



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 3

Fall 1994

This issue is the last for 1994. We enclose a renewal form and ask you to respond promptly so we will not need to send a reminder. Subscription rates are the same as last year—U.S., \$8; non-U.S., \$10.

You're receiving this *EAP* a bit early so that this issue will be finished before Editor David Seamon returns to Kansas State University after completing his year-long sabbatical. This issue includes regular features as well as book reviews and essays by architects Michel Lincourt and Harvey Sherman.

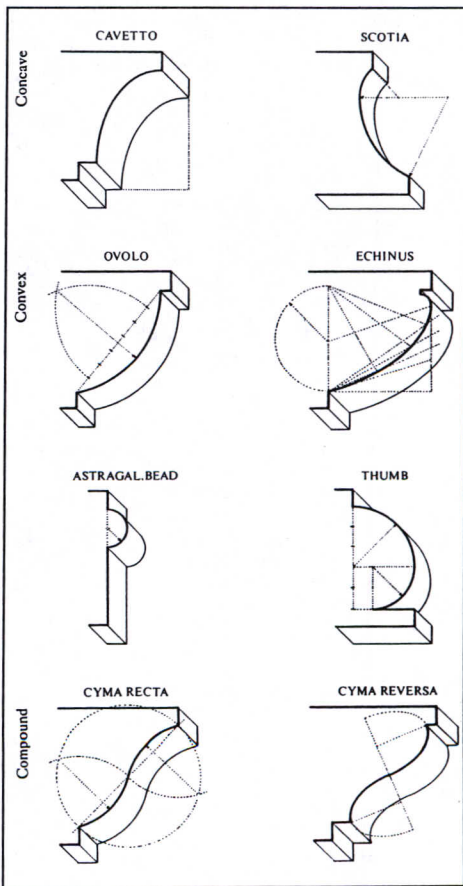
We also feature a report on the annual EDRA meeting (p.2). As many *EAP* readers know only too well, it is often difficult to convey the meaning and value of phenomenology. This difficulty was regularly apparent at the EDRA meeting. How to convey to skeptical colleagues that phenomenology contributes to architectural and environmental research? How to say simply what these contributions might be?

This lack of interest was indicated by the low attendance at the *EAP*-sponsored workshop as well as by informal conversations in which, mentioning phenomenology, one suddenly felt defensive or beside the point. We still face the same old questions: "Yes, but how do you know your claims are valid?" "Wouldn't you fit better among poets or artists?" "Yes, but what sorts of design and policy does your work lead to?"

One encouraging hope for phenomenology is the student work quietly happening in graduate schools. Regularly, we have letters from master's and doctoral students who sense the significance of phenomenology and who bravely decide to pursue a phenomenological thesis, sometimes in a program whose faculty can offer only minimal assistance.

In "Membership News," we highlight four graduate students whose work offers phenomenological insights into architectural and environmental issues. It is partly because of committed individuals like these that phenomenological insights will make a deeper inroad in research, design, and policy.

Portion of a drawing by Donald M. Rattner that illustrates concave, convex, and compound moldings. Rattner writes: "Instead of seeing moldings as abstract geometric shapes, one might equally understand them as tools that the architect uses to show the observer what the building is experiencing at a given point." See p. 6.



EAP EVENTS AT EDRA MEETING

The annual meeting of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) was held in San Antonio, March 16-20, 1994. The Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Network sponsored two events, the first of which was an intensive, "Banking on Humane Design: The Contribution of Phenomenology," organized by **Ingrid Leman Stefanovic**, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto.

Participants in the intensive, which ran an afternoon and morning before the main EDRA conference, included **Duncan Case**, Department of Architecture, University of Nebraska; **Herb Childress**, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; **Robert Mugerauer**, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin; **Douglas Paterson**, Landscape Architecture Program, University of Vancouver; **Fahriye Sancar**, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin, Madison; and **David Seamon**, Department of Architecture, Kansas State University, Manhattan.

On March 18, 11 members attended a lunchtime business meeting of the *EAP* network. The meeting began with an introduction of people present; a list was circulated to gather names and addresses. Co-Chair David Seamon gave a membership and financial report, explaining there was money to publish a fall issue of the newsletter. Several people praised its usefulness, and there was a discussion about how the network might attract more members.

Herb Childress had copies of the first *EAP* directory, which he and his wife **Judi** had produced. This document lists names, addresses on all *EAP* members, 1992-94, and includes descriptions of members who returned their survey form. Anyone who would like a copy should send a check for \$5, made out to Herb, who has just moved to California to begin work on his dissertation. His new address was not known at press time, so send directory orders to David Seamon, who will forward them to Herb.

The remainder of the meeting was spent discussing possibilities for future *EAP* gatherings. Participation in other professional meetings besides EDRA's was discussed, but it was decided that there presently aren't the interest or resources available to include *EAP*-organized sessions at other conferences.

The discussion then turned to an *EAP*-sponsored

PLACE & PLACELESSNESS: 20 YEARS OLD!

In 1996, geographer Edward Relph's pioneering *Place and Placelessness* celebrates its 20th birthday. The book was published in 1976 by Pion Press in London and has gone through several reprintings.

For many *EAP* readers, Relph's book has been an inspiration and beacon, articulating a theme--the crucial role of place and insideness in human experience--that has become a focus for much of the research and practice in environmental and architectural phenomenology.

In one 1996 issue of *EAP*, We hope to feature a special section on *Place and Placelessness*. Relph has agreed to write a short essay on the book 20 years later. We also hope to assemble a set of short pieces that discuss what the book has meant to others.

If *Place and Placelessness* has played a role in your thinking or practice and you would be interested in writing a short commentary (500-1000 words), please contact David Seamon. The essay would be due in late 1995.

session at the 1995 EDRA meeting in Boston. It was felt that the intensive session just held had been useful, though attendance was disappointing (partly because the intensives were held a day before the "official" conference began). The need to provide a phenomenological program during the regular conference time was emphasized, including the need to "somehow reach out to skeptics." For the Boston meetings, it was decided that there should be both the intensive sessions as well as a conference workshop.

