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THE HOUSE AS SYMBOL OF SELF

by

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## PREFACE

A few comments on the experiences of the author in writing this paper may be of interest. An initial version was written in March, 1970, and despite favorable reactions from a number of colleagues and the recognized "unfinished" status of a Working Paper, I seemed unable to agree that it was "finished" -- that this, for the time being, was all I had to say. This I interpret as a necessary birth-pang at stepping from one form of research -- so-called objective, quantified, scientific -- into another which might be termed phenomenological. I report this because I think it is a nice example of the "brain-washing" that we in the urban problems, city planning, environmental design... (fill in what you want)... fields have received regarding the necessity that real research in these areas be quantified, and objective. My delaying tactics were, in short, motivated by fear of disapproval from my peers.

I should also comment upon some of the reasons for a change in the focus of my interests. For the past three years I have been deeply involved -- at first as tentative onlooker, and then as full-fledged participant -- in the programs of the many human potential growth centers in the Bay Area: Esalen Institute in Big Sur and San Francisco, Berkeley Center for Human Interaction, the Institute of Human Abilities in Oakland, etc. The programs they offer for educating "normal" people to fulfill more of their potential, to

expand their capacities of self-awareness, are many and varied, embracing encounter groups, sensitivity training, Gestalt therapy, Zen meditation, workshops in self-hypnosis, fantasy, ESP, dreams, bioenergetics, altered states of consciousness, Eastern philosophy... the list is seemingly endless, as indeed is the appetite of the participants for new, mind-expanding experiences. In short, I have changed as a result of these experiences -- and so, of course, has the work that I do.

A vaguely recognized "tension" arose between the part of me concerned with academic objective research, and that part concerned with personal growth experiences, with their emphases on un-intellectual, almost anti-intellectual, concerns. To some degree, that tension was resolved through my discovery of the writings and thoughts of Carl Jung through a University of California Extension course in the Spring of 1970. Focusing on some of his concepts, I was able to resolve some of the split I felt between new and unexplainable experiences, and the intellectual side of my psyche which wanted to have those experiences explained. This paper was originally a term paper for that course in the psychology of Jung which since that time has become one of my chief areas of concern.

This paper -- as explained in the introduction -- is only a first tentative look at some new (for me) ideas. I welcome feedback from readers, examples from your own lives (or dreams) of topics that are discussed, books I should read, areas I should delve into further, quotes from literature that support some of my points. Please feel free to write me c/o Institute of Urban and Regional Development, Room 316, Wurster Hall, University of California, Berkeley 94720, or phone at 415-642-5668 or 415-642-4874.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Katherine Whiteside Taylor whose course "The Psychology of Jung," given as a University of California Extension course in the Spring of 1970 initially aroused my interest in Jungian concepts, symbolism and the unconscious. My thanks are also due to a number of friends and colleagues -- Bill Bostwick, Carolyn Hale, Martin Krieger, Beryl Radin, David Streatfield, Peter Marris, Len Duhl, Russ Ellis, J.B. Jackson -- for reading and commenting upon earlier drafts of this paper; their interest and encouragement during the long birth-process of this piece of work are much appreciated.

But most of all, my thanks are to Al Schwartz, a dear friend with whom I began to learn about realities other than the obvious, who helped me with this paper and knew what I was trying to say, and who died suddenly on Easter Sunday 1970. This paper is for him.

I have got my leave. Bid me farewell my brothers!  
 I bow to you all and take my departure.  
 Here I give back the keys of my door -  
 I give up all my claims to my house.  
 I only ask for last kind words from you.  
 We were neighbors for long, but I received more than I could give.  
 Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out.  
 A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

(Gitanjali, by Radindranath Tagore)

There shone in his face the serenity of knowledge, of one who is no longer confronted with conflict of desires, who has found salvation, who is in harmony with the stream of events, with the stream of life, full of sympathy and compassion, surrendering himself to the stream belonging to the unity of all things.

(Siddhartha, by Herman Hesse)

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## 1. Introduction

In my work of the last few years -- which has comprised sociological surveys of people's responses to the designs of their houses -- I have experienced a nagging doubt that what I was doing was merely scratching the surface of the true meaning of "the house." I have seen my role as that of a communicator of design-related information from the anonymous, largely lower-income public and the architects who were seeking to give them homes more in keeping with their needs. But the role has been uncomfortable, partly because I could not give the architects the concrete facts they were so hungrily looking for, and partly because I felt I was doing a grave disservice to "the public" by reporting their needs in bland tables of statistics on who liked this and who disliked that. There seemed to be something about the house far deeper and more subliminal that I was not admitting, or that my survey and observation investigations were not revealing. The exciting personal discovery of the work of the psychologist Carl Jung has opened a door into another level of my own consciousness which has prompted me to consider the house from a wholly different viewpoint. Hopefully this paper -- a tentative initial thinking-out-loud on the subject -- will enable me to draw together some first thoughts on the unconscious and symbolic meaning of the house.

In the first section of this paper, three major Jungian concepts will be discussed: the collective unconscious, the archetype



and the symbol. In the section that follows the concept of the house as symbol-of-self will be applied to some aspects of primitive architecture, and to some prevailing attitudes towards traditional and non-traditional housing forms in the contemporary United States. A thesis developed by Lord Raglan -- that the house originated as a temple -- will then be examined at some length, and applied to the notion that the house-self linkage may be a Western, microcosmic manifestation of the universe-self identity preached in many facets of Eastern philosophy. This theme is elaborated with reference to the work of the French historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, and in a final section where house-as-self symbolism is manifested in literature, poetry and dreams is suggested as possible "evidence" from the unconscious of the close identity between Man and his environment.

This paper is essentially about symbolism, and since it is within the unconscious that the true meaning of symbols lies, it is to evidence from the unconscious that we must look. Truths within the unconscious about "the house" could be examined in a number of ways: we could look at the concrete reality of the house and attempt to find within its design features motivated by unconscious needs; we could consider attitudes towards the house and look for unconscious meaning behind some of the articulated feelings; or we might examine written accounts of dreams or fantasies that deal with the house and look for the symbolism they imply. In this paper, each of these approaches to the unconscious will be touched upon.

The reader must expect no startling, all-embracing conclusion; there is none. This is a speculative think-piece and is deliberately

left open-ended in the hope that it will motivate the reader, and the author, to think further and more deeply on this subject.

## 2. Jung's Concepts of the Collective Unconscious, the Archetype, and the Symbol

Three of the most significant contributions of Carl Jung to the understanding of the human psyche are the concepts of the collective unconscious, the archetype, and the symbol. Freud postulated an individual unconscious in which are deposited the suppressed and repressed memories of infancy and childhood, all of which passed from consciousness into the unconscious as they became either irrelevant or too painful for the conscious mind to embrace. Theoretically, the psyche keeps these memories "in storage" until they are re-awakened into consciousness by the medium of the dream, or its waking equivalent, free association.

Initially embracing Freud's theories, Jung became increasingly dissatisfied as his studies of persistent motifs in his patients' dreams and fantasies, and in primitive mythology and folk tales, revealed what seemed to be universal patterns which could not be accounted for solely by the theory of an individual unconscious. As he noted the appearance of similar motifs throughout time and across widely separated cultures, he began to postulate the theory of an individual unconscious plus a universal or collective unconscious in which are deposited certain basic and timeless nodes of psychic energy, which he termed "archetypes."

Since Jacobi has termed the archetype "...a profound riddle surpassing our rational comprehension..."<sup>1</sup> it seems an impossible

<sup>1</sup>Jolande Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957.

task to try and define it. It precedes all conscious experience and therefore cannot be fully explained through conscious thought processes. Perhaps one of the simplest analogies is that offered by Jacobi of a kind of "psychic mesh" with nodal points within the unconscious, a structure which somehow has shaped and organized the myriad contents of the psyche into potential images, emotions, ideas and patterns of behavior. The archetype can only provide a potential or possibility of representation in the conscious mind, for as soon as we encounter it through dreams, fantasies or rational thought, the archetype becomes clothed in images of the concrete world and is no longer an archetype. For the archetype as such is nonperceptible and only potentially present; as soon as it becomes represented or actualized in the conscious realm of the psyche, we are encountering a representation of the archetype, or as Jung termed it, an "archetypal image." For the purposes of this paper we are more interested in the archetypal image, or how the archetype is made manifest in form, idea or myth, than in the unfathomable archetype per se.

This brings us to a consideration of the third of Jung's major contributions to the understanding of the human psyche -- the notion of the symbol. As Jacobi has written:

Man's need to understand the world and his experience in it symbolically as well as realistically may be noted early in the lives of many children. The symbolic imaginative view of the world is just as organic a part of the child's life as the view transmitted by the sense organs. It represents a natural and spontaneous striving which adds to man's biological bond a parallel and equivalent psychic bond, thus enriching life by another dimension -- and it is eminently this dimension that makes man what he is. It is the root of all creative activity...

<sup>2</sup>Jacobi, op. cit., p. 47.

