

**Vastness and Belonging:
An Examination of the Influence
of a Spatial Perception and State of Being in Landscape Archetypes**

by

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Statement of Research Problem

This inquiry seeks to examine the interplay between a specific state of being (that of belonging) and the perception of a spatial quality (that of vastness) as mediated by experiences of environment typified by different landscape archetypes. By examining vastness and belonging in tandem using landscape archetypes, insights regarding the personal and the poetic become potential avenues for expanding how to think, design and construct in the field of landscape architecture.

Introduction

In order to situate this study the following introduction presents the origin and subsequent influences that have guided the direction of this research, as well as describing the rationale behind the chosen methodology of this project.

Origins of an idea

Two texts, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* by Italo Calvino, and *The Needs of Strangers* by Michael Ignatieff, read in quick succession constituted the generative point for this project.

Italo Calvino is best known in architectural circles for his novel *Invisible Cities*. Less known perhaps, is *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, originally presented as the Charles Norton Eliot Lecture Series in 1985-86 and committed to paper in 1988.¹ In this text Calvino posits five qualities that he views as indispensable to literature. They constitute an examination of essential qualities that are applicable to almost any discipline and became the catalyst for this inquiry into the nature of vastness. In describing lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility and multiplicity he provides metaphors for examining the qualitative aspects of how we understand our world. His work asks, "What should be cherished in literature?"²

¹ The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures series at Harvard University's English Department are associated with the, "The Charles Eliot Norton Professorship of Poetry [which] honors Harvard's first professor of the History of Art. Established in 1925 as the result of a \$200,000 gift from Charles Chauncey Stillman (A.B. 1898), railroad financier and generous Harvard benefactor, the endowment provides annual appointments with full professorial rank for individuals chosen 'without limits of nationality, from men of high distinction and preferably of international reputation'." <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~english/events/nortonlectureshist.html>> [23 August 2004]. In actuality there are only five 'memos' or topics discussed, Calvino died before completing the sixth lecture, which was intended to discuss the subject of 'Consistency'.

² This question is taken from the description on the anterior cover of the 1995 Vintage Canada Edition reprint of *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*.

Originally published in 1984, Ignatieff's text, *The Needs of Strangers*, is described as "an essay on privacy, solidarity and the politics of being human."³ Through a series of six essays,⁴ he weaves together ideas of social ethics and psychological needs. Ignatieff states:

The language of human needs is a basic way of speaking about this idea of a natural human identity. We want to know what we have in common beneath the infinity of our differences. We want to know what it means to be human. [...] The possibility of human solidarity rests on this idea of natural human identity. A society in which strangers would feel common belonging and mutual responsibility to each other depends on trust, and trust in turn reposes on the idea that beneath difference there is identity.⁵

By simultaneously considering the ideas of these writers the question arose of how a cherished quality could fulfill a human need. Extrapolated to landscape architecture, this question instigated the desire to understand in greater detail how we perceive our environment and what effect this has on our identity, specifically, what links exist between one's sense of belonging and landscapes perceived as vast. Clearly landscape provides for basic (physical) human needs, but if this notion of landscape is reduced to a single quality, such as vastness and the subsequent perception of that quality could a causal relationship to metaphysical human needs like belonging be determined?⁶

The range of material and potential approaches applicable to such a question are in themselves vast. Determining what material to use and which approach to apply involved a round of preliminary questions and initial investigations in order to focus the objectives of this study. Some of those questions included:

1. What is vastness?
2. How is vastness perceived in the landscape?
3. What is belonging?
4. What governs belonging?

³ The cover of the 1988 reprint by Penguin Books (cited in the bibliography) uses this caption

⁴ The essay titles include: *An Introduction: Tragedy and Utopia*, *The Natural and the Social*, *Body and Spirit*, *Metaphysics and the Market*, *The Market and the Republic*, and *A Conclusion: Homelessness and Belonging*.

⁵ Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers*, (Great Britain: Chatto & Windus, 1984; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 28 (page citations reference the reprint edition).

⁶ "In contemporary philosophy problems of metaphysics often take the form of a trilemma concerning some large and important feature of our lives and discourse, a trilemma whose terms are: illusion, well founded appearance and fundamental reality." Ted, Honderich, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 559.

5. What is meant by 'landscape'?
6. Do innate responses to landscape exist?
7. Do 'universal' landforms and human needs exist, either individually or in concert?
8. What is the relationship between urban fragmentation, human migration and a sense of reduced social cohesion?
9. Can our environment be generative instead of reflective of social condition?
10. Can public spaces be designed to engender a sense of belonging?
11. When the dominant spatial perception of an environment is identified as vastness does it reduce an individual's sense of scale?
12. What is the relationship between vast environments, belonging, alienation, and isolation?
13. Can vast environments cause a shift in an individual's cosmology?
14. Is the ability to identify vastness predicated by absolute physical, elements in the environment, or the associative powers of innate or learned reactions and cultural or personal preferences of past, known environments?

These initial questions represent the first step taken to establish the direction of this study. Figure i, (below) delineates how some of these questions converge and serve as access points for shaping an approach to this study.

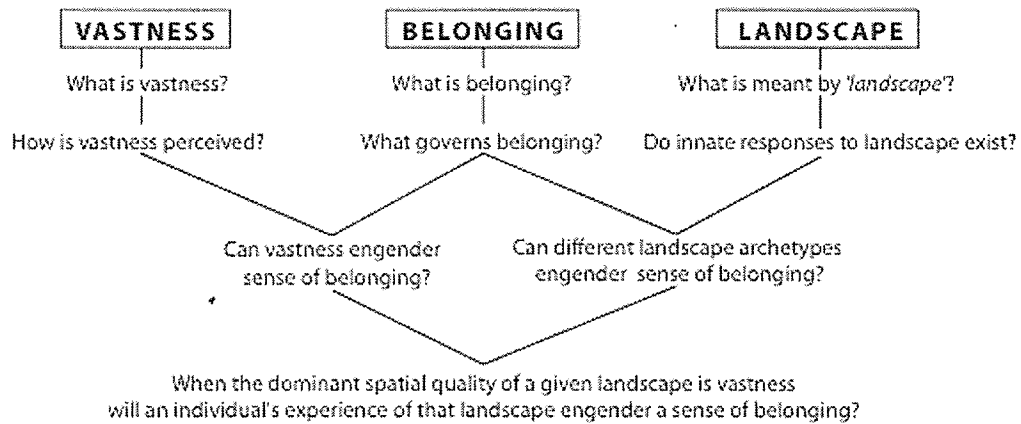


figure i.

Along with these initial questions a range of preliminary subjects were also considered when establishing the focus of this study. They included:

- community
- human needs
- identity
- memory
- mythology
- culture
- nomadism (both psychological and geographical)
- perception (both spatial and temporal)
- philosophical frameworks of understanding
- scale
- spatial typologies and archetypes
- the sublime
- cosmological shifts

The diagram below (figure ii), illustrates some of the relationships discovered during this initial phase of investigation. Unlike figure i. which illustrates a progression or focusing of the questions at hand, figure ii illustrates associative connections between subject matter from the primary issues of perception and human needs to the tertiary categorization of belonging,

landscape and vastness.

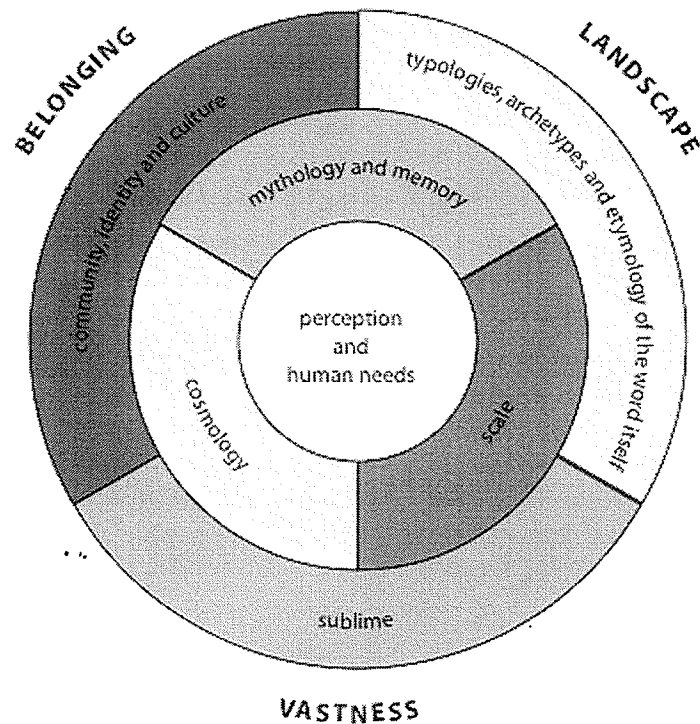


figure ii.

Methodology

Once the focus of this study had been established it became apparent that an extensive range of methods could be used to understand the issues at hand, and that each method would evolve its own unique understanding of the problem. Because the subject matter of this study strays beyond areas typically associated with landscape architecture it becomes necessary to find a method capable of linking general, everyday experiences to more specific ideas in order to show how they could enhance an understanding of landscape architectural practices. The following methodology is, therefore, divided into two sections. The first section addresses options regarding *how* to think about the relationship between vastness and belonging in the landscape, while the second section addresses *where* to look for some of the connections that cumulatively constitute this relationship and the manner in which they may be identified.