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic and **Duncan Case** volunteered to organize the 1995 Boston program; if any *EAP* members wish to participate they should contact either organizer as soon as possible. Stefanovic's address: Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto, 215 Huron Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A1 (416-978-2790). Case's address: 1625 Brent Blvd., Lincoln, NE 68506 (402-472-6342).

For further information on the Boston conference or joining EDRA, write: EDRA, PO Box 24083, Oklahoma City, OK 73124 (405-843-4863).

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Environmental Theory Arena is a small journal published twice a year that focuses on theoretical aspects of person-environment relationships. The goal is "to increase the range and diversity of theoretical debate and find ways to provide each other with a resource on environmental theory." Address: ETA, Environmental Psychology Program, CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd St, New York, NY 10036.

Integrative Explorations, the journal of the Jean Gebser Society, is an interdisciplinary, scholarly biannual open to "creative and alternative styles of investigation." the journal publishes "integrative explorations in the form of articles, bibliographies, or reviews of research about culture/civilization, consciousness, or philosopher Jean Gebser's life and thought." Write: Dr. Michael Purdy, Division of Communication, Governors State University, University Park, IL 60430.

Children's Environments, published by Chapman and Hall in London, is an international journal that serves "both as a means of communication for scholars in child environment research and as a bridge to practice and policy in environmental design, planning, education, and health for children." The editors accept a wide range of articles: "theory, empirical research, research applications, and behaviorally-based design or environmental policy." Write: Children's Environments Research Group, CUNY, Graduate School, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Ryan Drum is a botanist, marine biologist, and herbalist who lives on Waldron Island in Puget Sound, Washington. He writes: "Thank you very much for persisting and continuing to publish *EAP*. It is a delight. My own interest in the content derives from a compulsive interest in form and function. I have just wandered into the concern while researching charming structures in diatoms, both their silica shells and their cellular fine structure...."

"Now I am fascinated by the increasingly obvious to me, relationships between sickness and habitation shape and location.... I believe we have a homeless problem only because of building codes as an expression of class hatred and a cultural self-hatred of the real survival skills innate to the wild person in each

of us.

"I believe my home [lived in for 18 years and built entirely by himself, the roof first, the foundation last, so he could work out of the rain] is an expression of how I think and wish to live in this place built from local hand-shaped materials excluding glass, metal fasteners, and composite roofing.

"My house looks east to Mt. Baker, south to Mt. Ranier, and the equinoctial full moonrise is out of the crater of Mt. Baker; I see the entire year of sunrises over the Cascades. This was a deliberate function of mountaintop site selection. I have no household plumbing and only intermittent 12v electron flow.

NEW DESIGN PROGRAM

Emerson College, an Anthroposophic institution based on the ideas of philosopher and spiritual teacher Rudolf Steiner, announce a new program, the **Environmental Design Course**. The three-semester program is an intensive professional training in design and works "to develop a new relationship to the natural world through the practice of environmental design and landscape planning." The syllabus reads in part:

The course seeks to develop patterns of living with nature that are both beautiful and functional and which acknowledge the underlying spiritual qualities of humanity and earth. This requires an approach to nature that is both scientific and artistic.

The method of observation developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe provides a living perception of nature which can lead to possibilities of artistic expression. Rudolf Steiner continued this work and developed a modern path of knowledge known as Anthroposophy, which can lead to a more complete understanding of the human being and its relationship to nature....

The course will be of value to students with a wide range of backgrounds. It can supplement either academic studies or practical experience with the land. The course provides an intensive introduction to landscape architecture and planning and prepares students for careers in landscape contracting, garden design, and environmental restoration. The course is an opportunity for anyone interested in the improvement of our environment to gain experience with practical approaches to working with the earth.

Key faculty for the program include landscape architect **David Valbracht** and educator **Margaret Colquhoun**. For further information, write Emerson College, Forest Row, Sussex RH18 5JX, England (tel 0342-822238).

"I do freelance teaching as a naturalist and herbalist now and mostly support myself growing and selling medicinal herbs by the ton. I have apprentices regularly as surrogate graduate students and feel really blessed." Address: Waldron Island, WA 98297.

Tammeron Francis writes: "I am a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati in the architecture program. My in-progress thesis is 'A Phenomenology of Prehistoric Native American Architecture and its Landscape Context: Learning from Fort Ancient and the Related Earth-Architecture of the Ohio Valley'." Address: 2930 Scioto, No. 205, Cincinnati, OH 45219.

V. G. Kirby is a landscape architect and town planner who teaches in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University, near Christchurch, New Zealand. He writes: "My research interest is in landscapes that have values as cultural heritage. I am interested in the practical implications of people's inbuilt world views, attitudes, and assumptions. I am trying to relate, at both theoretical and practical levels, quantitative, rational, reductionist approaches to understanding heritage landscapes, with qualitative, phenomenological approaches.

"In my qualitative work, I use research methods adopted from ethnography and based on Glaser and Strauss's ideas about grounded theory, in order to try to define the ways in which individuals value their immediate landscapes. I am also interested in spatial scale and the way that policy and procedures vary at different levels, and how these levels (global-local) interrelate." Address: Dept. of Landscape Architecture, PO Box 84, Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand (0064-3-325-2811).

As reported in the winter 1994 *EAP*, **Theano Terkenli Koop** is a cultural geographer who recently completed her dissertation, *The Idea of Home: A Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, in the Geography Department at the University of Minnesota. She recently sent us a dissertation abstract, of which portions we reproduce here:

This dissertation explores "the idea of home in the contemporary

Western world and... construct[s] a theoretical framework for the understanding of our ever-changing personal geographies. For this purpose, the dissertation proceeds from a theoretical investigation of scholarly notions of home in space and time, using a humanistic approach, to an empirical survey of actual ideas of home in Greece and in the United States.

The study suggests that the essence of home lies in the recurrent regular investment of meaning in a context that, through some measure of control, we personalize and identify with. It also proposes that, in the present age of globalization, time-space compression, and growing urbanization, home geographies are increasingly becoming geographies of the self, as the self expands and contracts vis-a-vis contextual space."

Ashish Mukerjee is a Dallas architect who recently finished his master's degree at the School of Architecture in Louisiana State University. His thesis, "A Phenomenological Approach to Architecture," explored the value of phenomenology to architecture, using as a focus the work of Martin Heidegger, Christopher Alexander, and Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum. We reproduce a portion of the thesis abstract below.

