An Investigation of Significant Form: Through an Application of the "Script Analogue" to Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" Books

by

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(ABSTRACT)

In recent years, the study of language has been found to be significant to the development of a cultural approach to landscape architecture. In particular, attention has been focused on the literary device of metaphor, due to its capacity for referencing and extending traditional landscape themes. While the potential for metaphor as a creative and interpretation device is recognized, the distance which separates theory from practice is only beginning to be spanned.

A theoretical model called the "script analogue" provides a methodological bridge for utilization of metaphor as an indicator of significance in architecture. The "script analogue" was designed by Kathleen Arceneaux for the study of the relationship of African women to their traditional architecture. This thesis proposes to borrow the "script analogue" for application to western architecture. The context for this study is provided by the regional

literature of Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books, which depict pioneer life on the prairies of the mid-west during the late nineteenth century. Through application of the "script analogue" the primary metaphoric themes that linguistically connect people, place, architecture and action are pulled from the text, yielding a contextual image of the significant forms of a pioneer's domestic domain.

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Introduction

The topic of this research is significant form as it may be revealed through discovery of the metaphoric themes expressed in language, and ritualized in human activities, which connect people, architecture, and memory.

Chapter one of this research begins with a presentation of the arguments made by landscape architects for viewing the landscape as a literacy analogous to language. The figurative device of metaphor plays an important role in all of the critical essays presented, proscribed as a tool for creation and interpretation of landscapes. The comparison made between architecture and language as texts, assumes that they represent corresponding literacies. In response, this research questions how each system operates to give symbolic expression to thought and feeling, through presentation of Ernst Cassirer's general theory of symbolic forms, and Suzanne Langer's theory of significant forms.

Cassirer's theory suggests that we as humans order our world by distinguishing our experiences, and naming them. One of the basic principles at work in the symbolization of phenomenon is differentiation through analogous comparison. Metaphor is thus one of the basic tools man uses to describe something in terms of something else, establishing a sense of likeness and difference amongst perceptual experiences. Suzanne Langer's theory is important as it takes symbolic theory a step further, differentiating between types of symbols, and what they present. She finds that language, in normal usage, operates in the mode of discursive symbolization, in which there is a direct link between what a word names and its meaning. Although we tend to search from a lexicon of words for the one

which references most specifically what we mean, each individual term is distilled enough to convey meaning directly. In contrast, Langer views architecture as a non-discursive symbol, as its individual elements reference only in relationship to each other and the activities of people. Architecture as an organized entity presents an illusion of the semblance of life, and Langer refers to this image as its significant form. Langer's theory establishes a distinction between language and architecture as symbols. She also furnishes through this process a definition of significant form. In criticizing the shell of the argument this research begins with, one rescues the kernel, which is the role of metaphor in the creation and interpretation of architecture. Cassirer finds metaphor to be the essential creative starting point of all symbolic expression, and Langer locates metaphor as the means by which cultural ideas are connected.

While chapter one frames a set of ideas regarding metaphor, the span that separates philosophical thought from methodological application is only bridged with the introduction of Kathleen Arceneaux's formulation of the "script analogue" presented in chapter two. It is in recognition of architecture as a dynamic set of relationships, which metaphor linguistically connects, that continuity can be found between Langer's and Arceneaux's theories, and justification made of the presentation of their theories as supportive. The "script analogue" is a theoretical model, that provides a contextual frame for the discovery of architectural significance. The term script refers to the literary text in the context of the theater, in which the text frames a set of ideas but is itself incomplete until activated through account of human activity in relationship to the cultural and architectural stage. The term analogue makes reference to the idea that the means by which connections between elements of the script occur are through metaphors, expressed in language and ritualized in actions. The "script analogue" as a model is delineated by the terms: metaphor and ritual,

built architecture, designated architecture, commemorative memory, orientative memory, and the individual within culture and subculture. Research utilizing the "script analogue" begins by searching for the metaphors used within a culture, and tracing the network of connections they form among the script elements.

The "script analogue" was designed by Arceneaux for the study of the relationship of African women to their traditional architecture. This thesis research borrows the "script analogue," removing it from the context of traditional architecture, to utilize it to discover significance in western architecture. This research assumes that even in a culture characterized by the positive value placed on change as an indicator of progress, that stability zones can be located, and potentially reside within the domain of the home. Chapter three outlines the context for a western architectural case study, using the "script analogue." This study uses children's regional literature as a research resource, referencing a means by which cultural memory is brought forward and perpetuated. The Laura Ingalls Wilder "Little House" books were chosen for content analysis, as they detail pioneer life within a specific time-frame, and landscape setting, while recording the life of the family home in an era of great environmental and technological changes.

In chapter four, the "script analogue" is applied to the Wilder texts. The metaphors drawn from the texts are traced to the script elements first in a notational format, and then elaborated upon in essay. What emerges from this study is a sensed image of pioneer life, built entirely from metaphors that linguistically represent a network of connections between the script elements and indicate where, how, and to whom architecture is significant.

There has been an ongoing debate among scholars about whether Wilder's texts are completely her own or a collaborative effort with her daughter Rose, who acted as her editor. In one of the exchanges between the two women, Rose asks whether Laura's account of her childhood was truthful. Laura responded to the effect that her accounts were truthful, but not necessarily factual, as the experience of events often surpassed in significance the facts that surrounded them.[1] Likewise, this thesis does not represent a factual account of pioneer life, but builds an image of it, through extraction of the themes which connect people and place, as held in the selective memory of Wilder's texts.

In chapter five the primary metaphoric themes located in the texts through application of the "script analogue" are restated and further studies that derive from this research are suggested.

Chapter 1 Theory

There has been in recent years, an expression of interest by landscape practitioners and theorists in the study of language, semiotic and linguistic devises. It is proposed that analogies can be drawn between languages and architecture. Catherine Howett writes in Systems, Signs, Sensibilities: Sources for a New Landscape Aesthetic, that

> ...architecture can communicate visual conceptual messages according to the way a vocabulary of meaningful formal signs is ordered, much as a spoken or written language makes sense to us because it follows rules of syntax and grammar in the arrangement of words whose meaning we know.[1]

Approaching architecture as a "visual language" which embodies and communicates meaning and changes of meaning necessitates that architecture be viewed as a dynamic cultural construct. The attention that has been directed towards language studies, and particularly the figurative device of metaphor, as fundamental to the development of a cultural approach to landscape creation and interpretation has come in the wake of critical responses to current landscape practices and theory.

The strength of criticism to a given state of affairs resides in the questions that are asked and the insights generated in the process of building new theories. Howett's advocacy of semiotics arises from a desire to find a method for forging a new landscape aesthetic. She questions how landscape forms function to represent meaning, and arrives at the conclusion that these forms are a type of literacy, which act as signs in language reflecting

the shared meaning of the culture which creates and uses them. What Howett advocates in pursuit of a new landscape aesthetic is replacement of existing landscape forms, such as the picturesque models which she views as having limited meaning for contemporary society with forms which more appropriately express the complex cultural issues, concerns, and interests of late twentieth century existence.[2] Marcia Eaton replies to Howett's proposal in Responding to the Call for New Landscape Metaphors, with the assertion that languages are public and thus,

> ...one can only communicate within an already existent language and cultural sign system. Understanding demands mutually shared meanings. Interpreted radically, the admonition that we must start to speak a whole new language becomes absurd.[3]

Eaton contends that the values signified by landscapes change slowly, and that acceptance and appreciation of new forms depends upon the degree to which people share a common viewpoint and are able to exert some control over their environment.[4] Eaton suggests that the figurative devise of metaphor may provide an alternative to replacing landscape signs, as metaphors operate by extending the fixed meaning of a sign by making reference to something else, provoking new perception.[5]

The potential for metaphor to be used as a creative and interpretive devise has also been advocated by Laurie Olin in Form, Meaning and Expression in Landscape Architecture. Olin contends that there are several contemporary practices which have undermined landscape architecture as an artistic medium. One is the trend towards design of landscapes as literal depictions of a theme, which when given form tend to exist in Howett's terms as univalent signs. Another problem is the polar tendency towards design of landscapes that

exist as oblique signs. Olin contends that landscape architecture suffers from an anti-historical stance among practitioners with regards to historical precedents in the uses of materials and formal vocabulary, as well as, reference to central landscape themes. This stance, according to Olin has prompted designers to look to other fields, particularly art, for inspiration and guidance. As a result, Olin contends that landscapes are created that are often second and third generation abstractions.[6]

Olin asserts that the practice of landscape architecture has in essence become bereft of its roots and is thus working without a primary source of reference. He finds the 17th and 18th century works of Brown and LeNotre more successful than several much heralded contemporary examples, due to the designers ability to metaphorically re-present the landscape tradition that they had inherited in terms of the issues and concerns of their own time.[7] James Corner concurs with Olin's view that landscapes of significance metaphorically reconcile the past with the present. Corner argues in A Discourse on Theory II: Three Tyrannies of Contemporary Theory and the Alternative of Hermeneutics as the title suggests, that landscape architecture has been dominated by three tyrannical theoretical approaches which "...perpetuate an excessively hard or neutral world - a world in which culture can no longer figure or recollect itself."[8] These approaches are positivism, paradigms, and the Avante Garde, which Corner contends, fail to acknowledge the power of landscape to symbolize and reveal a culture's collective memory, orientation and sense of continuity in the pursuit of empirical truths, universal models, and novelty.[9]

Corner recommends hermeneutics employing rhetoric and metaphor as an alternative to contemporary theories of landscape analysis. He suggests that the strength of hermeneutics as a method of interpretation is that the research focus is situation specific, directed by

perceptual experiences, and recognizes tradition as a dynamic event.[10] He states that the role that metaphor plays in a hermeneutic practice is as a bonding and revelatory mechanism. He maintains that commonalities between different subjects, actions, and practices can be understood through investigation of metaphorical linkage. Landscapes, according to Corner, can be read as a "text" and through a hermeneutical examination "...enables a re-cognition, a knowing of things anew."[11]

In addressing problems of meaning and expression as it is created and may be interpreted in the landscape, all of the authors cited have drawn on the analogy that has been made between language and architecture, emphasizing metaphor as a tool towards a solution. Metaphor is viewed as a particularly powerful devise due to its capability to extend meaning, negotiate insight, and raise design to a poetic level. If metaphor is to be used to these means it is appropriate to question, Why metaphor should be singled out as the key for contextual design from a repertoire of other linguistic devises? And whether there is a correspondence between the way that architecture and language signify and embody meaning? Both of these questions can be approached by presenting a body of thought, which has built upon or is associated with an epistemological theory formulated by Ernst Cassirer. These theories will be used as a broad theoretical framework for this thesis.

Ernst Cassirer presents in An Essay on Man, a theory which provides a unifying principle for the diverse fields of human knowledge. It should be noted that Cassirer has been labeled a phenomenologist, pluralist, constructivist, and a symbolist depending upon which aspect of his work is emphasized. The basic premise of his theory is that man is a symbol using animal. He proposes that man "constructs" a symbolic world by exercising his reflective ability to recognize and differentiate qualities of a particular phenomena from a

flow of perceptual experiences, and then expressing what he has experienced in a representational form.[12] Man's experiences are thus concretized in symbols, and through symbolization made accessible for ordering and interpretation. Language, Cassirer contends, is one of the basic symbolic forms which marks the beginning of culture. He proposes that as phenomena is designated through naming it can be conceptually grasped, held by cultural memory, and made available for use.[13] Martin Heidegger has expressed a view similar to Cassirer's. He writes,

> ...Experiences that were there before they were 'named' were as yet outside the realm of the known because they were not yet distinguished, they could not be used, they had no distinctive consistency, they had not yet become cultural objects about which man could think and discourse.[14]

According to Cassirer the unifying principle of human life is the construction and organization of a symbolic world. Nelson Goodman, in Ways of Worldmaking, proposes however, that one could also say that as many worlds exist as there are world views. How a culture sorts, organizes, conceptualizes and articulates experience is the framing of a world version. Cultural objects, forms, and actions are the embodiment of a common viewpoint. For example, the Eskimo distinguishes in his language between many types of snow, not recognizing it as a comprehensive concept, suggests Goodman and thus differing in his perspective from "...the New Englander who has not grasped the Eskimo's distinctions."[15]

According to Cassirer's theory in the development of language and other symbolic forms, man progresses from known (named) phenomena to that which is unknown (unnamed). Metaphor as a form of analogy is the vehicle through which this conceptual leap is

facilitated. Suzanne Langer in Philosophy in A New Key describes metaphor as the "...most vital principle of all symbolism."[16] If it can be said that metaphor is at the very root of invention in all of man's endeavors, because man tends to think in terms of likeness, then there exists a creative starting point at which science and art are not dichotomous. Giambatista Vico states in his science of language that "...poetic expression is both historically and eidetically prior to the logically ordered prose of syllogistic formulations."[17] A classic example of scientific invention by metaphorical transfer is the case of Einstein's recognition of the concept of relativity while watching a train move away from a terminal platform.[18] Bruno Snell illustrates this process in language, by tracing the root metaphors that underlay common language usage. For example, he traces the word "sight" as it has evolved to convey more distinctly the processes of the mind, making the different concepts of sight available for use in science and our culture as a whole. Snell contends that "sight" was distinguished from other sensory experiences in the Homeric period, and then transformed by Plato and Aristotle into a concept which expresses absorption and contemplation, establishing the idea that "thinking" is a kind of seeing. He asserts that this metaphor underlies our western epistemological vocabulary of "intellectual sight" as revealed by the contemporary use of such words as introspect, focus, and insight among others.[19] Snell's example demonstrates that metaphors build upon root metaphors, and that their initial metaphoric resonance fades as they enter common usage.