If we can think of the archetype as a node of psychic energy within the unconscious, then the symbol is the medium by which it becomes manifest in the here and now of space and time. Thus a symbol, although it has objective visible reality, always has behind it a hidden, profound and only partly intelligible meaning which represents its roots in the archetype. A symbol always means more than its objective reality.

The symbol awakens intimations, speech can only explain... The symbol strikes its roots in the most secret depth of the soul, language skims over the surface of understanding like a soft breeze... Words make the infinite finite, symbols carry the mind beyond the finite world of becoming, into the realm of infinite being.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not a person sees something as a symbol depends on two factors. First, the attitude of the observer, for some individuals always insist on embracing only what is concretely and undeniably present, while others looking for the hidden meaning of things may approach the same "objective fact" with an attitude of openness to its symbolic meaning. Second, it depends on the nature of the object; with some, its concrete meaning is so clear that its symbolism may only be appreciated unconsciously -- such a case I would suggest is the house. In other cases the object is all symbol -- such as the crucifix, the yin and yang, the Star of David -- and it is difficult to approach it in any other way than as a symbol.

Perhaps the most important Jungian notion of the symbol for our purposes is its function of reconciling pairs of opposites. A symbol is "alive" only as long as it fulfills this bridging or integrating function of drawing together the raw material of the

<sup>3</sup>J.J. Bachofen, "Versuch uber die Grabersymbolik der Alten," as quoted in Jacobi, op. cit., p. 78.

collective unconscious with the form provided by consciousness into a meaningful whole. Jung termed this symbol-forming function of the psyche, its ability to synthesize pairs of opposites, its transcendent function.

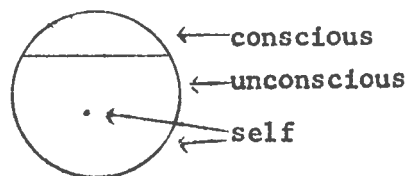
Although impossible for most of us to define or describe, we are all aware of the existence of something we call "self." It is in the nature of Man that he constantly seeks a rational explanation of the inexplicable, and so he struggles with the question, what is self? why here? why now? In trying to clothe this tantalizing and invisible self, to give it concrete substance, man grasps at physical forms or symbols which are close and meaningful to him, and which are visible and definable. The first and most consciously selected form to represent self is the body, for it appears to be both the outward manifestation, and the encloser, of self. On a less conscious level, I believe, man also frequently selects the house, that basic protector of his internal environment (beyond skin and clothing) to represent or symbolize what is tantalizingly unrepresentable.

The French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, has suggested that just as the house and the non-house are the basic divisions of geographic space, so the self and the non-self represent the basic divisions of psychic space. The house both encloses space (the house interior) and excludes space (everything outside it); thus it is at the same time both a basic divider and reconciler of the opposites of house and non-house. The house thus has two very important and different components: its interior and its facade.

It seems possible, then, that in perceiving house as a symbol of self, Man sees its interior as self viewed from within; it is his own created and changing symbol, reflecting the essence of self as viewed by self. And he sees the exterior as the symbol of self which he wishes to present to the outside world, or self as viewed by others. Thus in choosing the house as a symbol-of-self, Man has fixed upon an object with both an inside and an outside, an intimate interior and a public exterior. The house therefore nicely reflects how Man sees himself, with both an intimate interior, or self as viewed from within and revealed only to those intimates who are invited inside, and a public exterior (the "persona" or mask, in Jungian terms) or the self that we choose to display to others.<sup>4</sup>

Most of us have had the experience of moving house, and of finding the new abode initially strange, unwelcoming, perhaps even hostile. But with time, we get used to the house and its quirks, and it seems almost as though it gets used to us; we can relax when we return to it, put our feet up, become "ourselves." But why in this particular "box" should we be ourselves more than in any other? It seems as though the personal space bubble which we carry with us and which is an almost tangible extension of our self, expands to embrace the house we have designated as "ours." As we become accustomed to, and lay claim to, this little niche in the world which is exclusively ours, we project something of ourselves onto its physical fabric. The furniture we install,

<sup>4</sup>For the purposes of this paper, we will accept the Jungian view of "self" which he saw as both the core of the unconscious and the totality of the conscious and the unconscious. To illustrate with a diagram:



the way we arrange it, the pictures we hang, the plants we buy and tend to, all are expressions of our image of ourselves, all are messages about ourselves that we want to convey back to ourselves, and to the few intimates that we invite into this, our house. Thus, the house might be viewed as both an avowal of the self -- that is, the psychic messages are moving from self to the objective symbol of self -- and as a revelation of the nature of self -- that is, the messages are moving from objective symbol back to the self. It is almost as if the house-self continuum could be thought of as both the negative and positive of a film, simultaneously.

If this "explanation" of the house as ~~symbol-of-self~~ seems abstruse, and to be saying both less and more than the words themselves, then that is the nature of symbolism. Symbols can be thought of as points at which the plane of concrete reality and that of symbolic reality meet and create a constellation which is more than the sum of its parts. Jung has written of the symbol that it is

...neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal. It is always both.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. House as Symbol-of-Self: Jungian Concepts Applied to Primitive and Contemporary Architecture

As Lewis Mumford has pointed out, and Amos Rapoport recently reiterated, Man was a symbol-making animal long before he was a tool-maker; he reached high degrees of specialization in song, dance, ritual, religion and myth before he did in the material

<sup>5</sup>C.G. Jung, "Psychology and Alchemy," as quoted in Jacobi, op. cit., p. 98.

aspects of culture. Rapoport maintains that . . . "Man's achievements have been due more to his need to utilize his internal resources than to his needs for control of the physical environment or more food"<sup>6</sup> For example, among the primitive stone age Kona tribe of New Guinea, religion and ritual life are so complex that special separate villages built to a specific plan are constructed merely to house their ritual dances.<sup>7</sup> Describing the rich symbolism of Africa, Rapoport notes:

Among the Dogon and Bambara of Mali every object and social event has a symbolic as well as a utilitarian function. Houses, household objects, and chairs have all this symbolic quality, and the Dogon civilization, otherwise relatively poor, has several thousand symbolic elements. The farm plots and the whole landscape of the Dogon reflect this cosmic order. The villages are built in pairs to represent heaven and earth, and fields are cleared in spirals because the world has been created spirally. The villages are laid out in the way the parts of the body lie with respect to each other, while the house of the Dogon, or paramount chief, is a model of the universe at a smaller scale.<sup>8</sup>

It would seem then that there is almost an inverse relationship between technological advances and the cultivation of symbol and ritual.<sup>9</sup> Small wonder, then, that for Western man, the recognition of the symbolism of what we do, how we live, and the houses we live in, has been all but lost.

In a recent exhaustive study of the determinants of house form in primitive and vernacular architecture, Amos Rapoport concludes that the traditional determinist view of house shape and

<sup>6</sup> Amos Rapoport, House Form and Culture. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1969, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> The need for a re-fostering of ceremonial, celebration and ritual in our lives has recently been eloquently expounded by the theologian Harvey Cox in The Feast of Fools.



size being determined by climate, building materials, technology, and site is a dangerously narrow approach, and that equally important influences have been socio-cultural values, religion and symbolism. He points out, for example, that in similar regions of Africa where from a climatic and materials point of view one would have expected similar housing forms, you find square and round houses according to whether the religious beliefs of the tribe required the dwelling to be felicitously oriented to the cosmos or not.

Given a certain climate, the availability of certain materials, and the constraints and capabilities of a given level of technology, what finally decides the form of the dwelling, and moulds the spaces and their relationships, is the vision that people have of the ideal life.

...Buildings and settlements are the visible expression of the relative importance attached to different aspects of life and the varying ways of perceiving reality. The house, the village and the town express the fact that societies share certain generally accepted goals and life values. The forms of primitive and vernacular buildings are less the result of individual desires than of the aims and desires of the unified group for an ideal environment. They therefore have symbolic values, since symbols serve a culture by making concrete its ideas and feelings.<sup>10</sup>

Since Rapoport is here speaking of primitive society, where the notion of self as individual and different from the tribe is barely perceptible, it is perhaps not surprising to find house form symbolic of the culture or society as a whole.

In a recent study of how contemporary California suburbanites chose their homes, Carl Werthman arrived at conclusions similar to those of Rapoport, but here it is both the self as individual and self in a certain status-position in society that are the determining factors in choice of house form.<sup>11</sup> Extroverted, self-made businessmen

<sup>10</sup> Amos Rapoport, op. cit., p.47.

<sup>11</sup> Carl Werthman, The Social Meaning of the Physical Environment, Ph.D. dissertation in sociology, University of California, Berkeley, 1968.

will tend to choose somewhat ostentatious, mock-Colonial "display" homes; while people in the helping professions whose goals revolve around personal satisfaction rather than financial success tend to opt for the quieter, inward-looking architect-designed styles conforming to current standards of "good design." Thus most house buyers are looking for styles that will fulfill their self-image and be symbols-of-self.