Architecture is explored in this thesis on the premise that all things are phenomena. First, philosopher Martin Heidegger's work relevant to architecture is explained. Second, the phenomenological stance toward space, building elements, place, and how these can be discussed is examined.

The works of the architect Christopher Alexander and Louis Kahn are examined in relation to phenomenology—Alexander's, as he has explored how architecture contributes to a "good life"; Kahn's, as his architectural approach embodies much of what the phenomenological manner is.

Christopher Tadych is an architect who writes that "my design philosophy and interests are influenced by phenomenology." He continues: "I enjoy your newsletters and being thoughtfully drawn into such discussions as your forum enjoys. In my work, it is easy to be overwhelmed by specifications on details or budgets for prevailing wages; it's important, however, to talk about effect and affect. Your work closely supports my work and interests." Address: 665 Eastland Road, Berea, OH 44017.

Last year Tadych completed his master's thesis in Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin under the direction of Professor Robert Mugerauer. Entitled "Architecture as Cultural Dialogue: Synthesizing Architectural Intentions and Communicating

Architectural Phenomenology," the thesis is abstracted as follows:

Instead of moving our conceptions too quickly through a faculty of abstraction, like general science, a study of architecture must consider humanity's various attempts at concretizing cultural importance. Through a coherence and unity of cultural complexity, we investigate the manner of expression dependent upon location and people. The importance of our history is debated in the present using cultural conventions. The expansion and enrichment of this communication depends on a cultural dialogue that mediates applied intentions and the existent environmental phenomena already valued by culture.

Through our dialogue and actions, we explore our cultural world view as subject matter applied through intermediary objects. As art-objects (which study the ego), amote-objects (which study the collective direction of the community), or emote-objects (which study psychological affect of the object), these intermediary objects concretize our debate on a historical consciousness.

In opposition to the prepositional thought of Descartes' scientific method, Giambattista Vico discusses the actions of poetic men and women as responses to perceived feelings and intentional motives. Vico, however, does not determine whether

humans, and their making which creates a world view, are social by nature or by convention.

Christian Norberg-Schulz's work discusses both sides of this topic: his earlier books discuss our making through social intentions and conventions, and his later books discuss socialization grounded in natural connections. This thesis studies a balance of influence from the two. The interrelated artifacts of our world view are made as we synthesize our intentions and communicate our valued archetypes.

Kinsley K. Wu is an interior-design educator and architectural renderer and designer who teaches in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Purdue University. His research focuses on sacred places and "the cross-disciplinary search for place and the meaning of design." He has written *Freehand Sketching in the Architectural Environment* (NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990). His article, "Pilgrim Cathedral," recently appeared in *Architecture and Behavior*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1993), 191-204. Address: Dept. of Visual and Performing Arts, Purdue University, W. Lafayette, IN 47907.

Below: A drawing from Christopher Day's Places of the Soul (see p. 8 for a review). Day writes: "The apparent size of a building appears to vary with the seasons. Annual plants can grow to human height in barely a month; leaf transforms a branched stick to a heavily laden tree able to completely conceal a scale-dominating object which appears large in the bare winter. Snow can also change the scale and focus of things."



NOTEWORTHY READINGS

Ingrid Leman Stefanovic, 1992. The Experience of Place: Housing Quality from a Phenomenological Perspective. In *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 1, 2 (December): 145-161.

This essay begins by pointing out the irony that most research on housing quality is *quantitative* in nature. Stefanovic seeks to present how qualitative approaches, particularly phenomenology, might "contribute to the formulation of housing policy, specifically in terms of the interrelatedness of provision of shelter, and enhancement of quality of life within humane settlements" (p. 145).

The article next discusses "dwelling and the experience of place" and the "phenomenological reading of built spaces." It concludes with "directions for sustainable planning and design of housing." Emphasizing that phenomenology focuses on peoples' inescapable immersion-in-world, which is partly bodily and prereflective, Stefanovic explores how dwelling is much more than housing and how experienced qualities like identity, belonging, home, neighborhood, inside, and outside are crucial in any thorough approach to housing quality.

One of Stefanovic's aims is to begin a phenomenological reading of suburban settlement, which she illustrates in regard to, Mississauga, a suburban subdivision of Toronto. After arguing that Mississauga's central environmental message is "security, safety, certainty, and order" (p. 154), she concludes:

Spatially, the subdivision preserved a sense of insideness, but *at the expense of the outside*; temporally, the present was preserved but *at the expense of the past and the future*. The dialectical interplay of inside and outside, as well as the unity of temporal ecstasies of past, present and future were denied in favour of the static, utopian ideal of a Garden City. Heidegger [in *Being and Time*, 1962] has suggested that in the modern epoch, we flee from the reality of the belonging of past, present and future—towards the certainty and ultimately inauthentic sense of assurance symbolized by a fixed present.

The suburb, to my mind, was the incarnation of that contemporary need to flee from a genuine awareness of depth of meaning grounded in our finitude, and in the flux of primordial time. In this sense, the suburb could be seen to be unsustainable, as rooted in an idealized myth of shelter, as no more than the absence of outside threats.

Certainly, it is easy to understand the human need of seeking

a sense of stability and refuge within the unchanging reality of a fixed "present," and a utopian spatial form. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we can plan better communities by recognizing the natural human need of preserving "insideness," shelter, home, within the realities of a broader universe of change.

Perhaps the image of the city is of too much change, too much exposure—but a genuine sense of place, and... humane dwelling, are to be found only within a sustainable balance between insideness and outsideness, and in the unity of the three temporal ecstasies of past, present and future.

This means that the goal for architects, planners and designers alike is to be directed towards the facilitation of human settlement patterns which might spatially enhance a sense of home as centre, as haven, within a non-threatening, but nevertheless diverse and vibrant neighbourhood context (p. 155).

