Among the last several *EAPs*, we have had some issues dealing with one particular theme—for example, our last issue emphasized animals and their lifeworlds, while last year's spring issue focused on the lived relationship between technology and the designed environment.

A few readers have expressed concern about these thematic issues, feeling that architecture and architectural design have been given short shrift.

This criticism is important because it points to a central dilemma in shaping this newsletter: We try to accommodate the full breadth of the physical world beyond individual and group. Our substantive focus becomes the wide spectrum of environments that range from clothing and furnishings through interiors and buildings to outdoor spaces, streets, neighborhoods, communities, regions, and the natural world as a whole.

At the same time, we try to offer work probing the "person" half of the person-environment relationship, thus we have featured a special issue on the soundscape and have published essays that explore "less-abled" persons' architectural and environmental experiences.

If this wide breadth of topical interests weren't enough, we also have the varied backgrounds and experiences of our readers who range from professional architects and designers to philosophers, environment-behavior researchers, educators, artists, craftspeople, and others too various to mention.

For this reason, we have chosen to move away from the typical philosophical portrayal of "phenomenology," which too often transforms a potentially invaluable perspective into a point of view that seems esoteric and impenetrable by outsiders.

Instead, we have tried to maintain some balance between theory and practice so that academic work might be stimulated and grounded by real-world needs, just as real-world needs might be thought through more carefully and better clarified conceptually.

What we attempt here is an on-going experiment—a considerably new conceptual and applied point of view that, in its synergistic potential, could have a profound impact on how we live in and make the world. We try as best we can, and ask readers to bear with us.
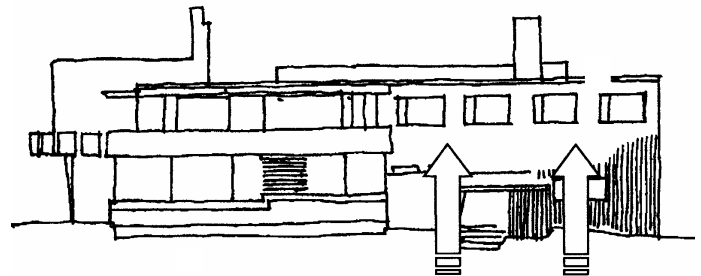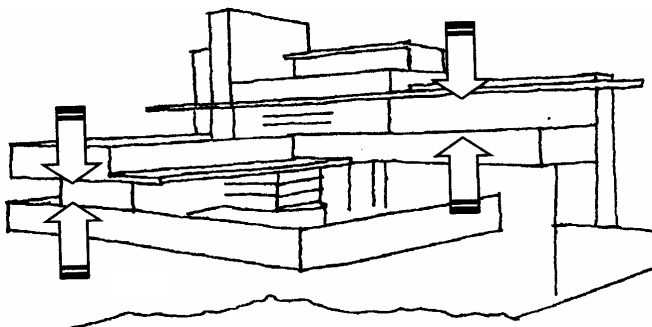


*Above: Conceptual drawings by Enku Assefa illustrating rising and sinking qualities in Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater (left) and Aalvar Aalto's Villa Mairea (right). See Assefa's essay, p. 11.*

## More Donors, 2003

We would like to thank readers who, since our listing in the winter issue, have contributed more than the base subscription for 2003.

Rosmarie Bogner Richard Capobianco
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## Boschetti Retires

*EAP* Associate Editor **Margaret Boschetti** recently retired from the program of Environmental Design in the School of Human Environmental Sciences at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. She is now an Emeritus Professor with the program and has resettled in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, her native state.

Boschetti wishes to devote time to retirement and has stepped down from her editorial duties with *EAP*. Along with David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer, Boschetti was a founder of the newsletter and, through the years, has played an important role with regard to submissions, copy editing, and mailing chores. Thank you, Margaret, for all the vision, good sense, and practical help over the years! mboschetti@earthlink.net

## Items of Interest

The **International Association for Environmental Philosophy** (IAEP) will hold its annual conference 8-10 November at Boston University, immediately following the 42nd annual conference of SPEP (Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy). Contact: Prof. Ken Maly, Philosophy Department., UW-La Crosse, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601; www.environmentalphilosophy.org.

Also in conjunction with the annual SPEP meetings is the annual meeting of the **Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences** (SPHS), held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, 6-8 November. The focus is "all topics within the human and social sciences concerned with a reflective appreciation of the nature of experience." Prof. Mary Rogers, Diversity Studies, Univ. of West Florida, 11000 University Parkway, Pensacola, FL 32514; mrogers@uwf.edu.

The **Nature Institute** announces its summer 2003 programs in Goethean science, including "Discovering Wholeness in Nature" (intermediate course) 16-21 June; and "Enlivening Perception and Thinking" (introductory course), 30 June-5 July. One important approach to a phenomenology of the natural world. 169 Route 21C, Ghent, NY 12075; www.natureinstitute.org.

The **Institute of Classical Architecture** offers a program in continuing education. The curriculum of classical architecture includes "theory courses, practical design training and instruction in manual skills. While the Institute's courses are oriented to practicing architects and interior designers, they are also open to those with a general interest in classicism." ICA, 225 Lafayette St., Rom. 1007, NY, NY 10012; www.classicist.org.

The **Program in Social Ecology** at the University of Western Sydney offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees examining "the rich diversity of relationships between the personal, social and physical environment." The program is premised on the view "that everything we do as individuals impacts on our environment and on other people and their environments." Social Ecology, University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1, Richmond, NSW 2753 Australia; k.adam@uws.edu.au.

The **Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center** at Duquesne University recently presented their 21st annual symposium on "the Phenomenology of Hope." For more information, see: www.library.duq.edu/silverman.

A recent issue of *Sacred Sites*, the newsletter of the **Sacred Sites International Foundation**, has several articles on "water and sacred sites," including an effort to save Coldwater Spring, the largest and last major spring in the Minneapolis area. The spring is threatened by highway construction, which in the late 1980s, due to the building of interstate

I394, destroyed Great Medicine Spring, the other important spring of the area. 1442A Walnut St., #330, Berkeley, CA 94709; www.sacred-sites.org.