Suzanne Langer, building from Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms, developed a general theory of aesthetics which is valuable in distinguishing between types of symbols and the types of meaning that they may give. Her theory of aesthetics moves from the question of What is presented? Langer makes a distinction between discursive symbols which act as signs, bearing a conventional meaning, and functioning to direct and explain; and non-

discursive symbols which are presentational, "...negotiating insight rather than conventional reference."[20] Langer contends that discursive and presentational symbolic expressions are both articulate logical expressions, differing in the mode in which they function to convey meaning.

The analogy that has been drawn between language and architecture has also been made for other non-verbal symbolic forms. These analogies may well stem from two positivist assumptions which Langer describes as the ideas that "...language is the only means of articulating thought and that everything that is not speakable thought is feeling."[21] The positivist position attempts to recast non-discursive symbols into discursive symbols, denying that meaning can be conveyed in any other manner than that which is heuristically read, while perpetuating the myth that anything that is not literal can not be logical, but must reside within the mystical realm of intuition. The comparison made between language and architecture should be taken as a metaphorical comparison between certain characteristics of the two modes of expression, as Langer contends that language is not directly equivalent to non-verbal expression. The essential difference between the two, is that the elements of language are words having a fixed reference, or in other words displaying a "...one to one correlation with the idea that they express."[22] What they mean is the idea that they have been assigned. Because words have a fixed reference they can be compiled into dictionaries. When words are combined in normal usage, which is discursive, following specific rules of syntax, propositions emerge. The meaning of a proposition is the sum of its parts.

In contrast, non-verbal expressions such as painting, dance, sculpture, and architecture do not literally say anything. Their comprising elements do not have fixed references that can

be compiled into tomes of meaning, though as whole structures one can make references to typologies. Presentational symbols can not be reduced to their comprising elements for significance. The way that these forms mean, depends entirely on the articulation of the relationships between the elements as they are combined into a composition.[23] For example, an architectural void can only be expressed in relationship to mass. Langer contends that as non-verbal symbolic forms "...can only loosely and inexactly [be] called a language, so its symbolic function is only loosely called meaning, because the factor of conventional reference is missing from it."[24] Langer suggests that what these symbols express when well articulated is an illusion which imparts the sentience of life, "... the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known."[25] The illusion which emerges from a non-discursive form, Langer refers to as its "significant form" as opposed to its meaning.[26]

Langer suggests that if we acknowledged that non-verbal expressions are not directly equivalent to language and as images do not aim towards literal expression, then what they signify is dependent on some degree of correspondence to patterns of life that are intelligible and recognizable. Langer describes the mode of illusion in which architecture expresses, as an "ethnic domain". The term ethnic domain is borrowed from anthropology, connoting "place" in the sense that place is demarcated physically by people as a "...zone of influence" and culturally as an "...organized entity."[27] A place is thus created and given perceptual form in relationship to the activities of people, reflecting their cosmology. Langer writes,

> The architect creates its image: a physically present human environment that expresses the characteristic rhythmic functional patterns which constitute a culture. Such patterns are the alternations of sleep and waking, venture and safety, emotion and calm, austerity and abandon...[28]

What is of interest here, in leading back to metaphor, is the capability of inert forms, made up of inert materials, to connote morphologies of feeling, or to exist as organic forms. Philip Wheelwright suggests, in The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism that the life of symbols resides in the tension inherent in the metaphoric bonds between elements. As a metaphor describes one thing in terms of another indicating a similarity, it also retains a sense of distinction between the terms by omitting the direct reference to likeness which is employed in a simile.[29] Mary Slattery, in Hazard, Form, and Value describes metaphoric tension as a "hazard to relationship," and states that "...the distance of the span which would naturally separate the two terms which are found related is then very important to affectivity of the impact of the feeling produced."[30] Thus the significance of an "ethnic domain" resides in the metaphoric tensions that exist between people and place.

Chapter 2 The "Script Analogue"

While the potential of metaphor as an interpretive devise has been recognized by landscape architects, particularly as it may be employed in hermeneutical approaches, the span between theory and methodology has not yet been bridged. We do however have an attendant set of concepts associated with metaphor that require framing for application for landscape analysis. This thesis proposes to borrow a theoretical model which uses metaphoric relationships to indicate significance in traditional architecture, and apply it to a contemporary western landscape context. This theoretical model is called a "script analogue" and was designed by Kathleen Arceneaux for the study of the relationship of African women to their traditional architecture.

Arceneaux's theory draws upon Post-Structuralist thought which has sought to call into question the various assumptions underlying notions of truth and objectivity in reading of texts or structures. The post-structuralists, while resisting an explicit ideology, generally challenge the idea that the text is a stable medium. The term "script analogue" is used in Arceneaux's research to refer to the role of the script in a theater context, as a sketch of settings and actions which realize their potential as form only through performance.[1] The "script analogue" provides a contextual frame within which architecture, individual, cultural memory, and act, are metaphorically linked. Arceneaux's formulation of the "script analogue" places the research focus on interpretation of the dynamic relationships between the constituent components of the script, as opposed to reading architecture as a text.[2]

The questions central to Arceneaux's research were, "How are architecture and culture related?", "How can significance be discovered in architecture?", and "For whom is it

significant?"[3] Her diagram of the "script analogue" illustrates the relationship between culture and architecture. The three general headings of architecture, individual, and memory are encircled and connected by ritual which she defines as "...a type of performance which unites people, things, and ideas due to its metaphorical content, and its capacity for repetition."[4]

Arceneaux has defined specific associations for each term in the "script analogue" which are restated here. The term architecture has been assigned the sub-headings of "built" and "designated" to indicate architecture as it is physically manifest, as well as architecture as it may be designated solely in language. At the center of the diagram, Arceneaux has placed the individual to signify that humans are the constructors of culture. The diagram indicates that individuals are "...members of culture, and also belong to over-lapping sub-cultures simultaneously."[5] The term memory, Arceneaux defines as "...the process through which architecture is a factor in the continuity of culture."[6] The concept of memory is inclusive, as indicated by the diagram of memory as "commemorative", in which architectural form serves to reinforce appropriate actions on the part of individuals within culture, and memory as "orientative," in which case it indicates where architecture is located, and how people orient themselves to it.[7]

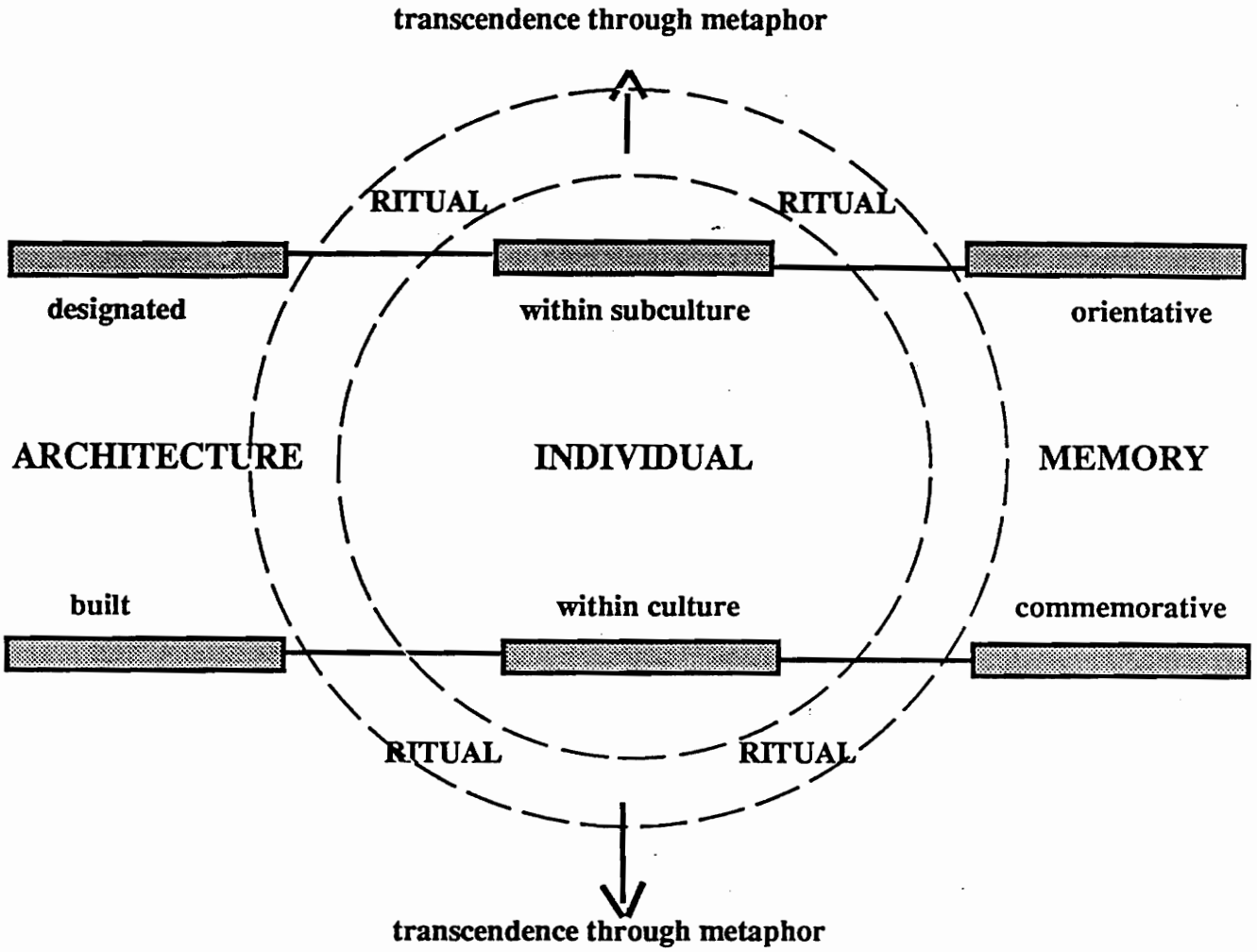
Arceneaux proposes that metaphors in language are the key to the discovery of significance in architecture as

> ...metaphor is the means by which cultural themes exist in an inter-connected relationship to each other." Ritual, as metaphoric action which takes place in an architectural setting activates the script, and connects it to other cultural and sub-cultural themes outside of the local and specific conditions. This inter-connectedness is termed in the "script analogue" as transcendence through metaphor.[8]

Arceneaux's research relied upon analysis of metaphors as expressed in language and conveyed in ritual as the means for revealing the significance of traditional architecture for African women. As indicated by Arceneaux, architectural significance does not refer to an aesthetic value, or to an intrinsic meaning, but to the connectedness of architecture and culture.[9]

While Langer's theory of significant form focuses on the image that is projected when there is a close relationship between architectural form and patterns of life; Arceneaux's theory of significance places emphasis on the connections between the elements that constitute architecture. The advantage of Arceneaux's theory is that it bridges the gap between theory and methodology. Both authors work from a cultural based perspective, and recognize metaphorical relationships embedded in culture as the key to significance. I believe that the two theories are compatible with one another, emphasizing different facets of the same issue, and reflecting the different concerns of the fields from which each author works.