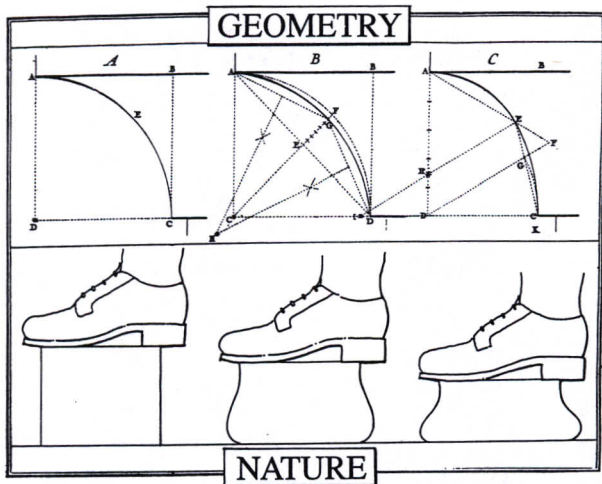
Donald M. Rattner, 1993. Moldings: The Atomic Units of Classical Architecture. In *Traditional Building*, July/August, vol. 6, no. 4, p. 4, 72-73.

Rattner is the Director of the Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture at the New York Academy of Art. His essay on moldings, which he points out are the smallest physical units of classical architecture, is intriguing phenomenologically because he treats them not only as abstract geometrical shapes to be grasped formally and aesthetically. Rather, he argues that moldings are better understood as "tools that the architect uses to show the observer what the building is experiencing at a given point." He writes:

...a major purpose of a building is to channel [weight loads] to the ground for dispersal. Thus certain portions of the building are continually subject to compressive stresses, much like the human being who has had a great weight dropped onto his or her shoulders. Under the impact of such a weight, a person's knees may buckle, muscles will bulge and flex.... The classical building similarly expresses its loads by contorting itself, the undulating contours of its moldings the equivalent of the body's rippling muscles" (p. 4).

Rattner begins his discussion, first, by formal typology of moldings, arranged by shape. Next, he regroups these types based on their function (e.g., the *cavetto* is "particularly appropriate for non-supporting situations because most of its section has been voided to form its great concavity, thereby depriving it of significant material strength," p. 4).

Rattner then discusses in greater detail how moldings can dramatize gravity or levity, and he then



Above: "Classicism unites the two domains—one the abstract, unchanging, and absolute qualities of pure mathematics; the other the figurative, changeable and subjective tendencies of organic nature" (p. 72).

briefly discusses several formal issues that can help guide the design of moldings for interiors (e.g., alternation and contrast, repetition, facial angle, proportion and scale, light and shade, character). One of Rattner's most interesting points is that classical architecture, because it offers a way to hold nature and geometry *together* (see drawing above), is more satisfying than various modernist and deconstructivist styles. As an example, he uses gravity:

...gravity is a primary contributor to the presence of stress inside an architectural construction. But gravity implies something else about the classical buildings: Namely, the existence of an up and a down. Organic nature acknowledges gravity's effect by detailing most living creatures differently at the bottom, middle, and top. This differentiation is not present in the horizontal dimensions where gravity is immaterial. Likewise, the elements of classical architecture are organized into a clearly articulated base, middle section, and crown, but are customarily symmetrical about the vertical axis.

Since the plant and the human figure have a recognizable top and bottom, they inevitably look ridiculous when turned upside down. The same cannot be said for the pure cylinder, which, having no moldings or modeling is incapable of expressing the effect of gravity or resistance to it. Needless to say, the cylinder represents the sensibilities of much contemporary architecture, which bases itself not on the imitation of natural phenomena, but on mimicking the inert machine.

Contemporary theory, in other words, accepts the geometry of architecture, but does away with nature. Classicism, howev-

er, unites the two domains—one the abstract, unchanging, and absolute qualities of pure mathematics; the other the figurative, changeable and subjective tendencies of organic nature. This dual aspect of classicism, I believe, explains why people are so satisfied by the classical setting; it reflects their own nature as both emotional and rational beings" (p. 72).

One might also add here that the bodily dimension of human being is nourished through the immediate, unself-conscious expression of bodily qualities like up/ down, heavy/light, large/small, and so forth. In this sense, Rattner's perspective is kin to explicit phenomenological discussion, including Harries' natural symbols and Thiis-Evensen's architectural archetypes.

Douglas D. Paterson, 1993. Dualities and Dialectics in the Experience of Landscape. *Design + Values* [Conference Proceedings: Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, vol. IV, Wash., DC], pp. 147-166.

This paper considers how dialectical themes are an integral part of design thinking and practice. It identifies some 200 "dialectical experiences in landscape," makes connections with theoretical works that draw on dialectical themes, and then presents several qualities that define good design. Finally, Paterson identifies topics in which a dialectical angle could contribute insight—e.g., a "dialectics of front-back":

[In our efforts at place-making], we have ignored the full nature and behavior of the *front-back* dialectic. We give distinct fronts and backs to buildings, often to the point where the back immediately assumes the role of "ugly neglect," yet we would never think of ourselves as being divided down the sides, from top to bottom, with white clothes on our front half and black clothes on the back portion—only clowns wear such outfits.

And we also create "back activities," such as industrial landscapes where we perceive that there is no real need for a front. But, in human terms, to relegate anyone permanently to the background is eventually to deny their being.

This problem with the front and back emerges from not only a literal interpretation of the dialectical condition but also a linear perspective on the dialectical condition. As noted earlier, the dialectical condition is circular. As such, we can offer the following dialectical definitions of front and back: *A back is merely a different kind of front. A front is merely a different kind of back*" (p. 162).

BOOK REVIEWS

Christopher Day, 1990. *Places for the Soul: Architecture and Environmental Design as Healing Art*. Wellingborough, England: Aquarian Press. Hardcover, 192 pp., \$22.50, ISBN 0-85030-880-1.

Christopher Day is an English architect who believes that the built environment contributes to both human well-being and illness. His descriptions of architecture as place making are often poetic and exuberant in their good feelings. At other times, when he criticizes modern Western architecture and the design professions, he becomes judgmental and dogmatic. In short, the book rebounds between negativity and joy, often within a sentence or paragraph. The reader who can move around this emotional teeter-totter will find much of value, particularly Day's creative graphics and his practical suggestions for how architecture might convey a sense of natural and human place.