Part one– modes of thinking

When determining how to think about vastness and belonging in the landscape a common

initial response is to seek clarity through defining each subject in absolute terms— to generate definitions that describe the ideas in black and white. In this sense, clarity is achieved by stating what something *is* through describing what it *is not* in a mutually exclusive formulation, i.e. dark is the absence of light. Such was the suggestion of the late Austrian-American developmental psychologist Bruno Bettelheim when he posited that the appeal of fairy tales lay in their polarization of elements⁷ and that through this polarization, complex issues could be made comprehensible. Polarization, as it is exemplified in this ancient form of teaching,⁸ demonstrates that the binarization of thought is deeply rooted in a Western understanding of the world. We are taught that dualistic categorization is capable of providing a framework for understanding the world, long before we are old enough to be mired in philosophical interpretations of dialectic thought. In fact, the mythology of fairy tales provides an example of thought that is so long established that it is often considered innate.

In reality, the polarization of concepts as a means of understanding only works as a primary analysis, for rarely is something all good or all bad. Polarization of any element ultimately sublimates whatever its diametric equivalent is; vastness, as it is perceived, cannot exclusively engender belonging, nor is alienation the exclusive domain of urban environments. In order to truly accept the multifaceted scope of any of these concepts, it seems necessary to step away from polarization as a means of definition of the issues.

In order to fully comprehend the flexibility and diversity of the issues relevant to vastness and belonging in the landscape, it is necessary to move beyond exclusively binarized thought, both in method and complexity. When Australian feminist Elizabeth Grosz questions, "How to *think* architecture beyond complementarity and binarization, beyond subjectivity and signification?"⁹ in her text *Architecture from the Outside*, she introduces the concept of the 'outside'. Her argument bases itself on ideas gleaned from the methods of Deleuze and Derrida:

It is significant that Deleuze, like Derrida, does not attempt to abandon binarized thought or to replace it with an alternative; rather binarized categories are played off each other, are rendered molecular, global, and are analyzed in molar particularities, so that the possibilities of their reconnections, their realignments in different

⁷ "The figures in fairy tales are not ambivalent— not good and bad at the same time, as we are in reality. But since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales." Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989) 9.

⁸ Mythology as a form of teaching is exemplified in a western context by fairy tales, but can be easily be transposed to other cultures when on considered global traditions of story-telling and other oral traditions.

⁹ Elizabeth, Grosz. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. (Massachusetts: MIT Press Cambridge, 2001) 59.

"systems" are established.¹⁰

So rather than reject the idea of binarization, it is assimilated into a larger network-mode of thinking. This coincides with the opinions of Italian author and architect, Luca Galofaro, who suggests that in order to facilitate critical developments in the fields of art, architecture and landscape, a specific interdisciplinary approach to thinking must occur.¹¹ Instead of borrowing applicable aspects of language and inquiry from adjacent disciplines, he suggests a superscription of methodology that seeks to embody any inherent contradictions, that may arise from the melding of fields. By creating a language founded in contradiction, a new methodology makes way for a separate stream of thought: one that is capable of satisfying the questions of an emerging discipline. By using this strategy, applicable to emerging fields of study with multi-disciplinary origins, the likelihood that ideas will be constricted in their development is less probable than if one applies strategies generated by long-standing and established disciplines, such as art and architecture. Galofaro proposes that by 'confronting' projects that straddle ideas, disciplines, and temporal or spatial geographies one is able to interpret projects of emerging disciplines on their own terms, such as those residing in the field he refers to as *artscapes*.¹²

Another approach which is similar to those of Grosz and Galofaro is that of editors Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell who describe their approach when selecting the essays for their anthology *Landscape, Beauty and the Arts* as a clustering of concepts:

These characteristics of the conception of landscape, natural beauty, and nature, and the difficulties they suggest in the way of making clear conceptual distinctions, undermine any attempt to produce a hierarchy of concepts that will constitute a definitive foundationalist grasp of their complex interaction. [...] Better then to deal with natural beauty by showing the cluster of concepts that make up the parameters of our present understanding, without worrying about the metaphysical certainties that a determinate schema promises.¹³

Using the non-linear metaphor of cluster is appealing methodologically because it juxtaposes a range of ideas, allowing one the freedom to identify independently unique connections

¹⁰ Ibid, 65-66.

¹¹ Luca, Galofaro. *'Artscapes: Art as an approach to contemporary landscape*. (Barcelona: Editorial Gustac Gilli, sa. 2003) 25-26.

¹² "Artscapes is a term that tries to sum up the idea of intervention in the landscape based on an artistic approach." Luca, Galofaro. *Artscapes: Art as an Approach to Contemporary Landscape*. (Barcelona: Editorial Gustac Gilli, sa. 2003) 23.

¹³ Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, eds. *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 3.

within the cluster of concepts being presented. In this way, the density of connections is not diminished.

Although each of these strategies is somewhat unique, they all share the notion of convergence. Each method involves the agglomeration of existing elements into a new structure or association where previously there was none. This begs the question: how does nothing become something? How does one approach an idea previously unknown, such as the structure of an original method of thought? What entices us to begin to think in such a manner, or indeed— to think at all? Grosz writes:

Thought results from the provocation of an encounter. [...] Thought confronts us necessarily from the outside, from outside the concepts we already know, from outside the material reality we already know.¹⁴

If thought is stimulated by encounters with the unknown, then how does thinking navigate from the unknown to become known? If we are drawn to new ideas that are outside our body of known concepts, then how do we begin to understand these concepts and transition them from unknown to known? When describing the study of landscapes in his text *The Vernacular Landscape* John Brinckerhoff Jackson states that, "even the simplest, least interesting landscape often contains elements which we are quite unable to explain, mysteries that fit into no known pattern."¹⁵ Although such mysteries represent the realm of the unknown, Jackson goes on to say,

that every landscape, no matter how exotic, also contains elements which we at once recognize and understand. [...] The familiar serves as a point of departure; it reassures us that however strange the landscape may appear to be, it is not entirely alien and is related to every other landscape.¹⁶

Believing that all things possess some aspect or quality that is familiar implies that our experience defines how we approach new ideas. To think outside the concepts we already know while beginning from a familiar point of departure may seem paradoxical at first, but yet it fits within the model of multiplicity and can be drawn back to the origins of this study by relating Calvino's ideas on the subject. Calvino embodies his ideas surrounding multiplicity in the writer Carlo Emilio Gadda, who he describes as having

¹⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture From the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. (Massachusetts: MIT Press Cambridge, 2001) 61.

¹⁵ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 11.

¹⁶ Ibid.

tried all his life to represent the world as a knot, a tangled skein of yarn, to represent it without in the least diminishing the inextricable complexity, or to put it better, the simultaneous presence of the most disparate elements that converge to determine every event [...] Whatever the starting point, the matter in hand spreads out and out, encompassing even vaster horizons, and if it were permitted to go on further and further in every direction, it would end by embracing the entire universe.¹⁷

By embracing an inherent complexity, and acknowledging the variety and relevance of individual experience, the familiar becomes a vast realm of possible access points to unknown concepts. Delineating some of the connections between vastness and belonging within this idea of a 'tangled skein of yarn', that is, within the complexity that describes the extent of our known world, allows the concept of multiplicity methodologically to exert the necessary re-focusing of how these concepts relate in order to distinguish or visualize new, but eternally existent, connections. Multiplicity serves as a flexible meta-structure adaptable to whatever unknown presents itself. It acknowledges that multiple access points exist to any given unknown, and recognizes that the transition from unknown to known will trace different paths based on an individual's experience.

Intertwining the methods of these various thinkers provides clues for *how* to think about vastness and belonging in the landscape. The formulations of thought they explore and the subsequent integration of these formulations create a structure that offers new links and associations useful to the question of *where*, *when* and *why* vastness and belonging relate in the landscape.

Part two— methods of thinking

Given that nodal or polar elements can be conglomerated to create a superstructure with multiple access points allowing various entries for unknown concepts to become known, the question of how to achieve this objective presents itself. In the face of this also lies the problem of how to relate an individual's experience as rigorous evidence of a phenomenological truth that may or may not possess a stable existence.

Environmental psychology, as an example, may provide empirical methods for quantifying vastness and belonging as they are perceived in the landscape (or in the mind). However, it

¹⁷ Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1995) 106-107.

is not through this type of scientific "exactness"¹⁸ that an understanding of vastness and belonging in the landscape is being sought in this study. Such a static goal would conflict with the mode of thinking previously determined as appropriate to this study. Instead, the methodology of this research turns away from scientific 'exactness' and alternatively embraces the notion of 'exactitude'. Calvino cites the poet Giacomo Leopardi as maintaining, "That the more vague and imprecise language is, the more poetic it becomes".¹⁹ Further elaborating, Calvino states:

What he [Leopardi] requires is a highly exact and meticulous attention to the composition of each image, to the minute definition of details, to the choice of objects, to the lighting and atmosphere, all in order to attain the desired degree of vagueness.²⁰

With this in mind, the methodological approach for this study must be capable of exhibiting rigour through poetic rather than empirical means, of using precision to demonstrate vastness, and consequently attempt to make the ephemeral explicit.

If exactitude can be used as a method for rigorously describing the poetic experience, then the question arises: what is the purpose or function of the images being described? In this sense the image or experience represents what Grosz refers to as 'an encounter'. An encounter is the element that provokes thought, and, in terms of vastness and belonging in the landscape, it is my own experience that has 'provoked' this inquiry.

