.

Feasts very likely played a part in these mortuary rituals. The food of the feast and a recollection of ancestors, through song or story amid an architecture shaped to direct a participation in the motif of the origin myth, probably helped to reinforce a connection between these people and the world-drama.

APPEARANCES IN SKY AND EARTH

To record the breath between the earth and sky in a particular place appears to have been a perennial human endeavor. While this interest was practical, it was, above all, a cultic embrace and valorization of celestial appearances. Lunar and solar alignments, as well as alignments dealing with the cycles of Venus, have been found at many Hopewell sites.

Recognizing celestial events may have illuminated the ebb and flow of flora and fauna, the deaths of important individuals, or various phases of earthwork construction. (Greber & Ruhl 1989, p. 288).

Finding meaning in the life of the land was no less important. The meaning of land and place was usually tightly bound to the valorization of various landscape elements. And that recognition shaped and defined which aspects of a geography were sacred and which profane. The fundamental intent of finding meaning in the land, however, was to establish a fixed point, from which to observe the world.

William Romain (1993, pp. 35-44) argues that the earthworks of the Adena-Hopewell valorized waterway confluences, biological and physiographic zones, particular river terrace levels, and the availability of geological resources such as flint or salt. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that broader world defining patterns such as the cardinal directions were important to the Adena-Hopewell.

LESSONS FOR OUR TIMES

Adena-Hopewell ceremonial building was a cosmogonic project that focused on a central theme: humanity and the part it played in the world-drama. The Adena-Hopewell emphasized the mortuary cult, which let death reveal the beings in the sky, in the land, and possibly in parallel "spirit" worlds.

To follow the sky, for the Adena-Hopewell, was not an astronomy of venturing but, instead, a patient listening to interconnected appearances in the life-world. Likewise, the Adena-Hopewell's sense of the land functioned to anchor their awe, work, and daily life within the context of a deeply rooted yet constantly changing landscape of myth.

Today, the most useful lesson of Adena-Hopewell building lies in its embodiment of a patient way of thinking grounded on appearances found within the range of daily life. This thinking, which can be called *mytho-cultic*, is an attitude and process whereby the significance of daily life and the appearances in the land of that life are revealed. The task of builders in our era is to regain something of that patient sensibility.

In our modern mode of being, neon road signs are easier read and more meaningful than the stars. We should recognize that this modern posture diminishes our relationship to the world, the earth, and our humanity. For as we continue in our frenzied search deeper and deeper into the atomic order of things and transcend the beings of the sky, we are compelled to transcend daily life as well.

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FEAR AND DARKNESS, OR THE SEDUCTION OF THE CELLAR

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Whereas the cellar used to be necessary to store roots, vegetables, wine, and heating fuel, I propose that we Americans continue to value cellars and to locate our residential structures over them, not because of their potential utilitarian uses, but because they offer the possibility of freedom from the fear and suppression of dark contemporary spaces.

It is clear that the grand experiment involving the suburban ranch house with its slab-on-grade foundation now blanketing the American landscape has not succeeded. I would argue that the failure of the ranch house to fulfill the need of the suburban dweller can be attributed in part to the absence of cellars.

The need for cellars is so strong that homeowners may dig cellars and pour concrete floors and foundations under their existing houses at great personal inconvenience and expense. The model today for the ideal house varies but in the northern United States it almost always includes a cellar.



In his *Poetics of Space*, The phenomenological philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1969, p. 18) writes:

As for the cellar, we shall no doubt find uses for it. It will be rationalized and its conveniences enumerated. But it is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of depths.

The world of the cellar is fundamentally different from the attic. Below the crust of the earth there is no view to the surrounding landscape or to any natural light and, therefore, no references to the external normative world. It is a subterranean, subtractive world of elimination and excretion rather than an additive world of provision and consumption. It is a world of absence, an unfilled world in pursuit of fulfillment. It is an usurper of power and giver of power. The attic has no such lure:

In the attic, fears are easily "rationalized." Whereas in the cellar, even for a more courageous man... "rationalization" is less rapid and less clear; also it is never *definitive*. In the attic, the day's experience can always efface the fears of night. In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle we see shadows dancing on the dark walls (Bachelard, 1969, p. 19).

In the past, the cellar was carved from the earth, natural and raw without building blocks, structural grids, or mass-produced modules. Following the soft veins of the earth, voids could be hollowed out. It was uncharted territory.

The cellar was not rational and did not comply with some predetermined logic. Its floor could become its walls, and its walls could become its ceilings. The cellar had no scale and was all scales concurrently. A person could be enormously large or pitifully small or both simultaneously. This space that had not been surveyed or had its limits defined spoke of the grotesque, primitive and cloacal.

The ancient cellar I speak of here is empty and uneven, with floors that slope and tilt in a continuum that moves in a bowel-like descent deeper and deeper earthward. This cellar has twists and turns with openings and passageways that lead to dark areas not always under the domain of the house. To pass through the cellar, one must at times crawl through spaces so tight that one's body is in contact with surfaces all around; the presence of light is questionable. Such is the origin of the cellar.



