Under His Roof: Father-Daughter Relationships Under Renovation

Claire Dias

Department of English

McGill University

Montreal

December 2004

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-494-12714-7
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-494-12714-7

Table of Contents

Abstract

My thesis is a collection of non-fiction and fictional narratives focused on domestic space and its impact on father-daughter relationships and vice versa. In all of the narratives the notion of a house under renovation serves as a vehicle for the figurative tension between members of the family and family space. The narratives offer no internal markers to indicate whether they are fiction or non-fiction, which demonstrates my conviction that only factors external to the text – relation to fact or to imagination – can determine a narrative's status as fiction or non-fiction.

The required afterword to my narratives discusses the theoretical problem of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction as well as the living nature of material culture and space as reflections and mediators of father-daughter relationships.

Resumé

Ma thèse est une collection de récits fictifs et non-fictifs focalisés sur l'espace domestique et son impact sur les rapports père-fille et vice versa. Les récits n'offrent aucun marqueur interne pour indiquer s'ils sont une fiction ou une non-fiction, ce qui démontrent ma conviction que seulement les facteurs externes au texte - relation au fait ou à l'imagination - peuvent déterminer le statut d'un récit comme fiction ou non-fiction.

L'afterword discute le problématique de distinguer entre fiction et non-fiction ainsi que la nature vivante de la culture matérielle et de l'espace comme mirroirs et médiateurs des rapports père-fille.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Brian Trehearne for his mentorship and guidance while serving as my thesis advisor. Thank you to Douglas Dias for being my attentive audience, my encourager, and my support. Thanks to all of the daughters who willingly shared their stories with me. Throughout the writing of this thesis, Hilary Carver, Margaret Dias, Chris Dias, Michelle Dias, Mark Rintoul, Luther Carver, and Cheryl Carver gave me extensive assistance, most notably, roofs to write under. I am grateful to Susan Elmslie for inspiring me through her own dissertation, and to Nathalie Cooke for pointing me towards Elmslie's work. Thanks also to Margaret Procter for her sound advice about thesis writing and the academic world, to Chris Farstad for pushing me to finish, and to Jackie Wylde for her editing help.

This thesis is dedicated to my father Luther Carver, who passed away during the late stages of my thesis writing. Under his roof and through his example, I learned how to tell stories.

Skylight

She enters the kitchen from the side door, wipes her boots on the mat, lowers herself to the floor and carefully unties her shoelaces. Her long, wet, black hair is gathered and twisted in a bright orange and blue towel.

"Welcome home, turban girl," Jerry murmurs from the sink where he is peeling potatoes. His eyes follow the up-down movement of the peeler.

"Whatever," says Laura with a subdued chuckle. She hears her own raspy laugh and cringes. It reminds her of the old ladies she hears chatting in the locker room at the pool. They chat about their granddaughters Ashley, Aimee and Jenna, and their doctor appointments and their husbands' tee off times, and they dry their bodies vigorously. Her eyes trace the paths of the bright blue veins peeking through their skin. She stares at the light brown spots that cover their arms and hands. She continues to listen to their stories as she modestly wraps a bath sheet around her body and carefully twists the towel around her hair and then goes to change in a private stall.

Laura hates her own skin. When she stares at herself in the mirror and pushes and prods her face she sees nothing but cavernous pores on her nose. She's been to three different dermatologists to see if there is any medication or cream or surgery that will fix her pores, but they tell her to stop worrying about it. They laugh and tell gruesome stories about their patients with deforming acne and seas of blackheads and psoriasis or discoid lupus erythematosus. They say, "Laura, Laura, you're blessed with great skin. People wish they had your skin. They do. You're blessed." Dr. A. Jin, with the long fingernails, tells her this. Dr. J. Mastriona, who sips coffee and speaks in breathy, beany exhalations, tells her this. At swim practice, Laura confesses to her teammates

about her hatred for her skin but they laugh and talk about their own deficient skin. The priest that lives next door to her tells her that her flesh is just a temporary residence that will last until she moves into her eternal residence. Laura wonders if Jesus had good skin. She prays for a better dermatologist.

A brown, curled up peel sticks to Jerry's wrist as he hacks away at the half-skinned potato. It catches Laura's eye. "Dad, you have a gross thing on your arm," she says in an exhausted monotone. He makes one violent swat at the dangling skin with the peeler and misses.

There is no visible hair on his arm. Laura examines her own, almost hairless, arm. On Sunday evenings Laura sets aside time for major personal grooming, like hair removal, nail trimming and trying new configurations of braids and barrettes. She has so little hair that she can tweeze her armpits, bikini-line and, if she has extra time, her legs. Her mom Janice taught her how to pluck the hair so that it would grow in slowly. She performs her grooming ritual on a towel carefully laid out on her bedroom floor and carefully collects the tweezed hair in a tissue. Jerry never enters her bedroom. If he needs to tell her that the phone is for her or that dinner is ready, he stands in the corridor and yells to her. Laura imagines him out in the hallway with his back to her door, his arms crossed over his chest and his head turned about forty-five degrees to the right, as he yells, "Laura, phone!" One time she opened the door to answer his call and walked straight into his back. She knows that he's on his way to her room because she can hear him humming loudly to himself as he walks down the corridor. She knows he's afraid to catch her doing something uncomfortably foreign, in other words,

something female, so he announces his presence with tuneless renditions of "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain." He always sings the same song. But just the first verse.

Laura watches him and wonders why he is wearing shorts in the winter time and how long he's been peeling potatoes for. She believes that her father should be more stylish and should know better than to wear shorts out of season. Jerry is a fairly successful architect in an Edmonton firm - successful enough that his name is on plaques on the sides of a few buildings around town - but he works from home. Lately, he's been poring over sketches and blue prints of the new family home that will be built in a few months. Sometimes Laura sees Jerry sitting on the edge of his bed in his downstairs office and staring at his house sketches. Or he stands at his work desk and squints as he moves his pencil carefully along the edge of a ruler, marking out the presence of a bedroom wall or bathroom door. The office in the new house is too small to fit his bed.

A pot hisses and jiggles on the stove. Jerry leans over the burner to turn down the heat. Laura leans back against the cold door and examines her nails.

One afternoon after one of Laura's parents' noisy arguments in the master bedroom, she saw Jerry on his knees in front of the oven scrubbing at the black chunks inside the oven. Kneeling, he hacked away at the oven wall with one of those steel wool pads with a green plastic handle and grumbled at the black grime. When Laura opened the oven later that night to make a grilled cheese sandwich the inside of the oven sparkled.