This thesis reasserts Arceneaux's proposal that architectural significance resides in the metaphoric relationships embodied in rituals, serving to link people, place, and memory, and that architectural significance may be discovered through analysis of metaphors used in language and expressed in actions. In a broad sense, places that can be designated as significant as indicated by the metaphoric connections between elements of the script, may also be designated as significant forms, as the metaphoric tensions between the elements give the illusion of an ethnic domain. This is not to say that significant forms will necessarily have a form which coincides with the aesthetic values of designers or that a defined value may be assigned to them.



The Script Analogue

From: Kathleen Dugas Arceneaux. The Script Analogue and Its Application in Architectural Analysis: The Relationship of African Women to African Traditional Architecture. Blacksburg, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Dissertation, 1989, p.5.

Chapter 3 The Research Framework

This thesis proposes to borrow a theoretical model which has been used to trace metaphoric relationships to indicate significance in the architecture of a non-western traditional culture, and apply it to a western non-traditional culture. It is only for lack of a better descriptor, that the terms 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' have been used to describe the cultural conditions which distinguish this research from Arceneaux's. The terms should not, in reference to culture, be considered mutually exclusive, rather they should be understood as indicative of a cultural predisposition towards a static or dynamic state.

Based on the theory that culture is a symbol system it is assumed that the "script analogue" may be used to discern significance in the architecture of cultures other than those referred to as 'traditional', as the comprising elements of the script are shared in common. Arceneaux's research revealed that the highly ritualized patterns of life for African women served to maintain the connections between the elements of the script, reinforcing cultural conventions, while restricting change. In the book, American Mythologies, Michael Blonsky suggests that the notion of change as an end in itself is an axiomatic American theme.[1] Fred Eisman, author of Regionalism in Children's Literature concurs. He writes,

> Basic to the American character is change. From the very onset, the United States has stressed its mobility and its newness, deriving its character precisely from its social impermanence, from its shifting frontier characteristics.[2]

Alvin Toffler suggests in Future Shock that the consequence of embracing a cultural mythology of change can be "...a life so ephemeral, unfamiliar and complex as to threaten

millions with adaptive breakdown in their dealings with it.[3] Toffler maintains, however, that people manage change by anticipating it and holding other factors stable. He writes,

> We can assign probabilities to some of the changes that lie in store for us, especially certain large structural changes and there are ways to use this knowledge in designing personal stability zones. These zones...are certain enduring relationships that are carefully maintained despite all kinds of other changes.[4]

Thus ritual as a linkage element as described by the "script analogue" may not be negated by a western mythology of change, but may in fact be a cultural necessity for psychological adaptation to a world in flux. Rituals are metaphoric actions which are repeated and through their enactment reinforce cultural values. Rituals take place within a present time, but evoke the past, and anticipate a future.

This thesis will utilize the "script analogue" as a tool to discover significance in western architecture, using children's regional literature as a research resource. The term architecture is used throughout this work to indicate designated forms in the landscape as well as buildings. The texts selected for content analysis are the Laura Ingalls Wilder series, commonly known as the "Little House" books. The titles included in this study are Little House in the Big Woods, Little House on the Prairie, On the Banks of Plum Creek, By the Shores of Silver Lake, The Long Winter, Little Town on the Prairie, and These Happy Golden Years. These seven books were written in the 1930's and recount Wilder's childhood as a member of a pioneer family during the late nineteenth century. This was a period in which pioneer life was being transformed through settlement of the west, disappearance of the frontier wilderness, and the advent of the machine age.

Children's literature was selected as a research medium as it represents the transference of culture memory, in the form of story telling, from adults (author) to child (reader). Regional literature was selected as a research sub-category within the genre of children's literature in order to limit the scope of the study to a fixed time frame and geographical area. A regional approach assumes that significance in architecture is contextual, and that analysis depends upon looking at the relationships which exist between local characters, their landscape, architecture, and mythologies.

The "Little House series recommended itself to this study as the events of the narrative occur within a limited time frame, the 1880's and 1890's; and within one dominant landscape form, the prairies of the mid-west. As well, the perceptual biases of a single story-teller eliminates the problem of multiple perspectives, while recognizing the validity of experiences of the individual within culture.

It should be noted that Wilder occupies two positions as a cultural informant in relationship to the texts. The first is as an adult author revisiting the past. Her opening line, "A long time ago, when all the grandfathers and grandmothers of today were all little boys or little girls or very small babies, or perhaps not even born..." orients the reader to past events linked to the present through the generational connections which form a cultural history.[5] In the telling of her story, Wilder, the author selected and composed the themes which constitute a history. Thus what she says and how she says it are equally important factors in the analysis of the books. Wilder's second position resides within the text as she narrates in the present tense from a child's eye view, her experiences as a female member of a pioneering family within frontier culture. Thus, gender issues become a sub-theme for study, as Laura's experiences are presumably gender influenced.

The "Little House" books are thematically concerned with change, as indicated by the book titles which chronicle the family's movements across the mid-west, and the chapter titles which separate daily events and occurrences into a seasonal context. As Toffler has indicated that one must look to 'stability zone' for the enduring patterns of a transitory culture, the point of entry for this study is the domestic domain, assuming that the house, as the locus of human life, will be most quickly re-established when all other factors are uncertain. The term domestic domain is inclusive of the home and landscape as they are built and designated, organized and maintained. It encompasses the total sphere of influence recognized, acknowledged, and modified by the individual for affirmation of cultural values associated with dwelling. This research assumes that the house and landscape can not be separated as discreet subjects for study. As Christopher Alexander writes, "A well designed house not only fits its context well but also illuminates the problem of just what the context is, and thereby clarifies the life which it accommodates."[6]

A key premise of this research is that significant form emerges as an image from a cultural fabric woven with metaphor and ritual. Significant forms will display an inter-connectedness of the 'script analogue' elements. In theory, examination of one element will in turn lead to another. Arceneaux proposes that the 'script analogue' can be tested through a hypothetical process of "taking away" the action or form associated with an element. She suggests that if its removal does not alter or impact the remaining elements, that one can assume that it is not significant. This method of testing the 'script analogue' is, as Arceneaux admits, speculative, as research on the effects of a single source change on a culture is scant, and the impacts may be difficult to trace, or even delayed.[7] Instead of testing the "script analogue's" application to the Wilder texts through negation of the

elements, this research has relied solely on the demonstration of connectedness between the script elements to indicate significant form. It is in keeping with the endeavor to converse about aesthetics through the use of metaphor, to avoid the suggestion that this research could yield scientific results. The potency of metaphor lies in its ability to negotiate insight through suggestion rather than explanation, and it is this 'sensed image' that is sought through the analogue framework.

Chapter 4 Application of the "Script Analogue"

Having defined the methodological conditions for the application of the "script analogue," the next step is to search the text for the dominant metaphors which form a mythology for domestic dwelling in the "Little House" series. William Faulkner wrote that any story is just a capturing of the "...fluidity which is human life...you focus a light on it, and you stop it long enough for people to be able to see it."[1] Wilder focuses her story through a repertoire of metaphoric counter-themes which seemingly constitute paradoxes for dwelling. The themes central to her story have been listed below using the "script analogue" outline and are expanded upon in the following text.

Metaphor and Ritual

The Cosmic Landscape:

The cosmic landscape is a metaphor for the home. Its immensity is made tangible as 'place' through its re-creation in the image of the home. It is acknowledged as God's kingdom and is perceived as a vertically stratified domestic domain in which man locates himself at a center point in a great chain of being, polarly defined by heaven and earth.

Rituals associated with this metaphor are non-specific, and constitute conscious directed actions. They are voiced as Pa says by "...doing the right thing," and take the form of stewardship of "God's nature," and following of God's laws.[2]

The East and West

The East is a metaphor for civilization, materiality, technology, rootedness, and security.

Rituals associated with the East, are those which re-establish traditional patterns of dwelling. They are re-creation rituals which take the form of building permanent structures, constructing appropriate house form, maintaining standards of conduct, cultivating the land, keeping of the home, and rebuilding of community.

The West is a metaphor for wilderness, spirituality, self-sufficiency, nomadism, and risk.

Rituals associated with the West include detachment from the home, sacrifice of the material accouterments associated with dwelling, and engagement in a journey. The journey is symbolically a spiritual fresh start. It represents a purification and reinstatement of the individual to a simpler state of being.

These geographic metaphors operate as counter-themes in which civilization opposes wilderness; materiality/spirituality; technology/self-sufficiency; rootedness/nomadism; and security/risk. As directional metaphors they suggest an attachment of value to position on a horizontal plane. Thus, central to Wilder's image of the domestic domain is its location in a middle landscape, bound in dynamic tension between the East and West as place and idea.

The Path and the House

The path is a metaphor for the journey towards the mystery of the unknown.
To journey ritualizes the belief in a promised land, dually characterized as a celestial heaven and an earthly "...land of milk and honey."[3] As a journey requires movement in time and space, significance is attributed to the process of creating as well as seeking paradise, and given an image in the purposeful motions of everyday life.

The house is a metaphor for the cosmic landscape. The interior of the home is arranged to reflect an inverse image of the cosmic landscape. This image is itself a metaphor for gender stratification and orientation within pioneer culture.

The house is a metaphor for the female body. It is a protective covering, demarking a physically defensible space, just as voluminous clothes, modulated voice, and reserved facial expression demark a bodily boundary.

Rituals of covering, protecting, shielding, partitioning, and defining zones of privacy are associated with the house and the female body. One of the interesting aspects of this sub-theme is that the landscape and house come to assimilate a wide range of human emotion. They become manifestations of the human psyche, entrapped within restrictive forms.

The following subjects have been selected for examination through the triadic elements of the Script Analogue.

1. Architecture

Built Architecture:

The form of an appropriate or "real" house, and its location within a 'middle landscape.'

The walls of the house as a charged surface, dividing interior and exterior life.

The hearth as the sacred altar within the home, with focus on its surface decoration rather than its location.

Designated Architecture:

The home interior as an inverse image of the cosmos.

The interior of the home as a designated zone for the activities of women.

The laying out of fields in linear forms analogous to the home.

The path which leads to and from the house and signifies in its physical adjacency, the myths attached to the home and path.

2. Memory

Commemorative Memory:

The cultural memory of forms carried to the frontier through the different members of the Ingall's family, which are drawn upon to create an appropriate environment for dwelling.

These include the form of the house and its components, and those of dress and deportment which are quickly re-established by the Ingalls as a method of creating a superficial stability zone in a place without history.

Orientative Memory:

The cultural memory which directs appropriate relationships of forms in space, and appropriate orientation of people to the house and to each other.

These include, the physical positioning of the house and person to vertical and horizontal coordinates, and the congregation of forms and people to the margins of the house's interior.

3. Individual

The Individual Within Culture and Subculture:

The narrator, Laura Ingalls, as a child member of pioneer culture, and as a member of the female subculture.

