



## METAPHOR

*Metaphor* derives from the Greek word *metaphora*, to “carry over,” to convey.<sup>3</sup> To use a metaphor, the aspects of one object are carried over, or transferred, to another object so that it is spoken of as if it were the first (Hawkes, 1). It operates on the linguistic principles of substitution and similarity. The persuasiveness of metaphor lies in this ability to relate the unfamiliar to the familiar. Metaphors can generate new relationships between elements, but they can also mask qualities of one element with those of another. To call trees “natural resources,” for instance, transforms them into raw products that can be detached from their place in an ecological habitat (Senecah, 97).

There are “small” metaphors, the kind that are tossed out in individual utterances, and “big” metaphors of the kind that lie behind research methods, institutions, and lives (Barnes and Duncan 1992, 11). In particular, the extended metaphors employed to comprehend the interrelationships of nature range from that of a complex machine with checks and balances to a self-regulating body, a community of mutual interests, or an economic system. Conversely, the cultural is often turned into the natural as in the use of organic metaphors of nucleated cities or urban blight to explain urban form.

Not only do metaphors convey meanings in a story, but stories also structure the very terms of similarity and substitution that precipitate metaphors. When two elements occupy similar positions in a story sequence or are substituted one for the other, they set up a comparison. The beginning and end of a story, for instance, invite a metaphorical substitution of one state for another.

## Top right: Places as Times: The Temporal Trope

Space, distance, and travel become metaphors of time, and the return to origins, to paradise, is a common temporal trope of gardens. At Rousham, William Kent used masses of trees to frame the landscape as one would frame a picture.

The foreground is seen against a distant valley and hill in which he placed two follies, *The Temple of the Mill* and *The Eye-Catcher*. These refer to a distant medieval past, considered to be the “natural” origin of British freedoms.<sup>4</sup> In a similar manner, tourism is a form of time travel to places that have not changed, or have been restored to some earlier time.

Bottom left: Ian Hamilton Finlay with Sue Finlay and Nicholas Sloan, *Sacred Grove: Five Columns for the Kröller-Müller or A Fifth Column for the Kröller-Müller or Corot-Saint-Just*, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, Netherlands, 1982. (Photograph © Victor E. Nieuwenhuys; with permission from Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller)

Classical bases around existing trees transform the trees into columns.<sup>5</sup> Each base bears the name of an individual associated with the French Revolution. Together they allude to the commemorative function of sacred groves of classical antiquity as well as William Kent’s *Elysian Field* and *Temple of British Worthies* at *Stowe*.



**HOME**lessness, the loss of stable place-bound identity, is a pervasive theme of modern experience. While periodic displacements by war, famine, and economic fate have occurred throughout history, critics of industrialization, and its decline, point to more fundamental conditions of homelessness resulting from mobility, alienation, and destruction of shared memory. In this narrative the advent of the railroad, steam power, and banking systems in the 19th century shattered the heterogeneous landscape of distinct villages, and regions differentiated by climate, food, language and custom (Nash, 7–10). Local power, authority, and distinctiveness were superseded, absorbed, and homogenized by a new network of mass-produced goods and labor, controlled by long-distance capital.

This now familiar story of displacement from home provides the foundational ideology for a significant number of 19th- and 20th-century movements in the allied design professions, most notably regionalism, preservation, and the urban parks and City Beautiful movements. The themes continue to resonate through books such as Michael Hough's *Out of Place* or James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere*, which enumerate an expanded list of threats including: information technology and the collapse of space and time, international-style modernism, tourism, Disneyfication, museumification, and utopianism. Their design proposals attempt to negotiate a difficult course, trying to establish a sense of identity, continuity, and rootedness of the premodern while avoiding a nostalgic return or postmodern simulation.

In the face of these circumstances, the attempt to maintain or re-establish home is one of the more compelling stories being worked out in various contemporary projects. People in search of the small-town ideal “discover” the backwater places, forgotten by the mainstream of progress, such as Pocatello, Idaho, or Metamora, Indiana, and in so doing significantly remake these places. The strategies of the historic preservation movement and the recent development of heritage regions address notions of historic continuity from the scale of the house to Main Street and the vernacular region. Meanwhile, designers reinvent the past in major new projects of New Regionalism and neotraditionalism. In the related movement of Bioregionalism, the desire to reinhabit nature draws on the metaphors of home in such titles as *Boundaries of Home* and *Home! A Bioregional Reader*.