Laura sighs. The kitchen table is set for two. It's the same table her family had in their Saskatoon house, the house they lived in before moving to Edmonton. Same table

they had in Toronto, in the first house she ever lived in. In Saskatoon, the table sat underneath the perfectly square skylight that Jerry put in. He spent more than a week drilling holes, measuring, sealing and teetering on a step-ladder while Laura collected the debris and swept up the dust he made. Janice asked him to put it in right over the centre of the kitchen, directly above where the table normally stood. Laura can't recall an evening when her whole family, she, her parents and her sister Shannon, ate at the table together. She remembers the staring contests she had with Shannon over Pad Thai and broccoli while Jerry read bills and her mom stood in her favourite Christmas knit sweater preparing more food. Laura's parents never sat at the table. The sunlight would glare through the skylight, blinding Shannon and Laura and making them sweat.

Laura remembers the pool that Jerry assembled in the backyard of the family's old Toronto home. It was also her mom's idea. She wanted a backyard pool like everybody else. Jerry put in an above ground pool to save money. He worked on setting it up for almost a month in the summer of 1983 and lost 12 pounds in the process. Shannon and Laura ran through the sprinkler and tried to spray him with the hose as he lumbered about with various parts of the pool wall, which he used as a protective shield. She can't remember where Janice was during all of this. Maybe out on her shift at the hospital. Maybe sitting and sun tanning her ivory white skin on the deck Jerry built the previous summer.

Laura stares at the brown and beige scarf that sits perfectly folded on her lap. Her mom is a full-time nurse who considers the health of her two daughters to be the most important mission of motherhood. Every morning, after her night shift, before Laura heads out to catch the school bus to St. Augustus Secondary, Janice throws every

leftover fruit or vegetable into the juicer and wipes the sleep out of her eye as the carrots and apples grind and pop inside the plastic container. Laura stares at the shake that Janice places before her in a fat beer mug on the wooden table, watches the seeds sink to the bottom and then watches Janice scrub the blender and clean away the fruit peels and return to bed. She feels the chunks of what her mother calls "Goodness" stick to the back of her throat with each sip. The almond coloured refrigerator hums gently. Nothing is left out on the counter. Every dish and cup is stacked away behind the heavy wooden cupboard doors. The counter is scrubbed. It smells like lemon. Minutes later, Jerry enters the kitchen from the long hallway and sees Laura's three-quarter full glass. Laura looks close to being sick, so he takes it away. The liquid splatters against the stainless steel sink as he disposes of it. Laura thinks the splatter sounds like someone puking, but without the gasps and groans. The sound of her sister in the bathroom last night. The sound of her sister in the bathroom at least two nights a week. The sound that her father seems to ignore. The sound that her mother never hears because she's on her night-shift at the hospital. Shannon keeps a one-litre bottle of water and two Tylenols next to her bed to combat hangovers, but she usually returns home too drunk to remember that they're there, so she makes frequent, clumsy trips to the bathroom instead. Laura imagines her sister's petite sixteen year old fingers gripping at the rim of the toilet bowl.

Jerry cleans the bathrooms once a week but never says anything about anything. Laura is sure that he is embarrassed about the waste basket contents he empties out. He must notice the wads of tissues and toilet paper in there, but he never says anything about preservation and economy. She knows he must be curious about the mounds of

white paper. Perhaps he peeks at it more closely than he would the kitchen garbage or garden waste that he perfunctorily pours from the cans into large bags without scrutinizing the contents. Maybe he notices the tampon applicators that Laura wraps in toilet paper to be discreet (and then covers with extra toilet paper to disguise them) and the eye-liner peels. Laura is glad that he says nothing, but she is embarrassed anyway. And he is always embarrassed around her. Around all of them.

Laura remembers the impromptu races she and Jerry used to run for fun. He was a fast sprinter in high school, won all sorts of letters and badges. He told her he ran the 100 metres in 12 seconds or something that seemed fast to Laura at the time. He assured her that his time was the fastest in his high school. He used to leave his running shoes by the front door of the house, perfectly lined up, but old and dirty. They reminded everyone in the family of his athletic prowess. Sometimes Laura placed her new Nike cross-trainers beside his shoes. She would perpetually challenge him to races, from the house to the car, from the car to the house. He won every time. He never slowed down to let her pass. He never gave her a head start. He just ran as fast as he could go and Laura would laugh and chase him. One day when the family was descending the steps of a restaurant during one of their vacations to California, Jerry challenged Laura to a race to the light-post about two hundred metres away. Shannon screamed, "Get ready. Get set. Go!" And they took off down the sidewalk as fast as they could go. Laura reached the light-post and smashed her hand hard and flat against it, so hard that it throbbed instantly and was red for close to an hour afterwards. Shannon was back near the restaurant laughing in the same way that she used to when Laura chased her around the kitchen table in their house in Saskatoon. Laura could

hear her dad panting. She turned to see him bent over just a few feet behind her, with his hands cupped over his knees and his back rounded like a cat's, his whole body heaving up and down. She realized that she had won. She looked away from him quickly. She said nothing. He said nothing. From that point on, he no longer kept his running shoes at the front door.

The disgusting peel still hangs from his almost hairless wrist. Laura picks at a loose thread in the scarf, unravelling part of the perfect brown and beige pattern. She is still slumped on the ground not quite ready to make an effort to stand again. She counts the cupboards on the far wall. She squints and tries to memorize the fuzzy outline of her father leaning over the stove.

Laura is moving to Toronto in a few days. There's an over-sized brown trunk of clothes, house wares, art supplies and miscellaneous items packed and ready to be moved to her new apartment. She thinks about what it will be like to live alone. She'll paint her apartment bright yellow and sky blue, set up her art easel in front of the window and keep her new white bathroom towels perfectly folded in the linen closet. She's packed all her photo albums and diaries. Everything will be big, bright and airy.

Laura stares at the back of Jerry's slumped shoulders. She wishes he stood up straight. She wishes he stopped pulling up his socks so high. She pushes herself up off the kitchen floor. She wants to check her trunk again to be sure that all of the things she needs for her Toronto apartment are there. She slowly slides her feet along the floor down the hallway towards her bedroom. Jerry stays at the sink.