The Cosmic Landscape

Laura Ingalls begins her story at her childhood home in the big woods of Wisconsin. Her tale follows her family's trek through Indian country, where they settle temporarily on the Oklahoma prairie, and from Indian country to the banks of Plum Creek in Minnesota. Their travels continue until the family, consisting of Pa and Ma Ingalls, their four daughters Mary, Laura, Carrie, and Grace, stake out a homestead by the shores of Silver Lake in DeSmet, Dakota. One would expect that in hundreds of miles of travel, Laura's stories would contain landscape descriptions that vary considerably. They are however, consistently similar in physical feature and character. From the big woods, the wagon trail, and the open prairie she describes a volumetric landscape space that moves out in all directions from the core of her own body. This space reaches outward as far as the eye can see, measuring off a space of visual knowledge that is contained by the edge of the horizon. She writes of her home in the big woods,

> The great dark trees of the big woods stood all around the house, and beyond them were other trees, and beyond them were more trees...So far as the little girl could see, there was only the one little house where she lived...A wagon trail ran before the house, turning and twisting out of sight...but the little girl did not know where it went nor what might be the end of it.[4]

and from the wagon trail,

> ...In a perfect circle the sky curved down to the level land, and the wagon was in the circle's exact middle... Pet and Patty moved forward...but they couldn't get out of the middle of that circle...Next day the land was the same, the sky was the same, the circle did not change.[5]

and from the prairies of Dakota,

> This prairie is like an enormous meadow, stretching far away in every direction, to the very edge of the world.[6]

From the "snug and cozy" perimeter of her home, whether it be a house, a wagon, or the circle of a campfire, the terrain beyond is immense, empty, and of an intangible scale. Laura writes of the land stretching beyond her home in the big woods,

> As far as a man could go to the North in a day, or a week, or a month, there was nothing but woods. There were no houses, there were no roads. There were no people. There were only trees and wild animals who had homes among them.[7]

and from the high prairie in Indian country,

> No roads, not even the faintest trace of wheels or of a rider's passing, could be seen anywhere. That prairie looked as if no human eyes had ever seen it before. Only the tall wild grass covered the endless empty land and a great empty sky arched over it. Far away the sun's edge touched the rim of the earth. The sun was enormous and it was throbbing and pulsing with light. All around the sky's edge ran a pale pink glow, and above that blue. Above the blue, the sky was no color at all.[8]

"Nothing," "no houses," "no roads," "no people," "no color," "empty," "endless," "empty," chants Laura's prose. The lulling rhythm of her repetitive phrases persuades us that the land beyond is not domestic terrain. It is foreign. It's immensity is given an image only through the negation of the familiar elements that allow one to think in terms of domestic space. The intangible quality of Laura's landscapes are not merely the exaggerated perceptions of a child who has never ventured beyond the security of her family home. For

the sense of awe that the big woods and immense prairie inspire in Laura stems from an experience of wilderness that is difficult to know today. The landscape is a wilderness untouched by civilization. Much later in her life, Laura's fiancee is to describe the prairie as crowded after passing as many as six houses in forty miles.[9]

It is into this prairie void that the Ingalls family moves in search of a place to build a home. With them they carry only the material possessions that Pa couldn't make, their traditions, and beliefs. Domestic traditions are maintained. The rhythm of familiar routines, and their proper order, "Wash on Monday, iron on Tuesday, mend on Wednesday..." lend a sense of familiar structuring as the Ingalls form themselves into a domestic hub in the stillness of the great prairie.[10] At first glance the rigid composure of the home front and wide open landscape appear antithetical. They are, however, metaphors for each other.

The prairie is the cosmic landscape of the home. It is an inhabited domain, alive and omniscient. Laura describes a vast flat land with imperceptible swells that swallow even Pa, and an earth which "...seemed to be breathing softly under the summer night."[11] Laura, intuned to the prairie pulse hears the "...savage fierce sound of the grounds growl."[12] And as prairie shadows are seen dancing, the grass hunches its back to the wind and weeps.[13] On the prairie the night creeps, and the wind screams, mourns, holds its breath, and whispers softly. The prairie is imbued with a conscience. Laura admiring its beauty and gentleness wonders aloud to Ma "...what it will do next," and comments that it "...seems like we have to fight it all the time."[14]

The prairie is made comprehensible through perception of its humanistic motions, and designation of its architectural features. The landscape is given edges where there aren't

any as Laura writes of the prairie "...stretching far away in every direction, to the very edge of the world."[15] Domed walls and ceiling are constructed as the sky becomes "...like a bowl of light overturned on the flat black land."[16] And from the great sky, low stars are hung from a thread. Below, paths are composed from moonbeams, and the grass "...spreads a coverlet of buff and tan and brown and warm brownish gray."[17] As the sun sinks "...to rest like a king," the land is bedded.[18] Laura describes to Mary the downy white clouds that are spread to enfold them in the colors of royalty. She writes "...all the tops of them are crimson, and streaming down from the tops of the sky are great gorgeous curtains of rose and gold with pearly edges. They are a great canopy over the whole prairie."[19]

Who reigns in this landscape entity structured of light, color, and clouds? Laura writes of her home and those of the birds and wildlife as singular points within a larger domain. A song suggests,

> The heavens declare the Glory of God and
> The Firmament showeth His handiwork
> Day unto day uttereth speech, and
> Night into night showeth knowledge.
> There is no speech nor language
> Where thine voice is not heard.[20]

The seminal idea which shapes a common cosmology for the strangers who band together to form a town on the Dakota prairie is issued by a Fourth of July orator who proclaims that, "Every jack man of us are free and independent citizen's of God's country."[21] Laura reinterprets this proclamation to mean that "God is America's King."[22] She concludes

> Americans won't obey any king on earth. Americans are
> free. That means they have to obey their own conscience...

> This is what it means to be free... The laws of Nature and of Nature's God endow you with a right to life and liberty... Then you have to keep the laws of God, for God's law is the only thing that gives you the right to be free.[23]

Laura suggests a natural consistency in following one's conscience, and keeping God's laws, the laws of nature. The voice of nature, and the voice of culture speak however of an uneasy alliance. They are loosely joined in a cultural mythology of "nature's God" and "God's nature." The pioneer is constantly at battle with the processes of nature, yet is aware that in its preservation is his own. Through Pa, the Ingalls children are taught to observe the character, balance, and dangers of the natural world. Nature suggests truths for the sagacious individual, and the rhythms of pioneering follow the rhythms of nature. There is a season for everything, sheltering in winter, planting in spring, harvesting in summer, and butchering in fall. Violation of nature's rhythms, such as killing out of season, is considered an indecency. Codes of conduct with regard to nature also stem from reverence for the self-justifying beauty of nature tempered by practicality. Pa lamenting the accidental shooting of a swan declares that "...It was just too beautiful to kill," and Laura extrapolates, explaining that "Pa shot all the ducks and geese that they could eat but he shot nothing else except hawks. Sometimes he shot a hawk because hawks kill other birds."[24] Nature provides a moral reference point for man, indicating how he shall conduct himself, and where he belongs in the scheme of things. On approaching a muskrat house with exceptionally thick walls, Pa forecast a hard winter ahead, and indicates to Laura the conditions which separate man from animal.

> "Pa, how can the muskrats know?"
> "I don't know how they know," Pa said, "but they do. God tells them, somehow I suppose."
> "Then why doesn't God tell us?"

> "Because," said Pa, "we're not animals. We're humans, and, like it says in the Declaration of Independence, God created us free. That means we got to take care of ourselves."
> Laura said dauntly, "I thought God takes care of us."
> "He does," Pa said, "So far as we do what's right. And he gives us a conscience and brains to know what's right. But he leaves it to us to do as we please. That's the difference between us and everything else in creation."
> "Can't muskrats do what they please?" Laura asked amazed.
> "No," said Pa, "I don't know why they can't but you can see they can't. Look at that muskrat house. Muskrats have to build that kind of house. They always have and they always will. It's plain they can't build any other kind of house. A man can build any kind of house he can think of. So if his house doesn't keep out the weather, that's his look out; he's free and independent." [25]

God's Kingdom is a vertically stratified domain, in which man locates himself between heaven and earth, between lightness and dark, between perfection and wilderness. For wild nature, despite its lessons is fettered, grounded by a predisposition which negates choice. Paradoxically, Laura's culture teaches one to embrace God's nature, and step away from it in order to orient oneself in the great chain of being. This removal is expressed in many ways. Laura comes to recognize in her youth that her untamed spirit constitutes a character flaw, and a hurdle to her ever learning to be "good" like her subdued sister, Mary. Her descriptions of the landscapes that include singing stars, waving grass, humming prairies, and animated clouds are considered to be embellishments of an imaginative mind. Her inclination toward impetuous behavior expressed as an eagerness to learn to spit tobacco like the Wildcat, Mr. Edwards, hear a few coarse words the railroad men might drop, and run naked like the biblical Adam, to name a few, are met with shock and disapproval. She observes that the wilderness within, which is manifest as an appetite for adventure, is negatively compounded by physical features which connote earthiness. On a trip to town, Laura fills her pockets with rocks, only to have the seam burst. She writes of the incident,

> Nothing like this ever happened to Mary. Mary was a good little girl who always kept her dress clean and neat and minded her manners. Mary had lovely golden curls...[26]

Gold connotes good things - a warm fire, the sun, wheat crops, and wealth. It is a metaphor for prosperity, the prosperity of illumination, knowledge, truth, and God. Gold is an extracted mineral, revealing its beauty through removal from the earth, melting, molding, and polishing. Similarly polished conduct constitutes refinement and beauty, attested to by Ma's voice instructing that "Children should be seen and not heard," "A lady always modulates her voice," and "a lady never does anything to draw attention to herself."[27]

The way the Ingalls build and dwell also suggests disassociation from the earth. From DeSmet, Laura tells us that "...people [are] coming from the East now to settle all 'over' the prairie."[28] The prepositional use of 'over' connotes a placement above, a covering, as in a roof over one's head, as opposed to 'on' which would suggest contact. Further, appropriate dwelling within a house depends upon a spatial separation between earth and interior elements. Ma comments after Pa built a floor for a cabin in the country that "she [is] glad to be up off the dirt...Now we're living like civilized folks again."[29] When moving into the house at Plum Creek, Ma tells Pa:

> "I don't know what to do about the bed. I don't want to put them on the floor."
> "What's the matter with that?" Pa asked her. "We've been sleeping on the ground."
> That's different," Ma said, "I don't like to sleep on the floor in a house."[30]

Stratification also is at issue in the Ingalls interactions with the Indians. Ma says she doesn't like"...Indians around underfoot."[31] Many of Ma's comments hold racist overtones, but are aimed at distinguishing, and reinforcing her conception of civility. When Pa suggests that she wash clothes in the creek, Ma replies with disdain, "If we want to live like Indians you could make a hole in the roof to let the smoke out, and we 'd have the fire on the floor inside the house...Indians do."[32] More seriously, the impermanent presence of Indians is an irritant to the pioneers, as the issue of land rights threaten peaceful cohabitation. A neighbor to the Ingalls in Indian Territory comments,

> Lord knows they'd never do anything with this country themselves. All they do is roam...The land belongs to folks that'll farm it. That's only common sense and justice.[33]

Although the settlers place themselves above nature's wild creatures and untamed earth, they also yearn as "civilized folks" to possess, subdue, and improve the ground they claim, thereby making it part of themselves. This idea constitutes a primary link between man and the land, tenuous as it may seem. Claiming and not claiming the land is perhaps a way of saying that one is on the earth, but not really of it.

East and West

Someone once wrote that the coordinates of an American home are "Out West and Back East."[34] The East is the enclave of America's collective memory. A memory which reaches back beyond shorelines to remember the over-civilizing excesses of the courts of Europe. In DeSmet, the memory of the settlers recall that "...[their] forefathers cut loose from the despots of Europe,...Tyrannist...fine gold-laced aristocrats...murders...[to find] themselves as independent citizens of God's country."[35] The severing of political ties did not however curb the ambitions of local politicians, nor sublimate the civilizing process that began on the eastern shores of America, with settlement and home-building. Instead it fostered a myth, in which the plagues of the far courts appear to resurface and spread out from the urbanizing capitols of the eastern seaboard. And the myth of the East, fostered a counter-myth of the West, a dream place of wild innocence, unencumbered by the trappings of "civilization." A place only a journey away, where the collective values of autonomy and independence retain meaning. These myths are given shape through the words and actions of the people in Laura's story. They are expressed in Mr. Edwards' farewell to the Ingalls family. Mr. Edwards tells Ma,

> "I'm aiming to go far west in the spring...This here country is too settled up for me. The politicians are a-swarming in already, and ma'am if there's any worst pest than grasshoppers it surely is politicians. Why, they'll tax the lining out'n a man's pockets to keep these here county seat towns! I don't see nary use for a county, nohow... Politicians they take pleasure a prying into a man's affairs..."
> [A train whistle blows]
> "There's the call," said Mr. Edwards.[36]

The call to the west is heard throughout Laura's story, until it is an expected note following settlement. In the course of her tale, Laura's family travels from Wisconsin to Dakota Territory, and occupies eight different homes. She tells us that they must leave the big woods as Pa feels crowded. She writes:

> Quite often... the ringing thud of an ax which was not Pa's [was heard], or the echo of a shot that did not come from his gun. The path that went by the little house had become a road...Wild animals would not stay in a country where there were so many people. Pa did not like to stay either.[37]

Towards the west lay Pa's paradise. He describes the land as

> ...level, and there were no trees. The grass grew thick and tall. There the wild animals wandered and fed as though they were in a pasture that stretched much further than a man could see, and there were no settlers.[38]

In Indian country, Pa finds everything he needs to provide for his family. He tells Ma

> This country's cram-jammed with game... I saw fifty deer... the creek's full... I tell you Caroline, there's everything we want here. We can live like kings.[39]

Indian country, proves however, to be too wild, too western, too unsettled, as disease, Indians, and wolves beckon at and invade the Ingalls' home domain. On leaving, Pa comments, "It's great country, Caroline...but there will be wild Indians and wolves here for many a long day."[40] The family moves on in search of the next promised land, further west, beyond the dangers of Indian country, where folks like themselves can stake out a government claim on unsettled land. What the Ingalls seek is a middle landscape, a place

'between' the spoiled East and the unruly West. They also seek the fulfillment of a covenant with God, a metaphoric paradise.