However organized the modern cellar may appear, it contains the history of the ancient cellar within it. Today's cellar too can be damp to the touch, containing and excreting fluids as does the body. Its temperature, like the body's, can be constant but, more often, cooler, somewhere between life and death.

The cellar can produce worms, snakes, and spiders. Mold and mildew flourish there like fungi on the body. Entry into even the modern cellar can

mean engagement in unprotected intercourse with one's most secret, most seductive, fears. Absent of societal hierarchy, the cellar becomes a necessary void providing secrets necessary for survival.

Houses are relatively conformative in that originality of design is typically only encouraged within a very narrow range of accepted styles and derivations. Outward originality, however minimal, is representative of the inhabitants' struggle "to maintain some sense of personal uniqueness in an increasingly conformist world" (Cooper, 1970, p. 276).

This struggle can be deemed less oppressive because the cellar permits the expression of subconscious will. Without the void below and the hope of possible cominglings of unsanctioned thoughts and events, despair from the constant subjugation of the societal machine could become overwhelming.

In current residences, the places required by society are typically on the main floor and open to view with windows and doors. Baudrillard (1992, p. 154) suggests we live in an obscene ecstasy of communication that "no longer has any secret of what dissolves completely in information and communication" (ibid.). This "obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-than-the visible" must be escaped (ibid.). For this, the cellar provides refuge.

The cellar can be referred to as an architectural archetype. Carl Jung, who used the term within psychology, utilizes a cellar from a dream in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. In interpreting this dream, he argues that the cellar represents the various levels of unconsciousness:

It was plain to me that the house represented a kind of image of the psyche—that is to say, of my then state of consciousness, with hitherto unconsciousness was represented by the salon. It has an inhabited atmosphere, in spite of its antiquated style. The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious. The deeper I went the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is, the world of the primitive man within myself—a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness. The primitive psyche of man borders on the life of the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animal before men laid claim to them (Jung, 1963, p. 160).

The descent into the nether regions of the unconscious begins for Jung with the cellar below the ground floor, through the vault below, and then even deeper into the cave below the vault that was cut into the rock of the earth itself. This downward passage and encounter with the earth's primeval forces signifies the ever increasing levels of anarchism and uncensored thought experienced as one goes deeper and deeper into the unconscious.

The early cellar was also known as the basement. Occasionally, in New England, the basement was the term affixed to the public toilet. To be base, from the Latin "basis" as the root of basement, is to be "devoid of high values or ethics" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 1992)—in other words, to be outside the normative values established by society. So, merely to be in the basement or the cellar, regardless of one's activities, is to be somewhat transgressive.

The darkness of the cellar is a concealed revolt against Bentham's "formula of power through transparency of subjection by illumination" (Foucault, 1980, p. 154). In the house above, desires are controlled by the omnipotent and unflagging awareness of neighbors and passersby. Inside desires are controlled by the ever-present media glowing from the television. In the darkness of the cellar, however, previously suppressed desires are not only released but may be seduced from constraint into freedom. In the private darkness of the cellar, there is no possibility to be watched, witnessed and documented.

The cellar has no natural light and no knowledge of the sun. There is no measurable passage of time other than what is self-contained in the body. The number of heartbeats per minute, the number of breaths per hour, the periodic movement of the bowels are all that is left to indicate that somewhere the clock is ticking and the passage of time recorded.

The cellar is also a metaphor for madness. It has been widely explored as a site for mad acts and transgressions where bodies have been buried and other dirty deeds done. J.K. Huysmans lays out just such a cellar in his novel *La-Bas* ["Down There"], where he explores the practice of the black arts

during a search for the divine within the depths of evil and the mad extremes of human experience.

Three of the most best-known literary examples of the cellar as a metaphoric site for madness are Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "The Fall of the House of Usher." The cellar is one of the few places that can satisfy requirements necessary for the horror of the almost indescribable acts of these stories.

A frequent theme in the cinema is the mad scientist or inventor at work on grotesque experiments in the cellar. Films that use the cellar of the house—from Gothic mansion to suburban tract home—as a setting where anything can happen are a staple of the thriller and horror genres. From the construction of mechanical humans to the reassembly of organic bodies and erotic worship, the cellar has been traditionally viewed as a laboratory for investigation, experimentation, and transgression.

While our awareness of the cellar's necessity is collective, it is hidden in both our physical reality and our consciousness. Its lack of positive recognition is evidenced by the dearth of documentation of most buildings' cellars. Baudrillard (1992, p. 79) says that the "secret maintains its power only at the price of remaining unspoken, just as seduction operates only because never spoken nor intended." So the privatization of the cellar becomes a necessary condition of its seductive power.

From outside the house, one may be uncertain if there is a cellar and how deep and dark it is. The existence of the question raises the possibility of transgression. The loyalty of the house's inhabitants to societal norms may be open to question. The cellar becomes a place for the unacceptable and forbidden.