She double checks the contents of the trunk and pushes it out into the hallway outside her bedroom so that it doesn't clutter up the space in her room. On the first

day, everyone who passes her room steps silently over the trunk. On the second day, they grumble as they lift each leg over it. On the third day, Shannon stubs her toe on the trunk, swears and smashes her fist against Laura's closed bedroom door. On the fourth day, Laura opens up her bedroom door and sees Jerry sitting on her trunk adjusting the family portrait on the wall. The blue print of the new family house is inside the cylindrical cardboard box beside him. On the fifth day, Laura and her trunk leave for Toronto.

* * *

In the months that followed Laura's move, she called Edmonton every Tuesday and Friday. Then she called every Friday. Conversations centred on her life in Toronto. Jerry would pick up the phone and ask how swimming was going. Then Janice would take the phone and ask if Laura was eating okay. Shannon never said more than, "Hello…I'll get dad."

After ten months in her sunny Toronto apartment with the pot-smoking neighbours, her father shouted to her over the crackling phone-line that the family house in Edmonton sold to the McIntosh family.

"Really, like, Tara McIntosh's family?" Laura asked.

"The McIntoshs," he responded.

"Tara used to play on my soccer team, remember?"

"They take possession on March 2."

On Laura's next visit to Edmonton she visited the old house. The McIntoshs added a second floor above the kitchen, replaced the hard-wood floor with Mexican style ceramic tiles and replaced the heavy wooden kitchen cabinet doors with glass doors. Laura stared at the array of plates and glasses in their closed cupboards. Tara guided her around the house. "Which room was yours again?" Tara asked Laura. Laura pointed down the hallway to her old room, but everything that used to surround her room was not there. The family portrait, the creaky wood floor, the "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain," Shannon's curses, and the lemon scent.

Over the phone Janice describes the way the new family house rose up out of a grassy field in Riverdale. Shannon, Jerry and Janice filled up one hundred and ten boxes worth of their stuff and moved them to the new house. On her Easter and Thanksgiving trips home, Laura notices that most of the boxes remained unpacked. The boxes lined the walls of the family room. Shannon's noisy tantrums and outbursts against Jerry could not be heard through the cardboard-box insulated walls. On her last trip to Riverdale, Shannon had already left to study at UBC and Janice had moved out. Laura stood in the master bedroom for twenty minutes and stared at the greyish-white walls. Janice had managed to complete one coat, but gave up on the paint job at about the same time that she gave up on her marriage. Laura ran her hands over the uneven brush strokes around the windows and doors. Laura thought they looked like huge scratch marks.

Jerry lived in the new family house alone for six more months before he moved into a small downtown apartment. On one of Laura's dwindling visits to Edmonton, she drove to Jerry's apartment on 111th Avenue and knocked on his apartment door.

They were going out for pizza and a night of bowling. He called to her through the closed door that he was coming out in a second. Relieved that she was not invited in, she paced the dimly lit apartment building hallway. Ten minutes later, he opened the door and stepped into the corridor.

Photographer Daughter

In the darkroom he carefully places the negative into the enlarging machinery and flicks on the light bulb. The light filters through three different lenses, through the negative and onto the light-sensitive paper below the negative. He squints at the paper below as though he can see the invisible transfer of images. Clearing his throat, he begins to run the paper through four rectangular containers of liquid, one by one. With each immersion, the image takes shape, the hazy outlines of a hand on a shoulder, the dark rim of the wooden stool, the angular creases of trousers. He lets the paper linger a second longer in the last of the four containers, which is filled with water, and then carefully clips the dripping picture to the wire that hangs taut the full way across the darkroom.

He stands for ten minutes in front of the photograph and examines the technical precision of his work. Mrs. Rahala's skin seems slightly darker than usual and her stool could have been adjusted to be higher so that her skirt would have draped more elegantly instead of bunching up at her feet. William Rahala's head is leaning an inch too far to the left. He concludes that it is not his best work and he will have to charge them slightly less than originally stated. He leaves the darkroom and moves to the front of the studio where his wife Farah is kneeling behind the counter display case counting packages of film. In his last studio Farah would have complained about having to count inventory or polish and dust the show cases of picture frames in the middle of a hot Dubai afternoon, but their new studio is air conditioned. Farah sometimes wears her heavier saris, even on the hottest days. Sweaty pedestrians trudging by the studio

peer in enviously at the woman carrying boxes in a dark blue long sleeve sari. Farah looks up at him, smiles briefly and turns back to her counting.

He spends his work day pointing his camera in to the faces of clients who have dressed in their best clothes, styled their hair with special products, polished their shoes to a shine and spent extra time on their make-up. His clients walk in confidently, but the moment he seats them in the portrait studio between the camera and black backdrop, these ornately dressed clients twist and fidget self-consciously on the stool. They ask to get up and straighten their ties in the long mirror he set up on the wall of the studio. He watches them stand before that mirror discreetly practicing their smiles. They find a smile they are satisfied with and hold it as they return to the stool and sit waiting for him to finish testing the lighting and adjusting the lens, with their smiles, slightly strained and maniacal-looking now, pasted on their faces.

When he first meets his clients he observes their stance and posture. He notices if they speak and smile more out of one side of their mouths than the other. He memorizes the funny way they might turn their heads, squint their left eyes when they smile, or the way they stand with their weight on their right legs. During the shoot he attempts to eliminate their idiosyncrasies, directing them to shift this way or that, so that the end product will appear completely natural, conservative.

The studio walls are covered with pictures of his own family. Farah on the stool surrounded by their three children, or just the children lined up in their church clothes. There's a portrait of his youngest child Hilary as a baby, plump and sleeping, and a photo of the two oldest children Vincent and Frances sitting back to back on the stool.

Vincent's eyes are bright but his smile is conservative and narrow. Frances shows both rows of teeth in the shot and her eyes are wide, her eyebrows lifted.

Several of his clients have their portraits taken by him every year. They return each summer and wait in the front room of the studio while Farah scurries apologetically to the darkroom to alert him. They look at the portraits of his family on the wall, usually noticing the newest portraits: "Ohhhhh, you have a lovely lovely family, Mr. Khan," Mrs. Rahala said to him in Urdu at the end of her family's studio shoot the other day. "That Frances is sprouting up like a weed. You keep an eye on that one."