In contemporary Western cultures a premium is put on originality, on having a house that is unique and different from the others on the street, for the inhabitants who identify with the box they occupy are themselves struggling to maintain some sense of personal uniqueness in an increasingly conformist world. On the other hand, one's house must not be too way-out, for that would label the inhabitant as a "nonconformist" and that, for many Americans, is a label to be avoided.

In traditional cultures, on the other hand, "novelty is not only not sought after but is thought of as undesirable."<sup>12</sup> The self as individual is a concept that in many such societies is barely emerging; thus the house is a symbol of membership in the tribe whose collective identity is often made manifest in the similar material objects fashioned by its members. The houses are constructed in a well-understood, traditional form, and each is built by the family who will then live within it. The contemporary house-buyer, on the other hand, is not only far-removed from the skills and traditions of house-building, but must rely on a gamut of professional "others" (architects, builders, developers, engineers) to provide him with the kind of house that jibes with his

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<sup>12</sup>Rapoport, op. cit., p.7.

self-image. It is small wonder that researchers (the present author included) are increasingly pressed to improve the lines of communication between the "providers" and the "users" of the contemporary urban environment.

The house as symbol-of-self is deeply engrained in the American ethos (albeit unconsciously for many), and this may partly explain the inability of society to come to grips with "the housing problem" -- which is quite within technological and financial capabilities to solve and which it persistently delegates to a low level in the hierarchy of budgetary values. America is the home of the self-made man, and if the house is seen (even unconsciously) as the symbol of self, then it is small wonder that there is a resistance to subsidized housing or the State providing houses for people. The frontier image of the man clearing the land and building a cabin for himself and his family is not far behind us. To a culture inbred with this image, the house-self identity is particularly strong. Little wonder then that in some barely conscious way, society has decided to penalize those who, through no fault of their own, cannot build, buy or rent their own housing. They are not self-made men.

Numbers of studies in England, Australia and the United States have indicated that when asked to describe their ideal house, people of all incomes and backgrounds will tend to describe a free-standing, square, detached, single-family house and yard. Whether the attachment to this form is the form itself, or the fact that it subsumes territorial rights over a small portion of the earth, is difficult to say, but we do know that almost universally, the image of the high-rise apartment building for family living is rejected.

An apartment is not seen as "home," for that can only be seen as a free-standing house-on-the-ground. According to a recent survey of 748 men and women in 32 metropolitan areas in the U.S. carried out by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan, about 85% said they preferred living in a single-family house rather than an apartment. Although 70% of the sample were already living in single-family houses, this preference is not necessarily a rationalization of current habits, since two-thirds of those currently living in multi-family dwellings also said they preferred living in a private house.<sup>13</sup>

One could argue that people have been conditioned to want such a dwelling through advertising, model homes salesmanship, and the image of the "good life" portrayed on Television. To a certain extent this must be true, but these media are in turn only reflecting what seems to be a universal need for a house form in which the self and family unit can be seen as separate, unique, private, and protected.

The high-rise apartment building, made possible by the combination of such technical innovations as reinforced concrete, steel-frame construction, central heating, and the elevator, is rejected by most Americans as a "home" because it gives one no territory on the ground, violates the archaic image of what a house is, and, I would suggest, is perceived unconsciously as a threat to one's self-image as a separate and unique personality. The house form in which people are being asked to live is not a symbol-of-self, but a symbol of a stereotyped, anonymous filing-cabinet collection of selves. Even though we may make apartments

<sup>13</sup>William Michelson, "Most People Don't Want What Architects Want," in Transaction, July/August 1968.

larger with many of the appurtenances of the suburban house, it still may be a long time before the majority of lower- and middle-income Americans will accept this as a valid image of "home."<sup>14</sup> It is too great a threat to their self-image. It is possible that the vandalism inflicted on high-rise housing projects is, in part, an angry reaction of the inhabitants to this blatant violation of self-image.

The mobile hippie house-on-wheels is another instance of a new housing form greatly threatening people's image of what a house should be. The van converted to mobile home and the wooden gable-roofed house built on the back of a truck are becoming fairly common sights in a community such as Berkeley. It is tempting to speculate that this house form has been adopted by hippies, not only because of its cheapness as living accommodation, but also because its mobility and uniqueness of form is a reflection of where many hippies are in psychic terms -- concern with self, with their own uniqueness, with the desirability of inward exploration, with the freedom of being without roots so as to move and swing with whatever happens. Hippies view themselves as different from the average person and so they have chosen to live in house forms -- converted trucks, tree-houses in Canyon, California, geodesic domes and Indian teepees in wilderness communes -- which reflect that uniqueness.

It was perhaps to be expected that eventually the "establishment" would react. You can't lay down the law about hair length or

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<sup>14</sup>The urban rich accept apartments because they generally have a house somewhere else; the elderly seem to adapt well to apartments because they offer privacy with the possibility of many nearby neighbors, minimum upkeep problems, security, communal facilities, etc.

clothes, but you can about where people live. In February 1970, the City of Berkeley passed a new ordinance which makes it illegal to live in a converted truck or van; the residents of these new "houses" mobilized and formed the Rolling Homes Association, but it was too late to prevent the ordinance being passed.<sup>15</sup> When others too openly display the appurtenance (clothes, hair-styles, houses) of a new self-image, it is perceived as a threat to the values and images of the majority community. The image of the self as a house-on-wheels was too much for the establishment to accept.

Even the edge-of-town mobile home park occupied by the young retireds and the transient lower middle class is somehow looked down upon by the average American home owner as violating the true image of "home" and "neighborhood." A person who lives in a house that moves must somehow be as unstable as the structure he inhabits. Very much the same view is held by stable house owners in Marin County about the house-boat dwellers in Sausalito. They are "different," "Bohemian," "nonconformists," and their extraordinary choice of dwelling reflects these values. Again the "self" and the "house" are seen as reflections of each other.

The contrasting views which people of different socio-economic classes in the U.S. have of their houses reflects again the house as a symbol of self in a self-world relationship. The greater are people's feelings of living in a dangerous and hostile world with constant threats to the "self," the greater is the likelihood that they will regard their house as a shell, a fortress into which to retreat. The sociologist Lee Rainwater has shown that this image of the self, and of the house, is true for low-income

<sup>15</sup>A similar ordinance was passed in San Francisco in March 1971.

blacks (particularly women) in the ghettos and housing projects of this country.<sup>16</sup> With increasing economic and psychic stability (and in some cases, these are linked) a person may no longer regard his house as a fortress-to-be-defended, but as an attractive, individual expression of self-and-family with picture windows so that neighbors can admire the inside. Thus, for many in the middle-income bracket, the house is an expression of self, rather than a defender of self. The self-and-environment are seen in a state of mutual regard, instead of a state of combat.

The fact that the decoration of the house interior often symbolizes the inhabitants' feelings about self is one that has long been recognized. It has even been suggested that the rise in popularity of the profession of interior decorator is in some degree linked to people's inability to make these decisions for themselves since they're not sure what their "self" really is. The phenomenon of people, particularly women, re-arranging the furniture in their house at times of psychic turmoil or changes-in-self, is a further suggestion that the house is very intimately entwined with the psyche.

An interesting contemporary development in this regard is the interior decoration of the urban commune. In a number of examples in the Berkeley-Oakland area visited by the author, it was very noticeable that the bedrooms, the only private spaces of the residents, were decorated in an attractive and highly personal way symbolic of the "self" whose space it was. The living rooms, the communal territory of six or eight different personalities, however, were only sparsely decorated since, presumably, the problem of

<sup>16</sup>L. Rainwater, "Fear and the House-as-Haven," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, January 1966, pp. 23-31.

getting agreement on taste from a number of disparate and highly individual "selves" was too great to overcome. Interestingly, the more normal family house may display an opposite arrangement, with bedrooms functionally but uninterestingly decorated, and the living room, where guests and relatives are entertained, containing the best furniture, family mementos, art purchases, photos, etc., and representing the collective family "self."

In an as yet unpublished study of living rooms, social status, and attitudes, Edward Laumann and James House of the University of Michigan Department of Sociology have found that the decoration, arrangement and furnishings of the living room indicate with rough but measurable accuracy where you fall on the socio-economic status index, how much better (or worse) your position is than that of your father, your attitude towards the respective roles that husband and wife play in the home and, in the case of Protestants and Catholics, your idea of your relationship with God.<sup>17</sup> The presence or absence of certain objects, they have found, are good if not perfect clues to status and attitudes. It is the living room rather than any other room in the house which provides these clues because

...The living room is the area where "performances" for guests are most often given, and hence the "setting" of it must be appropriate to the performance. Thus we expect that more than any other part of the home, the living room reflects the individual's conscious and unconscious attempts to express a social identity. Its decor, in contrast to that of other rooms, is most likely to reflect decisions made on criteria of taste and style, rather than purely economic grounds.