When the Ingalls reach Minnesota, and then Dakota, they are confident each time that they have reached their Edenic retreat. Game and wildlife is abundant, a town is near or being built, and the prairie seems to resist crowding. Ma, who longs for the familiar manifestations of home, and is tired of "...being dragged from pillar to post," is confident that at last they can live as civilized folks.[41] As a travel song forecasts, paradise is within reach,

> There is a land fairer than day
> And by faith we can see it afar.[42]

This fair land is made earthly, as Ma tells her children of the promise God made to his children,

> "...to bring them out of that land [of locust] to a good land,
> unto land flowing with milk and honey."
> "Oh where is that, Ma?" Mary asked and Laura asked.
> Ma rested the bible on her knees and thought. Then she said,
> "Your Pa thinks it will be right here..."[43]

According to Ma, an earthly heaven can be found in green growing land which supports man and animal.

The paradox of finding the westward lying paradise is that the finding incurs the loss. The plagues of the east spread out, and settlers pour into the open territory. They come like a "...wave, when the rivers rising," says Pa.[44] Settlement draws other settlers, and Pa can be heard yearning for the west, complaining again that "...a fellow doesn't have room to

breath here anymore."[45] Laura tells of geese flying over Silver Lake, outside DeSmet, looking down, seeing the rising buildings, flying on, as if they knew their home is gone. The Ingalls' home also is unsettled. Laura writes, "Pa didn't like a country so old and worn out that the hunting was poor. He wanted to go west."[46] Civilization arrives and the settlers are the bearers. In its wake the prairie land is transformed, the same prairie that Laura describes as the cleanest place she has ever seen, becomes soiled.[47] She writes of the emerging town,

> The town was like a sore on the beautiful, wild prairie. Old haystacks and manure piles were rotting around the stables, the backs of the stores' false fronts were rough and ugly. The grass was worn now... and gritty dust blew. The town smelled of staleness and dust and smoke and a fatty odor of cooking.[48]

The sights and smells of decay are the aftermath of the sounds of building. In an earlier observation, Laura writes that where the prairie grasses once stood was now

> ...muddy and trampled young grass, and wheels had cut deep, deep ruts...between the buildings and beyond both ends of town, the clean green prairie rippled far away and quiet...but the town was troubled and noisy with rasping saws and hammers.[49]

In the wake of new settlers, technology also reaches the distant territories. Most signifi cantly the train which forges in steel a visible connection between East and West. With the train comes a change, a change which occurs too suddenly to be embraced, disrupting the prairie pace. In an apparent contradiction, Pa initially praises the machine age, exclaiming of a wheat separator, "...that machine's a great invention. Other people can stick to old fashioned ways they want to, but I'm all for progress."[50]

When the winter trains don't arrive, and the family's of DeSmet are left without essential supplies, Pa cast dispersions on the value of machines. He can be heard saying,

> These trains are too progressive. Everything has changed too fast. Railroads and telegraphs and kerosene and coal stoves - they're good things to have but the trouble is folks get to depend on them.[51]

Pa's statements can be reconciled. He is appreciative of the separator which reduces the time it takes to do his work and saves him wheat that would be lost by hand-processing. However, as wildlife and timber disappear with settlement, Pa's role as provider and intermediary between the home and the larger world is diminished. Pa raises an early voice to the possibility of being displaced by the machine. He says speaking of a plow "...[it] will take a notion to keep on going...and there [will be] no use for a man's muscle."[52]

It is notable that Laura casts her parents in a softened image of the East and West. Ma is from the East. She is refined, a gentle presence in the home, a counterpoint to Pa. Ma is the cultivator, the processor, the alchemist of the home, transforming base materials into refined. This is apparent in her efforts to "raise" her home, through cleaning, partitioning, and decorating. It is apparent in her efforts to make food palatable and also beautiful, as in her dying of the butter with carrot shavings, and pressing it out in decorative molds. It is apparent in the efforts she exerts guiding her children's book work, domestic chores, and deportment. Pa, in contrast is instinctually western. He is connected to the earth and its creatures. He is guided in the outdoors not only by his physical senses, but his intuition. Laura hints at his kinship to the wilder elements when she tells us that Pa, like the wild animals does not like to stay in settled country.

> He liked a country where the wild animals lived without being afraid. He liked to see the little fawns and their mothers looking at him from the shadowy woods, and the fat, lazy bears eating berries in the wild-berry patches.[53]

It is Pa's knowledge of wild creatures, and perhaps wild men, which is his resource in uncharted places. He is the only member of the family who maintains primal contact with nature. He is the hunter, the timberer, and the sod-buster. Thus, Pa's role is most vulnerable to displacement by the machine, especially as natural resources become depleted. This becomes apparent in the year of the terrible blizzards. As the family weathers the storms in town, Pa becomes a dependent, waiting at home like the women for supplies and news. The train becomes a symbol of an impending loss of status for the providing patriarch. As well, it symbolizes the demise of a self-sufficient way of life, through fostered dependency upon the East, and elimination of the value placed on the process of production.

Prairie life is unpredictable, and the Ingalls family takes pride in the characteristics that make them pioneers, namely their self-sufficiency, perseverance, and creativity. Pa and Ma frequently give voice to these values through the much repeated phrases, "[We] must not be beholden," "Where there's a will there's a way," "We will have to contrive," and "We wouldn't do much if we didn't do things that nobody ever heard of before."[54] These values are exemplified in numerous actions, such as Pa's inventing the twisted sticks of straw for fuel when wood and coal run out; Ma making mock apple pie from green pumpkins when winter arrives early, and grease button candles when kerosene runs low.

Conversely, Easterners are perceived as soft. In the process of "civilizing" they are believed to have lost sight of the mythical spirit which won a nation, a spirit "...of plodding and striving," of never giving up.[55] Laura writes of this resilient flame within herself, found beyond the fatigue of isolating blizzards in the year of the hard winter.

> ...Laura felt a warmth inside her. It was very small but it was strong. It was steady, like a tiny light in the dark, and it burned very low but no winds could make it flicker because it would not give up.[56]

In that same winter, when the trains don't arrive, Ma and Pa can be heard speaking of this lack of spirit in the superintendent of the railroad:

> Ma exclaimed, "Patience! What's his patience got to do with it...He knows we are out here without supplies. It isn't his business to be patient. It's his business to run the trains.
> [Pa says] "You see girls...the trouble is, he didn't have enough patience."
> "Nor perseverance," said Ma.
> "Nor perseverance," Pa agreed. "Just because he couldn't get through with shovels or snowplows, he figured he couldn't get through at all and he quit trying. Well he's an Easterner. It takes patience and perseverance to contend with things out here in the west."[57]

Through her stories, Laura recounts in meticulous detail the rhythmic process entailed in pioneering. Through her voice a choreography of building, planting, harvesting, processing food, and a hundred other chores are made into an ongoing dance of creating place. She writes of bed making,

> Then, one on each side of the bed, they spread the sheets and the blankets and quilts, drawing them even and folding and tucking them in square at the corners, Then they plumped up a pillow and set it in place and the bed was made.[58]

of Pa sowing seeds

> He mellowed a spot of earth with the hole, dug a tiny hollow in it, dropped four kernels of corn into the hollow, covered them with a hoe. Pressed the spot firm with his boot, then stepped on to plant the next hill.[59]

of Almanzo Wilder's production of his first seed wheat,

> He had raised it in Minnesota. He had plowed and harrowed the ground and sowed the wheat. He had cut it and bound it, threshed and sacked it, and hauled it a hundred miles in his wagon.[60]

and even of the process of men and horses grading the land for a railroad, which is, Pa says, "pretty work"

> They all went on, steadily and evenly, circling into the cut and out while the plows went back and forth, circling under the dump and back over the end to the fill and under the dump again. The cut grew deeper and longer while the men and teams kept on weaving their circles together, never stopping.[61]

Laura's words portray an image of motion, and of progress, which contains in its steady beat, the values placed upon perseverance, on toiling, on making, on doing. The ritual is the motion of purposeful action, the steadfast progress towards...One wonders if this image arises from the experience of an incomprehensible landscape, a landscape in which one feels "small."[62] Whether it inspires the motion of building "...over our heads...and under our feet."[63] Whether it is the land that fuels the need to make one's presence felt in immense space.

The Path and House

Laura's descriptions of the landscape depict a vast space. She indicates that her family orients themselves physically and spiritually within this void through the use of coordinates, those of East and West and heaven and earth. She also indicates that though the space is perceived and experienced as volumetric, "...it surrounds," orientation depends upon reduction of the space into two-dimensional readings of a line projected from "...the eye to the horizon."[64] This condensation of space into planes makes perfect sense when navigation depends on positioning between polar coordinates. The implications of viewing the world in this way are two-fold, significance becomes attached to movement and directionality within space, and secondly, an aesthetics of surface arises from the diminishment of depth. The term depth is extended here to refer not only to spatial dimension, but to the substantive dimension which constitutes history and place. These propositions are supported through exploration of the metaphoric counter-themes of path and house found within the Wilder texts.

> Row away, row o'er the waters so blue
> Like a feather we sail on our gum tree canoe
> Row the boat lightly, love over the sea
> Daily and rightly, I'll wander with thee.[65]

Pa's song suggests the life of the nomad is unencumbered and light of load. In turn his romantic wandering songs are punctuated with those that recall the humble comforts of home, Pa sings,

> Mid-pleasure and palaces though we may roam.
> Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.[66]

The prospect of home lures the sojourner from the road. The path and house are adjacent structures, in Laura's descriptions of a proper home. It was a path that Laura noted as missing from the muskrat house she visited with Pa. A simple element distinguishing reasoned from instinctive life. As counter-themes, these structures are weighted with the values of settlement, domestication, and civility versus freedom, wilderness, and independence. The path and house are metaphoric structures, embodying the pathos of the mythic East and West. Together they impose a life rhythm of movement and moment, of journey and settlement. They combine as themes to form a ritualized cycle of dwelling. This cycle is encapsulated as an image in the Ingalls' motion of seeking, finding, building, and re-seeking a home. The Ingalls' motions will be cast in a theological light, and it is important to do so, as it is in the bisection of the planes they move upon, horizontal and mundane, vertical and esoteric, that the metaphors they evoke become transcendent, and a significant image emerges from their patterns of living. Joseph Campbell, author of The Power of Myth wrote that "...the main theme in ritual is the linking of the individual to a larger morphological structure than that of his own physical body."[67] It is through the Ingalls' theological perceptions, expressed in song, parable, and word, that their actions are linked to an idea larger than themselves.