* * *

I have asked Frances to photograph me. I sit cross-legged on a foot rest with my chin resting in my hands and try to stare into the lens that separates me from Frances, but I can see nothing but the glare of the kitchen light behind her. She had explained the look of the shot that she was going for by using metaphors, and then she clapped when I finally settled in this pose, so I don't move. I wonder if I have food on my teeth. We chatted for two hours over hot tea and homemade chocolate chip cookies before getting to the photo shoot. The apartment was filled with pillows of varying shapes and sizes. While we spoke, Frances knelt on one of the larger, flatter pillows and held her tea cup with both hands. She spoke slowly, staring at me with wide, bright, unblinking eyes, pausing often to think about what she was about to say, sometimes stopping mid-sentence to correct something she just said.

She directs me as I pose blindly in front of her camera. "Laugh," she says. "Now really laugh." She pretends to laugh. When I first arrived at Frances' apartment building, I buzzed up to let her know I was downstairs. She squealed into the intercom, "I thought you'd be late. I'm standing here without a shirt on. Come on up, I'll try not to be naked when you get here." The two women standing behind me waiting to use the intercom, who had been conversing quietly, raised their voices to drown out Frances' embarrassing giggles that followed her intercom confession. By the time I reached apartment 510, she had on a bright red v-neck sweater, with her long wet black hair gathered in a messy ponytail. Her husband Dean, whose pale face appeared in several pictures on the apartment wall, was not yet home from work. "Being married to Dean is amazing. We've only been married eight months, but it's great," she said when I looked at the photograph of Dean and Frances at the altar.

The visit began with the obligatory tour of the apartment. The furniture and walls were overwhelmingly neutral: brown, white and taupe everywhere. She showed me where the cupboards caught fire in the kitchen, pointed out the most special ornaments on the Christmas tree and led me to the doorway of her bedroom where she flung open the door and swept her arm through the air like a game show hostess and said, "This is where all the action happens." I said nothing in response. I just focussed on the brightly coloured bedspread, light fixture and pillows.

Between shots of me, while Frances is fiddling with the camera lenses and lighting, I observe the photographs that hang along the apartment walls: a few brightly coloured photographs from her honeymoon in Cuba, some wedding photos and five or six photographs of green and blue rooftops taken from bizarre angles. There are no

pictures of Frances or Dean's families. Frances is seven months away from finishing her specialist certification in Photography at the local university. When I ask her about her studies she explains her philosophy of photography instead: "Photographs have the potential to get down to the core of something or someone and, like, show his or her or its essence, if there is such a thing." She tells me that her thesis is well underway and asks me to attend her photo exhibition next month. She's shooting a series of photographs about healing through marriage. The main shot is a picture of a naked six year old girl and it may include an audio component of whispered wedding vows. "It's about vulnerability, and how God can fix things, you know? Like, make things right finally." Her sentence ends on an up-note as though she's asking a question.

She looks over my shoulder as I flip through her wedding album. My favourite picture is one of Dean and Frances and Frances' family standing on the steps of the town hall. Dean and Frances stand holding hands in the middle of the frame, Hilary stands to Frances' right, beaming and decked out in a blue bridesmaid dress, further to the right is Vincent, with a slightly confused smile, in a tux. On Dean's left are Frances' parents: her mom laughing in a glittering forest green sari and her father in a dark grey suit and navy striped tie, staring down the camera. "The night before my wedding was the first time I realised that I could be free," she blurts as I flip by the page displaying three separate photos of Frances standing next to her father. "So the family was gathered in our apartment and my father informed us that we would all pray together, okay. So he went on about how it could be the last time and whatever and then he instructed us to sit on the floor and cover our heads - we have this ancient brown and totally ratty rug that has been completely flattened over the years, which is

kind of like our prayer rug or something." Frances stops to flip her ponytail over her shoulder and lick her lips. "It's a real trigger for me, man. Like, I didn't want to kneel on the stupid ratty rug and I was the one getting married. Then I realised that the next day I could start praying wherever the heck I wanted to pray, wearing whatever the heck I wanted to wear, and so I just did it. You know."

When Frances and I met for coffee last week at Starbucks, she told me a bit about her relationship with her dad. She said that they went out for coffee a few times, but that things felt awkward face to face. Her best memories of time spent with her father were the intimate conversations in her dad's blue Chevy with the blue velvet seat covers, when he drove her to the university. As he looked out at the road ahead, carefully observing the street signs, and she gazed at the sky and people on the sidewalk, they talked about men and marriage. "It's amazing how you forget about those moments of total openness once you're in the heat of an argument at home," she told me between sips of her latte. "Those few years after moving to Canada were pretty brutal. When he screamed at me and slapped me for being rude and unladylike in the middle of the living room, I know neither one of us was thinking, 'Hey, but what about those great, happy, open moments we had in the car?' you know." The vague look of surprise on my face did not go unnoticed. "Yeah, we used to fight. Not as bad as he and Vincent fought though, but pretty bad." Then she told me about the painting she made in her first year university painting class. It depicted a fridge with a painting hanging on it – the painting on the fridge was of a boy and a man fighting in a bedroom. "Totally disturbing," she said, her eyes wide open and staring into mine. "I hung it on our fridge at home, but I don't think anyone in my family ever understood

it." She takes a sip of her latte and adds, "Well, no one ever asked me about it anyway."

* * *

Their house is bursting with the cries of a toddler, the giggles of three young children, the smell of chicken biriyani, and rhythmic hammering from the old den, which is being turned into a darkroom. He does not permit the children to have friends over. He argues that the house is too small and crowded already, without extra kids. It's been three years since his last studio closed down. Right after it had closed his long time clients and concerned friends called their home to inquire about the "Sold" sign on the studio door. "It's an unstable economy these days," he would explain. It had taken him several months to find a new job. Eventually he found a position at the local hospital filming surgical procedures. The new darkroom will help him make a few extra dollars on the side.

Farah and Frances have just chosen a new paint colour and couch for the main salon. The wall is a warm shade of beige that makes it apparent that the white ceiling needs a new coat of paint too. The new beige and brown striped Ikea couch makes their old side tables and brass potholders look out-of-date. But Frances loves it. She sits on it next to her father and tells him silly things and laughs contentedly even when he doesn't respond. She is a teenager now, with new ideas about life and God. He does not turn to answer her questions because he is not sure if they are actually questions. He doesn't know why she talks the way she does and why she isn't more like Farah.