For example, on a high-low-status scale they found sleek functional furniture, abstract paintings, sculpture and large potted

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<sup>17</sup> Notes on an interview with Professor Edward Laumann on "Living Rooms, Social Status, and Attitudes," by Christopher Carey, University of Michigan News Service, Ann Arbor, Michigan (mimeo, no date).



plants to be typical at the "high" end of the scale, and floral designed carpets, translucent curtains, mixed furniture styles, and religious objects to cluster at the "low" end of the scale. Granting that the order of things along the high-low status scale may only reflect a family's ability to pay, Laumann and House chose a random sample of 41 homes from among 186 respondents (all of which were one- and two-family home dwellers in Detroit) who had annual incomes over \$15,000 and presumably had enough money to decorate any way they wanted. They found that those with a traditional decor -- French or Early American furniture, wall mirrors, small potted plants and/or artificial flowers, paintings of people or still lifes, clocks -- tended to be the white Anglo-Saxon Establishment, occupying similar occupations and status positions to their fathers. Those with a more modern decor, characterized by modern furniture, wood walls, abstract paintings, solid carpets, and abstract designed curtains, tended to be upwardly mobile, non Anglo-Saxon Catholics whose families had migrated to the United States from southern and eastern Europe after 1900. This group seemed to be responding more to the newly emerging decorative norms decreed by the "tastemakers" rather than the norms set by the established upper classes.

The nouveaux riches have a strong need to validate their new found status, yet they are not acceptable socially by the traditional upper classes. Since their associations do not clearly validate their position, they turn to conspicuous consumption. However, conspicuous consumption must be done with "taste" if it is to validate one's claim to high status in respects other than mere money. Hence the nouveaux riches seek to discover what are the latest and most chic norms of consumption. Discovery of such norms is easy in a society that possesses a class of professional tastemakers (for example, architects, interior decorators, fashion designers)

and taste-making media (ranging from Better Homes and Gardens through the New Yorker). Normative consumption trends are also evident in the styles of decor adopted by business and government for their new offices and stores. In all cases, the norms today favor modern decor. The nouveaux riches, then, spurn the style of the traditional upper class in favor of the newer fashions. This serves a double purpose: to establish their tastefulness and hence status, while symbolically showing their disdain for the "snobby" traditionals.

The findings of this study of decorative styles of living rooms seem to tie in well with the result of Werthman's study of choices of house styles, for in both cases there appears to be a strong correlation between the style selected and the self-image of the consumer. Both the house facade and the interior design seem to be selected so that they reflect how the person views himself in relation to society and the outside world, and how he wishes to present his "self" to family and friends.

These are just a few examples of how the house-as-self linkage becomes manifest in individual and societal behavior and attitudes. No doubt the reader can add many more instances from his personal experience. The thesis is not a new one. But it is important to try and link these contemporary conscious attitudes with the beliefs of other cultures, far removed in space and time; if Jung's concept of the collective unconscious has any validity, then we would expect to find comparable house-self symbolism in all places where Man is living, or has lived. An examination of the recent work of Lord Raglan, British anthropologist and historian, reveals that there are strikingly similar beliefs about the symbolism of the house in many widely contrasting cultures. The next section will discuss his findings.

#### 4. Raglan's Thesis of the House-as-Temple and Eliade's Thesis of Sacred and Profane Space

In a recent exhaustive study of the origins of the house, Lord Raglan presents the hypothesis that houses were originally neither shelters nor dwellings, but temples. We shall explore Raglan's ideas in some detail since his evidence provides a strong background to the major thesis of this paper: notably, that the recognition of some connection between house and self is just the first glimmering of a much larger and more complex Man-environment identification.

Raglan presents anthropological and archeological evidence to suggest that the first person to have a house in many tribes and societies in the world was the divine king or queen. Gradually, similar constructions and design elements began to be incorporated into the house of the earthly king or ruler -- the palace. And eventually the ordinary people had houses, but these had in them many features reminiscent of the temple; for example, in many societies, ceremonies and rituals involved with the choosing of a site, the construction of the building, and the moving in of the family. In many parts of the world it was necessary for a human sacrifice to be performed on the site of a new temple or palace, but generally an animal sacrifice was sufficient for the consecration of a house-site. Again, sacrifices were in order before the building was occupied to propitiate the earth spirits beneath the site. The only survivals into our own time are perhaps the ceremonies of roof-raising, laying the foundation stone, and the custom of inviting friends and relatives to a housewarming.

Just as the entrance to the temple was, and still is, regarded as the dividing line between the sacred and the profane worlds and is suitably embellished to ward off evil spirits which might attempt to enter the inner sanctum, so the threshold of the house is regarded as one of the most important dividing lines between inner private space and the other public world. Even if few living in the Western World would admit today to a belief in household spirits, there are still parts of the world where there are strong beliefs about how the house should be entered (right foot first among country dwellers in Finland, Syria, Egypt, and Yorkshire), and the custom of carrying the bride over the threshold is widespread throughout the world and has been recorded since ancient Roman times. Among contemporary city dwellers, the sanctity of the threshold is still revered by such behavior as removing one's hat and wiping one's shoes before entering the dwelling, or in Arab houses, by removing one's shoes. In China, the orientation of the door towards the south, and in Madagascar towards the west, are examples of the importance of a felicitous orientation of the door to the cosmos.<sup>18</sup> Among orthodox Jews, the Commandments are attached to the doorpost of the house, for they have been ordered: "Thou shalt write them on the posts of thy house and on thy gates." (Deuteronomy, VI, 9) In North of England working class districts, the daily routine of polishing the front door knob and whitening the door step is a further contemporary example of special, almost ritualistic, attention paid to the threshold.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Deffontaines, "The Place of Believing," extracted from Géographie et religions, in Landscape, Vol. 2., No. 3, Spring 1953, p. 26.

The location of the threshold varies in different cultures,<sup>19</sup> and it may well be that this location vis-à-vis the "outside world" is symbolic of how the people as individuals relate to the rest of society. In the American house, the front yard is generally unfenced and part of the streetscape, and may be viewed as semi-public territory; the real threshold to the house is the front door itself. This may reflect an American interpersonal trait of openness to strangers and of (initial, at least) friendliness to people they hardly know. In England, however, the fenced front garden with a gate puts the initial threshold at some distance from the house itself, and is probably symbolic of the greater English reserve at inviting strangers into their houses and at "opening up" to people before they know them very well. The compound of a Moselm house puts the threshold even more forcibly and deliberately at some distance from the house, and reflects the extreme privacy required by individuals, particularly women, from strangers and neighbors. (Could this reflect a greater inability among Moslems than, say, Americans to view themselves -- without symbolic architectural barriers -- as separate, individual, and inviolate "selves"?)

In a section of his book on ownership, Raglan points out that whether or not the male in the family owns the house (and there are many cases among North American Indian and African tribes where the house is actually the property of the woman), the wife is usually the de facto ruler of the household. This may explain the greater tendency of women to dream of themselves as a house. Once outside the confines of the house, the situation is generally

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<sup>19</sup> Lapaport, op. cit., p. 80.

reversed. This may be a partial explanation of the American male's interest in barbecuing, for once outside, he is boss and can be the cook; it may also account for the growing interest among Western European and American men to build by hand a second home "in the woods" where the man is once again in command.

One of the principal tasks of the woman of the house was, traditionally, to keep the hearth fire perpetually burning. Raglan suggests that the hearth was originally conceived as a microcosm of the sun. Cooking took place outside, or in a separate building, and the sacred hearth was seen as a parallel to the sacred flame in the temple, not something to be cooked on, but a symbol of the sun which must never be allowed to go out for fear the sun itself would go out.<sup>20</sup>

It is probable that fire existed before Man built his first dwellings. Pierre Deffontaines has suggested that the house originated as a shelter for this sacred fire that must not be allowed to go out.<sup>21</sup> Among the ancient Greeks the sacred fire was first enclosed in a special precinct, which later was surrounded by the living quarters of the family. The dwelling thus came into existence to protect the fire, and the Greeks maintain it was the sacred hearth that inspired man to build the house. In the houses of northern China, the "kang," a large central hearth of brick and earth, is thought of and referred to as "the mother of the dwelling." Deffontaines reports that until recently in houses in rural Sardinia, the hearth fire was kept perpetually alight and

<sup>20</sup> In most parts of the world, cooking was one of a number of taboo activities (others included childbirth and death) which could not take place within the house.