While this search for vastness and belonging in the landscape is precipitated by experience²¹ that can be illustrated with exactitude and embodied methodologically through the anticipation of repeating experience, a methodological space is also needed to accommodate spontaneous ideas generated through random occurrences. Such experiences, like those achieved through non-specific artistic endeavours or material explorations, fall into the realm

¹⁸ In his essay "What is metaphysics?" Heidegger raises the following point:

"Mathematical knowledge is no more rigorous than philological-historical knowledge. It merely has the character of 'exactness,' which does not coincide with rigor. To demand exactness in the study of history is to violate the idea of the specific rigor of the humanities. To be sure, man's (sic) prescientific and extrascientific activities also are related to beings. But science is exceptional in that, in a way peculiar to it, it gives the matter itself explicitly and solely the first and last word." David Farrell Krell, ed. *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977) 96-97.

¹⁹ Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1995) 57.

²⁰ Ibid 59-60.

²¹ This correlates with Heidegger's statement: "At first and for the most part man (sic) can only see when he has anticipated the being at hand of what he is looking for." David Farrell Krell, ed. *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977) 96-97.

of 'pure discovery'. 'Pure discovery'²² acknowledges that important and currently unknown concepts are a necessary component of this – or any – study if a richness of understanding is to be achieved. Anticipation acts as the placeholder and interpreter for 'pure discovery', which, by its very nature, can have no premeditated structure.

Using two methods, one born out of the anticipation of finding something known, the other out of relating the hope for pure discovery in the realm of the unknown, is designed to extend the range of the type of discoveries possible within this study.

Anticipation

In order to begin tying the ideas of vastness and belonging together through the experience of landscape the following section explores three questions:

1. What is vastness?
2. What is belonging?
3. What is landscape?

The responses to these questions constitute the basis for interpreting the interplay of these concepts, as well as serving to clarify anticipated links between vastness and belonging in the landscape.

What is vastness?

Vast generally describes something extremely large in scope, expansive, or immense. It is often used to refer to things that are too large to fit within one's scope of vision in its entirety,²³ as if it is impossible to comprehend all aspects of the idea or object simultaneously. When *vast* is used to describe landscapes, it usually refers to 'natural'²⁴ or wild environments,

²² Heidegger presents this method when he asks, "Is there ultimately such a thing as a search without that anticipation, a search to which pure discovery belongs?". Ibid.

²³ When John Brinckerhoff Jackson describes his interpretation of the concept of visibility, he states: "Several times in discussing the political landscape I have mentioned the importance of visibility. In our context, the word means of course something more than that an object can be seen. It means that it is conspicuous, that it is distinct from its surroundings, and that as a form it can be understood at a glance; and in this sense it is obvious that not all objects in the landscape are really visible. To the environmentalist the topography and vegetation have visibility; to the student of architecture it will be the buildings; all the rest is merely visible background, and all objects in that background seem to merge into a kind of invisibility." Considering this idea, it is important to note that what each individual sees will alter their individual conception of vastness, just as it does landscape in the manner that Jackson describes here. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 32.

²⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary defines nature as meaning "a thing's essential qualities" while the Webster dictionary defines nature as "the existing system of things, or of matter and mind; the creation; the universe:" "For the purpose of this study nature refers to its vernacular usage which

that is vast plains, vast skies, vast oceans, etc. In reference to an idea, it usually means something that is not easily or accurately described or understood concisely.

It follows that *vastness* represents the cumulative result of sensations generated by something *vast*, and the thing in question can be said to embody *vastness*. It is also important to note that *vastness* is a relative term; relative in the sense that the circumstances that combine to create *vastness* are not absolute. Even though the meaning of *vastness* may be considered constant, the collective sensations that create it are variable and the determination of whether or not they result in *vastness* is dependent on an individual's sensory interpretation.²⁵ The circumstances that evoke *vastness* have the potential to be dramatically different for each individual. Therefore, determining what constitutes *vastness* is not achieved through defining absolute criteria, but rather through describing a diverse range of individual experiences that in turn convey the sensations resulting in *vastness*. Examining the relationship between what affects the subjectivity of an individual's perception of any given object or idea is critical to understanding the variables involved in determining what equals *vastness*, for it is the variability of our individual perception which differentiates our understanding of fundamental concepts.²⁶

That being said, one's ability to identify *vastness* regardless of subjective influences, may be, for the purpose of this study, determined by the presence of three key categories or qualities of experience: scale, emotion, and location. These categories are capable of combining to produce a situation or sensation that can then be classified as *vastness*. In the case of landscapes, as are examined here, the key signifiers can be viewed as an equation of sorts: scale plus emotion equals a location (which may in some cases also be a particular landscape) that represents the individual's concept of *vastness*. Certain measures of scale and types of emotion frequently recur in combination when identifying *vastness*, even if what

implies a system of living things minus human intervention. <<http://dict.die.net/landscape>> [23 August 2004]

²⁵ "For an emotional response to coexist with that natural scientific model, it must be able to claim a similar objectivity. Carroll argues that is possible. Emotional states are appropriate to objects: fear of chicken soup will not sit well with the supposition that chicken soup is not dangerous and so will be inappropriate to the latter belief. Beliefs, in turn, are reasonable or not; and this allows for the assessment that the emotion in question is objective because it depends on a reasonable belief. Being excited by 'the grandeur of a towering waterfall,' which 'one believes to be of a large scale,' is surely, 'an appropriate emotional response,' and 'if the belief in the large scale of the cascade is one that is true for others as well, then the emotional response of being excited by the grandeur of the waterfall is an objective one.' Yet, this sense of scale, appropriateness, and objectivity does not depend on, and is immune to correction by scientific categories." Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, eds. *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 37.

²⁶ In this sense it may be possible to categorize *vastness* as an aesthetic judgment. Unlike cognitive judgments which "involve a determinable relationship between understanding and sensibility" and are concerned with the nature of objects, aesthetic judgments "are based on a pleasurable relation of faculties [...] they depend on the subject and his (sic) experience of pleasure, and not the object's determinate properties," Salim Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art: An Essay on Kant and the Philosophy of Fine Art and Culture*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.) 161,167.

provokes the specific measure or emotion is variable. These are 'a greatness of dimension'²⁷ based on relative scale and the emotional inspiration of awe, (which historically have been typified by the sublime, as will be discussed.) This leaves location as the only category without a recurring or specific signifier, though historically the location of vast landscapes has been typically understood as wild or natural sites.²⁸ It seems fitting that those elements that define vastness are equally vast, or vague, in and of themselves.

Given the idea that scale and emotion can be used to identify the location of vastness, it seems appropriate to question what influences the formative elements that constitute one's concept of scale and one's emotional reactions. Much attention has been given to culture in this regard, particularly as the primary influence when considering the variability of perception. However, culture in its broader context of ethnic, linguistic, religious and racial determinants is less influential when affecting the perception of geographical vastness than an individual's geographic region of origin, which only partially constitutes one's cultural make-up. This is particularly true in Canada where our society is characterized as multicultural. Separating geographic origins from culture as a whole, however artificial in reality, allows the experience of an individual to override those elements of their cultural make-up characterized by social determinants. It prioritizes the experience of environment as a key variable in determining how environments will be classified or perceived in the future.

This is an important distinction because it is more likely that vastness will be identified in the same way by people from similar landscapes than from similar cultures. This is especially true of cultures bound by large geographic areas, such as Canada and the United States. Although Canadians and Americans are culturally distinct, there is more likely to be a shared understanding of what constitutes a vast landscape between individuals from the Maritimes and New England than someone from the Maritimes and the Canadian Rockies. The familiar anecdote of European travelers coming to Canada with the idea of a visiting each major Canadian city within the span of a week is so commonplace it has become something of a tourism myth, and further exemplifies the relevance of geographic origins as they pertain to the concept of vastness. While such an itinerary may seem ridiculous to most North Americans, this reaction is again based on an understanding of scale that is embedded in experience related to geographic origins. If geographic origin is divorced from a composite idea of culture and relocated to the sphere of memory, an understanding of what variables affect the perception of vast landscapes is somewhat simplified. Therefore, the idea that an individual's concept of vastness is culturally bound, especially in North America, is less

²⁷ This phrase is used by Edmund Burke to describe vastness

²⁸ This was particularly prevalent during the seventeenth century when notions of the *sublime* were in vogue in Europe.

probable than one that suggests it is context bound, intertwined with an individual's experience and understanding of relative scale.²⁹

In reference to landscape, absolute and relative scale encompass not only measures of land, but also one's perspective or position relative to landscape being measured and the method of measurement. In his essay "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," author Ronald W. Hepburn highlights the importance of scale, perspective and viewpoint with regard to aesthetic experiences of nature:

Aesthetic experiences of nature, it may be said, are fugitive and unstable, wholly dependent upon anthropocentric factors such as scale, viewpoint and perspective. The mountain we appreciate for its majesty and stability is, on a different time-scale, as fluid as the ripples on the lake at its foot. Set any distinctive natural object in its wider context of which it is a part, and the particular aesthetic quality you are enjoying is likely to vanish. You shudder with awe at the base of your cliff towering above you. But look again at the cliff (if you can identify it in time) from an aircraft at thirty thousand feet, and does not the awe strike you as having been misplaced, as somewhat theatrical and exaggerated, childish even?³⁰

Setting these factors apart as significant determinants when defining an aesthetic experience, one cannot help but see how this may be transposed to the case of vastness. Not only does Hepburn view an understanding of the aesthetic experience in nature as variable or ephemeral dependent on the aforementioned factors, he also implies that the experience itself is such: capable of vanishing within a shifting context. It seems reasonable, then, that these arguments may equally be applied to vastness, because vastness itself can be viewed as a type of aesthetic experience of nature, although it does exist beyond this definition, as well.