**Listening to Nature: A Sound Walk across California** is a website created by the Oakland Museum and explores "the natural communities of California, from the Pacific Ocean, the inland valley and over the Sierra Nevada to the Great Basin." The "walk" includes animal sounds and illustrations to "provide a visual reference for the many sound files that can be quickly downloaded."
www.museumca.org/naturalsounds/

The **WeatherPlayer** is an online audio installation designed to use atmospheric conditions as a way to generate "music." Using the current weather conditions at UK's University of Brighton artist Owain Rich uses a computer program to convert light, temperature, wind, and precipitation readings into a "composition" that mirrors the day-night cycle and changing winds. http://www.weatherplayer.com/

The heads of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches recently signed what is called the "**Venice Declaration**"—a document calling "for worldwide development of ecological responsibility." Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I—known as the "Green Patriarch" because of his environmental activism—said that "Christians and all other believers have a specific role to play in proclaiming moral values and in educating people in environmental awareness
www.patriarchate.org/visit/html/environment/html.

# Citations Received

Paul C. Adams, 2001. "Peripatetic Imagery and Peripatetic Sense of Place." In Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, & Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press (pp. 186-206).

This geographer discusses "the stroll as a source of pleasure and the foot as a means of serious transportation, which together were for a long time at the foot of a strong and deep sense of place." Brief discussion of urbanist Jane Jacobs' street ballet and of New Urbanism as a way to recreate pedestrian-based place.

Louise Chawla, ed., 2002. *Growing Up in an Urbanising World*. Sterling, VA: Earthscan/Unesco.

This volume "marks the revival of the 'Growing Up in Cities' project of UNESCO—pioneered in the 1970s by the influential urban planner Kevin Lynch—which seeks to understand the reasons why young people find their city a good place in which to grow up, or a place where they feel alienated and disconnected." Includes information on young people and their urban surroundings in eight countries: Argentina, Australia, India, Norway, Poland, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.

Jeffrey Cook, 1996. *Seeking Structure from Nature: The Organic Architecture of Hungary*. Boston: Birkhäuser.

An overview of the innovative recent architecture of Hungary, including the remarkable work of architect Imre Makovecz, who explores and actualizes powerfully in a contemporary context "the spirituality of the natural world and the sanctity of daily life."

Thomas A. Horan, 2000. *Digital Places: Building Our City of Bits*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.

A helpful effort to explore the ways that electronic connectivity may help and hinder physical placemaking: "The need for human interaction is neither created nor destroyed, but merely and significantly altered by digital technologies. Rather, digital places are new leverage points for creating new experiences and relationships that will profoundly redefine our experience of physical space and place" (p. 23).

Helmi Järviluoma & Gregg Wagstaff, eds., 2002. *Soundscape Studies and Methods*. Helsinki: Finnish Society for Ethnomusicology Publication 9, elina.paukkunen@helsinki.fi.

A collection of essays that explore the soundscape and the realm of sonic experience.

Daniel Kemmis, 2001. *This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Trying to find a middle way between national and local control, this political thinker argues for a new style of political governance emphasizing place-based bioregional units and cooperation among parties with divergent perspectives (e.g., environmentalists vs. "wise users")—what he calls an "agenda of ecologically responsible devolution of authority" (p. 231).

This agenda would be grounded in a new kind of party bipartisanship, which for Democrats would mean "a move toward democracy—toward trusting westerners to govern their own landscape"; and for Republicans would mean "the kind of conservatism that made Theodore Roosevelt a Republican, a conservative, and a conservationist all at once" (p. 229).

A powerful, eye-opening argument grounded in peoples' concern for place and region as a springboard for reconciling conflicting points of view through real-place collaboration.

Chang-Moo Lee & Kun-Hyuck Ahn, 2003. "Is Kentlands Better than Radburn? The American Garden City and New Urbanist Paradigms." In *APA Journal*, *69* (1):50-71.

These planners argue that both Radburn and Kentlands share the "underlying goal of a walkable residential environment" but argue that "Kentlands' interconnected grid cannot resolve the conflict between automobiles and pedestrians." It is also claimed that New Urbanist schemes "do not allow a sufficient buffer area for children's play adjacent to the home, nor do they provide much in the way of private outdoor space."

John McMillan, 2001. *Reinventing the Bazaar: A Natural History of Markets*. NY: Norton.

This economist explores "exotic, innovative, and everyday marketplaces—some in physical space, others in cyberspace. How do markets work? What can they do? What can't they do?" He argues that successful markets are well structured and incorporate five elements to run efficiently: information flows smoothly; property rights are protected; people can be trusted to live up to their promises; side effects on third parties are curtailed; and competition is fostered.

William J. Mitchell, 2002. E-Bodies, E-Building, E-Cities. In Neil Leach, ed., *Designing for a Digital World*, pp. 50-56. London: Wiley Academic.

This architect asks what developments in cyberspace means for "architectural and urban design strategy in the 21st century?" He identifies three types of costs associated with assigning particular activities to specific urban locations (fixed, interactive, and churn).

Some results are place positive—e.g., what he calls "the revenge of place"—"if you can locate anywhere you will locate where it's particularly attractive in some way." Also, the removal of functional incompatibilities (e.g., manufacturing close to residences) may reestablish traditional neighborhood patterns of fine-grained mixed uses.

Other results are place negative—e.g., weaker geographical interdependencies may generate "profoundly antispatial interdependencies among towns, cities, and regions"—e.g., the information technology centers of Silcon Valley and Bangalore may be closely linked or "a high-rise office building in Jakarta may function as a node in the global financial networks, while the surrounding urban kampongs belong to a completely different economic, social and cultural order."

Dermont Moran & Timothy Mooney, eds., 2002. *The Phenomenology Reader*. NY: Taylor and Francis/Routledge.