After twenty minutes of her banter, he tells her to marry a good Christian man and to stay away from the Muslim boys, and to always pray.

The room with the couch is the main room, which is surrounded by the three bedrooms, the kitchen, and the new darkroom. This is the room where he found Frances lying on the floor with the phone nestled between her shoulder and ear at ten o'clock on a school night. He had immediately wanted to know to whom she was talking. She answered, "A friend from school." He wanted to know which one. "Arif Kassam," she said, matter-of-factly, looking up at him, staring him in the eye. He tore the phone from her grip, threw it to the ground and commanded her to be respectful and stand up, yanking her to her feet by her wrists. Farah and Hilary stood in the doorways of their bedrooms, saying nothing.

There is no longer a window to outside in the main room since he covered over the old balcony to make an extra room. He likes it this way. The main room now feels like an insulated place where the family gathers for prayers, games and fights. The walls of the room are covered with family portraits, mostly transplants from the walls of the old studio.

Once the darkroom construction is complete, he announces to Vincent that he will begin instructing him on photo development. Every second day, he drags Vincent into the pitch black room, shuts the door, and they do not emerge until Farah announces that dinner is ready. Frances, who is four years older than Vincent, crouches against the wall beside the closed door of the darkroom and listens to her father's deep voice describe each piece of equipment and each step of the development process. "This is the 'stop bath,' my son. This is the fixer." She hears no response from Vincent.

* * *

Her father stands in the foyer of the art gallery, with his hands on his hips, frowning at an abstract sculpture of a man carrying what seems to be a pink rabbit. In the main section of the gallery, people carrying diced marble cheddar on tooth picks and plastic cups of red wine slowly file past Frances' photographs. Some turn red in the face and look away. The naked girl in black and white stares out at them. In the first frame, a man's hand is held firmly over her mouth. Her eyes are wide open and staring directly into the camera. In the second frame the girl is pulling the man's hands away from her face.

Mirrors in the Guest Room

Maman set up her mirror collection in the guestroom of our Sherbrooke Street apartment. Three walls of the room were hung with mirrors: two perfectly square mirrors with rusty metal frames, an old smile-shaped mirror from a dentist's office, an ornate silver Versailles mirror, a heart-shaped mirror with "You Turn Me On" written in rhinestones, and ten others.

That was before I sat at her bedside whispering *Shhhh* as she groaned. That was before I bathed her, wiping her neck and underarms with shreds of the red, cotton skirt she used to wear when she went to the St. Patrick's Christmas bazaar. Before the red skirt hung too loosely around her emaciated hips. Before.

Maman used to sit in the guest room at her sewing desk, fixing the hem of Papa's trousers or mending his shirts, as I stood in front of the oblong mirror and marvelled at the endless multiplication of myself in the Star of David mirror on the wall behind me. Maman found the mirror for Papa when he graduated from the McGill Faculty of Law, four years before I was born. Maman would laugh at me as I posed and stuck my tongue out at the mirror. Her laugh then was a soft, smooth exhalation. I would stand smoothing out the creases in my blue sundress and twirling the long blue ribbons hanging from my pigtails. Maman always insisted that I wear dresses, pigtails and matching ribbons. Sometimes she even made me wear sunbonnets. The mirrors showed a never-ending trail of my image, extending into what I imagined to be a thousand parallel universes. There was one girl dressed in a traditional blue sundress, another who felt silly wearing her long blue hair ribbons, another who was doing the exact same thing as me, two or three or twenty universes away from my own.

Sometimes Maman put down Papa's trousers, stood behind me and wrapped her long, thin arms around me. A thousand mothers hugged their eight year old daughters.

Maman was the eldest daughter of a boisterous Québécois property manager, my grandpère, Guy-Antoine Lapointe, who died two weeks after my Grandmère, when I was five. After finishing high school my mother visited the apartments in Grandpère's building to help him with repairs. She told me that she helped Grandpère while she was looking for her dark-haired, handsome Mr. Right. On her repair visits with Grandpère she admired the collection of oil paintings of Old Montreal in M. Gagnon's hallway, the assortment of dark African masks in Ms. Holburn's home office and the cabinet full of chess paraphernalia in Mr. Miller's salon. Grandpère observed the way Maman ran her fingers over the nostrils and gaping mouths of the masks and gaped at the chess pieces made from old coke cans, and suggested that his daughter begin her own collection. A week later Maman came home from a Saturday morning trip to the Sainte-Eustache flea market with a hand-held mirror. A tall, green, thin angel with up-stretched arms, holding up the mirror face, was the mirror's handle. She polished the mirror and hung it on her bedroom wall. The following week Maman bought another mirror with roses painted on its exterior, a compact mirror that cracked in her pocket in the bus on the way home.

Maman's favourite was a classic oval mirror with a silver Versailles-style frame. As a girl I watched Maman carefully take the mirror off the wall and polish the frame with a red-checked cloth and some strong smelling cream from a blue tin. "Every girl should have at least one collection," she whispered to me as she rubbed at the tarnished edges of her finest mirror before she added, "And every girl must have a secret."

Maman's collection had expanded steadily until she met Papa. After Papa she bought her last three mirrors. She told me that Papa wanted her to rely on him, not mirrors, to reflect her beauty, but I know that Papa just wanted her to look at him instead.

Grandpère and Maman were called to fix a faulty light fixture in apartment 180, the home of the Jewish family that had just moved in. In our guestroom on a rainy Saturday afternoon in early May of 1970, in the presence of the mirrors, Maman told me the story.

"Mer-e-dite," she said to me. She could never quite pronounce the *th* in my name correctly. Every time she spoke my name it sounded extremely concrete and mature. I always felt very present with Maman. "Your Papa was studying at the kitchen table when Grandpère and I arrived to fix the light. He had five candles burning on the table because it was so dark in there. There were big books everywhere and he was so beautiful there with his five candles and big books." Maman held Papa's newly hemmed trousers against her chest as she recited the story. "Soon I began to run into him in the hallway…by accident," she said to me with an exaggerated wink. "Soon we fell in luuuve." She dragged out the vowel in the last word to make me giggle.

On Papa's desk there was a black and white 8x10 photograph of Papa and Maman at his graduation. He is standing in the foreground in a black graduation gown and mortar board, with his degree in his hand. Maman is standing on the steps behind him, holding his overcoat in her arms and gazing proudly at him.