Each of the Ingalls' journeys are preceded by the perception of something amiss in their home environment. The serenity of their home in the big woods is marred by what is recognized as the intrusion of civilization. It is the impetus for movement. In a conversation

with Laura, Pa suggests that it is good for creatures to move, to find new homes, as a home can become dark and befouled. Pa says of a beehive he had disturbed

> The whole tree was hollow and filled from top to bottom with honey. The bees must have been storing honey there for years. Some of it was old and dark, but I guess I got enough good clean honey to last us a good long time."
>
> Laura was sorry for the poor bees. She said: "They worked so hard, and now they won't have any honey."
>
> But Pa said there was lots of honey left for the bees, and there was another large, hollow tree nearby, into which they could move. He said it was time they had a clean, new home."[68]

The journey itself, begins with a purification ritual, in which house and person are cleansed. Cleansing symbolizes a fresh start, a shedding of earth-bound roots, and the tethers of domestication. It is an act of reinstating oneself to a simpler state of being, in anticipation of being received at a brighter home. Laura writes of leaving the big woods,

> So Pa sold the little house. He sold the cows and the calf. He made hickory bows and fastened them upright to the wagon box. Ma helped him stretch the canvas over them. In the thin dark before morning, Ma gently shook Mary and Laura...She washed and combed them and dressed them warmly.[69]

And of the days before leaving Minnesota to travel to Dakota territory,

> The last crowded days of packing, cleansing, scrubbing, washing, and ironing, and the last minute flurry of bathing and dressing were over. Clean and starched and dressed-up in the morning of a week day, They sat in a row on the bench in the waiting room while Ma bought the tickets.[70]

The journey is marked by milestone events, such as fording a river, the crossing of a state line, the setting and breaking of camp, which mark off a linear passage in space and time. These milestone indicate a progression towards a destination, and give shape and form to homeless existence. They also accumulate in memory, intensifying the sense of arriving home.

The journey embodies a questing myth, signifying dually the search for physical and spiritual shelter. As one of Laura's favorite songs suggests, they are pilgrims, foreigners in a strange land, journeying towards a sacred place.

> We are going forth with our staff in hand,
> Through a desert wild in a strange land,
> But our hope is bright and our faith is strong
> And the good old way is our pilgrim song.[71]

Metaphorically the path they travel upon is of faith, and the home they travel towards is God's. As another song promises,

> Oh Canaan, bright Canaan
> I am bound for the happy land of Canaan.[72]

The way towards or away from this bright land is the path one chooses. The path is thus a metaphoric structure, signifying in its topography, the choices and directionality of human life.

A path is a suggestive structure, soft-edged, and unconfirming of destination. It lacks the concentrated form of a road, which claims a named place. Like a road, it is onomatopoeic

for movement, piquing curiosity, encouraging movement. Laura writes of the path adjoining the Ingalls' home at Plum Creek,

> Then the dim path wandered on until it curved around a tiny hill and went out of sight.
> Laura thought that the little path went on forever wandering on sunny grass and crossing friendly streams and always going around low hills to see what was on the other side...[73]

A path differs from a road however in its ability to connote by diluted physicality, the intangible substance of faith, which leads to mystery, perhaps the mystery of God. In Wilder's text, the secular and religious search for a home via the path, are mixed metaphors, intertwining and casting far away places, namely the West, with religious mystery. Speaking to her friend Ida, of the Wessington Hills, sixty miles from DeSmet, Laura comments,

> "They are so beautiful that they make me want to go to them."
> "Oh, I don't know," Ida replied. "When you got there, they would be just hills, covered with ordinary buffalo glass like this..."
> In a way that was true, and in another way, it wasn't. Laura could not say what she meant, but to her the Wessington Hills were more than grassy hills. Their shadowy outlines drew her with the lure of far places. They were the essence of a dream."[74]

The path is a vulnerable structure, open on all sides. In journey and in times of hardship, the Ingalls' faith is their light, guide, and protection. These thoughts are given voice in a Christmas song,

> ...One star alone of all the train
> Can catch the sinner's wandering eye.
> It was my light, my guide, my all,

It bade my dark forebodings cease,
And through the storm and danger's thrall
It led me to the port of peace.[75]

and another sung during the long winter,

When gloomy clouds across the sky
Cast shadows o'er the land
Bright rays of hope illume my path
For Jesus holds my hand.[76]

The image of the Almighty the Ingalls embrace is that of a benevolent shepherd, who tends his flock, and guides their path. A much quoted psalm begins,

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
He leadeth me beside the still waters
He restoreth my soul...[77]

And as another song says, Those that stray from the shepherd's care wander into barren lands.

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold
But one was out on the hills away
Far from the Gates of Gold
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the shepherd's care.[78]

It is in the image of the shepherd that Pa Ingalls casts himself. He is the shepherd who provides the "fold," and guides his pilgrim family. His authority is one granted by gender, and tempered with knowledge gleaned from the land, people and animals. Pa occupies two positions, that of guide on the path and head of the home. He is a transient, moving

between the two. In the home his presence is associated with the walls that surround and the vulnerable portals. Upon entrance, to each new home, his gun and a lucky horse-shoe are ritualistically placed above the door, symbolizing its protection. The conception of Pa as protector is strong, so strong in fact that in his absence, or the absence of the symbols associated with him, the house is experienced as a weakened structure. Laura writes of the newly built cabin in Indian Territory,

> The house was safe but it did not feel safe because Pa's gun was not over the door and there was no door, there was only the quilt.[79]

As head of the household it is Pa's job to secure or build a house. When locating a homesite he tends to choose land that is gentle enough to be farmed, in proximity to timber and water, and several miles removed from civilization. Although there does not appear to be any pattern with regard to orientation of the house, it must be rooted. Laura writes of the cabin he built in Indian Territory,

> He paced off the size of it on the ground, then with his spade he dug a shallow little hollow along two sides of that space. Into these hollows he rolled two of the biggest logs, because they must hold up the house...Then Pa chose two more strong, big logs, and rolled these logs onto the ends of the sills...the sills were half buried in the ground, and the logs at the end fit snugly to the ground.[80]

The most salient characteristic of the house, is its permanent stance, its solid embodiment. It is structurally antithetical to the path. Laura writes of the cabin,

> There was no door and there was no windows. There was no floor except the ground and no roof except the canvas. But the house had good stout walls and it would stay where it

> was. It was not like the wagon, that every morning went to some other place.[81]

The house is a female domain. It is for Ma that Pa builds and settles. And though he holds title to them, Pa refers to the house as Ma's. The houses that Pa builds are honest. Their simple rectangular shape speaking directly of a one-room interior. These hollow receptacles frame the role of the pioneer wife, who leads an interior life of cultivation. At the end of each journey, Ma initiates the rituals associated with the settlement. Her first act before moving is to clean the house, no matter what state of repair it may be in. Laura writes of her mother's response to the surveyor's house, in DeSmet, which provided the family with temporary shelter for a winter,

> Ma looked at everything and was pleased. "It's very nice, I'm sure," she said. "And so clean. We can get settled here in a jiffy. Bring me the broom, Carrie."[82]

Through the ritual of cleansing, the sanctity of the home is concretized. As well, cleansing serves as an initiative act for a different type of journey, one in which the movement is of place-making, marked by the milestones of domestication.

While the house form is dictated by Pa, following the example set by his Pa, interior organization is directed by Ma following a pattern Laura notes in Grandma's house and later in her own. Whether a log cabin or a frame house, the interior edges of the house are filled. Beds are pushed to one wall and partitioned off with curtains to distinguish zones of privacy in the living quarters. The hearth is located in an adjacent wall. The kitchen table and its bench are located under a window, and covered with the familiar red and white checked "between meals" tablecloth. Ma and Mary's rocking chairs are positioned by

another window or the fire, depending upon the season. Laura states in one book that she and Pa stand behind the cookstove, or sit in the doorway when the family gather in the evening, and the babies find seats in the elder women's laps. The family's what-not-shelf rounds out one corner of the room, and the cookstove another, if they have one. The cookstove or hearth is the most important edge-feature, as Laura writes of the stove in the house Pa built in Plum Creek "...[It] stood lordly in the corner." [83] Fire and its light is an important symbol associated with the house. The hearth fire is the source of Ma's alchemical power, and suggests her nurturing warmth. It connotes God's light which illumines the path that leads to his fold. Fire like water is an elemental and thus suggestive of purification. It is indicative, as Pa says of the beehive, of a good, clean, new home[84]

The orientation of furniture and physical activities to the interior edges of the house, creates a centered void which is filled with the intangible essences of light, sound, and aromas which nourish the soul. The house collects at its edges, calling to mind an inverse image of the cosmic landscape. The nature of the great room is unspecified and expansive, and in this way, a metaphor for the cosmos. Laura writes that her home is beautiful when the large space is illuminated with light of the fire, or sunshine spilling in the door and windows, when Pa's voice and violin ring out, when Ma's knitting needles flash and click in the firelight, and when the smells of the prairie and Ma's cooking scent the interior. She writes of Christmas eve in the cabin in the big woods.

> The room was still and warm and full of firelight.[85]

and of the great room in Grandma's house,

> It smelled good. The whole house smelled good, with the sweet and spicy smells from the kitchen, and the smell of the hickory logs burning with clear, bright flames in the fireplace, and the smell of clove apples beside Grandma's mending basket. The sunshine came in through the sparkling window panes, and everything was large and spacious and clean.[86]

A subtheme of the house, which arises from the interior organization, is its suggestiveness of the marginal occupation of the subculture of women to culture at large. The house is a protective covering, sheltering behind its exterior walls and gathering to its interior walls the lives of the female dwellers. The walls surround like Pa's protective arms. Laura writes.

> When Pa told his story, Laura and Mary shivered and snuggled closer to him. They were safe and snug on his knee with his strong arms around them. They were cozy and comfortable in their little house made of logs with the snow drifted around it, and the wind crying because it could not get in.[87]

The craftsmanship of a house is a source of pride for Pa, and he receives praise for the security they provide. Of the home he built in Plum Creek, he proclaims, "This house is tight as a drum," and of its surfaces " There is not a single crack in the roof, or the walls or the floor of [this] house."[88] It is in focusing on making the surfaces of the home impenetrable, in constricting the passage of air and light, that it is dually experienced as a haven and a trap. This theme is revisited in the restrictive but protective clothing the women wear, and the codes of appropriate behavior which limit their experience of culture beyond the home.

A house declares through the posture of an open door or a curtained window the boundaries between public and private life. Similarly, a body houses a soul, revealed or guarded through articulation of surface expression. Ma tells Laura,

> "Modulate your voice, Laura...Remember." Her voice was low and soft, an excellent thing in a woman."[89]

As well as comportment of voice and action, clothes shape the image and role of a female pioneer. Laura writes of the heavy clothing, she and her sisters must wear that restrict movement, hide form, and limit comfort,

> [They] were sweltering inside their underwaistes and drawers, and petticoat waists and petticoats, long-sleeved, high-necked dresses with tight waistbands around their middles.[90]

and of the corsets that bind to reveal,

> Her corsets were a sad affliction to her, from the time she put them on in the morning until she took them off at night. But when girls pinned up their hair and wore skirts down to their shoe-tops, they must wear corsets.
> "You should wear them all night," Ma said.
> Mary did, but Laura could not bear at night the torment of the steels that would not let her draw a deep breath...
> "What your figure will be goodness know," Ma warned her. "When I married, your Pa could span my waist with his two hands."[91]

It is interesting to note that the veiling of expression, is appropriate behavior for males as well as females in certain circumstances. Laura tells of eating dinner at a public hotel with her mother and sisters, at which the male diners carefully avoided making eye contact with

Ma, or making conversation except to say "Thank you" when food was passed their way. On the occasion of a church fund-raiser, she writes of her parents pause at the door, at the sight of a whole roasted pig.

> "Oo, look!" Carrie cried out. Laura stood stock still for an instant. Even Pa and Ma almost halted, though they were too grown-up to show surprise. A grown-up person must never let feelings be shown by voice or manner. So Laura only looked, and gently hushed Grace...[92]

The concealment of one's feelings protects autonomy. It is a way of saying as Ma often does, "...that we will not be beholden to anyone."[93] It is a postural stance of independence.

As well, to reveal little by barricading behind the masks of face, voice, posture and clothing, is to proclaim a defensive boundary. The assumption of defensive posturing on the part of women serves as a means of protection, not only of their virtue, modesty and privacy, but of a gender role which is a counter-part to the male protector. Defensive posturing is a badge of vulnerability. The conundrum is that while female form and movement is restricted it is also emphasized in caricature form through surface stylization of the pleasant face, the demure voice, the pinched waist, the bustled behind, and the hooped lower body which supposedly goes unnoticed by the lowered eyes of the male appreciator. This paradox may well stem from the fact that while modesty is a culturally sanctioned stance for women, their options are limited to marriage or school teaching. Thus they must assume an image which dually suggests and denies sexuality.