Apart from viewpoint or perspective, how distance is understood is also greatly affected by mobility. The modality of mobility and the type of terrain covered, be it land or water, significantly impacts the choice of absolute measure by which progress, as well as an

²⁹ "The Eurocentricity of 'landscape,' the attachment to it of those whose home it is, is a reminder that deserts and ice-scapes are home to others. They have attracted people from the mainstream with a longing to be taken out of themselves into 'something vast, overpowering, and indifferent.' But this is not so much a rejection of home as a transporting a kind of home-space to an unfamiliar location in which some deeper sense of human reality emerges." Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, eds. *Landscape, natural beauty and the arts*. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 17.

³⁰ Ronald W. Hepburn, "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. ed. Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993.) 77.

understanding of an applied relative scale, is gauged. In his text, *Space and Place*, Yi-fu Tuan terms the physical ability to move, and for humans this may be independent or assisted, as spatial ability. This ability transforms into spatial knowledge with experience, "... when movements and changes of location can be envisaged."³¹ By this, Tuan means our acquired ability in turn represents a skill or method that can be communicated without being enacted. Spatial ability may manifest itself as the ability to walk to a specific destination; however, spatial knowledge means we do not need to walk the route and actually arrive in order to know that we are capable of doing so, or that the destination in question exists. Given this, it seems reasonable to assume that spatial knowledge employs and informs our sense of relative scale. Distances that are too far to walk, swim, drive, sail or fly within what our sense of relative scale dictates as a reasonable timeframe inform how vastness is identified. In order to make this type of assessment, spatial knowledge is used. In essence, what Tuan highlights by using the term 'spatial knowledge' is the role of memory insofar as it informs awareness of spatial concepts.

The impact of memory on our lives is ubiquitous and merits a broader assessment in regard to conceptualizations of vastness. When we experience sensations or situations that are novel, we interpret and classify them accordingly, that is to say in terms of the stimuli (i.e. sensation or situation) and our resultant response. The response is hence encoded with meaning. This information accumulates in the mind and forms an individual's 'databank', and in turn it is unnecessary to encode each sensation or situation every time it is encountered again, as the information has already been processed. Memory provides a shortcut, for better or for worse. Cumulative life experience (or knowledge) functions like an inverted pyramid, the foundations of which are laid long before we began examining their influence on our future comprehension. The extensive consequence of memory only becomes apparent when specific examples are brought to light, examples such as how geographic origins, or memory of past environments, affect notions of scale.

If vastness is qualified in part as a greatness of dimension,³² then the relative aspect of scale, that is to say, what an individual considers to be great, affects the qualification of what is vast. Since most fundamental concepts are formed during our cognitive development as children,³³ the elements influencing their formation also lie in the past, brought forward by the agency of memory.

³¹ Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.) 67-68.

³² Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Edited and introduction by Adam Phillips. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.) 66.

³³ Monique Laurendeau and Adrien Pinard. *The Development of the Concept of Space in the Child*. (New York: International Universities Press, Inc. 1970) 15-17.

Whether examining maps of the New World from the 1500s or cognitive maps from the 1970s evidence of the variability of scale and influence of memory and familiarity can be seen in each.

The concept of a cognitive map, a term coined by Edward Tolman in the late 1940s³⁴ but popularized by Kevin Lynch in the 1960s, exemplifies how understanding of scale is influenced not only by physical, but also by psychological, mobility.

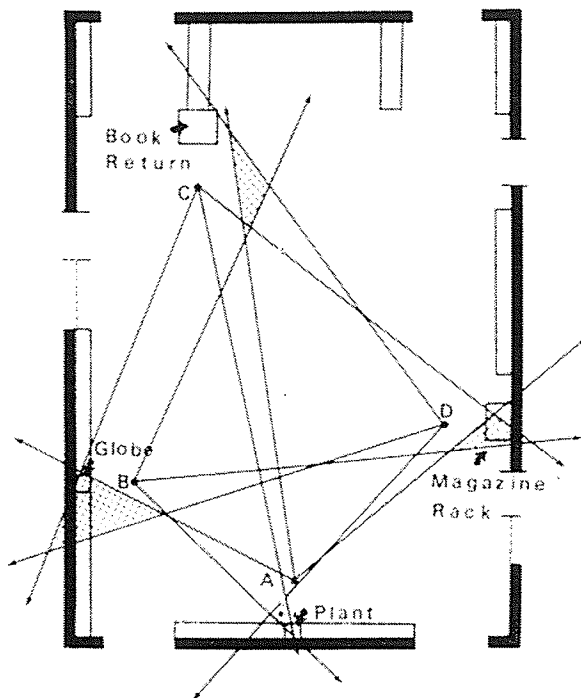


figure iii.

Figure iii represents a cognitive map resulting from an experiment conducted by Curtis W. McIntyre and Herbert L. Pick Jr. in the early 1970s

(a) to examine the objective accuracy of cognitive maps across three age groups, (b) to examine the ability of these age groups to remain oriented with respect to designated objects during movement in space, and (c) to demonstrate the utility of a 'triangulation technique' for generating physical representations of cognitive maps.³⁵

³⁴ Barbara Tversky, "Levels and Structure of Spatial Knowledge" in *Cognitive Mapping: Past, Present, Future*. Scott Freundsuh and Rob Kitchin, ed. (London: Routledge, 2000.) 25.

³⁵ Douglas A. Hardwick, Curtis W. McIntyre and Herbert L. Pick Jr., "The Content and Manipulation of Cognitive Maps in Children and Adults," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*. serial no. 166, vol. 41, no.3 (1976): 7.

Once the subjects in the experiment had been familiarized with the four stationpoints – plant, magazine rack, globe and book return – they had to locate the points again with their view of the stationpoints obstructed. Although this example seems somewhat simplistic because of the researchers' need to assert quantifiable controls, the variance in the angles expressed by the vectors in the map are a clear indication of how spatial perception can vary from person to person and how memory generally lacks accuracy.

The following map (figure iv) is a section from a manuscript in the John Rylands Library (Manchester) made by Pierre Desceliers in 1546.



figure iv.

It possesses the interesting feature of a ragged, non-descript edge on the unexplored and hence unknown, portion of the continent, while the area that is today New England, is grossly oversized with detailed indications of settlements. Such examples demonstrate how perception influences understanding and subsequent accuracy when depicting location and scale.

Indeed, Barbara Tversky, states in her article, "Levels and Structure of Spatial Knowledge", that

All conceptions of cognitive maps recognize that, as for maps, not all the information in the environment is represented. Rather that information is schematized. Much information is left out, some information is simplified or idealized.³⁶

Maps, when created without specified or modern cartographic conventions, highlight just how individual spatial knowledge can be.³⁷ The schematization that occurs when creating maps (or spatial diagrams) is an interpretative process. Measures vis-à-vis locations and our comprehension of them, thought to be absolute, become entirely flexible when recalled from memory or viewed outside their historical context.

The predominance of certain types of sensory input over others is another important factor in understanding what provokes an individual to perceive an environment as vast. Tuan categorizes our senses in two groups: 'proximate' and 'distant'. He defines proximate senses as those which "yield the world closest to us", while distant senses, which include hearing and sight, are "the senses that make the world 'out there' truly accessible".³⁸ Outside inherent ability, the factors that determine how sensory information is interpreted are culturally influenced to the extent that how we interpret our reactions to stimuli, if not our reactions in and of themselves, are largely learned. This highlights the relevance of our origins, geographic and otherwise, as important when understanding how vastness may be felt and interpreted. This is, of course, tempered by the fact that culture cannot alter the physiological primacy of 'distant' senses in humans. Regardless of our cultural interpretation of sensory information, it remains that vastness will be predominantly accessed by visual and aural means when physically possible. All of these things combined, a picture of vastness begins to materialize that implies that the scale at which something is categorized as vast is less about an absolute measure and, instead, is comprised of a range of influencing factors, ranging from memory and sensory perception to physical mobility.

Having examined the question of vastness on the basis of how it is affected by scale, as

³⁶ Barbara Tversky, "Levels and structure of spatial knowledge" in *Cognitive Mapping: Past, Present, Future*. Scott Freundsuh and Rob Kitchin, ed. (London: Routledge, 2000.) 25.

³⁷ On the casual occasions where I have had the opportunity to ask children to create maps of their neighbourhoods, the elements that held greater importance for the individual, or were capable of provoking stronger emotional reactions, were enlarged. This was also true of the areas most familiar to the individual, while unknown or unimportant areas were smaller or absent from the map altogether.

³⁸ Yi-fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature, Culture*. (Washington, D.C.: Sherwater Books, 1993.) 35.

determined by geographic origins, position or perspective vis-à-vis aesthetic experience, physical mobility, sensory perception and memory, vastness as it relates to the second component in the equation – emotion, which is much more difficult to quantify – will be examined. While scale engages questions regarding the physical speed and ease with which we cover a given geographical distance, emotion engages questions regarding the psychological ease and familiarity with which we cover that distance.

As a starting point, the emotion of fear – whether stemming from unfamiliarity or anxiety – is capable of making things seem larger. This idea is a foundational component of most ‘sublime’ experiences. In fact, it is difficult to consider the emotional relevance of the vastness of landscape in Western thought without situating the experience historically as it relates to the notion of the sublime. In his essay “The Measures of America”, Dennis Cosgrove conceives of the sublime as being “invented as a description of landscape in the eighteenth century.”³⁹ Jean François Lyotard describes the notion of the sublime as surfacing “between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe this contradictory feeling – pleasure and pain, joy and anxiety, exaltation and depression – was christened or re-christened by the name of the sublime.”⁴⁰ Still other sources identify the notion of the sublime as being generated by philosophical reflections on visual and literary arts and aesthetics.⁴¹

Experience of the sublime creates a push-pull scenario, where reverence and awe are accompanied by more ominous sensations. This oscillation is fundamental in generating feelings of the sublime. First published by Robert and James Dodsley in London in 1757,⁴² Edmund Burke’s text, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, characterizes the sentiment that evokes the sublime as principally one of terror. Burke writes that:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is the source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.⁴³

³⁹ Dennis Cosgrove, “Taking Measures of America,” in *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape*. Essays, Drawings and Commentary by James Corner, Photographs by Alex S. MacLean, Foreword by Michael Van Valkenburgh. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.) 3.