No one ever slept in the guestroom after Maman died. In fact, I can't even remember having a real guest in the house. I still called it the guest room though. Maman's mending materials lay unused on her sewing desk for almost two years.

Brown thread chewed at one end and wound around a spool at the other end. A needle puncturing the round red pin-cushion. A pair of Maman's beige tights hanging over the back of the empty white chair.

After Maman died, Papa rarely left his office, which was at the farthest end of the hall next to the bathroom, during the day. Every weekday, he lumbered from his bedroom into his office at 7 a.m., about the same time that I got up to make my breakfast before school. He sat at the heavy mahogany desk that was centred with the open door frame, so I could see him leaning over his work with large piles of paper and files piled to his left and right.

The first time Papa caught me posing and making pouty faces at the mirror, I was eleven years old, Maman had just died, and I was standing on my tippy toes in the center of the guestroom on Maman's rickety sewing chair. I had just come in from school and my open school bag was propped up against the side of the chair. I was captivated by the way the angel-handle hand mirror hanging from the crown-moulding distorted my face. I didn't expect Papa to walk by the room or I would have chosen a much quieter chair to stand on. I heard him at the door of the guestroom behind me but I was too embarrassed to turn and look directly at him. In the Versailles mirror in front of me, I glanced at his face. His brown eyes disappeared beneath his dark eyebrows, his cheeks turned red and I heard him noisily suck back saliva before he began shouting.

"Look at me, Meredith!" I did not look. "Look at me right now," he said enunciating and punctuating each syllable. I wanted to obey him, but I didn't turn. I scanned the Versailles frame's blackened edges, avoiding Papa's reddened profile in

the mirror. He had not moved from the doorway. While he was silent, I should have gotten down from the chair, but I was frozen up there, and all of my parallel selves in their own universes froze too. A creak in the chair reminded him why he was standing there. He grunted, threw the cap of his pen at me and missed, so he threw the rest of the pen at my head, turned abruptly and walked away. It didn't hurt, but I could still identify the point of its impact long after the initial hit. My memory felt it.

After I heard the loud scrape of his desk chair against the floor of his office, I slowly lowered myself to the chair, which seemed cool and hard. I pulled my knees to my chest, tugged my knee-length school kilt down over my bent legs and under the soles of my feet and watched the way my face turned red and my lips puckered when I cried. When the sound of sniffling subsided, I peeked out into the hallway to see what Papa was doing. I could see him in his office at his desk, bent over a book and writing furiously. I walked back into the guest room and shut the door. In the closet I easily found the red-check cloth and blue tin of polishing cream. I carefully removed the heavy Versailles mirror from the wall, steadying it on my knee and laying it on the floor. For over an hour I worked the cream around the frame, digging the cloth into each crevice and using my fingernails to scrape at the blackest parts. When my arm began to ache, I decided that the job was finished. I leaned the shining mirror against the wall, stood back to admire the glistening arches and angles of the frame, and went down the hallway to boil water for Papa's evening tea, closing the guestroom door behind me.

On the kitchen table I poured honey into the steaming cup of tea. I listened to the light tink of the spoon against the cup as I stirred. I placed the cup and saucer on the

long narrow table in the hallway and returned to the kitchen for some digestive cookies. As I groped in the pantry for the open bag of cookies I heard a loud crash. I swung around, leaving the pantry wide open, snatched the yellowing tea towel and rushed out to the hallway towards the tea cup, which was still safe and steaming on the table. Papa was returning to his office at the end of the hallway. The guestroom door was open. I stood in the center of the hallway with the bright kitchen light spilling out into the darkness, my shadow on the wall looming over me. Papa sat down at his desk, pulled some files out in front of him and looked up to see me watching him.

I did not enter the guestroom for two days. I didn't even go in to collect my school knap sack. My school teachers scolded me for forgetting my school books and homework, and on the second day, Ms. Payette gave me my first detention. On the second night I went in to the room to pick up my bag. Shards of broken mirror glittered on the floor. The mirrors hung silently around the empty oval space where the Versailles mirror used to hang. Inside the open closet I could see its shiny and empty frame. I never played in the guestroom again.

After Maman died I made the tea. I didn't know how to make the loose tea kind like Maman did without leaving too many leaves in the tea. Mme. Gagnon from next door did our groceries and cleaning for us but I had to write the list of food for her, so I began to include 'tea bags.' Each weekday after school I made tea for Papa while he leaned over the papers on his desk. I made the tea extra strong and brought it to him on a wood tray with rope handles that I had made him on Father's Day, in the woodworking unit of my grade seven art class. I sanded and varnished it seven times. I had asked my art teacher Mr. Langley if I could come in during the lunch period to

hand paint a special message on it. Mr. Langley sat next to me as I carefully handwrote, "Daddy, I love you," in pale blue paint along the bottom edge of the tray. I felt silly addressing the tray to Daddy, since I had never called him anything but Papa, but the other girls wrote Daddy in their cards so I tried it. I even included some childish bubbly hearts and daisies that I often saw on the other girls' school books and agendas.

I had given the tray to Papa two days after Father's Day because he seemed too busy on the actual day. It was a Sunday afternoon and he had just come in from his weekly long walk. As usual he was installed in his armchair watching the CBC – on that Sunday it was a special program on the role of the Canadians at Dieppe. I stood in the hallway and watched the CBC host in a three-piece suit introduce the program, staring boldly at the camera and addressing the viewing audience as "dear friends."

I asked Mme. Gagnon next door if I could borrow some of her fancy doilies which she sometimes sells at the flea market at the Old Port. I arranged the tea pot on the biggest doily and the tea cup on another smaller doily. I placed the small doily over the word "Daddy," because it was like I had addressed the tray to a person I didn't know. When everything was ready, I picked up the tray and walked quietly towards the living room. Papa sat bolt upright in the brown armchair with his right leg crossed over his left and both of his elbows resting on the chair's arms. The television showed black and white shots of a battlefield on which black and white figures of men were shot. One soldier charged into an array of bullets, fell backwards and then crumpled to the dirt. Papa shook his head. I crept to the right side of the brown chair, placed the tray on the floor and left the room. I went back to the kitchen, leaned against the fridge and

examined my nails. I listened to the fridge hum. Then I heard him call me back to the living room.