This volume "charts phenomenology's most famous thinkers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Derrida as well as less well-known figures such as Stein and Scheler."

Douglas Porteous & Sandra E. Smith, 2001. *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

An examination of the deliberate destruction of people's homes with examples ranging from ethnic cleansing to expropriation of parks.

Edward Relph, 2001. "The Critical Description of Confused Geographies." In In Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, & Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press (pp. 150-166).

This geographer considers a way critically to describe the postmodern landscape of "people, things, and bits of geographies, histories, and cultures that have been uprooted, disfranchised, spun around above the earth, topologically transformed, remixed, deposited elsewhere, linked by electronic networks, and given distinctive facades to dinstinguish them from all the other equally confused places."

Relph identifies four strategies for critical description: "First, accounts must be grounded in the subtleties of everyday places and specific situations. Second, there is a need to maintain a critical historical perspective. Third, given the breadth of deception in postmodern landscapes it is essential to question appearances. Fourth, it is necessary to argue forcefully for balance and practical wisdom that can address the injustices of the present age."

Miles Richardson, 2001. "The Gift of Presence: The Act of Leaving Artifacts at Shrines, Memorials, and Other Tragedies." In In Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, & Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press (pp. 257-272).

This geographer examines places "where people leave objects in the face of death"—shrines, memorials, graves of media starts, sites of senseless killing.

Victor Regnier, 2002. *Design for Assisted Living: Guidelines for Housing the Physically and Mentally Frail*. NY: Wiley.

Including design guidelines and case studies, this book considers how "to design a more satisfying physical environment and caregiving milieu for older, mentally and physically frail people—an environment that is more satisfying than the traditional nursing home."

David Smith, 2002. *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: The History of Duquesne University's Psychology Graduate Programs*. Pittsburgh: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center.

In the field of applied phenomenological research, Duquesne University was a major center in the 1970s and 1980s and based on the recognition that "what was required [in the human sciences] was not just the mere infusion of humanistic values into a traditional psychology but a radical and comprehensive reforming of the psychological enterprise fostered by a specific type of human science psychology—one that was founded upon the insights of existential-phenomenological philosophy." The Duquesne work still represents some of the finest "empirical" phenomenological research ever done.

Mary Evelyn Tucker & John Grim, 2003. *The Religions of the World and Ecology Series*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sponsored by the Center for the Study of World Religions, this set of ten volumes examines the world's major religious and spiritual traditions' understanding of ecology and environmental ethics.

# Book Review

Shierry Weber Nicholsen, 2002. *The Love of Nature and the End of the World: The Unspoken Dimensions of Environmental Concern.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

*This book has its starting point in a persistent question: How can the public mind relegate matters of the environment, which is the ground of our whole lives, to the periphery of concern, as though they were the private interest of a group called "environmentalists"? At the same time, I have never met anyone who did not value and appreciate some part of the environment. How can we be so split in our thinking?*

This opening question guides this book by Shierry Weber Nicholsen, a psychotherapist in private practice in Seattle, who for many years taught environmental philosophy and psychology in Antioch University's Program on Environment and Community.

By the "public mind," she does not mean politicians and the voters they mobilize: at least, not only actors in formal political processes. If this were the case, her question would be relatively easy to answer, because there is no shortage of reports that document how big money influences politics by attributing concern for the environment to "special interest" groups of environmentalists.

Instead, Nicholsen explores a much more difficult and less charted territory by extending the public mind to include people in their spheres of everyday life. As she uses the word "mind," it includes perceptual experience and emotion. To answer this question, she assembles the insights of aesthetics and psychoanalysis.

She works through a collage of quotations and reflections, a method that she describes as "a series of interconnected meditations" or "a set of developing variations" on the theme of people's simultaneous attachment to and destructiveness toward the natural world. In less deft hands, this method would quickly collapse into formless rambling, but the pieces hold together by echoes between the chapters, so that the reader has a sense of an outwardly expanding and inwardly deepening exploration.

In the process, Nicholsen introduces readers to an extensive, varied literature. As she notes, "With few exceptions, people writing about the natural environment and people concerned with the interior of the psyche have not drawn on each other's work" (p. 2). Add to these two bodies of literature relevant texts from the field of aesthetics, and this interdisciplinary weaving alone makes this book worthwhile.

In addition to elaborating central images and ideas through this method, Nicholsen also seeks to evoke experiences, to bring to awareness "things unthought and unspoken." The meditations on quotations invite readers to initiate their own lines of reflection, "allowing the phrases to resonate in the mind and lead one where one will" (p. 3).

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Appropriately, the book's opening chapter deals with the unspoken, a sphere of everyday life that Nicholsen as a psychotherapist knows to be "a vast and important territory," and one that she considers particularly relevant to human relationships with the natural environment.

We are silent, she observes, about our most intimate loves and our most overwhelming fears. She makes the case that these loves and fears include our dependency and identification with the natural world as the ground of our being—today, a world that we know to be wounded, whose destruction threatens our own.

Nicholsen argues that our apparent blindness to the scale of this destruction is in fact denial—the defense mechanism by which we not only hide the depth of our love, fear, pain and concern from others, but simultaneously from ourselves. She acknowledges many reasons why people understandably hide their loves and fears, but also affirms that, "There is a relief that comes with speaking, and with it a potential for growth, understanding and effectiveness" (p. 12). The purpose of this book is to indicate ways to open up this speaking through personal memory and through the insights of psychoanalysis and art.

In the field of psychoanalysis, Nicholsen draws together the work of Wilfred Bion, Harold Searles, D. W. Winnicott, Donald Meltzner, Robert Jay Lifton and James Hillman. She shows these authors' relevance to an understanding of our environmental relationships, not only mining their best known books but also less known essays and articles, often making surprising but apt connections.

In the area of aesthetic theory, she draws upon the work of Christopher Alexander, especially his writing on early Turkish carpets in which he argued that beauty and aesthetic experience bridge and unify our human and natural worlds and our internal and external experience.