⁴⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant Garde” in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Clive Cazeaux ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000.) 455.

⁴¹ Primary reflections on the sublime are most commonly cited from two works, namely: Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and Immanuel Kant’s text, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*.

⁴² Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Edited and introduction by Adam Phillips. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.) Xxiv.

⁴³ Ibid, 36.

Other ideas that Burke explores in regard to vastness include obscurity, power, infinity, and magnificence. Each of these qualities can be viewed as implicit in vast landscapes. Burke even examines vastness itself as an element of the sublime, stating that "greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime."⁴⁴

Shortly after Burke, Immanuel Kant's text, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, was published as part of his pre-Critical writings. Kant's writing on the subject of the sublime leads to an alliance between the emotion of the sublime and man's (sic) moral dignity. While Burke's text tends more towards an experiential examination of these ideas, that is to say, their origin in our experience (as the title implies), Kant wrestles with how the sublime and the beautiful constitute aesthetic or moral judgments, and how man himself may be a sublime entity, rather than analyzing exclusively art, literature or nature. Kemal and Gaskell observe that:

Kant's conception of the sublime may guide an alternative conception because it embodies a sense of nature escaping beyond the control implicit in any frame. This excess can be the model for the aesthetic experience of nature. Human beings appear in concert with their environment, rather than being separated from it or having to control it by their reason. Their unity is also an assimilation into nature, which cannot simply measure or judge from some external vantage point.⁴⁵

However, if we are to accept Burke's idea that, "Indeed terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime,"⁴⁶ then vastness may be only occasionally categorized in this manner, as terror is an antithetical emotion to belonging. Instead, it will be more profitable to adhere to the idea that the sublime describes a, "dislocation of faculties among themselves [that] gives rise to the extreme tension (Kant calls it agitation) that characterizes the pathos of the sublime".⁴⁷ It is this combination of the "daunting and dreadful that is nonetheless exhilarating to contemplate".⁴⁸ The exhilaration, according to some interpretations, arises from the knowledge of danger with the assurance of safety (which would be more reasonable in the context of vastness and belonging). However, it is not necessary that the assurance is always present, because the vulnerability that

⁴⁴ Ibid, 66.

⁴⁵ Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, eds. *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 34.

⁴⁶ Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Edited and introduction by Adam Phillips. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.) 54.

⁴⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant Garde" in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Clive Cazeaux ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000.) 458.

⁴⁸ Ted Honderich, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.) 858.

accompanies the sense of 'greatness of dimension,' – whatever the absolute measure of that dimension – is determined by the individual.

As a counterpoint, German philosopher and poet Friedrich von Schiller's premise for understanding the sublime is based on free will. As human beings, we must not 'must' in order to be the being who 'wills', thus remaining capable of exercising free will. Schiller continues this thought with the following line of reasoning:

Man (sic) cultivates his understanding and his sensuous faculties in order to exploit natural forces in accordance with their own laws, either as instruments of his will, or to safeguard himself against those of their effects that he cannot control.⁴⁹

If the forces of nature cannot be assimilated in the manner Schiller describes above, the only possible solution is to succumb to these forces voluntarily in order to preserve our free will.

The morally cultivated man (sic), and only he, is wholly free. Either he is superior to nature as a force, or he is at one with her (sic). [...] This frame of mind which morality teaches as the concept of resignation in the face of necessity, and which religion teaches as the concept of submission to the divine judgment requires, however, if it is to be an act of free choice and deliberation, much more in the way of clarity of thought and energy of volition than the individual is accustomed to exercise in practical life.⁵⁰

This secular and religious categorization of choices; of resignation and submission as acts designed to preserve one's free will, exemplifies the cosmological tone with which the sublime is conceptually imbued. Whether through feelings of terror or a push-pull scenario that places in conflict (or in tandem) ideas of vulnerability and free will, they all revolve around the scale and power of nature, which may be equated at times with vastness. One's assimilation into this power, regardless of motivation, presents a type of critical emotional evaluation on the part of the individual. It represents the need to be able to place ourselves within the context of things greater than ourselves in order to exist beyond a state of constant anxiety. In doing so, nature or the contemplation of landscape, natural, vast or otherwise, asserts itself as other-worldly. Whatever the repercussions are for the individual, it necessarily invokes questions of existence and the Divine: meaning that vastness in the landscape, as identified by the presence of sublime emotions, can provoke a shift in

⁴⁹ Friedrich von Schiller. *Naive and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime; Two Essays*. Trans. Julis A. Elias. (New, York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966) 194.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 195.

cosmology creating a sense of belonging.

What is belonging?

Ironically, the range of possible answers to the question, *What is belonging?* can itself be described as vast. Beginning from a common or basic ground, 'belonging' may be interpreted as being part of a something. What governs one's ability to categorize and group things is determined by what is recognized as common between the elements being classified. In a social sense, these parameters of commonality are usually identified as such things as class, gender, race, religion, language, ethnicity and age. These are social parameters that have traditionally been localized, but, as individual mobility increases the idea of native land or location coinciding with ethnic identity (particularly in North America) becomes a false lead to understanding or identifying belonging. Therefore it becomes necessary to look beyond these traditional social parameters in order to find a different premise for understanding belonging.

In this case, the premise for understanding belonging shifts from one based on shared similarities and is replaced by the idea that belonging can be based on 'difference' in order to match the contemporary notion of a multi-centred self. Through the concept of difference, belonging is re-interpreted to mean something that entails being a unique part of a larger composite whole, rather than simply being categorically similar, as was previously observed when discussing the sublime in relation to vastness. By rejecting categorical similarity as the basis for belonging, the emphasis shifts from exterior to interior determinants, potentially resulting in individualistic interpretations of the concept of belonging. Through this shift from exterior to interior determinants a chain of events is identified: specific qualities of environment inform spatial perception and this perception provokes an emotional response, which in turn can affect one's state of being.

Using this premise, the question of belonging now becomes one of emotional response. Specifically, how different environments affect spatial perception by triggering responses that cause an individual to feel he or she belongs within the physical environment that creates that particular emotional perception. Although it is difficult to quantify or give permanence to emotional evaluations, it is interesting to consider at this point the observation that, "...if emotions are only accessible to introspection, we all learn to speak of them more or less uniformly and can unreflectively assume knowledge of other people's while occasionally having to discover or deduce our own."⁵¹ This is to say, that although emotional responses

⁵¹ Ted Honderich, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.) 224.

are individual and idiosyncratic, there do exist general trends or similarities, even though it may be difficult to identify how one personally fits into such trends.

As with vastness, the understanding of belonging sought in this study is one that resides in a spatial understanding of environment. As such, if belonging is taken as the state of being in question, then it becomes necessary to identify what emotions – and the environment within which they occur – typically contribute to this state of being. In order to do so, the idea of 'home' serves as a vehicle for identifying some of the general emotional trends that come into play when assessing belonging.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides four definitions of the word 'home'.⁵² First, it is a physical structure or location; second, it is an adjective describing a connection; third, it is an adverb relating a journey with a particular destination and fourth it posits home as a birthright. Further summarized as a physical place, a psychological connection, a journey and a birthright, these four avenues provide a framework for examining some of the emotions that are engaged when we consider our own home—home that, in this instance, ideally or commonly defines where we feel we belong.

Belonging: home as a physical place

Much has been written about the house, that is to say, the architecture of home. In his book, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, Witold Rybczynski explores the architectural embodiment of ideas about home as identified in ten themes: nostalgia, intimacy and privacy, domesticity, commodity and delight, ease, light and air, efficiency, style and substance, austerity, and comfort and well-being. Through these qualities and conditions, Rybczynski winds his way through history taking particular interest in (primarily European) cultural idiosyncrasies as they contributed to the development of the concept of home, both in its physical architecture and in the emotions associated with that architecture. He develops an intimate association between the presence of comfort and domestic well-being. Rybczynski states that: "Domestic well-being is a fundamental need that is deeply rooted in us, and that must be satisfied,"⁵³ and implies that the architecture of our home is capable of satisfying this need. Could this sense of ease, facilitated through domestic well-being, i.e. the erasure of anxiety by built form, be interpreted as the architectural manifestation of belonging?

⁵² "home, [...] 1. Dwelling-place; fixed residence of family or household; native land; ~ [...] 2. [...] Of, connected with, ~ [...] 3. [...] To one's ~ or country [...] 4. ~-born, native; [...]" H.W. Fowler and F.G Fowler eds. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, fifth edition revised*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.) 582.

⁵³ Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. (USA: Viking Penguin Inc., 1986; New York: Penguin Books, 1987.) 227.