"Meredith, come," he shouted. I rushed back to the brown chair. I hurried and stood directly in front of him like I knew he expected me to when he called me in to see him. "Did you make this for me?" he asked softly, motioning towards the tray that he now balanced on his lap. I nodded. "It is very nice. You can bring my tea to me on it every day now." He reached forward and patted me awkwardly on the shoulder. I smiled.

"Yes, Papa."

He cleared his throat, which was a signal that he was finished, and then he returned his attention to the black and white battlefield.

Over the summer between grades seven and eight I decided that I hated my name. It was too old and formal. When my homeroom teacher Ms. Bovaird took attendance on the first day of school, she called out my name, "Meredith Sarah Hirsh," and I raised my hand and asked that she call me Merri. Robert Shapiro snorted. As I moved from one new class to another throughout that first day, I insisted that each teacher and all my classmates call me Merri. I practised writing Merri on all of my workbooks and desktops, settling on a bulbous script with the 'i' dotted with a fat heart. At home while I heated up Campbell's tomato soup, sliced apples and buttered bagels for Papa's and my dinner, I imagined pulling my kilt up above my knobby, white knees and hanging around outside the front doors of the school sucking on cigarettes with Brenda McCall and Cindy Brunetta. "Stop daydreaming and get that spoon out of your mouth," Papa barked at me as he walked into the kitchen to pick up his bowl of soup.

It took a few weeks of reminding my classmates and teachers before Merri stuck. I introduced myself to Brenda and Cindy as "Merri, with an I." At home I cut each letter of my new name out of large pieces of cardboard and tacked them to the wall next to my bedroom door so that if Papa looked into my bedroom he wouldn't see it right away. I went into the guestroom and took the heart shaped "You Turn Me On" mirror off the wall and hung it on my bedroom wall above the letter "I." I rearranged the furniture in my room so that my desk sat beneath the name and I could lie in my bed and look at the heart mirror and see the reflection of the streetlamp outside my bedroom window.

I started to stand at the front doors of the school with Cindy and Brenda every lunch hour. They were in grade ten and liked to call themselves my big sisters. By Christmastime Cindy had taught me how to swear and how to roll my kilt so that it was short but not bulgy. For Christmas they bought me a fancy black bra they ordered from a catalogue. I never got used to smoking. I pretended that I could smoke like them, sucking in on the cigarette and exhaling slowly with my eyes partially closed. Cindy said smoking was sexy, but my sputtering and wincing only made them laugh. Papa never noticed the black bra under my white blouse or the smell of cigarette smoke that clung to my clothes and hair, but he noticed, angrily, that I had stopped making tea after school. Sometimes when I walked down the hallway to my room I could see him amidst the books at his desk and he would call to me to ask if I submitted the grocery list to Mme. Gagnon and I would say, "Yes, Papa." Sometimes at night when I was scribbling notes to Cindy in my bedroom, I could hear the floorboards creak as he paced back and forth in the hallway, stopping by the open guestroom door.

In the summer of 1976, two burly men came to remove the contents of the guest room. I was sixteen and beginning to get desperate about keeping anything and everything that belonged to Maman or reminded me of Maman. I drew pictures of her in my notebooks. I stole the beige tights from the guestroom and tucked them in my pillow case. I took all of the leftover thread and needles from the sewing desk. I began to collect match boxes and I began to keep secrets from everyone. I told no one that I wanted to be a painter or that I was lonely. Papa insisted that the guestroom space could be best used as a sunny dining room where I could do my homework. The men carted away the small single guestroom bed, the old sewing machine and Maman's desk. For two months the floor was bare and the dusty mirrors only reflected each other. Then the burly men returned to our apartment on the same Sunday I turned seventeen and delivered a beautiful teak dining table with six chairs. The men arranged the table in the new dining room, running their hands over the surface of the table and complimenting Papa on his superior taste. Papa beamed, occasionally glancing at me to make sure I was listening.

Later that afternoon when Papa went for his walk, Mme. Gagnon brought over some *Tarte au sucre* for me. I cut myself a large slice and placed it on the dining room table but I could not eat. Instead, I sat crying and staring at the space on the wall to my left where the Versailles mirror used to be. I stood to check in the closet for the Versailles frame. Gone. No doubt sold to the burly men.

Right there, one by one, I removed each mirror from the walls and laid them out on the new table. I stood on the new chairs to reach the highest mirrors, not even removing my shoes. When I was finished I moved each mirror, one by one, to Papa's

office. I placed the smallest mirrors on his shelves. I hung the smile mirror over the oil painting on Papa's office wall, and I leaned the larger mirrors against the wainscoted walls of the office. I took the graduation picture of Papa and Maman to my bedroom. In my room I removed the heart shaped mirror from the wall (the letters had long since fallen off), which I then placed carefully on Papa's desk on top of his books and files.

Leaving the office door open, I went to the kitchen to make tea. I stood next to the stove and listened to the kettle whistle. I leaned over the tea cup and watched the tea bag bleed in to the water. I stirred in honey. I could hear Papa removing his shoes by the door then walk down the hallway to his office. Keeping a close eye on my overfull cup I made my way to the dining room, where my piece of pie was waiting. I stared at the bare wall, sipping my tea and savouring each small forkful of pie.

Shattered

Rachel lies on her back on the Persian rug with her hands behind her head, staring at the newly painted living room ceiling. She is twelve. Her father sits on the parquet floor next to her with his back against one of the brown striped chairs. "Why did you have an affair, Dad?" she asks. He looks at the new marble fireplace for a few moments and then turns to her. Her eyes are waiting for his.

"I met her at work," he says. "She was beautiful and understanding and we started talking a lot and I felt like she understood me and we were attracted to one another, you see. And we started to meet up for coffee and drinks and one thing led to another. It doesn't mean I don't love all of you, you know. I'm back here because I love you." While he talks, Rachel turns on to her side towards him and props herself up on her left elbow. Her eyes remain wide and dry, appearing wise and old to him, so he continues his confession in greater detail.

* * *

Alex is curled up in Grace's lap on the brown love seat. He is five. She sobs, wraps her arms around him, rocking back and forth. His chin quivers and he cries tentatively, like he isn't sure why he is crying. Muffled music escapes from behind Rachel's older brother's bedroom door. The drapes in the sitting room are pulled shut, the record player is silent and the lights are off. The front door slams and eleven year old Rachel enters the room, with her yellow back pack slung over her shoulder. She is returning from a birthday slumber party and the half-empty pink treat bag is still in her

hand. Her mother, Grace, hasn't said anything, but Rachel somehow knows that her dad is gone. Still sobbing, Grace stops rocking and waves her over to the love seat. Alex says, "Rachew." He couldn't properly pronounce the l-sound yet. "You're gonna cry."