As the most private of spaces, the cellar's predominant residence is largely within our unconscious where it provides the license for violation of societal doctrine. As Baudrillard notes, the "adventure of the unconscious, appears as the last, large-scale attempt to reestablish secrecy in a society without secrets" (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 80).

By locating habitable space over the cellar, an unconscious commitment is made marking the first step on the stair down to the depths. One recognizes the temptation and an acceptance of the challenge. To accept the challenge is to willfully enter into the sport

of seduction. Here the game begins.

The cellar, while visually secure, is an imperfect stronghold acoustically. If sounds are loud enough, someone above may become aware of subterranean activities. A certain amount of stealth is required to conceal any noises that may be deviant enough to arouse suspicion. Eventually, this stealth becomes unconsciously self-imposed and acts as constant protection against forgetting one's position. The movement from the normative to the deviant through stealth begins to place one outside societal law. Potentially, this movement projects one through the darkness toward the light of liberation.

Any light in the cellar must be artificial. Whether a candle, flashlight, or light bulb, it is a point source and cannot eliminate all shadows and darkness. Ultimately, the space cannot be reasoned but, rather, moves with the person and shadow. Says Bachelard:

In our civilization, which has light everywhere, and puts electricity in its cellars, we no longer go to the cellar carrying a candle. But the unconscious cannot be civilized. It takes a candle when it goes to the cellar (Bachelard, 1969, p. 19).

The cellar is the last earthly stop on the long pull of gravity. Things flow down. Objects unacceptable to societal standards, broken or obsolete objects, objects no longer of any "real" value, are pulled down into the cellar. Likewise, when people want to escape the suffocating "usefulness" of sanctioned productivity as it is defined by society, they too may allow themselves to be pulled down with the dark, damp, and dirty—with "the other" that society denies.

We are afraid of what we might encounter in the dark. We are not only afraid of what may be hiding without but also of what may be hiding within and that they both might be the same. Freud refers to this as fear of the "uncanny":

for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something that is familiar and old-established in the mind and that has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (Freud, 1955, p. 241).

Freud (ibid., p. 224) looked at the uncanny as something that is *unheimlich*, or secretly but fearfully familiar, something that has been repressed due to horror and loathing to the point of unawareness and then resurrected from this state.

The uncanny can be interpreted, as Vidler (1992, p. x) notes, "as a dominant constituent of modern nostalgia, with a corresponding spatiality that touches all aspects of social life." Vidler describes what he sees as the first domestication of the uncanny as absolute terror in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and E.T.A. Hoffman. Here the favorite motif of the uncanny was, according to Vidler (*ibid.*, p.1):

Precisely the contrast between a secure and homely interior and the fearful invasion of an alien presence; on a psychological level, its play was one of doubling, where the other is, strangely enough, experienced as a replica of the self, all the more fearsome because apparently the same.

Perhaps we can see the uncanny here not as a duplicate of what is merely seen but as an x-ray of the self that shows that which is beneath. That which is unseen, unknown, and feared, when made visible, becomes familiar and can be identified and claimed. To claim possession of that which was once the other is to approach completion and wholeness.

The uncanny was constructed, as Walter Benjamin noted, in response to the origination of the huge cities of the 19th century and their overwhelming structure. To provide a locus for the *unheimlich* that was repelled and ostracized by societal structure, so that order could be maintained, the dank locus under the house has survived and even flourished beyond the control of communal politics.

Darkness as the home of the uncanny cuts through history and provides a way of understanding troubling aspects of post-modernity. Within this complex darkness is voiced a particularly current sense of haunting that is provoked by the loss of traditional bodily and locational references and by the pervasive substitution of the simulated for the "real."

The pervasiveness of this substitution has been such that the simulated has now become the real with unlimited possibilities of duplication. It is our haunting in the face of this multiplicity that pushes us to look into ourselves within the freedom of darkness for our other, to try to verify that it is not a simulation. Within our morphing, shifting, hyperflux world, we need this verification to prove our authenticity.

We may look upon the cellar today not as a real place but as a presence that hovers around, just out of sight, on the fringes of our daily lives. It is a presence that may even be glimpsed fleetingly out of the corner of one's eye.

If one is patient, he or she may be able to catch traces of the cellar, the tease of it, waiting there, patiently, ready to seduce at a moment's notice. Sometimes, this trace may be felt merely as a lessening of the pressure in a particular area that may tend to draw one towards it. At other times it can be just a fainting shadow of a memory or a dream that upon its return may carry the license to trespass and violate that which is beyond the outer boundaries, perimeters, or zones of the known and sanctified.

The draw of the cellar is the draw of humankind--the seduction of an amplified awareness of what it is to be human, the confirmation of our existence. Striving for cognizance of humanness, for the transillumination of the full depth of our passions, we continue to situate ourselves over this darkness and its libertarianism.

The possibility of discovering that which is a part of us, that which was within, hidden and repressed but in the dark, may be exposed and, once seen, lashes us to this void. The lure of freedom from the effort of constant containment and continuous suppression seduces us and compels us to position ourselves over this abyss time and time again in the hope that eventually the lure may work.

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