Of course, a home is not simply a question of architecture. The English language (unlike many others) distinguishes between house and home. Although a house may be a home, the reverse is not always the case. Therefore, if a home is not exclusively architecture, then what is it? What causes the transition from house to home? The distinction is interesting because in terms of belonging, it is unlikely that anyone would associate a sense of belonging with a house that is not their also home. It seems obvious that the transition from house to home is not exclusively one of architectural modifications and is more likely to have an emotional component, but are there physical modifications that precipitate this emotional attachment? While Rybczynski embroils himself in a sociological debate with statements like, "...the idea of domesticity was principally a feminine idea."⁵⁴ his statement does shed light on how domesticity – irrespective of origin – has traditionally been viewed as the ideal of 'making a house a home'. Regardless of the attributes of whomever is found to be responsible for creating home,⁵⁵ it is the component parts that they contribute to creating this sensibility of 'home' and ensuing sense of belonging that are in question. That said, it would appear that architecture needs to be invested with an emotional component in order to illicit a sense of belonging. If domesticity facilitates comfort and a sense of ease, which can be characterized as domestic well-being, then it is possible that some kind of human intervention on the landscape may be necessary to create a similar associative sense of belonging. In some regard, the act of building a house is perhaps what marks the landscape that we refer to as home, the landscape where we feel we belong.

Towards the end of his exploration of the idea of home, Rybczynski explains his idea of comfort, the premise behind much of his concept of home. As he discusses the broad spectrum of possible definitions, the overlap between his notion of comfort and what is being presented in this study as belonging begins to become apparent. Rybczynski describes comfort as part physiological response, but equally as something that cannot truly be measured, as it is comprised of such qualities as intimacy, privacy, convenience, efficiency, domesticity, and physical ease; things not generally quantifiable. Ultimately, Rybczynski does not settle on any one definition; instead, he leans towards the idea that while not exclusively a subjective concept, comfort is "[a] recognition [that] involves a combination of sensations – many of them subconscious – and not only physical, but also emotional as well as intellectual..."⁵⁶ Indeed, as he describes comfort, I think of belonging– something we know, sense, and feel, but fall short of isolating with any completeness, even when this sense of home or belonging occurs at a specific location.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 223.

⁵⁵ The attributes of the individual are not specified as the individual is unspecified, nor is it necessary to do so for the purpose of this argument.

⁵⁶ Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. (USA: Viking Penguin Inc., 1986; New York: Penguin Books, 1987.) 232.

Focusing on the phenomenological rather than the sociological, Gaston Bachelard's examination of the spatial qualities of a 'house' also centres on our relationship with the architecture of home. His book, *The Poetics of Space*, is an intimate look at the meaning of domestic space. In the second chapter, entitled "House and Universe", Bachelard considers our relationship with the house as a whole, and how it either becomes our universe or protects us from a malevolent universe. This relationship is illustrated through poetic passages that concern a house, oneself and elements such as weather or seasons that require us to seek shelter. Bachelard capitalizes on the idea that a house may be given human qualities and that these qualities are transposed onto a physical object through our imaginings. This idea may aid in furthering our understanding of the emotions that provoke belonging because, in this transposition, Bachelard states that "Inhabited space transcends geometrical space."⁵⁷ Once the constraints of geometrical space are lifted, we are free to explore – through our immediate senses, our past memories, and future imaginings – what is significant about the house as an emotional or phenomenological entity. So, even though Bachelard speaks of the house in terms of built structure,⁵⁸ through the juxtaposition of home and universe he infers that the location of home need not be cloistered in a constructed environment, architectural or otherwise.

Although neither a sociological nor phenomenological approach is entirely appropriate to this study, one can see how borrowing from both can further our understanding of belonging. It becomes clear that the timescale of architecture matches neither the contemporary pace of modern day life nor the permanency of landscape. Landscape has the potential to be even more strongly engrained in identity than architecture— for land does not require ownership or direct inhabitation in order to have critical significance for many people when they identify their concept of home.

Although the writings of Yi-fu Tuan stem from the field of geography and are often weighted towards a socio-anthropological approach – as was popular in the 1970s for cultural geographers and theorists – they provide interesting insights regarding identity, perception and landscape. In his article "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics" Tuan uses 'home' as the framework for exploring what he terms overpowering and indifferent landscapes. He notes: "Love of home is universal," notwithstanding his curiosity as to how it is possible, "for

⁵⁷ Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. (New York: Orion Press, 1964. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.) 47.

⁵⁸ note: it is difficult to ascertain whether or not Bachelard's use of the word *house* is a result of translation or intention.

humans to differ so greatly in the environment they prefer?"⁵⁹ that is, the landscape of home.

Associating home with an individual's geographical origins may account for the wide range of environmental preferences displayed by humans. Although vastness may be associated with concepts of overpowering and indifferent landscapes, such as those of desert and ice,⁶⁰ these associations relate a concept of scale that is identifiably Eurocentric in origin, for if the desert is your home, it is unlikely that the notion of 'overpowering' would be an associative one.

Tuan describes a conceptual model of 'home' involving ever-widening concentric circles, where the centre is referred to as 'homeplace' and is characterized by some type of protection or enclosure. The larger circles surrounding 'homeplace' are referred to as 'home space'. Beyond these circles lies 'alien space'. Although this spatial model is an interesting method for examining the many shades of home, it still places an architectural form at the centre of the concept and limits the possibility of landscape by means of scale and deference to built structures, to shape or exist independently as our concept of home. However, as we move on to consider *Home as a journey*, it may still prove useful to employ Tuan's model as a starting point with the following caveat: if the notion of multicentredness is superimposed on this spatial model, it is possible to bring the model into alignment with the concept that individualistic interpretations of environmental conditions are generative of vastness or belonging. A multicentred approach also acknowledges a conceptualization of belonging that resides outside the traditional coincidence of social parameters. Therefore, once Tuan's model is extended conceptually to incorporate multicentredness, the transition from point to point (centre to centre) increases the spatial territory of the model, distancing us from the specificity of house as home, or home as architecture, and allows for a more comprehensive view of belonging as 'homeplace,' represented by multiple locations or extensive landscape.

Although the idea of home and belonging being multicentred may appear at first to be oxymoronic, upon further reflection, the idea of multicentredness is perhaps the only way to represent accurately an individual's concept of home in a contemporary and global society. This is due to the fact that as individual mobility increases, physical location and emotional allegiances are less and less likely to coincide, though they may both be implicated in one's concept of home and sense of belonging. Therefore, using a set of overlapping spheres, which allows for a multicentred view of home and belonging, a comprehensive and diverse range of components within any given individual's conceptualization of home, and ensuing

⁵⁹ Yi-fu Tuan, "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics" in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. ed. Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993.) 139.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

sense of belonging, becomes possible.

Belonging: home as a journey

Historically, humankind has always been in motion and the idea that home and belonging can be defined as fixed territorial points is valid on an ever decreasing timescale. In his foreword to *Locality and Belonging*, American anthropologist David Parkin introduces the idea of belonging within the context of transnational communities and dispersed networks, arguing that even the earliest anthropologists accounted for movement (attributed most frequently to trade and intermarriage) within one or two generations of a population.⁶¹ Therefore, in a territorial sense, belonging may be more accurately described as a web, manifested as we trace the course of our travel from point to point. Parkin's discussion confirms that modernity and increased mobility have only changed the scale of this web— they are not responsible for its existence. The trajectories of motion between temporarily static reference points spatially encompass our entire range of potential belonging. In a sense, 'home as journey' draws a web that is the physical representation of multicentredness.

The first point in the web — one's geographic origins, the familiar, the point of departure — is embedded in this concept of home as a journey. Within this point the notion of return is created. The expression 'right of return' is a politically charged term frequently used in the contemporary arena of rights dialogue; yet, if examined outside the context of nationalism and political rights, and instead considered on an individual or personal level, the notion of return may be viewed as the influence of memory on our idea of belonging.

Coupled with this idea of movement and belonging is the anonymity acquired through movement. The more we move, the more anonymous we are allowed to remain. Although anonymity may seem antithetical to the concept of belonging, it has an important role to play in the process of self-identification. Therein lies the irony: travel or movement places one in a condition of anonymity, yet frequently what motivates travel is the search to define an individual's sense of belonging in a modern context. To differentiate oneself is therefore part of the process of identification. Ignatieff writes that:

We think of belonging as permanence, yet all our homes are transient. Who still lives in the house of their childhood? Who still lives in the neighbourhood where they grew up? Home is the place we have to leave in order to grow up, to become ourselves.

⁶¹ David Parkin foreword to *Locality and Belonging*. Nadia Lovell, ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1998.) i.

We think of belonging as a rootedness in a small familiar place, yet home for most of us is the convulsive arteries of the great city. Our belonging is no longer something fixed, known and familiar, but to an electric and heartless creature eternally in motion.⁶²

It seems reasonable, then, to question what causes anyone to stop moving, to remain in one place. What does an environment, city, town, house, apartment or room need to provide in order to slow someone down? To stop moving, in some ways, acknowledges a sense of belonging. It is the acceptance of identity (found or otherwise) that sets in motion a process whereby we invest ourselves in a specific location and begin to make changes, lay claims, and consequently have a stake in the material outcomes of the places that surround us. Maybe it is possible to be at home, or to belong, in motion. Through the idea of the journey, we begin to assess what role landscape plays in our notion of home— either as backdrop, context or component. The journey engages questions about the possibility of attachment to a physical place in regard to home and belonging, even when the physical place in question is no longer the current environment. Indeed, Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi states,

One who travels a lot has this advantage over others: the objects of his remembrance soon become physically distant in such a way that presently they take on the vague and poetical tone that other memories acquire only with the passage of time. One who has not traveled at all has this disadvantage: all his remembrances are of things that are in some way present, since the places all his memories refer to are present.⁶³

As Leopardi so poetically observes, travel accelerates the passage of place into memory, and as has been already observed when exploring the definition of vastness, memory exerts a powerful force on our emotions.