The book begins with a staunch justification of the importance of the built environment in human life. Following chapters discuss such themes as "building for physical health," "qualities and quantities," "space for living in," "ensouling buildings," and "healing silence." The last two chapters discuss "the urban environment" and "building for tomorrow."

The crux of Day's approach is what he calls *conversation*--the possibility of transforming differences into unity, whether different building materials (e.g., wood and stone), different building elements (e.g., wall meeting ceiling, foundation meeting ground, or building meeting its surrounding spaces), different community groups, or designer-contractor-client-user differences. Day's aim is to find design and construction means for drawing conflicting parts

into an harmonious whole. He explains:

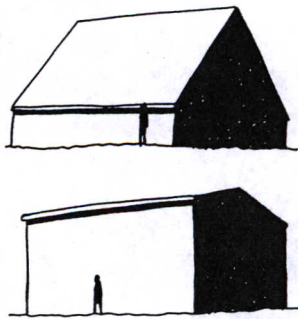
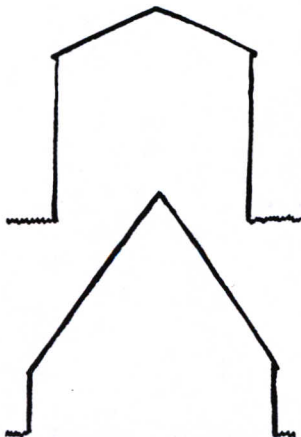
Conversation is the art of raising disparate elements into one whole, raising it above the levels each was previously trapped in. This applied to every sort of architectural relationship--the metaphoric experience between inside and outside, between one space and another or between adjacent visible elements. It also applies to the relationship between user, architect and builder.

To meet, elements often need to be modified in their form to respond to each other. A square window can look out of place against a sloping ceiling. As you pass from an arched corridor into a room with another shape of ceiling, a metamorphosis needs to occur to bring them into a meaningful relationship--a metamorphosis of space and form that reflects the change of mood experience that you experience as you move from the one space to another.

This principle can be brought into every form of meeting so that elements do not just collide with each other but *speak* to each other--indeed, so that they sing together (pp. 68, 70).

Day appears to have designed a fair number of buildings himself--mostly houses and small schools--and one wishes that their graphic and written presentations were more extensive and clear. In spite of its incomplete designs and frequent preaching, this book offers many provocative suggestions for both a phenomenology of architectural experience and a phenomenology of designing and building. In addition, several of Day's graphics make an effort to speak to the experienced relationship between the built environment and sense of place.

--David Seamon



From Day: "Buildings of comparable volume can have markedly different perceived sizes: walls confront the observer and imply used space within much more than do roofs. Furthermore, perspective effects can reduce the apparent height of roof ridges."

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has always addressed the largest ideas with the humblest tools: plain words and everyday examples. Like a fine workman, he assembles intellectual and aesthetic delight from common materials. How fitting, then, that his newest book addresses the nature of aesthetic experience directly, revealing some of the reasons that beauty is central to our lives and to our cultures.

For Tuan, the essence of aesthetic experience is the attitude or intention of the viewer rather than the form or content of the viewed thing. The aesthetic act is distancing oneself from the thing, holding it apart from oneself for what Tuan calls *reflective appreciation*: "The shift from sensation to aesthetics is a subtly graduated change that depends... on the degree to which an external reality exists for the self.... This capacity presupposes a distance between the self and the nonself—a recognition of the strange and marvelous other" (pp. 22-23).

The book's longest section describes the nature of sensory experiences, with a fine chapter devoted to "the proximate senses" of taste, smell and touch, and separate chapters for hearing and for vision. In each, he begins with the nature of the sensation itself but moves quickly to that state of conscious concern he places at the center of aesthetic experience. With smell, for instance, "From one angle, we may view odor as 'primitive,' something intimately associated with food and sex. From another angle, we can see that the discernment and appreciation of fragrance are capable of endless refinement" (pp. 58-59).

This distancing, though, is tenuous and not easily achieved, which is perhaps one reason we value aesthetic feelings so highly. "Overwhelming emotion does not allow the distancing necessary to aesthetic experience, nor does a condition of repose in which consciousness, lulled by gentle sensations, hardly reaches out to the world. If the distance is too great, the pause too long, the experience will tend to be intellectual rather than aesthetic for lack of intimate, warmth-generating contact with the sensory realities" (pp. 13-14). The aesthetic experience, then, seems to be a blurred central region along the continuum of awareness and abstraction; complete immersion and

complete rationality are both ruinous of aesthetics.

Tuan spends the remainder of the book examining the aesthetic expressions of a variety of cultures throughout history, with special focus on four: the Australian Aborigines, the Chinese, the medieval European, and the American. He attempts to demonstrate that, while the particulars of the beautiful in food, landscape, symbolism, and ritual may vary from place to place and from time to time, they are constant in their dependence upon this state of "searching appreciation." He also shows some of the ways that the beautiful has been used to support the political, coming together in what he calls "the aesthetic-moral state," offering examples both in the positive—Louis XIV's Versailles—and the negative—Hitler's monumental architecture of Berlin and Nuremberg. In each case, though, he shows that the goal is the same: the physical expression of some cultural ideal, whether that ideal be democracy or *noblesse oblige* or national superiority.

This section of the book is fascinating in the details that are brought to light, but is also the least clear and straightforward. Tuan's broad scope—he treats Chinese culture from 200 B.C. to the early 18th century A.D. as more or less unitary in its aesthetic goals, for instance—makes his arguments for aesthetic-cultural linkage less compelling. He also shifts over the course of the book from an argument that many aesthetic ideals are innate and pan-human to a position that criteria for elegance and delight are culturally bound, that "Culture also tells people what is beautiful" (p. 105). By encompassing too great a task—the examination of culture through the aesthetic—he has ironically presented the reader with too much abstraction, too great a distance from the object, and lost the beauty of the earlier sections.

For EAP readers, the greatest benefit of Tuan's book is in its exemplary treatment of the essence of the aesthetic as an act or intention toward the world. Tuan's strength has always been his blending of the immediate and sensory with the intellectual and probing, and never has he been more dexterous than in the first half of this book.