Reflecting on the ideas of Christopher Alexander, David Abrams, Thoreau and Cezanne, she elaborates the possibility for a relation with the natural world that she terms "perceptual reciprocity." Convinced by the argument of Paul Shepard that cultures that encourage this type of perception also foster a greater degree of maturity, she proposes the concept of "perceptual maturity."

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Nicholsen relates the type of "binocular vision" that perceptual maturity involves to phenomenology. "Phenomenology," she suggests, "as the philosophical approach that attempts to step back from categories and experience things directly, might then provide humans with a sense of something more like embodied limits, which would in turn leave room for the other creatures" (p. 170).

Certainly, phenomenology shares her shift of attention to "the unspoken." The binocular vision that she advocates requires alertness to the direct experience of things, which opens us to our embodiedness and interconnectedness with the natural world, along with awareness of cultural perspectives and the perspective shaped within us by language. This openness is, indeed, the phenomenological task.

In this phenomenological space, which Nicholsen associates with Winicott's concept of the "holding environment," people and groups can be open to the fear, mourning and joy that come with their connectedness to the natural world. Through admitting and feeling loss, people can move on together to meet the challenges they face.

Facing the emotional issues raised by our connectedness to a natural world in grave peril, Nicholsen believes, "means not only suffering the pain of them; it also means reflecting on their meaning so that we learn from experience, and allowing this reflection to give rise to experimental action." In this way, we find "places where experiments to meet adaptive challenges are generated" (p. 196).

These "holding environments" opened up by the phenomenology of "perceptual maturity" are public spaces in Nicholsen's broad sense of the public mind. At their best, political leaders will create these environments within formal political processes, but they may also be created by groups of all kinds.

Nicholsen's hope for her book is that "the temporary intellectual community created by the internal dialogue between author and reader" will form one space of this kind (p. 197). In an area where more reflection is urgently needed, this book has successfully gathered important and relevant work from many authors and disciplines, insightfully drawn connections, and indicated potentially productive lines of thought for readers to follow further.

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# A Rite of Spring

Dru Clarke

*Originally from New Jersey, Clarke was a science teacher at the secondary level for 31 years. Presently, she is pursuing a doctorate in environmental education from Kansas State University. Her main research interests are place-based education and children's responses to nature. She and her husband are stewards of a small ranch in the Kansas Flint Hills that they share with wildlife. They raise quarter horses as well as cats, dogs, and chickens.*
*druc@kansas.net* © 2003 Dru Clarke.

April's lengthening days are here again, and we break out the drip torches, wet towels, and rakes. We head for the pastures and wood lots with their limb and leaf litter. We bundle up in protective gear and cover our skin, save our faces. We test the wind with a wet finger, assess the relative humidity, alert the County authorities. It is time to burn.

I am an Easterner by roots, and the spectacle of spring burning on the Kansas prairie confounded me when I first encountered it. Fire, to me, was an aberration, something to avoid, something to suppress at all costs. Long before I moved to the Flint Hills, I flew over Kansas one spring night, and sections of it glowed like a phosphorescent sea.

Back East, such a sight would generate panic and finger-wagging scolding: how can you *do* such a thing? Think of the air pollution, think of the poor animals. Talk about a shift of paradigm: fire and its complement, grazing, are *good* for this land.

It begins this way. The first bunch of grass sparks, sputters, then bursts into flame. One match to combust this patch. How deft will I need to be to raze the entire north pasture? I work my leaf rake and pull glowing leaves and stems along in its wake. New clumps catch and, soon, the northeast corner is walled in by flames taller than I. My pace quickens, my heart races. The primordial kid in me has been loosened. The burn is on.

I back up the hill into thin trees, drawing the fire with me. I look to the south where my husband begins his fire. I wonder if he used just one match? He is more experienced than I, but I am more competitive, more reckless. My fire is so far spotty, but

the west pasture, only paces away, sprawls for ten acres, and is laden with duff from two years without fire. He is far from me, and if there is trouble I am on my own.

The fire jumps the fence and threatens a dead tree. I squeeze between barb wire and catch my jacket, cursing my bulky awkwardness. Flailing, then free, I beat the flames, trampling them into submission, into dead, flat ashes.

The fire moves into the pasture and is ahead of me now. I run to keep up with it. The heat sears my face, steals oxygen from my lungs. I gasp as if drowning and lurch backward out of the flame's ravenous grasp. It relents and backs off, like a predator waiting for its prey to weaken. But soon it loses its power and does what I intend.

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The flames subside. I walk through the embers, loosen smoldering horse droppings, rake persistent coals into a hail of sparks that fly up, then extinguish themselves. A deer skeleton, charred and disarticulated, is once again visible. I had walked by it often, never seeing it until now. Burnt elytra of beetles and tiny pyramids of soil granules from nesting ants memorialize the cleared landscape.

But there are no dead animals to testify to the horror of fire. In prairie, the animals move out or hide in burrows deep enough to avoid the inferno above. I look up and hawks have come to this part of the sky. They know that not all have escaped, or they are waiting for the saved ones to emerge into exposed hunting ground.

My son and daughter-in-law helped us burn two years ago. She, from Connecticut, had never experienced this rite of spring but quickly became the best practitioner of all. She refused to leave a section unburned and nurtured each blade with tinder until all had been reduced to carbon.

This spring, again, we burn our land. The horses watch attentively and move easily to safe ground. We accelerate the recycling of nutrients and give the new grass room and light to grow. We try to be good stewards of the prairie. We reenact a ritual that keeps the prairie alive and vital. The world becomes strange and wonderful again, like it was when we were kids.

# Home in Postmodern Culture

Matthew Day

*Day is a psychologist who recently completed his doctoral dissertation, "Home in the Western World: A Cultural-Hermeneutic Study," in the Department of Psychology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. The following essay is abstracted from the dissertation's first chapter. mday@sjcme.edu. © 2003 Matthew D. Day.*

*Home is where one starts from.*
—T.S. Eliot

Being at home, for many, if not all of us, is a most cherished experience. Even for those who value other things more, such as a relationship, job, or travel, feeling "at-home" somewhere is still an imperative in their everyday lives.