Belonging: home as a psychological connection

The transition of physical connections into psychological ones through the agency of memory – resulting from either spatial or temporal distance – brings us to the discussion of 'home as psychological connection'.

Although capable of existing independently, our psychological connection to home may be

⁶² Michael Ignatieff. *The Needs of Strangers*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1984.) 141.

⁶³ Giacomo Leopardi. *Pensieri*. trans. W.S. Di Piero. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.) 137.

viewed as what motivates our journey. Outside our memories of territorial reference points, our psychological connection to home is what ties us to people or communities. Often these communities are formed on the basis of shared mythologies stemming from common habits or beliefs. Parkin posits that most of our ideas about belonging are in fact 'imagined communities', or shared myths.⁶⁴ To this end, psychologist and writer Rollo May states that "myth is a hunger for community. The person without a myth is a person without a home."⁶⁵ He makes this observation in relation to Nietzsche's statement in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*: "What does our great historical hunger signify, our clutching about of countless other cultures, our consuming desire for knowledge, if not the loss of myth, of a mythic home, the mythic womb?" May supports the importance of myths as significant aspects of humanity by looking to historian James Oliver Robertson, who defines myth as "that which holds us all together."⁶⁶ Always, the myth explains that which is otherwise inexplicable. It prioritizes specific values in order to accentuate or highlight certain moral codes in relation to the subject matter at hand. It is not difficult to see how this idea of community and myth as collective consciousness is the anthropologist's or psychologist's parallel to the architect or landscape architect's notions of memory.

Modern-day North American preoccupation with the search for roots and the preservation of the traditions of ethnic heritage may be considered a search for a myth lost in migration. As opposed to indigenous peoples in North America, the rest of the population is generally either too modern or too multicentred to be self-possessed of a singular, ready-made sense of belonging encapsulated in myth. In one sense a deficit, this condition may nevertheless also be viewed as a privilege of the North American context, for it allows one the freedom to develop a sense of belonging in terms of how one chooses to view or acknowledge their roots.

This identification of roots often manifests itself as a collective myth. It is interesting to note, as Ignatieff observes in relation to Quebec nationalism, that "Collective myth has no need of personal memory or experience to maintain its force."⁶⁷ In this sense, belonging is purely psychological and self-determined, we choose which myths we believe and share associatively. The human need for roots is a widely accepted idea and connecting to one's roots through myths – whether to past or present, real or imagined communities – is an attempt to acquire or clarify one's identity and ultimately satisfy this basic need – the need for

⁶⁴ David Parkin foreword to *Locality and Belonging*. Nadia Lovell, ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1998.) x.

⁶⁵ Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth*. (New York: Norton, 1991.) 45.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Michael Ignatieff. *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1993.)153.

roots, the need to belong.

In her essay "Neighbourhoods and Human Needs", Margaret Mead states that "There are very few cultural differences when we discuss basic human needs."⁶⁸ If belonging is considered a basic human need, it should follow that the individual components that combine to create a sense of belonging will not vary greatly either. This is evident in terms of psychological connections to home as exemplified through cross-culturally recurring themes in myths. One such theme is our relationship with nature. If we revisit the concept first introduced as belonging and view ourselves as a component part of a larger whole, this whole, in a secular sense, is best described as 'nature' because of the pivotal role it assumes vis-à-vis existence.

Myths relating to nature are capable of reinforcing the ties a certain population may have with a specific location or idealized form of nature. Simon Schama offers one such example in his text, *Landscape and Memory*:

[William Cullen] Bryant's poems (immensely popular in their day, almost unreadably plodding in ours) revealed the American forests as the birthplace of the nation. To repair to the woods was to be reminded of two features of the national personality: its liberty and its holiness.⁶⁹

On other occasions, myths about nature are less nationalistic in tone and are more geared towards internal, psychological needs or codes of conduct exemplified in moralistic stories, as in the case with fairytales: "The fairy-tale hero proceeds for a time in isolation, [...] The hero is helped by being in touch with primitive things – a tree, an animal, nature – as the child feels more in touch with those things than most adults do."⁷⁰ Such interpretations speak to how our relationship with nature is fundamental or initially innocent only to later become tainted or complicated by socialization.

Despite this variety of interpretation, the recurrent theme of nature in mythology highlights the idea that all people likely share some type of inherent bond with nature, regardless of one's individual understanding or interpretation of its meaning. Kemal and Gaskell describe this relationship in their introduction to *Nature, the Fine Arts and Aesthetics* with an excerpt in

⁶⁸ Margaret Mead "Neighbourhoods and Human Needs" in *Human Identity in the Urban Environment*. Gwen Bell and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt. eds. (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1972.) 245.

⁶⁹ Simon Schama, "Landscape and Memory". (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1995.) 199.

⁷⁰ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.) 11.

reference to the holy isle of Lindisfarne from Bede's *Historis Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*:

...human creation and nature so interpenetrate in our understanding that they apparently preclude the likelihood in our understanding of producing clear conceptual distinctions. Human beings are fragments of nature, and nature is a figment of humanity.⁷¹

Belonging: home as a birthright

It seems ironic that the primary and typically most significant bonds in life are ones not chosen. Not only does the location of one's birthplace influence how an individual self-identifies, but so does the birthplace of one's ancestors. In many cases, it will be these bonds that have the most enduring effect on one's identity and sense of belonging, regardless of how an individual may come to define themselves later in life. Where one is born exists as the point of departure for the definition of self and, for many, it will also serve as a point of return, even if one's concept of belonging evolves over the course of their lifetime to become multicentred. The idea of roots as a psychological connection places a heavy significance on ancestral birthplaces. This connection has historically lent authenticity to an individual's sense of belonging. However, it should be noted that incorporating birthrights into one's concept of belonging contradicts the concept of freewill on a philosophical level—there is no choice as to where and when one is born. Perhaps this is a clue as to why traditionally time and place are held as such critical elements of belonging: they represent the aspects of identity outside an individual's control. The acknowledgement – that elements of existence lie outside an individual's control or understanding – provokes questions of Divine forces in many when developing concepts of individual belonging.

What is landscape?

In his opening statement of the second chapter of *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*, Edward Relph states:

I generally use the word 'landscape' to refer to everything I see and sense when I am out of doors [...]. My idea is that landscape is the necessary context and background both of my daily affairs and the more exotic circumstances of my life.⁷²

⁷¹ Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal, eds. *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993.) 3.

⁷² Edward Relph. *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*. (Totowa NJ: Barnes & Noble Books. 1981.) 22.

As this broad usage indicates, landscape has become a term that for many exists outside of its traditional definition as "A portion of land or territory which the eye can comprehend in a single view, including all the objects it contains".⁷³

These two definitions both relate to John Brinkerhoff Jackson's interpretation of the concept of visibility, noted at the beginning of this text. To summarize, Jackson observes that our understanding of landscape represents a composite of what we see as 'conspicuous' elements. Those elements that one is not biased to view as conspicuous simply recede into the background and become largely invisible. With this in mind, it can be concluded that *how* an individual sees (on a metaphysical level) alters *what* they see. This idea of seen and unseen landscapes represents, on the one hand, a division between the physical and the esoteric, but also, on the other, it implies that the range of physical elements that an individual sees reflects their personal priorities. In terms of the 'unseen', landscape has become a metaphor encompassing a wide range of concepts, especially with the advent of academic disciplines such as cultural landscape studies. Even within the field of landscape architecture, which generally focuses its attentions on the 'seen' landscape, many varying definitions and interpretations of what constitutes landscape exist. For the purpose of this study, the definition sought is of a physical landscape, one seen perhaps in more detail by landscape architects but equally capable of being experienced and available to be seen by anyone. The concept of visual space or visual order is not being proposed to the exclusion or denial of a spatial order as a whole, instead, it is proposed that spatial order is to a large extent visually perceived (as was previously argued in relation to distant senses and vastness).

Perhaps the fact that landscape architecture exists, in part, as a method of altering the seen landscape explains why there is such difficulty in agreeing on a universally applicable definition within the profession itself. It is the prerogative of landscape architects to effect change on the landscape; it therefore seems unlikely that the linguistic definition would not be altered by these changes, as well. To this end, Schama states:

Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock. [...] But it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real

⁷³ Definition from Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913), source: <<http://dict.die.net/landscape>> [23 August 2004]

than the referents;⁷⁴

This 'muddling' is, in part, what leaves us without a singular, universally accepted definition. In light of this, attempts to distill the meaning of landscape until it represents a single viewpoint are perhaps a false and unachievable pursuit. When the term 'landscape' is modified by adjectives in an attempt to clarify its meaning, it simply illustrates what is seen or unseen by the person applying the adjective. The intermingling of such qualifiers as seen and unseen, public and private, synthetic and natural, and social or cultural, are indications of how difficult it is to arrive at any single definition of landscape. Perhaps a single definition is the antithesis of a contemporary one. Perhaps, landscape no longer exists as a stand-alone concept in a meaningful way.

In fact, it is not necessary to arrive at a singular or absolute definition of landscape because ultimately the relationship of vastness and belonging is illustrated in this study through the use of three landscape archetypes. Landscape archetypes provide a model within which to frame an individual's perception and illustrate the flexibility of spatial perception and being. Archetypes act as tools for consolidating the experience (and subsequent memories) of a large number of individuals without enforcing a uniform definition of landscape.