<sup>21</sup> Deffontaines, op. cit., p. 26.

only extinguished when someone died, for the period of mourning. The belief that the house had its traditional beginning in the protection of fire is still maintained in Madagascar where fire must be the first item brought into a newly completed dwelling.<sup>22</sup>

The hearth was, until quite recently, still the focus of family life in England, where wives left behind by their soldier husbands in World War II were enjoined to "keep the home fires burning." Although central heating is becoming more and more common in England, and anti-pollution laws prevent the burning of coal in open fires in many parts of the country, many families have replaced the perpetual hearth with an electric heater displaying artificial smouldering "logs." It is not easy, after many centuries of veneration of the hearth, to replace it overnight with concealed hot air vents and to feel that something of the sanctity of the home has not been lost.<sup>23</sup>

The ritual of keeping the hearth alight because it represents the sun can be termed a cosmic ritual. Such rituals are based upon the belief that one can affect the macrocosm by acting upon a microcosm. There are many indications that temples of various faiths have been built as symbols of the universe, with the dome or high vaulted roof as symbolic of the heavens, and the floor symbolic of earth below. Raglan reports "...in the rituals of the Pawnees the earth lodge is made typical of man's abode on earth; the floor is the plain, the wall the distant horizon, the

<sup>22</sup> Ibid,

<sup>23</sup> An interesting parallel reported in the San Francisco Chronicle in May 1971 told of the demolition of a soup kitchen in the Mission District where the only item to be saved for incorporation in a new old men's hostel was the much loved symbolic hearth.

domed the arching sky, the central opening, the zenith, dwelling place of Tirawa, the invisible power which gives life to all created beings."<sup>24</sup>

Since one of the most widespread primitive beliefs about the creation of the world was that it originated from an egg, so many of the first cosmic manifestations in temples and houses were round or spherical in shape. In time, the belief in the world conceived as circular began to be replaced by a belief in the world as square, and starting in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and spreading later to China, India, Rome, North America and Africa, the temple and the house as cosmic manifestations began to be built on a square or rectangular plan, instead of a circular one.<sup>25</sup> People as far apart as the Eskimos, Egyptians, Maoris, and tribes of the North Cameroons believed that the sky/heavens were held by four corner posts which had to be protected from decay or damage, and whose guardian deities had to be placated by ritual. The weathercock on the roof which is believed in parts of England to crow to wind-spirits in the four quarters and ward them off is one of the few contemporary western manifestations of the ancient cosmic significance of the square and the four cardinal points.

Thus, Raglan traces four main stages in the development of house building, each paralleling or following contemporary fashions in the construction of temples or houses for the gods. Early hunters and food gatherers probably made their homes in caves or by twisting the branches of growing trees. In Neolithic times in Eurasia, Egypt, and North America, the beehive-shaped hut appeared,

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. p. 138.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. P. 158.



incorporating three new ideas: a perfect circle drawn on the ground, a pit dug within it, and a dome of branches or wicker work created over it. A later development was the rondavel, a more sophisticated development of the beehive with a circular outer wall about five feet high, on which a conical roof is placed. Still existing as survivals in large parts of Africa south of the Sahara, as well as in central Italy, Provence, parts of Portugal, Spain, India and Siberia, the rondavel began to be replaced around 1400 B.C. by square or rectangular dwellings. This represented a complete break with the past, and necessitated knowledge of how to lay out a right angle and make some form of framed truss. In most parts of the world, the rectangular house predominates today, but the circular shape has often been retained in the form of the dome for religious or important secular buildings (for example, city hall, the state capitol, the opera house), recalling much earlier times when the circle had specific cosmic significance.

To summarize then, Raglan's thesis is that the house form (derived from the form of the temple) symbolized Man's early beliefs concerning the form and shape of the universe.

Although to some extent repetitious of Raglan's thesis, it is worthwhile considering too the work of the noted French historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, for his conclusions on the nature and meaning of "sacred space" are very significant in our understanding of the symbolism of the house.

In a section of his book, The Sacred and the Profane, entitled "Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred,"<sup>26</sup> Eliade describes how

<sup>26</sup> Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1959.

for many primitive societies, space was not homogenous; some parts were seen as sacred while all other space around was a formless, foreign expanse. In settling a new territory, man was faced with both a horizontal expanse of unknown land, and a complete lack of "vertical" connections to other cosmic levels, such as the heavens and the underworld. In defining and consecrating a spot as sacred, be it a shrine, a temple, a ceremonial house, Man gave himself a fixed point, a point of reference from which to structure the world about him. In doing so, he consciously emulated the gods who many believed created the world by starting at a fixed point, be it an egg, the navel of a slain monster, or whatever, moving out to the surrounding territory. As Hebrew tradition retells it: "The Most Holy One created the world like an embryo. As the embryo grows from the navel, so God began to create the world by the navel and from there it spread out in all directions."<sup>27</sup> Through finding a sacred space, generally with the aid of signs or the revelations of animals, man began to transform the shapeless, homogeneous chaos of space into his world. "By occupying it and, above all, by settling in it, man symbolically transforms it into a cosmos through a ritual repetition of the cosmogony. What is to become 'our world' must first be 'created,' and every creation has a paradigmatic model, the creation of the universe by the gods."<sup>28</sup>

Once located, the sacred space had to be consecrated, and this very often took the form of a construction which had at its center a pillar, pole or tree.<sup>29</sup> This was seen as a symbol

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>29</sup> The parallel of the U.S. astronauts placing the flag pole on the moon's surface bears thinking about.

for the cosmic axis and the means by which communication was made possible from one cosmic level to another. Whether seen as a ladder, as in Jacob's dream, or as a sacred pillar as worshipped by the Celts and Germans before their conversion to Christianity, the vertical upright was an almost universal symbol for passage to the worlds of the gods above and below the earth. The Kwakiutl of British Columbia believe that a copper pole passes through the three cosmic levels (underworld, earth and sky) and it is visible in the sky as the Milky Way.

But the work of the gods, the universe, is repeated and imitated by men at their own scale. The "axis mundi," seen in the sky in the form of the Milky Way, appears in the ceremonial house in the form of a sacred pole. It is the trunk of a cedar tree, 30-35 feet high, over half of which projects through the roof. This pillar plays a primary part in the ceremonies; it confers a cosmic structure on the house. In the ritual songs the house is called "our world" and the candidates for initiation, who live in it, proclaim: "I am at the Center of the World...I am at the Post of the World."<sup>30</sup>

Thus, having created a sacred place in the homogeneity of space, man erected a symbol for the cosmic axis and thus centered this place at the Center of the World. But, Eliade maintains, there could be many Centers of the World, and indeed the Achilpa people of the Arunta tribe of Australian aborigines always carried the sacred pole with them so as not to be far from the Center of its link with other worlds. The religious man of fixed settlements, although he knew that his country and village and temple all constituted the navel of the universe .

...also wanted his own house to be at the Center and to be an "imago mundi". . . (he) could only live in a space opening upward, where the break in plane was symbolically assured and hence communication with the "other world," the transcendental

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36.

world, was ritually possible. Of course the sanctuary -- the Center par excellence -- was there, close to him . . . but he felt the need to live at the Center always. . .<sup>31</sup>

Thus it was that the house, like the temple and the city, became a symbol of the universe with Man, like God, at its center and in charge of its creation. The house, like the temple or shrine, was sanctified by ritual.

By assuming the responsibility of creating the world that he has chosen to inhabit, he not only cosmicizes chaos but also sanctifies his little cosmos by making it like the world of the gods... That is why settling somewhere -- building a village or merely a house -- represents a serious decision, for the very existence of man is involved; he must, in short, create his own world and assume the responsibility of maintaining and renewing it. Habitations are not lightly changed, for it is not easy to abandon one's world. The house is not an object, a "machine to live in"; it is the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods, the cosmogony."<sup>32</sup>

Having considered some of the evidence for the house-as-self symbolism as manifested in architectural styles, beliefs about dwellings, rituals connected with dwellings, we will turn now to some contemporary written and spoken accounts of dreams, fantasies, and feelings connected with the house. Again, the reader may be able to recall similar experiences of his own and fill in many more examples.

##### 5. The House-as-Self Manifested in Fantasy, Literature, Poetry and Dreams

Among the ways in which individual and collective memories are "released" from the unconscious is the dream. But the unconscious is more than a depository of past emotions; it also has an important integrating and guiding function; it presents us with the

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

true reality of our present situation, and with the seeds of future action, not only through dreams and fantasies, but also through such creative endeavors as writing, painting, sculpture and other arts.

One of the means by which increasing numbers of people are getting in touch with their unconscious is through experiences offered by the currently burgeoning encounter group or human potential movement. Through the media of group encounter, individual and group fantasies, mime, dance, movement, art, and meditation, large numbers of people who are by no means "sick" are reaching into the unconscious to learn valuable truths about themselves and the world, an experience formerly available only to the mentally ill and those who needed and/or could afford psychoanalysis.

Participants in a recent workshop on Humanistic Education for College Teachers held at Mills College, Oakland, reported that after ten days of intensive experiences with all kinds of encounter group techniques (movement, fantasy, non-verbal communication, etc.) by far the most "mind-blowing" experience was being set the task of drawing in as much detail as possible, the house and garden in which they had grown up, and then describing it and its associations to another person. As the drawings continued over a two-hour period, people remembered minute details of furniture arrangement, views from windows, smells of garden bushes which triggered off memories -- many of them painful and very profound -- which no amount of talking about their childhoods, or even professional psychotherapy, had ever revealed.

This experience would seem to confirm Bachelard's somewhat fanciful suggestion, in The Poetics of Space, that along with formal

psychoanalysis, the patient should be assisted in making a topo-analysis, or an analysis of the spaces and places which have been the settings of past phases of his emotional development. Perhaps, too, every architect and landscape designer should undergo such analysis, for the past landscapes and houses he has lived in and experienced emotionally will undoubtedly be affecting the kinds of work he does today. This is not to say there is anything wrong with such influences from the past, but it might well be to his advantage as a designer that he recognize the biases they might introduce into his work.