Of all concepts, "home" is perhaps the most universal and frequently referred to, and considered to be the single most often-used noun in all languages (Hulse 1992, p. 71). In America, "home" encompasses both the diversity of its settlers and the wide breadth of its land. It describes everything from the warmth of a fireplace to a computer web site, and can refer with equal ease to a house, village, city, country, or the earth.

Our global culture, shaped by mass transportation, communication, production, and consumption, has vastly expanded the territory and meaning of home. The old homesteads of the past have given way to new frontiers in space and cyberspace. Where generations were once born and buried in the same community, we now live in a global, postmodern so-

ciety in which for many of us the meaning of home has become increasingly blurred. Moreover, because the idea of home appears everywhere and is so taken for granted, its unique, personal meaning is in danger of being lost.

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The concern over the fragility of the home dates back at least to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time of rapidly growing industrialism and a booming U. S. economy. In 1884, for example, social critic C. E. Sargent, in a "scholarly and scientific study of the nature of home," expressed alarm that the "kingdom of the fireside" was becoming "usurped by the street and public hall." He warned that "the restoration and preservation of the old home love and reverence, by a more scientific conception of the home relations, is all that can save society from wreck."

Today, following the frenetic shift from Sargent's modern (industrial) to our postmodern (technological) age, the idea of home is perhaps more popular than it has ever been. Commercial interests have seized upon (and helped to shape) a nostalgic longing for the times when a simpler and more defined home-life prevailed. "Home" is now packaged, promoted and sold as a readily available commodity. From pre-fabricated modular "homes" to designer "home interiors," we are inundated daily with advertisements and products that promise to provide us with a sense of "at-homeness."

Whether it is through "The Home Shopping Channel" or via advertisements on the popular sit-com "Home Improvement," the idea is to coddle the consumer with images and products that will make them feel or believe they are "at home." According to Gill (1995, p. 10), "in advertising terms, 'home' equals 'buy'." We are encouraged to buy or rent "homes" and to keep them well supplied with the latest and most sophisticated "home products." We are admonished to "phone home" by AT&T and "welcomed home" by CBS television. "Homestyle" products fill the grocery shelves and we can dial "1-800-MAKE A HOME" and order a sofa from Lazy Boy.

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Despite the many commercial, political and technological remedies available, there is evidence that not all is well on the home front. If we look closely at our experience of home, even when we are among the most "well off," we are apt to find a mixed blessing. We might have all of the material comforts we want, yet still feel something is psychologically and spiritually amiss. Ours is a "mobile society," always looking for something better: a new car, bigger house, or computer upgrade.

As a result, most of us are never fully satisfied with what we have because we never seem to ever truly arrive "home." The growing gulf between possible "homes" offered in our luxury and goal-oriented commercial culture, and the homes in which most of us actually reside, is filled with a longing difficult to satisfy. "Where we are" never seems to quite coincide with where we think we "ought to be." Critics of our postmodern society warn we are heading into a placeless, soulless, hyper-space characterized by depression and hyperactivity.

It is argued that, as the world becomes more globally connected, the desire for a stable and distinct home-life increases. Leslie (1993, p. 697) speculates that our current fascination with home is a result of the proposition that "in an era of generalized homelessness and spatial displacement, where the notion of 'home' as a fixed location seems in doubt, constructions of the 'home' form a powerful unifying symbol."

Over the past few years, the popularity of home decorating and home improvement has seen phenomenal growth, as evidenced by home gurus such as Martha Stewart and "big box" hardware stores like Home Depot. Home ownership and house sizes have also increased. There is also, arguably, a growing desire for geographic and ethnic homelands. Ethnic fighting in Bosnia, Africa and Kosovo, and ongoing ethnic and political disputes in the Mid-east, Northern Ireland, and the United States, can be seen as examples of the consequence of an increased longing for a traditional sense of home amidst ever expanding and mixing cultures.

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It is ironic that, despite the widespread popularity of home as a concept, describing the experience of at-homeness is so problematic. While the idea of home is universally understood and sought after, understanding its more subjective, lived-meaning is complicated by the home's private, interior nature. How one is "at-home" is often hidden from public, "objective" scrutiny. Home, by virtue of its sheltering and concealing nature, deflects from view the everyday, mundane experience of its occupants.

Researchers, therefore, have had difficulty gaining access, sometimes literally, to the home's interior. It is even more difficult to access the home's "psychological" interior. Indeed, as Freud pointed out, not only are our innermost psychological sanctums hidden by neuroses or "defenses," they are often hidden even from ourselves.

Academic, political, and commercial researchers would all like to have a clear view of the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of people in their homes. As anyone trying to sell a product or idea will attest, to gain access into someone's home will almost assure a "sale." According to Leslie (1993. p. 696) "The private space of the home serves as an ideal conduit—a controlled point for the dissemination of advertising and other public messages."

The desire to feel connected to the larger world from within our homes has become a two-way street. The traditional boundaries between home, work, and public life have given way to the telephone, pager, television and computer which provide direct links between the world at large and our most private spaces and moments at home. We can now "log on" to the World Wide Web and visit "home pages" anywhere, and can "telecommute" to our "virtual offices" without stepping out the door.

Yet telecommunication technology not only brings to us information and entertainment; it can also collect "personal data" and manipulate our behavior to make us better "consumers." Access to people's homes has become a goal for a growing number of interests. A key to "unlock" the essential features of the lived-experience of home, therefore, would be highly sought after.

One potential means for examining at-homeness is what can be called an *ecohermeneutic* approach to interpretation derived from the Latin word *oikos* or "home," which gives us our prefix "eco" (economy and ecology). This prefix is linked with hermeneutics to form ecohermeneutics, the study of the "home" of meaning (Day 2002).