In response to the conclusion that the meaning of landscape as a singular term does not hold much validity in a contemporary context, the images and descriptions pertaining to vastness and belonging in the landscape being presented in this study respond to three specific landscapes archetypes. These are: oceans, rails and metropolis. Each of these archetypes represent places that relate a set of specific spatial conditions. Some of these conditions are expressed as geometric parameters: each type being examined embodies the specific geometry either of point, line or plane. Each type also represents varying degrees of human intervention and nature, as well as different levels of engagement of proximate and distant senses. There is also an element of population density (or lack thereof) that characterizes each type.

The experience of landscape archetypes

As the generative point of this research was in part a personal one, it seems appropriate that the closing point return to the personal. Throughout the entire process of this research, I have collected images and recorded my thoughts regarding my experiences of vastness and belonging in the landscape. Together with the enclosed DVD the following section of text

⁷⁴ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*. (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1995.) 61.

describes these experiences and conforms to notions of 'pure discovery' previously described in the methodology. Telling the story of my experience of each archetype is designed to illustrate how different conditions or locations can result in similar interpretations or perceptions of vastness and belonging within one individual's collective experiences. Thus, each landscape archetype is designed to show how the perception of a spatial quality can be viewed as plastic, consistently evoking the same state of being in an individual despite different contributing conditions.

The links between each setting are personal and highly specific, but equally offer opportunities for generalized observations. I come from an ocean landscape. These are my geographic origins. The links between the vastness experienced in an ocean landscape (my point of departure) and that of a prairie landscape (my environment when embarking on this study) are drawn together through their shared geometry; my experience of rail travel moves me from these open landscapes to the enclosure of the city— yet the experience itself depicts another example of vastness: linear space. In my case, I have chosen to illustrate this through the experience of train travel, but it could just as easily have been a car on a highway or even boat on a river. My final destination is the city: the density of an urban metropolis where I feel hemmed in by buildings. Never seeing beyond the edge of the urban fabric causes me to return once again to vastness, lost in the density of people, activity and built structures.

In order to maintain the chronological aspect of the experiences recounted in this narrative, it is suggested that readers view the enclosed DVD before proceeding to read the next section. (see Appendix 1)

Discovery

ocean

I feel I belong next to the ocean, I am most at ease next to the ocean. Ironically, I am somewhat ill at ease when I am 'on' the ocean and other than small day trips paddling along the shore in a kayak well out of the reach of changing tidal currents, I prefer to be beside the ocean. On occasions when I have lived away from the ocean, I feel an indescribable absence, a void. The strength of this void was somewhat subdued in my personal experience by the fact that when I lived inland, it was in the prairies. The prairies subdued this void by sharing certain formal geometric similarities with the ocean and thus, my response to the prairies is in part similar to my response to the ocean: I prefer edges rather than centres. My preference for these stereotypically vast landscapes lies in their expansive qualities rather

than in their exposure. The more I examine how and why I associate these qualities of vastness and belonging on a personal level, the more I am made aware of the strength of the imprint of my geographic origins. I wonder how far the romantic notion of prairie or ocean extends, to beyond those with whom I share this imprint of geographic origins. As with other myths, perhaps there is no need of direct experience in order to adhere to or to associate with the mythology of golden fields shimmering in the sun or waving under gentle breezes; of a distant ship fading to a speck and then disappearing over the horizon— such mythic images probably have universal appeal. Vastness, – in this, its most stereotypical incarnation – triggers memories of home for me, and, in terms of scale reduces my significance reminding me that I am but a small part of a much larger system.

rail

In some respects, the railway is a Canadian icon that also has mythic proportions. The cliché phrase ‘the railway built this country’ describes that myth. It is especially pertinent to the experiences I had living in the prairies for the first time, when commencing my studies for a Masters degree in Winnipeg. Winnipeg’s history is marked by the railway, as it heralded the city’s glory days when it was still considered the gateway to the West. My previous experiences of the railway were in Eastern Canada. I have traveled from Halifax to Toronto on the train a number of times. With all the stops in between, it impresses upon me the size and diversity of landscapes that make-up this country. Moving along these lines, connected by familiar points of departure and arrival, only highlighted how my identity is comprised of a notion of vastness; of large geographical spaces with which I am largely unfamiliar, yet affirm as part of my identity. I often assume that this is the case for many Canadians, rightly or wrongly. This coincides with my belief that identity is often assumed and, as Ignatieff has pointed out, we have no need of personal experience of the myths that we adhere to in order to identify culturally with them.

It strikes me that traveling in Canada this way is by no means a rapid form of transportation, and whenever I can afford to, I generally prefer to fly. However, there is something unique about the consumption of time that occurs when traveling by train in Canada. It conveys the idea of vastness in a different way than an expansive aerial perspective does. It creates vastness on a temporal scale, as well as a geographical one. It also acknowledges the importance of the in-between, unknown space as something we pass through. Apart from the point of origin and the destination, I am relatively unconcerned about what lies in-between. For me, the window of the train acts like the frame in a length of film; the syncopated rhythmic advancement of the reality outside my window becomes a fiction strung together through

movement, like a movie without a plot happening in real-time. Within this space I am able to drift away— as I similarly do when a passenger in a car, rarely remembering which turns left or right are necessary to navigate my way to the destination. I'm not entirely sure what this means, except when I find myself in this condition I often return to my own thoughts and rarely contemplate the reality of the landscape outside my window. The in-between space gives me time to think, to drift in my own thoughts. Therein lies the critical understanding: when drifting these spaces, much like the derives of the dadaists, landscape shifts to become backdrop and we are released from the present, both temporally and spatially. How we choose to reintegrate ourselves upon arrival at our destination is affected by these psychological wanderings. Such wanderings are what provoke the shift of cosmology that I experience when being in motion causes me to feel, sense or think of vastness. For me, vastness, in the sense of linear motion, creates a space so that I may begin to search the meaning of my own existence while dislocated from my environment, shunted down a seemingly infinite line.

metropolis

On an urban scale, I typically only experience vastness in large and or unfamiliar cities. This is quite a common occurrence for me as I come from a small rural Canadian town and have a terrible sense of direction. When hemmed in by buildings or crowds of people, when the only clear sightline out is up, and the only natural element available to connect with is the sky, I can be overwhelmed by the vastness of the city. Dramatically different— it is vastness unlike that of the ocean, where I am absorbed by nature. It is equally unlike that of the railway— where I am decontextualized without perspective. The vastness of the city is a human creation; hovering between the idea of Divine forces and Big Brother, I am reduced to an ant, struggling to find my way, like all the other ants. I believe that vastness in the city creates belonging through human solidarity and through this solidarity belonging is achieved.

Conclusions

Through presenting these ideas regarding vastness, belonging and landscape, I have tried to expose the importance of recognizing that the harmonious accord of specific faculties define qualities that are capable of exemplifying themselves through a diverse range of manifestations.

Although vastness has been presented here as having a constant meaning, it seems clear

that the causes of vastness are variable, thereby placing the burden of identification on the individual. Using scale and emotion to specify a location is one way to identify vastness in the landscape. As vastness, in this study, is being examined in terms of its geographic manifestation, geographic origin instead of cultural identity as a whole has been selected as a pre-determinant for identifying vastness. It has been shown how geographic origins are capable of crossing nationalistic cultural boundaries (through the experience of similar landform) to influence conceptualizations of relative scale.

Memories, understanding of scale and emotional response combine to form a method of interpreting one's spatial environment, vast or otherwise. One's personal and sometimes ephemeral understanding of belonging can be significantly affected by this assessment. Thus, how we view environments necessitates developing an understanding of how and where we place ourselves relative to that viewpoint. In so doing a hierarchy of values becomes evident. In short, identifying what determines the classification of an environment indicates how one sees the world and acts out what they believe to be their assigned role within that context.

Originating from outside free will, the concept of belonging evolves over the course of one's life through the self-defined process of identification with a variety of conditions and environments that cause an individual to feel they belong. Many writers have sought to prioritize what elements exert the most influence over an individual during this process. Once analyzed, notions of belonging are often found to have some aspect rooted in memory, whether it is, as May describes, through a psychological connection to myth, or, as Bachelard alludes, to the dream of phenomenological encounters of the soul.

In the examination of what constitutes belonging, the model of home has provided four reference points. Based on this examination it is possible to summarize belonging as indicating a harmonious accord of multiple factors exemplified in the notion of home, accentuated through travel, established in memory, and mythologized collectively and individually according to how we choose to define ourselves, that is, one's identity.

Whether identified as context, backdrop or a portion of land comprehended as a single glance, the current meaning of landscape has multiple incarnations. Accepting any one definition will ultimately be at the expense of another. The exclusion of certain elements throws into question whether or not a singular definition of landscape is either meaningful or useful in a contemporary context. Given this, landscape archetypes provide an excellent model for consolidating shared experiences based on landform without diminishing the

significance of the context within which these experiences occur, or the experiences themselves.

If one of the skills of a landscape architect is the ability to design environments that possess qualities creating a specific atmosphere, then increasing the understanding of a quality's variability allows a landscape architect to increase the breadth of their work within different contexts. If vastness can be understood as plastic in nature, then its range of application can be expanded. By recognizing the extensive range of an individual quality a greater understanding of how to manipulate space effectively can result; something fundamental to successful practice.

Having demonstrated that vast landscapes are capable of triggering the sensation of belonging within an individual and that vastness is a diverse and plastic quality applicable by design to different environments, one may conclude that landscape architects have the potential to engender a sense of belonging through the design of spaces that evoke vastness. At a time when society is becoming more and more disenfranchised and vast landscapes (in their native or stereotypically wilderness form) are disappearing these may be two highly desirable aims for our profession.

Appendix 1, DVD

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