For an example of the house-as-self phenomenon displayed in the acting out of fantasies, one has only to look at the play of children on vacant lots or back yards or European adventure playgrounds. Left to their own devices, children of all cultures will attempt to build "houses," and in doing so, it seems likely they are expressing in concrete form an emerging, tentative concept of self. The phenomenon of the boys doing the building, followed by the girls decorating and "furnishing" the house, is an imitation of adult behavior, of the supposed male need for an outgoing, constructive, decision-making concept of self, and of the supposed female need for a more inward-focusing, reflective, nurturing self-concept.

One doesn't have to look further than the very words that are sometimes used to describe houses -- austere, welcoming, friendly -- to see that we have somehow invested the house with human qualities. In a book describing his experiences cleaning and repairing a country cottage to live in, Walter Murray wrote:

So I left the cottage, swept if not yet garnished, and as I looked back at it that quiet evening with the sunset all aglow behind it, it seemed that somehow it was changed. The windows were clean, and the soul of a house looks out of its eyes; sweet cottages peep, old houses blink and welcome. Now Copsford, which had at first defied, gazed after me at least as an acquaintance, and months later was even friendly. But I never knew a smile to wrinkle the hard corners of its eyes.<sup>33</sup>

Although one might perhaps sneer at its "cute" anthropomorphising of the environment, it is passages such as this which reveal what may be profound and barely recognized connections with that environment.

In her introspective autobiography, written in the form of a diary, Anais Nin saw quite clearly both the security and sustenance that can ensue from living in a house that reflects one's own self-image, and the phenomenon of projecting onto the home one's inner fears and anxieties.

When I look at the large green iron gate from my window it takes on the air of a prison gate. An unjust feeling, since I know I can leave the place whenever I want to, and since I know that human beings place upon an object, or a person, this responsibility of being the obstacle when the obstacle lies always within one's self.

In spite of this knowledge, I often stand at the window staring at the large closed iron gate, as if hoping to obtain from this contemplation a reflection of my inner obstacles to a full, open life. . . . But the little gate, with its overhanging ivy like disordered hair over a running child's forehead, has a sleepy and sly air, an air of being always half open.

I chose the house for many reasons.

Because it seemed to have sprouted out of the earth like a tree, so deeply grooved it was within the old garden. It had no cellar and the rooms rested right on the ground. Below the rug, I felt, was the earth. I could take root here, feel at one with house and garden, take nourishment from them like the plants.<sup>34</sup>

In a short passage from a popular newsmagazine description of the German writer, Günter Grass, the image of his style of writing,

<sup>33</sup>Walter J.C. Murray, Copsford. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950, p.34.

<sup>34</sup>The Diary of Anais Nin 1931-34. New York: The Swallow Press and Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1966.

his way of working, his clothes and the house he lives in all reflect the inner character, the self, of this man.

Grass is a fanatic for moderation. He is a moderate the way other men are extremists. He is a man almost crazy for sanity.

Balance is Grass' game. He is in love with the firm, the tangible. He has a peasant's instinct for the solid ground, an artisan's feeling for materials. His West Berlin home -- described by one visitor as "a god-awful Wilhelmian house" -- is solid as a fort. The furniture is reassuringly thick-legged. The floors are bare. There are no curtains. In lean, wrinkled, absolutely undistinguished clothes -- open necked shirts are the rule -- Grass walks from room to room with workmanlike purpose. He looks like a visiting plumber who has a job to do and knows quite well that he can do it.<sup>35</sup>

The notion of house as symbol of "mother" or the "womb" is one that is fairly common in literature, and indeed has been the inspiration of a number of "organic" architects who have tried to re-create this safe-enclosed, encircling feeling in their designs. In the following description, we see how the house takes on a symbolic maternal function in response to the fear of the man within and the storm outside.

The house was fighting gallantly. At first it gave voice to its complaints; the most awful gusts were attacking it from every side at once, with evident hatred and such howls of rage that, at times, I trembled with fear. But it stood firm. . . The already human being in whom I had sought shelter for my body yielded nothing to the storm. The house clung to me, like a she-wolf, and at times I could smell her odor penetrating maternally to my very heart. That night she was really my mother. She was all I had to keep and sustain me. We were alone.<sup>36</sup>

Here, in the unusual circumstances of a storm, one can see how this human, protective symbol of the house might well be conceived. But what of ordinary circumstances? How does the house-as-self symbol first begin to take root? Undoubtedly, one must look for

<sup>35</sup>"The Dentist's Chair as an Allegory of Life," Time, April 13, 1970, p. 70.

<sup>36</sup>Henri Bosco, Malicroix, as quoted in G. Bachelard, The Poetics of Space. New York: The Orion Press, 1964, p. 45.



the roots in infancy. The child, except in unusual circumstances, is born into a house. Gradually, as the range of senses expands, it begins to perceive the people and environment around it. The house becomes its world, its very cosmos. From being a shadowy shell glimpsed out of half-closed eyes, the house becomes familiar, recognizable, a place of security and love.

The child's world then becomes divided into the house, that micro-space within the greater world that he knows through personal discovery, and everything that lies beyond it, which is unknown and perhaps frightening. In a sense, the child's experience reflects the assessment of known and unknown space as made by preliterate societies. As Mircea Eliade has written:

One of the outstanding characteristics of traditional societies is the opposition that they assume between their inhabited territory and the unknown and indeterminate space that surrounds it. The former is the world (more precisely, our world), the cosmos; everything outside it is no longer a cosmos but a sort of "other world," a foreign, chaotic space, peopled by ghosts, demons, foreigners. . .<sup>37</sup>

As the child matures, he ventures into the house's outer space, the yard, the garden, then gradually into the neighborhood, the city, the region, the world. As space becomes known and experienced, it becomes a part of his world. But all the time, the house is "home," the place of first conscious thoughts, of security and roots. It is no longer an inert box; it has been experienced, has become a symbol for self, family, mother, security. As Bachelard has written, ". . . geometry is transcended."

In the following poem, written by a child of 12 years, the notion of the family house being a special place of security and love to which the child anxiously returns after school, is feelingly evoked.

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<sup>37</sup> Mircea Eliade, op. cit., p. 29.

O Joyous House<sup>38</sup>

When I walk home from school,  
I see many houses  
Many houses down many streets.  
They are warm comfortable houses  
But other people's houses  
I pass without much notice.

Then as I walk farther, farther  
I see a house, the house.  
It springs up with a jerk  
That speeds my pace;  
I lurch forward  
Longing makes me happy,  
I bubble inside.  
It's my house.

As we become more ourselves -- more self-actualized, in Maslow's terms -- it seems that the house-as-symbol becomes even less tied to its geometry. A writer quoted by Bachelard describes his house thus:

My house is diaphanous but it is not of glass. It is more of the nature of vapor. Its walls contract and expand as I desire. At times, I draw them close about me like protective armor. . . . But at others, I let the walls of my house blossom out in their own space, which is infinitely extensible.<sup>39</sup>

The symbol has become flexible, expandable according to psychic needs. For most people, the house is not actually changeable, except by such measures as opening and closing drapes and re-arranging furniture to suit our moods. For one French poet these alternate needs of expansion and contraction, openness and withdrawal were made physical realities in the design of his dream home -- a Breton fisherman's cottage around which he constructed a magnificent manor house.

<sup>38</sup> By Richard Janzen, aged 12, from Canada. From Miracles: Poems by Children of the English-speaking World, collected by Richard Lewis. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966.

<sup>39</sup> George Spyridaki, Mort Lucide, as quoted in Bachelard, op. cit., p. 51.

In the body of the winged manor, which dominates both town and sea, man and the universe, he retained a cottage chrysalis in order to be able to hide alone, in complete repose. . .The two extreme realities of cottage and manor. . .take into account our need for retreat and expansion, for simplicity and magnificence.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the suburban home buyers' yen for both an opulent facade with picture window view and colonial porch and for a private secluded den is a modern manifestation of this need.

The earliest and most basic function of the house is to shelter Man while he sleeps, that is, when he is at his most vulnerable. But when Man sleeps, he also dreams. And dreams, for primitive as for contemporary Man, tend to be a major route to the individual and the collective unconscious. Maybe it is not too fanciful to suggest that the symbolism of the house first began to be truly experienced when it became the locale and protector of Man in his dreaming state, when he first began to comprehend that he could transcend space, time and the conscious mind. From this beginning, Man may have begun to dream of his house as "self" -- it was his first conscious construction in the world, one of the first artifacts which he could look at and say "I made it." Perhaps in the unconscious the separation between the "I" and the "it" was bridged.

If we start to consider the messages from the unconscious made manifest through dreams, we have even more striking evidence of the house-as-self symbol. Carl Jung in his autobiography describes quite vividly a dream of himself as house, and his explorations within it.