Whereas mainstream ecology is interested in the home life of plants and animals, ecohermeneutics is the study of the human habitat and how meaning flows to and from that habitat. A deconstructive understanding of the concept of home, coupled with an experiential understanding of at-homeness, might provide a "ground" from which to make diagnostic and ethical judgments benefiting both individuals and society.

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# Inside and Outside in Wright's Fallingwater and Aalto's Villa Mairea

Enku Mulugeta Assefa

*Assefa is an Ethiopian architect who recently completed his master's work in Architecture at Kansas State University. This essay is abstracted from his thesis, "Interpreting Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater and Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea Using Karsten Harries' Natural Symbols and Thomas Thiis-Evensen's Architectural Archetypes." Because of space requirements, many of Assefa's specific architectural examples relating to the two houses have not been included. Interested readers can find more thorough discussion in his thesis. © 2003 Enku Mulugeta Assefa.*

The philosopher Karsten Harries writes that a key task of architecture is "interpreting the world as a meaningful order in which the individual can find his place in the midst of nature and in the midst of a community" (Harries 1993, p. 51). Harries argues that, too often, buildings don't respond to the needs of human dwelling because they are made arbitrarily instead of being let to arise out of the real-world requirements of particular people, places and landscapes. As an expression and interpretation of human life, a non-arbitrary architecture involves design that both listens to and incorporates nature and culture.
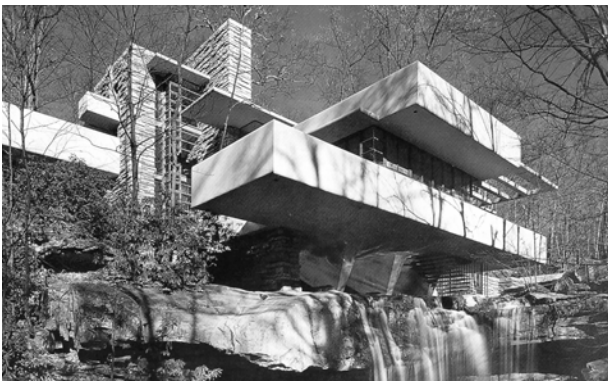


Harries claims that one need in creating a non-arbitrary architecture is understanding what he calls *natural symbols*—the underlying patterns of experience that mark the essential qualities of human nature and life, for example, qualities of direction, of weight, of materiality, of light and so forth. Natural symbols often express themselves in lived dialectics like up and down, vertical and horizontal, and center and boundary (ibid, p. 54).

In this essay I use two seminal 20th-century houses—Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater and Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea—to examine the natural symbol of *inside and outside*, which for Harries is one crucial lived relationship sustaining successful architecture and place (Harries 1988, pp. 192-93).



I choose these two houses because of their similarities in intention and design. Both houses were conceived and implemented within the same decade—the 1930s. Wright was 68 years old when he built Fallingwater and had already designed dozens of other remarkable residences when he began the house in 1935. In contrast, when Alvar Aalto began Villa Mairea in 1938, he was still fairly young and had not designed a single large residence.

Aalto's client, Harry Gullichsen, admired Wright's Fallingwater, which provided a major inspiration for Aalto's sketch phase of Villa Mairea—note one of Aalto's early drawings for the house, below. The phenomenological architect Juhani Pallasmaa (1998, p. 78) writes that "resemblances in [the] ambience [of the two houses] are not so clear in the drawings or even the photographs, but the actual experience of the two houses forces one to a comparison."
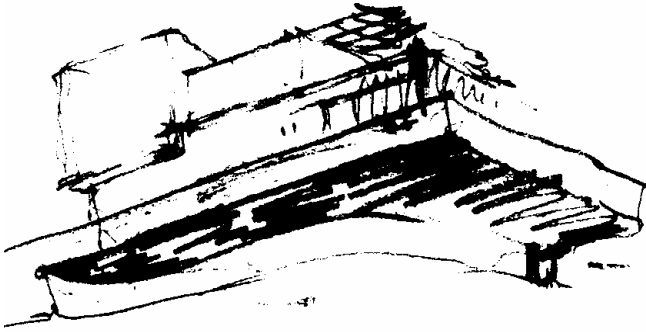


Both architects shared a common creative ground in drawing on nature to discover timeless patterns for their architectural designs. Wright professed that he "could draw inspiration from nature herself" (Wright 1954, p. 22), while Aalto claimed that "the profoundest feature of architecture is a variety and growth reminiscent of natural life. I should like to say that in the end this is the only real style in architecture" (Aalto 1998, p. 34).

## Inside and Outside

The creation of an inside automatically shapes an outside, which then relates to inside in a dialectic relationship. Inside establishes physical security and safety from nature's elements and society's demands and also facilitates a sense of identity for the person and group (Jacobson et al. 1990).

In Wright and Aalto's houses, a powerful sense of insideness is generated, first, by *opacity*, which, in Fallingwater, is expressed in roughly dressed stone masonry walls and, in Villa Mairea, by white-painted, solid walls. In contrast, the *transparency* of glass windows in both houses opens inside to outside and thereby connects the two.

In both houses, the architects created a strong sense of insideness yet, at the same time, devised masterly ways to connect inside and outside and thereby create a robust continuity between the two. This inside-outside relationship can be said to translate into environmental and architectural experience in four different ways: (1) *in-betweeness;* (2) *interpenetration generated by inside*; (3) *interpenetration generated by outside;* and (4) *intermingling*

## In-Betweeness

*In-betweeness* involves a place neither inside nor out. It incorporates a threshold whereby a strong dialogue between the inside and outside occurs with a unique in-between experience as the result. For Wright, in-betweeness was an intentional aim: "We have no longer an outside and an inside as two separate things. Now the outside may come inside and the inside may and does go outside. They are of each other. Form and function thus become one in design and execution if the nature of materials and method and purpose are all in unison" (Wright 1954, p. 50).

Fallingwater's deep doorway located at the east main entrance is one in-between place as are the projecting terraces that, as extensions of the rooms within, are neither in nor out. The depth created by the terraces and the overhanging volumes above give the balconies a quality of outdoor rooms. As in-between spaces, they become thresholds mediating the contrasting domains of insideness and outsideness. The trellis-like openings projecting from the guest bedroom to the south and the trellis stretching to relate the house to the north driveway are other important elements transforming inside and outside to an in between.