Four Letters Home, written by Wilfred E. Holton, Ph. D., professor of sociology at Northeastern University, tells how a sequence of groups (New England farmers, Irish, Polish Jews, southern blacks), from the early 1800s to the present, made the Roxbury part of Boston their home. The letters are inscribed in granite outside of the Ruggles Station transit station as part of a series of projects along the Orange Line coordinated by UrbanArts, a nonprofit agency. The following excerpts tell of changes wrought by transportation technology.

(Continued overleaf)

Above: Karen McCoy, *Uprooted*, 1994;  
Krakeamarken sculpture park,  
Randers, Denmark.





Karen McCoy, *Considering Mother's Mantle*. Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, Cazenovia, 1990. (Courtesy Courtney Frisse)

The recently established Stone Quarry Hill Art Park has become a space where artists and the community can engage discourses of nature, history, and identity. For the opening show "Re-claiming Land," one of the artists, Karen McCoy, revealed the discourse of boundaries. She started by aligning arrowhead plants in a pond to create a grid that followed the same orientation of plants growing in the north-south lines scored into rocks by glaciation. By extending these lines into the field by inlaying sod, bleaching, and weaving grasses into a spiral cul-de-sac, she represented the history of land division. She also revealed alternative and forgotten histories of the area by uncovering the overgrown traces of the first owner of this land who was a woman and a weaver in the early 1800s.

nificant help from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Natural Resource Defense Fund, the Nature Conservancy, landscape architects, artists, and architects.

What is at issue is the sense of closure of "home truths," which are established when certain relationships become so familiar, tangible, and close to home that they appear natural. While certain notions of history, community and nature have helped to preserve a quality of architecture and encourage a better ecological fit in Cazenovia, there are certain hidden consequences. In their study of Bedford, New York, a community very similar to Cazenovia, James and Nancy Duncan point out that ideologies of local "home rule," and the aestheticization of nature, history, and community, hide the social inequalities of services and affordable housing options. (1988, 124).

Given the cogency of home, it is important to develop a critical practice that opens the discourses of these narratives. Even in a place like Cazenovia with a strong identity and sense of place, these qualities develop through processes of negotiation, contest, interpretation, and change. And they have very real consequences in the ongoing life of the community. The purpose in arguing for the storied nature of home is not to dismantle the construction of one group to validate claims by others, or to lose the whole notion in relativism. Home and community may be unstable and multiple, but their very purpose is to define limits, conventions, and identity through shared stories. A critical practice recognizes the necessity of home and the importance of establishing and fixing identity in place, as well as its provisional and storied nature.

### RETELLING TRADITION: KENTLANDS, MARYLAND

By all accounts neotraditionalism, also referred to as the New Urbanism, is one of the most successful contemporary challenges to the loss of home and community. As its name describes, neotraditionalism looks back to traditional places like Cazenovia as models to emulate in new community design. In fact, one of the leaders of this movement, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, spoke at Cazenovia, noting its strengths and recommending ways to maintain it.<sup>4</sup> It is important to ask, however, what kind of cultural practices are involved in reinventing and retelling tradition. Are there certain ideologies embedded in the promotion of the physical form of traditional towns? And what are the implications of adapting places like Cazenovia as models for contemporary communities when much of their strength comes as a consequence of essentialized notions and a history of exclusion?

Developer Joseph Alandre cites another upstate New York community, Chautauqua, as his model for the neotraditional town of Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Maryland. In the 19th century Chautauqua started from a single tent where people gathered in the summer to hear orators, educators, and musicians, and grew into a town and a traveling institution that gathered communities across America around its program of arts and education (Schlichting). Alandre, on the other hand, started by restoring the existing

from, *Landscape Narratives* by Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton.  
New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998, 35, 241,258.