I was in a house I did not know, which had two storeys. It was "my house." I found myself in the upper storey, where there was a kind of salon furnished with fine old pieces in rococo style. On the walls hung a number of precious old

<sup>40</sup>Bachelard, op. cit., p. 65.

paintings. I wondered that this should be my house, and thought, "Not bad." But then it occurred to me that I did not know what the lower floor looked like. Descending the stairs, I reached the ground floor. There everything was much older, and I realized that this part of the house must date from about the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The furnishings were medieval; the floors were of red brick. Everywhere it was rather dark. I went from one room to another thinking, "Now I really must explore the whole house." I came upon a heavy door and opened it. Beyond it, I discovered a stone stairway that led down into the cellar. Descending again, I found myself in a beautifully vaulted room which looked exceedingly ancient. Examining the walls, I discovered layers of brick among the ordinary stone blocks, and chips of brick in the mortar. As soon as I saw this I knew that the walls dated from Roman times. My interest by now was intense. I looked more closely at the floor. It was on stone slabs, and in one of these I discovered a ring. When I pulled it, the stone slab lifted, and again I saw a stairway of narrow stone steps leading down into the depths. These, too, I descended, and entered a low cave cut into the rock. Thick dust lay on the floor, and in the dust were scattered bones and broken pottery, like remains of a primitive culture. I discovered two human skulls, obviously very old and half disintegrated. Then I awoke.<sup>41</sup>

Jung's own interpretation of the dream was as follows.

It was plain to me that the house represented a kind of image of the psyche -- that is to say, of my then state of consciousness, with hitherto unconscious additions. Consciousness was represented by the salon. It had an inhabited atmosphere, in spite of its antiquated style.

The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious. The deeper I went, the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered remains of a primitive culture, that is, the world of the primitive man within myself -- a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness. The primitive psyche of man borders on the life of the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before man laid claim to them.<sup>42</sup>

Jung describes here the house with many levels seen as the symbol of the self with its many levels of consciousness; the descent downwards into lesser known realms of the unconscious is represented by the ground floor, cellar, and vault beneath it. A final descent leads to a cave cut into bedrock, a part of the house

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<sup>41</sup>Carl Jung, Memories, Dreams and Reflections. London: Collins, The Fontana Library Series, 1969, pp. 182-3.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

rooted in the very earth itself. This seems very clearly to be a symbol of the collective unconscious, part of the self-house and yet, too, part of the universal bedrock of humanity.

Jung, unlike Freud, also saw the dream as a possible prognosticator of the future; the unconscious not only holds individual and collective memories, but also the seeds of future action. At one period of his life Jung was searching for some historical basis or precedent for the ideas he was developing about the unconscious. He didn't know where to start the search. At this point he started having a series of dreams which all dealt with the same theme.

Beside my house stood another, that is to say, another wing or annex, which was strange to me. Each time I would wonder in my dream why I did not know this house, although it had apparently always been there. Finally came a dream in which I reached the other wing. I discovered there a wonderful library, dating largely from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Large, fat folio volumes bound in pigskin stood along the walls. Among them were a number of books embellished with copper engravings of a strange character, and illustrations containing curious symbols such as I had never seen before. At the time I did not know to what they referred; only much later did I recognize them as alchemical symbols. In the dream I was conscious only of the fascination exerted by them and by the entire library. It was a collection of incunabula and sixteenth century prints.

The unknown wing of the house was a part of my personality, an aspect of myself; it represented something that belonged to me but of which I was not yet conscious. It, and especially the library, referred to alchemy of which I was ignorant, but which I was soon to study. Some fifteen years later I had assembled a library very like the one in the dream.<sup>43</sup>

Thus here in another dream Jung sees an unexplored wing of the house as an unknown part of himself and a symbol of an area of study with which he would become very absorbed in the future, and which permitted him to expand his concepts of the transformation of the self.

Later in his life Jung was to make manifest in stone this symbol which had at times stood for Self in his dreams. He describes in his

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

autobiography how he yearned to put his knowledge of the contents of the unconscious into solid form, rather than just describe them in words. In the building of his house -- the Tower at Bollingen on Lake Zurich -- he was to make "a confession of faith in stone."

At first I did not plan a proper house, but merely a kind of primitive one-storey dwelling. It was to be a round structure with a hearth in the center and bunks along the walls. I more or less had in mind an African hut where the fire, ringed with stone, burns in the middle, and the whole life of the family revolves around this centre. Primitive huts concretise an idea of wholeness, a familial wholeness in which all sorts of domestic animals likewise participate. But I altered the plan even during the first stages of building, for I felt it was too primitive. I realized it would have to be a regular two-storey house, not a mere hut crouched on the ground. So in 1923 the first round house was built, and when it was over I saw that it had become a suitable dwelling tower.

The feeling of repose and renewal that I had in this tower was intense from the start. It represented for me the maternal hearth,<sup>44</sup>

Feeling that something more needed to be said, four years later Jung added another building with a tower-like annex. Again, after an interval of four years, he felt the need to add more and built onto the tower a retiring room for meditation and seclusion where no one else could enter; it became his retreat for spiritual concentration. After another interval of four years he felt the need for another area, open to nature and the sky, and so added a courtyard and an adjoining loggia. The resultant quaternity pleased him, no doubt because his own studies in mythology and symbolism had provided much evidence of the completeness and wholeness represented by the figure four. Finally, after his wife's death, he felt an inner obligation to "become what I myself am," and recognized that the small central section of the house

. . .which crouched so low and hidden was myself! I could no longer hide myself behind the "maternal" and "spiritual" towers.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

So in the same year, I added an upper storey to this section, which represents myself or my ego-personality. Earlier, I would not have been able to do this; I would have regarded it as presumptuous self-emphasis. Now it signified an extension of consciousness achieved in old age. With that the building was complete.<sup>45</sup>

Jung had thus built his house over time as a representation in stone of his own evolving and maturing psyche; it was the place, he said, where "I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself." He describes how

From the beginning I felt the Tower as in some way a place of maturation -- a maternal womb or a maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I am and will be. It gave me a feeling as if I were being reborn in stone. It is thus a concretisation of the individuation process...During the building work, of course, I never considered these matters...Only afterwards did I see how all the parts fitted together and that a meaningful form had resulted: a symbol of psychic wholeness.<sup>46</sup>

In examining at some length Jung's own reflections on the house as dream-symbol, and the building of his own house as a manifestation of the self, we are not just examining one man's inner life; hopefully, there is something here of the inner symbolism of all men. Jung, perhaps more than any other thinker or writer of this century, has fearlessly examined his own unconscious and delved into a great range of disciplines which together aided him in his quest to build a theory of the unconscious and the self. The fact that his writings and theories are finding increasing acceptance in the Western world suggests that what he is saying is striking some universal cord of recognition.

#### 6. The Self-House/Self-Universe Analogy

It seems that consciously or unconsciously, many men in many parts of the world have built their cities, temples and houses as

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

images of the universe. My contention is that somewhere through the collective unconscious, man is still in touch with this symbolism. Our house is seen, however unconsciously, as the center of our universe and symbolic of the universe. But how is the step made from "symbol of universe" to "symbol of self"? There are certain religions, notably Buddhism, that regard the apparent separation of the individual ego and the universe as a delusion. My contention is that in thinking, dreaming or fantasizing about "self" and "house" as somehow being inextricably intertwined, Western man is making a first tentative step towards ridding himself of this delusion. Why should he want to do this, the reader might ask. I cannot attempt to answer that question, except to say that all of us are looking, in our own way, for the truth, the Ultimate Reality, or whatever we want to call it. Perhaps, in perceiving "self" and "house" as being on some level one and the same thing, Man is taking the first step on the path towards what Zen adherents would term "enlightenment."

For the unenlightened -- or indeed for the so-called enlightened -- to define this ultimate state would of course be an impossibility. But from the writings and teachings of Buddhist adherents, it seems that being enlightened subsumes a recognition that the self and the universe are one and the same thing. Man has conveniently packaged reality into separate containers -- self, others, the physical environment -- because to do otherwise might lead to a confusion bordering on what society has deemed madness.

The child in his first few years does not distinguish between animate and inanimate; for him, physical events and objects are anthropomorphized. A study by Searles of the psychological significance of the non-human environment, first prompted by his work with schizophrenics, notes that:



The concreteness of the child's thinking suggests for him, as for the member of the so-called primitive culture and for the schizophrenic adult the wealth of nonhuman objects about him are constituents of his psychological being in a more intimate sense than they are for the adult in our culture, the adult whose ego is, as Hartman and Werner emphasize, relatively clearly differentiated from the surrounding world, and whose development of the capacity for abstract thinking helps free him...from his original oneness with the nonhuman world.<sup>47</sup>

Must the Buddhist, striving for a sense of oneness between consciousness/self and the universe be regarded, then, as an undeveloped child or as mentally ill? I think not, for a small but growing school of psychiatry is beginning to regard schizophrenia as perhaps more "normal" than we have hitherto recognized. Perhaps most eloquently expressed by the British psychiatrist, R.D. Laing (The Divided Self, The Politics of Experience), a new concept of treatment of mental illness contends that a spell of so-called "madness," under structured and supportive circumstances, may be for many the most constructive path to complete sanity, if not "enlightenment."<sup>48</sup> Remarkable parallels have been found in ways of thinking and regarding self and the environment, between the descriptions by mystics of what Maslow would term "peak experiences" and descriptions by schizophrenics of hallucinatory phases of their illness.<sup>49</sup> The social climate of the times tends to determine whether these so-called "delusions" are recognized by society as mystical

<sup>47</sup> Harold F. Searles, The Nonhuman Environment in Normal Development and in Schizophrenia. New York: International Universities Press, 1960.