For Aalto's Villa Mairea, in-between places include the deep, projecting main entrance canopy, the covered terraces below the studio, the west side of the flower room, and the terrace that leads to the sauna. Perhaps the most powerful in-between experience is fostered by the entrance canopy, which works as a threshold that mediates the lived-transition between outside and inside. Exposure gradually decreases from the wide open outside to the entrance canopy and then to a tight passageway that gives an impression of entering a narrow cave.

The wide transparent glass openings used in both houses, particularly in Fallingwater, play a crucial

role in facilitating in-betweeness. Wright often omitted walls and vertical frames from window corners to dematerialize solid walls. The absence of walls and frames opens a new opportunity to see the outside. More importantly, these glass corners bring attention to the fragility of the wall, thus dissolving its presence and merging inside with outside.
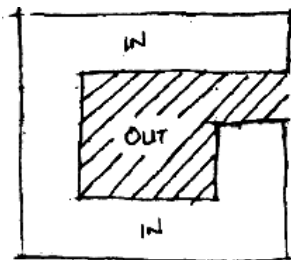
## Interpenetration

Interpenetration is another way in which the continuity between inside and outside can be expressed and works in two ways as shown in the drawings, below, depending on the relative strength of inside or outside. On one hand, the inside can project itself into the outside—for example, the projecting terraces of Fallingwater. Here, I call this situation the *interpenetration of the inside*. On the other hand, outside can be brought inside through some sort of enclosure shaped by the building—for example, Villa Mairea's wrapping around an inner courtyard. I call this situation the *interpenetration of the outside.*

In both situations, inside and outside are brought together in a more intimate relationship—in the first instance, through an architectural element that becomes a physical link with outside; in the second instance, through a spatial link whereby outside space is cradled and contained.
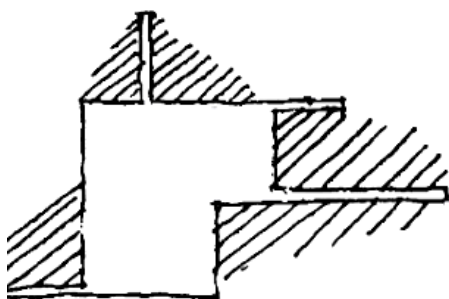

interpenetration of inside out


interpenetration of outside in

## Interpenetration of the Inside

Fallingwater expresses interpenetration of the inside through physically fusing with the landscape on the house's north side through a projecting trellis; on the east side, through a projecting stone masonry wall; and on the west side, through a balcony that glides over rock outcropping. On the house's south side, a plunge pool—part of the building and only separated from the stream Bear Run by a low wall—creates interpenetration between the building and water.

Yet again, the horizontal stone masonry wall at Fallingwater's east main entrance interpenetrates with outside to subtly usher visitors toward entry. In a similar way, Villa Mairea's meandering entrance canopy stretches out to meet visitors and invites them inside. In this sense, by projecting inside out, the entry designs of both houses strongly weave the buildings with their surroundings by leading visitors in.

Anther example from Villa Mairea is the unusually curved entrance canopy, which swings towards the direction of the access road and joins its movement. Similarly, a covered terrace leading to the sauna behind the house penetrates into the forest to strongly weave the building with the landscape, a connection that is also accomplished by rustic stone masonry on the east side of the house.

## Interpenetration of the Outside

If interpenetration of the inside out involves physical form extending outward, interpenetration of the outside involves surrounding space intermingling with the inside through the enclosure and cradling of physical form.

On its south side facing Bear Run, Fallingwater interpenetrates the outside by projecting balconies reaching into space and endowing that space with a sense of vertical presence. As the drawing on the next page illustrates, the projecting balconies, by penetrating into the outside space, allow that space to penetrate back into the building mass. As a result, the interpenetration creates defined spaces that belong simultaneously to the inside and the outside. Because of Fallingwater's precarious placement on the rock embankment above the stream, the dominant spatial expression of these spaces is *vertical*—between above and below.
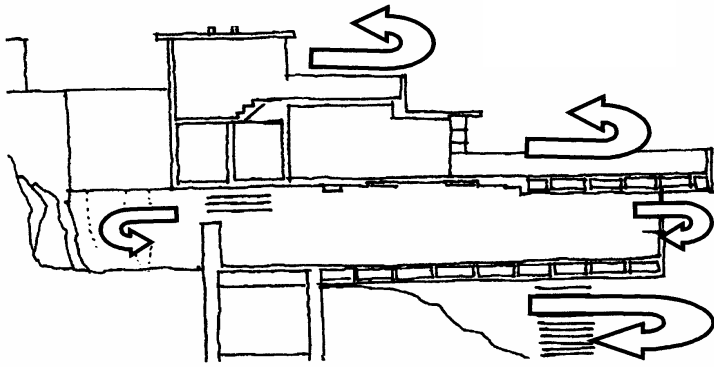
In contrast, Villa Mairea's interpenetration of the outside much more involves a *horizontal* expression and, as with Fallingwater, the reason relates to topography. Though Villa Mairea is located at the crest of a gently rising hill, the actual site of the house stands is relatively flat. Aalto used this generous expanse as a space with which the house could engage spatially. As the drawing, below, illustrates, the u-shaped plan cradles the outside by forming a partial courtyard, which belongs to both inside and outside. The worlds of house and nature can meet as equals in this space.
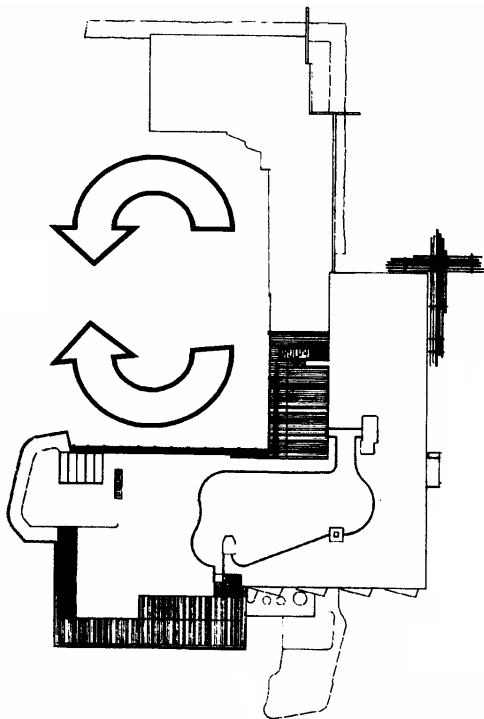