An emphasis on superficial expression suggests a lack of substance or of depth. This is compounded by maintenance of conventions that appear to have no intrinsic value. Examples of moot conventions are found throughout the Wilder text, such as the making of lace to sew on petticoats that are covered with a dress, Ma's insistence on curtaining windows despite being sixty miles from the nearest neighbor, the spreading of a between-meals tablecloth, and even Pa's laying out of crop fields with straight sides and squared corners in a prairie that flows. These conventions suggest that what is also at stake in attention to surface appearances is a tradition or lack of one in new territory. The myths attached to the polar coordinates of East and West imbue them with the creative substance of history making. The middle landscape however is undefined, and thus barren of identity. The bringing forth of conventions, which define appropriate form and actions serve to create stability zones for living. They give context. They are restorative acts which claim a heritage, where one has not yet been created.

There are reverberations to an overemphasis on an aesthetics of surfaces. One which is apparent in Laura's writings is that the house and landscape become absorptive mediums for the transference of human emotion. Laura writes of the farewell to Mary as she leaves for college,

> "Good-by," Laura and Carrie managed to say...
> The wagon started. Grace's mouth opened wide and bawled.
> "For shame, Grace! For shame! A big girl like you, crying!"
> Laura choked out. Her throat was swelling so that it hurt. ..
> Pa and Ma did not look back.
> Laura had never felt such a stillness. It was not the happy stillness of the prairie. She felt it in the pit of her stomach...
> "Come," she said, "We'll go into the house."
> The silence had settled into the house. It was so still that Laura felt she must whisper...they stood there in their own house and felt nothing around them but silence and emptiness.[94]

The houses in which Laura resides are empathetic. They become incarnate with human sensibilities. They are metaphors for the body. Laura writes that the house listens,

> The house was empty and stood still, with Ma gone. Ma was so quiet and gentle that she never made any noise, but now the whole house was listening for her.[95]

It senses a strange presence,

> The largeness of the empty house seemed to wait and listen. It seemed to know that Laura was there, but it had not made up its mind about her.[96]

And in town, Pa's store building turns its eyes inward personifying the intrusion of pedestrian glances.

> "Can we put up the curtains now?" Laura asked.
> The two windows were like strange eyes looking in. Strangers went by in the street, and across the street stood the staring store buildings.[97]

As well, the landscape is imbued with human characteristics. The walls of the home divide, symbolizing the splitting of the human psyche. When Pa doesn't arrive home on time, and a blizzard comes up, Ma worriedly waits and Laura writes,

> Ma did not move. The lamp went on shining. The storm howled and hooted after things that fled shrieking through the enormous dark around the frightened house.[98]

It is perhaps, the custom of guarded expression which necessitates a great room, "[a] room to live in" as Laura refers to it, as it does a landscape "where one has room to breathe."[99] These spaces are the catch for internal life, and vital spaces as such.

The final ritual to be considered in association with the house, is Ma's placement of her china shepherdess upon a mantle shelf, when she deems a house to be an appropriate environment for dwelling. The shepherdess is a female icon of domestic husbandry. In her refinement of "...little china bodice laced with china gold ribbons and her little china apron, and her little china shoes," she symbolizes Ma's role as cultivator and culture bearer.[100] The shelf the shepherdess is set upon was carved by Pa. It's surfaces decorated with the organic shapes of flowers, leaves, and vines encircling rectangles and spheres, recalling and commemorating the centered home and its fields, and the wilderness beyond. Not all houses however receive the sanctioning gesture of placement of the shelf and shepherdess.

The Ingalls inhabited a sod dug-out in Plum Creek until Pa could build another home, and the shepherdess was kept packed away. Although the dug-out had thick walls, a good roof, and door, it was condemned as inappropriate by its subterranean location. To live below the earth signified a compromising of station for Ma, a letting down of appropriate form.

> "Oh Charles!" said Ma. "A dug-out. We've never had to live in a dug-out yet."[101]

Further, Ma describes the experience of living below the earth as akin to feeling like "...an animal penned up for winter."[102] The Ingalls favor a house which ascends vertically, rising from the ground to meet the sky. Ma says of the dug-out, "Anybody could walk over this house and never know it's here."[103] As well as vertically claiming a centered position

between heaven and earth the house must horizontally claim a center point between East and West. It must set upon the earth, and claim the land which spreads out indefinitely, until it reaches another house, or town, creating form for secular navigation, and announcing inhabitation of the prairie.

The railroad shanty which Pa built of new lumber and describes as "...fresh and clean as a whistle" also does not receive the shepherdess.[104] Laura writes of the shanty,

> It shone yellow in the sunshine; a little house almost lost in the grasses, and its little roof shaped all one way, as if it had only half a roof.[105]

To Pa's inquiry of the shepherdess's whereabouts after moving in, Ma replies,

> "I haven't unpacked the shepherdess, Charles," said Ma. "We aren't living here, we're only staying till you get our homestead."[106]

Not only is the house form inappropriate, rising, stopping, and falling back to the ground, it is reminiscent, Laura later says, of the claim shanty built in the same fashion, of a chicken coop. It is a temporary dwelling and Ma equates civilized life with permanency. Ma says to her friend Mrs. Booth when preparing to move again:

> "I'll be thankful when we're settled...This is the last move we're going to make. Mr. Ingalls agreed to that before we left Minnesota. My girls are going to have schooling and lead a civilized life."[107]

An appropriate house embodies in its physical stance a resting point, from which one can draw upon the personal and cultural history, essential to the creation of a significant present and future.

The claim shanty in DeSmet does not initially receive the shepherdess as its "...half roof slanting up and stopping" suggests a lack of wholeness.[108] It is not as Laura describes the surveyor's house, with its sides all the same, "...a real house."[109] Laura writes of the claim shanty being transformed into a real house.

> Now that the corn was planted, Pa built the missing half of the claim shanty...he laid the floor joist...made the frame...put in the studding, and the frames for two windows. Then he laid the rafters, to make the other slant of the roof that had not been there before...it was exciting to see the shanty being made into a house.[110]

A "real house" is made more "real" as interior rooms are partitioned off with walls instead of curtains, recalling an image of home that Ma must have brought with her from the East. She says of the remodeled claim shanty, "We must not call this a claim shanty anymore... It is a real house now with four rooms."[111] In acknowledgment of the appropriateness of the house, the shepherdess is placed upon its shelf.

The Middle Landscape

The Ingall's cycle of journey and settlement is once completed and ongoing. Their patterns of movement demonstrate that the path becomes enticing again, and the West beckons as the civilizing process taints the sanctity of the home, until it is experienced as Pa characterizes the bees' nest, as overstuffed, old and dark. The cycle is however broken with their settlement on the claim stake in DeSmet. Laura writes that Pa must settle permanently "...for the sake of them all."[112] The claim stake is located between the wilder territories and town, claimed and demarked against encroachment in a surveyor's office. Spatially, the claim stake can be described as a negotiated landscape. It holds a position from which traditions may be brought forward, and the incursions of modern life can be judiciously allowed entrance. Laura tells of Pa bringing Ma her first sewing machine, yet shaking his head at the new farming methods. He says, "Let these brash young fellows go in debt for machinery and break up all their land. I'm going to let the grass grow and raise cattle."[113] Through negotiation of the home front, Pa's position as the family provider is secured, although his identity as a hunter is lost to that of a farmer. As well, the time investment of a claim stake allows for response to the nature of the prairie to occur, and subsequently the negotiation of traditions. Ma yearning for the restful sight of the wooded landscapes of the East suggests that they plant trees, and Pa, who enjoys the expanses of the prairie and the restful sight of clear fields objects. They compromise and plant a windbreak around the house, and a pair of parental trees by the door.

The claim stake is not a hiding place, but a refuge. From its doors, the Ingalls family can move towards the community. Laura writes of Pa taking his place as a town elder, "The country was settling so rapidly that already a county was being organized, and Pa must

help. As the eldest settler, he could not shirk his duty."[114] Social connections emerge slowly in the prairie settlement. A sense of community is initially forged through the exchange of goods and services, nationalistic celebration, and community building projects. New social forms emerge in response to the loss of connectedness, once provided by extended families. Many of the social interactions contain domestic rituals of form. Pa is the organizer for example of town sociables, which interestingly bring people together through the ancient tradition of storytelling in the form of song, dance, acting, and recital performances. At functions such as church fund-raisers, women take up their household roles of preparing and serving food. Notably, social interactions maintain a sense of the individual within community. Ma, for example, contributes her special dishes to the fund-raiser, and it is a compliment to her that they are all eaten. The balance between individuality and community is paramount. When in balance, it is as Pa admits in Plum Creek, "...pleasant to be with a crowd of people all trying to do the right thing."[115]

The path as metaphor and myth remains a vital theme in the Ingalls' lives despite their planting of roots. A journey in domestic life is initiated with cleansing of each new house, and the journey towards God's home is ongoing. Ma describes earthly life as a battle, and Mary describes human nature as "...desperately wicked and inclined to evil as the sparks fly up...", both giving expression to the ideas which move one to try to do the right thing, and to stay upon the metaphoric path.[116] It is as alluded to earlier, in the purposeful actions of everyday life that the myth of the path is ritualized. As one of Pa's songs suggests,

> It is only by plodding and striving
> And laboring up the steep hill of life,
> That you'll ever be thriving
> Which you'll do if you've only the will[117]

The obstacles of everyday life are a metaphor for the mountain that must be climbed to reach God's kingdom.

> Yes a brighter morn is breaking
> Better day are coming on
> All the world will be awakening
> In a new and golden dawn...
> Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord
> And we will walk in his path[118]

Counter to the settlers' self-concept, are notions of staticism, ease and entitlement, as attested to in Laura's writing of the sailors in The Lotus Eaters, a poem by Tennyson which she disliked,

> Even that poem was a disappointment, for in the land that always seemed afternoon, the sailors turned out to be no good. They seemed to think they were entitled to live in that magic land and lie around complaining. When they thought about bestirring themselves. they only whined "Why should we labor up the laboring wave?" Wasn't that a sailor's job to ever labor up the laboring wave? But no, they wanted dreadful ease.[119]

It is a sentient image the settlers create in their striving to "prove up" the land and carve out an earthly paradise. What they are about in their actions is a re-creation of Eden lost. And through their efforts the realization of Eden reclaimed. Laura writes,

> But someday they would have all the good things to eat again for better times were coming. And with so much work to do and everything to look forward to the days were flying by.[120]

The rhythm of their lives is one of movement and moment, sameness and change. Laura writes,

> In all this the best part was knowing that tomorrow would be like today, the same and yet a little different from all other days, as this one had been.[121]

Chapter 5 Conclusions

The "script analogue" is a research tool. One that is particularly suited for application to literary works. Literature in itself represents an already interpreted environment. It is a medium through which the world has been recreated. The "script analogue" highlights this world, deriving from its theoretical framework the questions that lead one to the discovery of significant form. Importantly, the "script analogue" frames the cultural context which generates significant form. The image of people and place that it yields may be called ordinary or everyday aesthetics, but what one recognizes in this image is a cultural tradition which provides reference for contemporary existence. The "script analogue" has been a valuable tool for this study, providing insight into a specific American aesthetic experience.

Architecture is given form through light, void, and mass. Its elements can be named as ceiling, floor, wall... and designated as sky, earth, grove... It becomes an organic entity, a significant form, however through organization of its elements in an image of the patterns and ideas that constitute human life. Architecture is an articulate form, not in the same way as language, but as a system in which each element retains a sense of individual identity while functioning in a relationship as a complex whole. Through application of the "script analogue" to the Little House books, the metaphors connecting architecture, person, and memory have been traced to reveal the significant forms of a pioneer family's domestic domain.

Significant forms resist the cognitive habits of scientific inquiry which condense symbols, giving way to final comprehension. Significant forms are woven of the metaphors expressed in language and ritualized in human actions. Metaphors are vital symbols which

connote rather than convey meaning. They give illusion to thought. They are dynamic analogies, and difficult to hold. The "script analogue" frames metaphoric relationships, and like a cat's cradle composed of strings splayed between the fingers, reveals a pattern that changes with the shift of a hand, to display an overlay.