<sup>48</sup> This form of treatment is currently being experimented with in at least one location in the U.S. -- the "Blow-out Center" at Agnew State Hospital, San Jose, California, in conjunction with Esalen Institute, under the direction of Drs. Julian Silverman and John Perry. (The latter, incidentally, is a Jungian analyst.)

<sup>49</sup> "Mores, Mysticism and Madness," lecture by John Perry and Julian Silverman, sponsored by the Carl Jung Institute of San Francisco, May 6, 1970.

experiences and the person having them regarded as a teacher (e.g., Buddha, St. Paul, St. John of the Cross), or whether, as now, they are generally seen as "madness" and the person is locked away to "get better."

So, there may not be as much a gulf as we think between madness and enlightenment. And perhaps it is the so-called "normal" adult who having been socialized to regard self and environment as separate and totally different, is most out of touch with the essential reality which children and schizophrenics, primitive people and Eastern gurus understand completely. Even Searles (quoted above), after extensive work with schizophrenics whom he initially regarded as "sick," had to conclude his book with the following statement:

It seems to me that, in our culture, a conscious ignoring of the psychological importance of the nonhuman environment exists simultaneously with a (largely unconscious) overdependence upon that environment. I believe that the actual importance of that environment to the individual is so great that he dare not recognize it. Unconsciously it is felt, I believe, to be not only an intensely important conglomeration of things outside the self, but also a large and integral part of the self. That is, I hypothesize the existence in this regard of an intrapsychic situation which is analogous to that situation which is well known to exist in neurotic and psychotic patients as regards interpersonal matters: the patient steadfastly and sincerely denies the importance to him of certain other persons upon whom he is unconsciously extremely dependent and who constitute, via his unconscious identification with those persons, important parts of his very personality.<sup>50</sup>

The phenomenon of dreaming of the self as a house -- that "package" outside our own skin which encloses us and in which we feel most secure -- is perhaps the first glimmering of the unconscious that the "I" and the "non-I" are indeed one and the same. As Alan Watts has so eloquently written in The Book,<sup>51</sup> the notion

<sup>50</sup> H.F. Searles, op. cit., p. 395.

<sup>51</sup> Alan Watts, The Book: On the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are. New York: Collier Books, 1966.

that each individual ego is separate (in space) and finite (in time) and is something different from the universe around him is one of the grand hoaxes of Western thought. Although virtually impossible for most of us non-mystics to grasp in more than a superficial way, this knowledge of our indivisibility from the environment is buried deep within the collective unconscious and becomes manifest symbolically (often without our recognizing it) in fantasies, flashes of intuition, dreams, poems, paintings and literature.

### 7. Conclusion

I have, in this paper, tried to examine some aspects of the symbolism of the house which seem to make sense to me. I realize that in doing so, I may have slipped into the error of suggesting that the house symbol is always and for all people a symbol of self. As Jung has pointed out, archetypes or predispositions are universal, but the symbols through which they are manifested are individual. Thus, in interpreting a dream, say, which contains images of horses and flowers and rocking chairs, one cannot merely turn to a Dictionary of Symbols, find out what these images "mean" and interpret the dream. The dream-symbol cannot be separated from the dreamer; the symbols have arisen from his unconscious, and he must himself attempt to describe what he feels they mean.

Nevertheless, there seem to be indications -- one can barely term it "evidence" -- that many people do at times dream of "the House," and that they themselves frequently interpret it as an image of the self. If this is so, it goes part of the way to explain why for most people their home is so sacred and why they so strongly resist a change in the basic form which they and their fathers and their

fathers' fathers have lived in since the dawn of time. Jung recognized that the more archaic and universal the archetype made manifest in the symbol, the more universal and unchanging the symbol itself. Since "self" must be an archetype as universal and almost as archaic as man himself, this may explain the universality of its symbolic form, the house, and the extreme resistance of most people to any change in its basic form.

For most people the self is a fragile and vulnerable entity; we wish therefore to envelop ourselves in a symbol-for-self which is familiar, solid, inviolate, unchanging. Small wonder, then, that in Anglo-Saxon law it is permissible to shoot, to kill anyone who breaks and enters your house. A violation of the self (house) is perhaps one of Man's most deep-seated and universal fears. Similarly, the thought of changing one's basic self-concept is, to most people, as threatening as is the suggestion that they might live in a round house or a houseboat or a mobile home. A conventional house and a rigidly static concept of self are mutually supporting. Perhaps with the coming of age of Reich's Consciousness III generation,<sup>52</sup> we can expect an increased openness to new housing forms and living arrangements, the beginnings of which are already apparent in the proliferation of communes and drop-out communities.

But it is not only the intellectual, drop-out fringe who may alter society's notion of a "suitable" dwelling unit. Already the mobile home industry, through astute advertising and sales techniques, is beginning to sell people on the idea of the home as a consumable product: something to be used, enjoyed and traded in! In 1969, while conventional housing starts were on the decrease,

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<sup>52</sup> Charles Reich, The Greening of America.

mobile home production was on the upswing, representing one-third of all new single-family dwellings.<sup>53</sup>

Is it too fanciful to draw a parallel here between the emerging acceptance of new housing forms and the many social movements (civil rights, women's liberation, the hippie sub-culture, the human potential movement, etc.) which are causing many to question the inviolate nature of old self-concepts? If the general thesis of this paper has some validity, then the future should see an increasing acceptance of new structures for living as more and more of the populace question that indefinable element of the psyche -- the self -- for which the house is a tangible symbol.

This long, somewhat disjointed statement on house-as-symbol-of-the-self brings me back to my original problem. How to advise architects on the design of houses for clients who are often poor, whom they will never know, let alone delve into their psychic lives or concepts of self. I have no answer, but if there is some validity to the concept of house-as-self, we must learn ways of complementing and enhancing the image of self of the resident. If in new housing forms we violate this image, we may have produced an objective reality which pleases the politicians and designers, but at the same time produces a symbolic reality which leaves the residents bewildered and resentful.

Just as Jung found the stimulus for his life's work in the tension created by his need to provide rational explanations and his experience of the mystical, I hope also to use this tension as the motivating energy to delve deeper into the problem of matching people's needs to the physical envelopes we provide them for living.

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<sup>53</sup>Lawrence A. Mayer, "Mobile Homes Move into the Breach," Fortune, March 1970.

As Jung's own work represented a shift from rational thought to phenomenology, I hope that this paper marks a personal shift from work based on a search for causality to work based on a consideration of what "is."

In the field of Man's relationship with environment, the type of approach which might be termed "intuitive speculation" seems to have been lost in a world devoted to the supposedly more scientific approach of "objective analysis." As Alan Watts has speculated, this emphasis on the so-called "objective" may indeed be a sickness of Western man, for it enables him to retain his belief in the separateness of the ego from all that surrounds it. Although certain "objective facts" have been presented in this paper, it is hoped by the author that its overall message is clear: allow yourself to be open to the consideration of relationships other than those that can be proved or disproved by scientific method, for it may well be in these that a deeper truth lies. Perhaps no one has stated it more eloquently than Watts, and it is with a quotation from his Nature, Man and Woman that I will end this paper.

...the laws and hypotheses of science are not so much discoveries as instruments, like knives and hammers, for bending nature to one's will. So there is a type of personality which approaches the world with an entire armory of sharp and hard instruments, by means of which it slices and sorts the universe into precise and sterile categories which will not interfere with one's peace of mind.

There is a place in life for a sharp knife, but there is a still more important place for other kinds of contact with the world. Man is not to be an intellectual porcupine, meeting his environment with a surface of spikes. Man meets the world outside with a soft skin, with a delicate eyeball and eardrum and finds communion with it through a warm melting, vaguely defined, and caressing touch whereby the world is not set at a distance like an enemy to be shot, but embraced to become one flesh, like a beloved wife...Hence the importance of opinion, of instruments of the mind, which are vague, misty, and melting

rather than clear-cut. They provide possibilities of communication, of actual contact and relationships with nature more intimate than anything to be found by preserving at all costs the "distance of objectivity." As Chinese and Japanese painters have so well understood, there are landscapes which are best viewed through half-closed eyes, mountains which are most alluring when partially veiled in mist, and waters which are most profound when the horizon is lost, and they are merged with the sky.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Alan W. Watts, Nature, Man and Woman, New York: Vintage Books, 1970, pp. 80-81.

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