—Herb Childress

WHAT IS A WINDOW? REACTING TO THIIIS-EVENSEN'S ARCHITECTURAL ARCHETYPES

Michel Lincourt

Michel Lincourt is an architect from Quebec working on his doctorate in Architecture at Georgia Institute of Technology. His dissertation focuses on a phenomenology of elegance as it has meaning for architecture and urban design. The English translation of the song by Jacques Brel is Lincourt's. Address: Doctoral Program, College of Architecture, GIT, Atlanta, GA 30332-0155.

In *Archetypes in Architecture* (NY: Oxford, 1987), architect Thomas Thiiis-Evensen insists that one essential characteristic of the floor, wall, and roof is the way they define the relationship between interior and exterior. He argues the window is one important expression of the interior-exterior relationship.

Here, I examine Thiiis-Evensen's discussion of the window from the perspective of an architect commissioned to create a house. He turns to *Archetypes* for guidance in designing the windows.

WAITING AND READING

Waiting for his client, the architect reads in *Archetypes* that windows are basically holes in the wall--that they are "an expression of the interior to the world at large." He thinks, "Fine so far, the back view from my client's future house is lovely." He reads that "windows are meant to be looked through and to admit light."

He thinks immediately that windows do more than that--for instance, they open to ventilate the house. He thinks about what his client had told him: "You know, it's so nice in the spring to smell the fresh air and the perfume of the garden."

He next learns that Thiiis-Evensen defines the window's profile as either perpendicular or diagonal; he reads that the face of the window can be more or less recessed in the thickness of the wall, and that different expressions may be created by selecting one degree of recess over another--for example:

in placing the window face outermost in the opening, the interior space appears to extend right out to the wall face... This can result in two effects. In the first, the entire volume of the building seems overlaid... The effect is aimed at Neo-Classicism. According to its tenets, a building should appear as a combination of stereometric masses... The other effect... gives the wall, especially when the windows are relatively large, the impression of being a thin skin.

Frankly, the architect is not really sure what to

make of these insights. He does not want to design a Neo-Classical house, and why would he want to design the walls of his client's house that would look like a thin skin?

Then the architect reads what he already knew--that the window frame is composed of lintel, jambs and sill, for which infinite variations are possible. Thiiis-Evensen describes several possible combinations, for instance, he claims that windows with only lintels lead the facade to express an upward motion, while the presence of only sills suggests a downward motion. Next, Thiiis-Evensen discusses possible variations of bay windows, a topic that interests the architect because his client loves bay windows and wants some in her new house.

DEALING WITH THE CLIENT

The architect feels frustrated with Thiiis-Evensen but hides his feelings from his client, who has just arrived. All he and she have discussed so far is the new house's windows as seen from inside. He reflects on Thiiis-Evensen and realizes that, except for two images--Le Corbusier's La Tourette corridor windows, a large circular opening in Kahn's Dacca Governmental building--the discussion focuses entirely on windows as seen from outside. He thinks that, in ignoring the experience of looking out the window, Thiiis-Evensen is not very helpful.

His client is concerned with details. "Should the window sill be thirty inches from the floor?" she asks. "That would be handy because, if I felt like it, I could place furniture under the window. And what about the radiators under the windows? They are so ugly. Also, could you give me deep sills, because I want to put African violets on them. You know, I have a very good collection of violets."

Thiiis-Evensen does not talk about violets on window sills. Perhaps the topic is too mundane for a scholar-architect but certainly not for this middle-aged lady who will spend most of her savings to

build the house that she and her husband will occupy the rest of their lives and where she intends to be happy. The architect's challenge is to design a house that will please her, and that includes window sills that will contribute to her happiness.

She jumps to another topic. "Oh, yes! Before I forget, I have a problem for you. You know that we will have a very nice view from the living room. But all the living room windows open on the back veranda which is some fifteen feet above the ground."

"And what do you think of French windows? I think they would be quite handsome. They open toward the interior, don't they? Oh, but if you build me French windows, will I be able to open them without hitting the violets on the sill?"

Suddenly, the architect is tired. He thinks that windows are so, so complicated. So much to decide. What kind of window should he propose? Perhaps the north windows of the house should be different than those on the south. How large and how many on each side? Will all windows open?

"What will the house look like?" asks the client, jumping ahead. "I want to see your fine drawings!"

"You know," says the architect, coming back to life, "I will design you the most beautiful windows you could ever imagined."

He tells her about proportions, the Golden Section, the relationship between the function of the room and the orientation of its windows. He tells her about Vitruvius who said that the bedroom windows should be oriented toward the east and about Palladio and his beautiful villas.

She is impressed and leaves his office dreaming about a house more beautiful than a Palladian villa. She thinks about how talented her architect is—that he has promised a design the following week.

HOUSE DREAMS AND A SONG

The poor architect no longer thinks about Thiis-Evensen and the other theoreticians. Wide awake, he dreams about the house he has to create and the feeling that he wants to transmit—a house with windows full of light, a bedroom with a view.

The radio plays a song by Jacques Brel:

Les fenêtres nous guettent
Quand notre cœur s'arrête
En croissant Louissette
Pour qui brûlent nos chairs

The windows are watching us
When our heart stops
Walking by Louissette
For whom our flesh burns

He thinks that windows are like the eyes of a house—a probe into its soul. Windows are for watching when the woman we love is about to arrive. Our heart stops when she turns the corner and walks to the house. A window looking to the street is all important because from this direction our happiness arrives. "I see her coming."

Les fenêtres rigolent
Quand elles voient la frivole
Qui offre sa corolle
À un clerc de notaire

The windows are laughing
When they see the frivolous girl
Offering her flower
To a notary clerk

Such fun to sit in the window and watch the spectacle of the street. He thinks that real life is better than films or novels—often sad but more often funny.

"You should have seen the face of that poor bureaucrat—you know, the skinny one, the very shy one—when she made a pass at him. Right in front of the house, there, on the sidewalk. Oh, that girl! She has no scruples. But she's so cute."

Les fenêtres sanglottent
Quand à l'aube falote
Un enterrement cahote
Jusqu'au vieux cimetière

The windows are sobbing
When at pale dawn
A funeral jolts
Toward the old cemetery

To have windows to the street is to rejoice and to sorrow with our neighbors.

"What's the matter? You can't sleep?"