There is a density to this overlay, a building of themes that yields a sensed image of people and place. Fundamental to Wilder's image of the domestic domain is a perceptible tension which arises from the juxtaposition of metaphoric counter themes. The dominant metaphors derived from the Wilder texts are: the cosmic landscape and defensible house, the East and the West, Heaven and Earth, and the house and the path. Although specific architecture features found to have metaphoric reference, and ritualized actions associated with them are mentioned in the main text of this research, and could be listed here, it is meaningless to do so, as they are only significant in relationship to a set of ideas. A designer might ask, "Well, what does this research leave me to work with?" The answer lies in focusing on the counter themes, on finding the points where cultural values are balanced against one another. Wilder portrays pioneer life as a dualistic and often paradoxical condition, thus the place that metaphors can change and be extended is where the idea they embody takes on a spatial dimension forming an edge which is balanced in relation to another idea and to its spatial manifestation. The Wilder text reveals that there are specific edges that themes divide upon, distinguishing the domestic domain, and these are formed from the relationship of the house to the land and sky, from the boundaries that demark the house from wilderness and community, from the point where the house meets the path, and from the walls that divide interior and exterior modes of experience.

There is no specific entrance point into the "script analogue," as one finds that the frame only supports circuitous themes. This study entered the "script analogue" through the element of designated architecture and followed the metaphoric threads that led from the landscape, to the house, and back to the landscape. From her very first book, Wilder portrays the house as a self-sufficient hub in a landscape that stretches beyond vision to the imagination. The "Little Houses," little in proportion to the prairie, are not ornaments on the land, as their aesthetic experience resides in the symbolization of order, strength, and security, poised against a landscape that shadows the unknown. The Ingalls' first two cabins are massed structures, from which doors and windows are literally cut-out from the heavy log frame. The timber houses that follow are additive forms, that convey in their tight rectangularity the enduring character of the first log cabin. A "good house" is according to Laura a secure house. Its foundation banked with leaves, walls chinked, windows curtained, and door protected with a latch-string or lock, and Pa's gun. The protective layers of the house move inward to partitioned rooms, and the heavily dressed figures of the women inhabitants; and outwards to fields and outbuildings, holding at bay through ordered symmetry the impulses of nature.

The walls of the house are charged with the currents that divide life. They separate gender modes of experience, sheltering at their interior edges the lives of women, and allowing entrance through portal to the worldly lives of men. The Wilder text could have been read with gender issues as a dominant theme, emphasizing the acculturation process of women to a cultural form that is not inherent. Wilder continually contrasts the "snug and cozy" house to the uncontained force of nature, a theme revisited in the gender stereotypes suggested by Ma's disposition to nesting and Pa's to adventuring, with Laura poised in conflict between two adult worlds. The Wilder text demonstrates that architectural

significance differs according to gender experience, and that these differences go beyond relationships of forms in space, and orientation of people to the house and each other to a perceptible variation in articulation of household images. Ma Ingalls' worldview is directed inwards and back to a tradition which dictates familiar form. As the culture bearer, she carries forward a memory of the home that must be passed on to her daughters. Her tradition is re-expressed on the frontier through the contrived stylization of the interior of the home, female dress, and decorum. In contrast, Pa Ingall's worldview is directed outwards and forward to the future. His role dictates that he safeguard his family through understanding and anticipation of nature. His experience of nature, describes a sublime beauty, an aesthetic of reverence and awe, that carries with it a recognition of one's own vulnerability in relation to more powerful forces. The sturdy house is a perceptual response to essential qualities of the land and cosmos. Despite the dualistic tensions symbolized by the house and landscape, they remain inter-dependent themes. The intangible prairie necessitates its apprehension through metaphors for the house, just as the tight house necessitates the expansive spaces of a great room, and the spiriting of human emotion across walls to an absorptive landscape.

The house as a metaphor for man stands "upon" the landscape. It portrays the semblance of reasoned life. It is a visual assertion of man's free-agency, and subsequently of his alienation from nature. Alienation as a condition of independence, is thematically reinforced by the way the Ingalls tentatively locate themselves in space, building houses that are rooted yet rising, removed from the plaques of the East and the wilderness of the West, to occupy a centered but undesignated place of thought and space. The middle landscape is acknowledged by Rosalind Krauss in Notes on the Underground, and Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden, to be a fairly common American literary theme. Both authors assert

that the magnitude of the American landscape, and the inheritance of the technology from Europe's first industrial revolution, relieved Americans from depthful metaphor. Indeed, the Ingalls' perception of the land as seemingly endless and bountiful in resources does foster an attitude of dispensability, as witnessed by the series of moves they make to look for richer pastures, when the home environment is depleted, or impinged upon by civilization or wilderness. The Wilder text demonstrates however that the horizontal metaphors that stand as mundane coordinates are balanced by vertical metaphors which function as spiritual coordinates for the middle landscape. Religious mythologies are a force in the pioneer's life, as are environmental and cultural conditions. Notably, reference along a vertical scale tend to range from a point beginning at the surface of the earth and ascending heavenward. In the seven books covered in this research, there were only two subterranean references, an interesting fact in light of the Ingalls' dependency upon the land.

One senses from Wilder's descriptions a certain vacancy to the middle landscape. A flattening of experience that occurs because the mode of memory, the mode in which events are apprehended, resides at the actual and virtual polar references of East and West, and heaven and earth. The prairie void which has "no roads," "no houses," "no people," "no color," is a promised land. In its pristine state resides the potential for man cast out of Eden, to reclaim his destiny. The middle landscape is a redemptive domain, in which one can "prove up" their fortune. The paradox is that "proving up," through claim of the garden, entails making it one's own and inevitably changing it. As witnessed by the Ingalls' experiences, settlement dims the bright vision of the edenic retreat. In part this occurs because the cultural and individual histories that provide a mechanism for human adaptation to a new environment, hinders phenomonological response. As well, the distant

government agencies which specify the tenets of claim stakes contain a vision, foreign and insensitive to local conditions. Human orientation in relationship to vertical coordinates remains a point of conflict for the Ingalls, as the material and spatial embodiments of land and home run counter to a religious mythology which places value on renunciation of worldly entrapments. In a sense, the quest to find paradise is an attempt to reclaim a natural link in the world, to reclaim human ease in the garden. Or to put it another way, to reconcile dualistic mythologies.

Wilder's counter themes are overlaid one upon another, becoming mixed metaphors for each other. The East and the earth reference the house, suggesting staticism, dependence, and materiality. The West, and heaven reference the path, suggesting enlightenment, independence, and transcendence. The path is thematically a rich metaphor, extending symbolically to connote change, progress, and manifest destiny. As counter themes, the house and the path symbolize a life rhythm of movement and moment. A rhythm reflected in the purposeful actions of everyday life, and more abstractly in the pioneering struggle to overcome one's circumstance, and obtain the promise of paradise. The house in conjunction with the path, is a pause, a resting point where history can be brought forward supplying a context for the present, and demarking the illusion of life as a continuum. The fullness of history relies not just on its retelling, but on the actual creation of resting places, where relationships between people, architecture, and environment can be re-formed and formed anew.

The house and path are particularly strong themes in the Wilder text, strong enough to be assumed under the ceiling of the domestic domain, making the middle landscape acceptable as a place to stay. A result of this internalization of counter symbols, is that the house is

fortified as a symbol of the individual, and its counterpoint becomes the community. It is interesting to note that metaphors found within the Wilder text exclusively reference the domestic domain, and where they are lacking is in reference to the community. In fact domestic forms are transferred as a model for communal interactions. The reason that metaphors collect at the domestic domain is that this is also where taboos, cultural sanctions are strong. Sanctions particularly guarded are individual entitlements, voiced in the text as inalienable rights to independence, to own land, to protect property, and to worship as one sees fit. The focus on rights that are protected is thus on those of the individual rather than on those of the collective, a cultural myopacism which precipitates degradation of the landscape and weak community form. Many of the themes located in the Wilder text appear modern. In particular the cultural emphasis on privatization of architectural experiences; as attested to by the design of American cities built between roads that isolate the individual in his car, prolonging the experience of home, and shortening the excursion into the communal domain, or the privatization of the city into corporate images that can transfer anywhere but speak of nowhere.

It seems fair to say that the Wilder text portrays a culture that allows differences but does not assimilate them well into community form. In a sense, weak community form reinforces a cultural emphasis on "individualism," and engenders the creation of domestic spaces that exist as islands unto themselves. The primary conflict found within the Wilder text is the dualistic tension between the community and the individual. This tension is recast over and over throughout the text in different terms. The community which is associated with home building, with materiality, with effeminism, and with commemoration of the past, stands in opposition to the individual who is associated with the path, with spirituality, with masculinity, and with orientation to the future. While these themes divide

neatly into opposite pairs, they contain internal dualisms. For example, while women are associated with setting, domestication, and the nurturing of tradition, the very notion of civility that they carry forward from the past, obscures their ability to perceive unsettled land in any other way than as "wild," and in need of change. Women are the land settlers, but not the land stewards, as appropriate form becomes the commanding form of the domestic domain. Nomadic mythology provides a self concept for the male. His role as trailblazer however, is balanced by that of protector and provider, which require study and understanding of nature. So although he is associated with movement toward the future, he is the steward of the land, for it is the provisional source for his family's welfare. The interdependence of oppositional themes found within the Wilder text are finely balanced, one to another, and within a larger cultural matrix. There are questions that derive from this study, in regards to the metaphoric themes discovered, and their interconnected structure that may be used to frame future research projects. One might ask, how is significant community form created from a cultural fabric that emphasizes the individual and places value on freedom, autonomy, and independence? Beginning with the assumption that American cities do not reflect a melting pot, one might locate recurrent forms of significance within and across sub-communities, and use these findings to suggest how metaphors could be extended to create significant public spaces. A study could also be done that traces the metaphors found in the Wilder text across time to contemporary voices of the mid-west prairies. A researcher might look for the subtle shifts that occur in the counter-themes found in this study, as they change in response to changes in population density, the advancement of technology, shifts in gender roles, and other relevant cultural and environmental conditions. One should ask how change affects the balance between counter-themes, and finds new expression in form. And further, how one might use metaphor to create links between past and present experiences of the prairie home.

Endnotes

The following abbreviations have been used after initial listing of the full titles: LHBW, Little House in the Big Woods; LHP, Little House on the Prairie; OBPC, On the Banks of Plum Creek; BSSL By the Shores of Silver Lake; TLW, The Long Winter; LTP, Little Town on the Prairie; and THGY, These Happy Golden Years.

Introduction

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Chapter 1

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APPENDIX: Review of other Descriptive Studies

There are many approaches to descriptive studies that utilize linguistic analogies. Three that I found to be of valuable reference are: Marilyn Chambers, Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction, John Forrest's Lord I'm Coming Home: Everyday Aesthetics in Tidewater North Carolina, and Gaston Bachelard's The Poetics of Space. These works represent three different approaches to the aesthetics of place, with similar results: the discovery of significance.

Chambers examines the different images of the American house as depicted in the literature of Thoreau, Poe, Hawthorne, James, Wharton, Cather, Faulkner, and other prominent literary figures. She examines the house as a symbolic indicator of cultural values, and presents a collection of themes associated with the physical, spiritual, and psychic aspects of dwelling. Chambers provides a broad overview of American myths associated with the domestic domain.

John Forrest's research is an ethnography of a small community's everyday aesthetics. Forrest attempts to document a community's entire aesthetic, their activities in relationship to aesthetic forms, and aesthetics as a functional communal system. His methodology relied on compilation of data on forms deemed socially significant to the local people, and include the aesthetics of home, work, leisure, and church, with subtopics on architecture, cooking, quilting, fishing, decoys, hunting, and sermons. Through examination of the details of everyday life, Forrest provides a compelling vernacular image of a people and place.

Gaston Bachelard uses a phenomenological approach for discovery of the poetic images of ordinary and often overlooked architectural spaces. He inquires into the significance of

houses, shells, nests, drawers, wardrobes, corners, and other intimate spaces. Bachelard gives image to these places through the nuance of poetry. One finds in the immense and miniature worlds that Bachelard explores, insights into the poetics of other spaces – what they could be and perhaps should be.

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