## Intermingling

In *intermingling,* architectural and environmental elements are used metaphorically to bring the meaning of outside in, and inside out. For example, the presence inside of natural outside elements can remind us of the outside, which we then experience vicariously. By echoing features of the natural site, intermingling enables us to be aware of the outside as we remain inside. In the opposite way, inside elements brought outside invite the safety, comfort, and culture of the inside out. Intermingling allows one domain to assert itself in the other, thereby establishing another kind of kinship and linkage between inside and outside.

In Fallingwater, Wright used the rock boulder protruding in front of the living room fireplace as one means to bring nature in. The association of the boulder with the fireplace powerfully expresses the phenomenon of the ground, which is particularly a feature of the outside. The outcropping creates a feeling that one is literally living with a primordial force of nature but in a secure, protected way. Similarly, Aalto used roughly cut natural stones in the Villa Mairea's living room fireplace, though this use is not as powerful as Wright's because these stones do not have the literal earth-sourced connectedness with site as Fallingwater's boulder does.

Both architects also use inside and outside elements in a more metaphorical way. For example, Fallingwater's waxed flagstone floor appears as wet ground thus reminding one of the running water outside. In addition, the waxed flagstone conveys safety and hazard simultaneously—safety, because of the strong attachment and anchorage the stone floor has with the natural ground; hazard, because of the impression the floor gives of water.

Aalto's effort to simulate a sense of the surrounding forest inside Villa Mairea is another example of intermingling at this more metaphorical level. The outside forest surrounding the house is echoed in the rhythm of columns and poles in living room, music room, library, entrance hall and staircase. Arranged in irregular groups of one, two, or three, these columns suggest a deliberate intention to minimize any regular geometry and to remind one of the natural world outside.
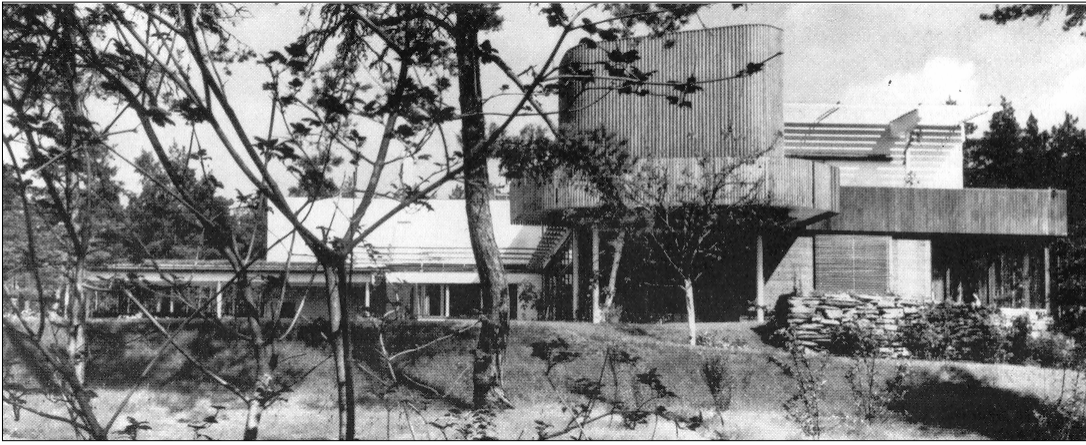
In an opposite way, Villa Mairea's covered outdoor terrace is an outside space given a quality of the inside by treatments peculiar to inside space. The terrace's clean, tidy, white-painted posts and beams suggest the inside, as does a rustic fireplace, which speaks to comfort and warmth.

In Fallingwater, Wright intermingles outside elements inside but, other than introducing pieces of sculpture, does little with intermingling inside elements outside. In contrast, Villa Mairea exhibits as much presence of inside elements in the outside as outside elements inside. The result is that the intermingling of inside-outside appears to be more balanced in Mairea than Fallingwater.

## A Non-Arbitrary Architecture

In creating two houses that speak to the natural symbol of insideness-outsideness (as well as to other natural symbols like light-dark, horizontal-vertical, up-down, and center-periphery—see Assefa 2002), one can argue that Wright and Aalto demonstrate a non-arbitrary architecture that responds to and reflects a particular natural and cultural setting. In this sense, Fallingwater and Villa Mairea provide invaluable models for current design education by demonstrating an architecture that arises from and speaks to peoples' existence in the world, particularly the human relationship with nature.

Harries (1993, 1997) claims that Modernist, Postmodernist, and Deconstructive architectures are arbitrary in the sense that these styles could readily be other than what they formally and stylistically happen to be. Harries suggests that a return to what is essential might help to solve the problem of arbitrariness. As I hope I have begun to demonstrate here, the reference that Wright and Aalto make in their two houses to the essence of human life and landscape through creative use of the natural symbol of inside-outside clearly suggests one way to identify and discuss components of a non-arbitrary architecture.

But Harries also argues that natural symbols can never tell us how to build but, instead, can only help us to think about how our buildings might be made more thoughtfully (Harries 1997, p. 11). To create a non-arbitrary architecture grounded in human being-in-the-world requires a deep understanding of what human beings and nature are. With this understanding in hand, architects might have a powerful tool to envision architecture enabling people to find their place in the world.

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