"I was watching this poor Mrs. Jones who had this terrible accident last night. They came to take her body a few minutes ago. I wonder why they do it so early in the morning. It's not yet six o'clock. You should have seen—the whole family was there, on their front lawn, in the rain. He looked completely devastated. The children were crying. Let's get

dressed--go over and see if we can help."

Mais les fenêtres jaccassent
Quand une femme passe
Qui habite l'impassé
Où passent les Messieurs

But the windows are babbling
When a woman passes
Who lives in the alley
Where the gentlemen go

Windows are also hostile, aggressive--peepholes into other peoples' affairs.

La fenêtre bataille
Quand elle est soupirail
D'où le soldat mitraille
Avant de succomber

The window is fighting
When from a cellar's opening
A soldier is strafed
Before succumbing

Windows are for soldiers and war.

The architect sings along with Brel. A window can be so many things--instruments of repression:

Mais les fenêtres gentilles
Se recouvrent de grilles
Si par malheur on crie
Vive la liberté

But the kind windows
Cover themselves with iron grids
When one dares to shout
Long live liberty

Moments of wonder:

Les fenêtres surveillent
L'enfant qui s'émerveille
Dans un cercle de vieilles
À faire ses premiers pas

The windows are watching
In a circle of old women
A child amazed
By his first steps

Gentle smiles at the world:

Les fenêtres sourient
Quand quinze ans trop jolis
Et quinze ans trop grands
S'offrent un premier repas

The windows are smiling
When fifteen years too cute
And fifteen years too tall
Are tasting their first meal

Menacing sights:

Mais les fenêtres menacent
Les fenêtres grimacent
Quand j'ai parfois l'audace
D'appeler un chat un chat

But the windows are menacing
The windows are grimacing
When sometimes I dare
To call a cat a cat

Xenophobia:

Les fenêtres souvent
Soupçonnent ces manants
Qui dorment sur les bancs
Et parlent l'étranger

Often the windows suspect
Those poor fellows
Who sleep on a park's bench
And speak a foreign tongue

But most often the windows are laughing and singing:

Les fenêtres souvent
Se ferment en riant
Se ferment en criant
Quand on y va chanter

Often windows
Shut with laughter
And with happy shouts
When we're about to sing

Windows are for letting happiness inundate the house with summer light. Perhaps the architect is about to find something. He draws little human figures on his tracing paper. He tries to remember his client, her husband, and their children who will visit them from time to time. This house is so important for all of them. They want a house with many windows. They

want a happy house.

Ah! je n'ose pas penser
Qu'elles servent à voiler
Plus qu'à laisser entrer
La lumière de l'été

Non je préfère penser
Qu'une fenêtre fermée
ça ne sert qu'à aider
Les amants à s'aimer.

Ah! I do not dare to think
That they are screening
Rather than welcoming
The Summer's light

No, I prefer to think
That a closed window
Is only helping
Lovers to love

The architect traces the first line of his design.

* * * * *

Architecture is a mystery hidden behind countless
veils. Perhaps Thiis-Evensen has lifted one but only
to show that many more remain.

THE BODY IN THE HOUSE

Harvey E. Sherman

Harvey E. Sherman is an architect and principal of *Homebase*, a design firm that works to make housing and community design based on the concern that American family life has changed dramatically. The crux of his essay is well captured by its original subtitle: "Restimulating bodily memory as a means to reclaim the identities of our bodies in the environment."

Sherman writes about his work: "I have experienced that the unconscious in our minds and bodies often determines housing and community design, which we create from the dynamics of our own family lives. My awareness has come partly from the re-experience of my own family. When we open to our unconscious somatic experience in the environment, memory and blocked relationships begin to open. Our bodies and our environments live in, or *become*, each other, and our culture is reconstructed in each of us." Address: *Homebase*, 2134 Hartford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116 (612-292-1189).

The story of my houses:

I used to walk home from Richards Elementary School in Whitefish Bay, up Berkeley Boulevard north to my house on Lake Drive, which was the next street to the east. I would cut through a neighbor's yard at mid-block. This was an unusually long block, about one-third mile, with a short, steep hill where I would cut through to our house. From there the street sloped gradually up hill to its end at the Village boundary.

This time, it was in a dream that I was coming home from school along Berkeley Boulevard. It was sweet, although I was feeling some loss. This street is lined with beautiful single-family houses: small versions of Georgian mansions, French country houses, large Cape Cods, taut English colonials, borderline Victorian Gothic, and, because this is Wisconsin, a kind of Frank Lloyd Wright colonial. In the front yards, nothing happened except grass,

although landscaping at the house walls was lush. Doctors lived on this street, and middle managers and some lawyers and business owners and their wives and children. Elm trees lined the sidewalks.

Months later in another dream I was again on my way home from school on a cloudy afternoon, and I experienced a feeling of repression or fear within the neighborhood.

Two years ago at Thanksgiving I returned to Milwaukee, and while there I walked "home" from Richards School. The street had not changed much visibly, the boulevard trees were of course different, and the houses seemed newer.

I noticed more children than when we lived there. I passed the houses of childhood friends and acquaintances: Skipper Pevar, Robert Hartke, Fred Brumder,

Diane Friend, Bob Yolles, Betty Lustock, Mark Ackerman. Jerry Cohen's dilapidated house and overgrown but beautiful yard had been replaced by two Frank Lloyd Wright colonials. The hill at mid-block was not as high as I remember.

Near the end of the block, as the hill was sloping to flat, I encountered a quiet boy sweeping leaves on the sidewalk. It was becoming dark and on the other side of a large picture window, inside a brightly lit dining room, I could see his father in a tee-shirt and suspenders standing motionless and looking down.

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The following January 9th, Wednesday, at 1:49 pm a car traveling about 80 miles an hour left the ground at the top of the Berkeley hill and crashed into a tree 114 feet farther down the hill. Four of the five teen-age boys in the car, having taken the afternoon off from Whitefish Bay High School, were killed.¹

The shock of this accident cracked open more memory of my childhood in this neighborhood. I went back again in May. I felt like an intruder, and I drove very slowly along Berkeley Boulevard.

Near the bottom of the hill the sun shone through the new leaves of a maple sapling, which created a pond of light at its base. A little further up the hill one of the remaining elms was missing a large patch of bark near its base. The patch had been creosoted so that it blended with the bark.

Near the top of the hill a fear passed through me. Had this fear always been there? Was it recent? Did I bring it? Was I supposed to be feeling it?

There were no crosses at the base of the elm like there are at the edge of the squatter village southeast of Mexico City, to remember the young children who drowned when their school bus overturned into the pond next to the road which led into the village. The Mexican villagers wanted to remember openly and to grieve for their lost children.

In a similar way, I want some sign from my environment that this accident happened and that those boys had histories that are important to remember, just as mine is.

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My family and my childhood neighborhood on Lake Drive in Milwaukee taught me about who I was supposed to be, but not as much about who I am. Memory of more distant pasts was cut off within me, and I abandoned parts of myself. Without the assurance that there were others who were as I was, I felt shame. The environment in my body changed with my conformity, yet I was unaware of this.

As a teenager, I became more conscious of trying to change my experience of my body. Control and a need for certainty obscured my sensuality. I had no idea that I was replacing the desire of my body with the judgments of our culture about my body's desire. At the time, I wasn't aware, either, that my houses might have something to do with this *replacement* of desire.

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I often think about the six suburban houses that I lived in as a child in Milwaukee. I try to make some sense of why we continually moved, usually to larger, more expensive houses. As a traveler on my parents' journey away from a past that no one would talk about, I experienced the American Dream as disembodied desire, propelled by images of an idealized life.

When I feel anger about being uprooted so often, I can't understand the desire that so many people seem to have for the beautiful suburban houses like the ones that I lived in. Yet I yearn for a house, I yearn for the pleasure of a house, I yearn for the pleasure of the experience of my body.

The yearning can become a substitute for the pleasure, which is fed by images of our houses and our bodies that are given to us by *others* (who are present within each of us).

Such images often obscure the meaning of our own house and body. The ideal of the self-sufficient family in our culture, which provides the context of family insularity, is engendered by images and environments that do not reflect back to us completely who we are as families and individuals and thus do not help us to remember other possibilities for family life, home and community.²

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I have now experienced my father as two fathers, within myself. For the first time, I knew his confusion over his place in a society which was only open to part of him, and how, through his silence, he passed on a lack of trust in his own body, to me.

He treated his houses in the way that he lived in his own body. He did want to possess them, but he did not live in them. He always let them go, and he began again. His story, thus, has a shape, and it continues in me.

In 1985, a year before he died, my father wrote about himself, in the third person, "Had lived and worked on a fruit farm for eight years [he was 15 then]. In 1928, home burned down. Had to leave town in a hurry to Chicago to support himself."³ This may well have unlocked a disembodiment which fed on building, possessing and shedding houses.

I am experiencing that my body and my house live in each other, that my body and my houses become each other. I am learning about the ways I live in my houses from the ways I live in my body. I understand how a house can become a visual symbol and physical manifestation of my own freedom or control, and how being in and around the house reinforces certain behaviors.⁴

In our society the house is a powerful tool of possession and control and, as such, serves to maintain cultural boundaries between what is public and private within each of us. When our histories remain masked within our bodies, that which we say is private may be that which we can't speak, or we may speak in disembodied ways.

Our houses, our environments, including shared and public places, become reflections of this. Thus, the distinction between public and private takes on meaning different from that which is commonly understood.⁵

It seems likely that the degradation and the increasing privatization of the public realm in our cities is connected with how we embody public and private as a culture. Related to this is the barrier which often exists between the public and private sectors in trying

to build responsive living environments.

As an architect who designs houses and has tried to develop housing, I have experienced that the separations we make between public and private in social and political life and in our environments are analogous to the boundary between public and private which exists within or for most of us.⁶

I believe this boundary can exist inside or outside our corporeal bodies, although I'm only beginning to sense its physical nature. My intent is to bring the boundary inside, to possess it in such a manner that I can present and represent my embodied self.⁷

I am discovering that when we are safely able to experience and acknowledge our diverse identities, often buried in the labyrinths of our bodies and in our shared body, we alter our body-environment reciprocity in ways which help us, more naturally, to speak from deeper places within.

NOTES

1. *Milwaukee Journal*, January 10, 1991, p. 1.

2. Eli Zaretsky writes that, "While family life differed vastly among different strata and classes, the early bourgeois family [in sixteenth century England]—the family as a self-contained productive unit—furnished the basis for a new ideology of the family linked with the newly emerging ideas of private property and individualism. Much of this ideology was expressed through religion, particularly Puritanism, which was an inseparable part of the early bourgeois outlook." These ideologies continue within us (see Zaretsky, E., *Capitalism, The Family, and Personal Life*, NY: Perennial Library, 1986, p. 23).

3. This is from an outline autobiography by my father, Eugene Sherman, which I found in 1992 as a result of involvement in a workshop entitled "Origins and Autobiography," which was created and led by Jan Hoistad.

4. I doubt that I would be doing this type of exploration of house and body if I had not read Clare Cooper-Marcus's work (see Cooper, C., "The House as Symbol of Self," in J. Lang, C. Burnette, W. Moleski, & D. Vachon, eds., *Designing for Human Behavior* (Stroudsburg, Pa: Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1974).

5. Different, for example, from the meaning given by Sennet (See Sennet, R., *The Fall of Public Man*, NY: Vintage, 1978).

6. See Leavitt, J., "Two Prototypical Designs for Single Parents: The Congregate House and the New American House," in Ahrentzen, S. & Franck, K. (Eds.), *New Households*, New Housing, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990, 170-185.

7. I first had a sense of this notion, in terms of my body experience, as the result of one part of a performance by Diane Elliot, entitled *Bloodroot*, performed at the Hennepin Center for the Arts in Minneapolis in November 1990.

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Editor

David Seamon
Architecture Department
College of Architecture and Design
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506-2901

Associate Editor

Margaret Boschetti
Associate Professor, Interior Design
School of Human Environmental Sciences
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina 27858-4353

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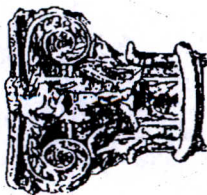
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EAP, c/o David Seamon
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Manhattan, KS 66506



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