* * *

David runs around the cottage kitchen pretending he is a jedi, swatting the air with the metal barbeque spatula and buzzing loudly with each swat. He lowers his dark eyebrows, grits his teeth and shouts threats into the air. He circles the old glass top kitchen table, occasionally lunging forward to stab his invisible opponent. Rachel looks up from the cutting board where she is slicing tomatoes for the salad and warns him to stop fooling around. "David, you'll hurt someone," she says.

"Listen to your mother," Grace shouts from the other side of the kitchen screen door. David ignores his grandmother's words.

"Are you listening to me?" Rachel shouts as David continues to circle the table with his eyes partially closed. He makes one sharp swat and the spatula smashes hard against the glass table top. David jumps back against the kitchen wall and drops the spatula as the table shatters. Shards of glass slide along the ceramic tiled floor. Rachel covers her mouth with one hand and freezes over the small pile of sliced tomatoes. Paul comes running into the kitchen, holding the baby, telling David not to move. As soon as David starts to cry, Rachel unfreezes, drops her hand from her mouth and mumbles, "It's okay." No one hears her. Paul and Rachel drive to the nearest town first thing the following morning to order a new glass table top.

* * *

Their house is a side-split just like the house where Rachel grew up. The kids' toys, CDs, books and videos are in neat piles everywhere. Rachel's small office is full of old, useless files and notebooks that she refuses to move or throw away. The décor is exactly the same as it was six years ago when they moved in, except for the downstairs bathroom that Rachel painted bright red in a spur of the moment effort to add colour somewhere. The kids are outside in the large backyard playing in the leaves with Paul. When they bought this house she insisted on a substantial backyard, something she had never had in her childhood homes. She loves watching the backyard naturally change from white to green to brown with the seasons, from the inside of her out-dated off-white kitchen.

* * *

The renovation project is taking weeks longer than everyone expected. The outside wall of the kitchen is now just a thick sheet of white plastic that makes a thundering sound every time the wind blows. Plastic sheets cover the new stove and new counter. Building materials for the two new skylights are piled up in the corner of the kitchen. Rachel ignores her math homework while she fiddles with an adjustable wrench at the table. There is a suffocating smell of fresh paint lingering in the air. The walls have just been painted a bright yellow.

She can hear her parents fighting in the laundry room where Grace is cooking pancakes on a hotplate. She can't make out what they're saying.

* * *

Now that they have three kids, the house seems to be shrinking. The youngest, now almost two, sleeps in a crib in the corner of Rachel and Paul's room. For two years they've been talking about the possibility of renovating the house, expanding the back of the house into the backyard in order to make space for another bedroom, but Rachel refuses to call the contractor. They hear the child moving around in the crib, so they begin to whisper.

"If we really want to sell we'll have to up-date the kitchen, Rachel. We'll have to change it," Paul says.

"I know," Rachel says and turns over so her back is towards Paul.

"So?"

"I don't know, Paul. Everything has to stay as it is. I want everything to stay as it is."

Rachel imagines the noisy clomping of the kids' feet against the dark hardwood floor and the way they race past her in the small hallway.

* * *

Rachel sits at the glass table and swallows the last gulp of orange juice from her cup. Her father and Grace lean over the kitchen island, pointing at different coloured paint chips from the local paint store. "I want it to look *open*," he says. Rachel hurries past them to the fridge to grab the glass jug of orange juice to refill her cup. The jug is almost full and very heavy, so Rachel holds it out in front of her between both hands as she rushes back to her place at the table, trips on a bump in the linoleum floor and falls straight towards the table. The heavy glass jug smashes against the edge of the table and the jug and the orange juice and the table top and Rachel crash to the floor. Her father stands up straight on the far side of the island. Grace begins to scream at Rachel.

"It was just an accident, Grace," says Rachel's father.

"Now we have to buy a new glass top!" Grace yells back.

Rachel is kneeling on the floor in the middle of the puddle of orange juice and broken glass, sticky and crying.

* * *

Seven years after he came back to them, they moved to a sprawling bungalow in Forest Hill. All Rachel remembers is that the house looked like it was straight out of a modern decorating magazine. Spacious, colourless and muted. It seemed that no one was ever home or just that no one ever passed each other in the wide hallways. Rachel's older brother never moved in.

A few months after moving in, her father left them for good.

* * *

Paul stirs the can of white paint. "This will look good," he tells Rachel. Rachel examines a pile of old paint brushes she found in Grace's basement.

"Why are we painting the table? Why don't we keep it as it is? I mean, it's only going to her cottage, anyway," Rachel says, keeping her eyes on the paint stained bristles.

"It will look better though. Trust me."

"But I like it the way it's always been."

* * *

He stands over the stove and fiddles with the knobs. He is wearing a grey suit, white shirt and red tie. Every morning Rachel sits at this table and chats with him while he boils water for Grace's tea. He usually lets Rachel have a cup of milky tea as well. Sometimes she stirs in a spoonful of sugar. It is seven in the morning, the room is dimly lit and Rachel's brothers are still asleep. Grace waits in bed for her tea. Rachel sits crossed-legged on a kitchen chair picking at a blueberry muffin and recites to her father what she wants for Christmas. They laugh. She is nine. Three empty tea cups sit on the counter next to the stove.

Sloping Floors

This is the house on the Lakefront where I smoke up on the balcony in the cool night air with my boyfriend and his friend. We go inside the house, one by one, to squish our faces against the door's frosted windowpane and pretend we are fish in a bowl, sucking in our cheeks and gazing wide-eyed out at our laughing friends. We sit on lawn chairs and drink tea from Grandmother's pink teapot with the frilly tea cosy. My boyfriend Francis hits his face hard against the glass and Jon starts choking on his tea because he is laughing so hard. You are away. Mother is in the hospital getting her nose done, again. And I pretend for a moment that I can't remember which one is my boyfriend, so I alternately kiss both Francis and Jon between drags of my DuMaurier Light and then I stumble off my yellow lawn chair to go get ice for Francis' head but he pushes me out of the way and leaves, slamming the door behind him. I watch the glass quiver for a second, hoping to see Francis' puckered lips appear again against the frosted glass, but they don't so I sigh and turn to gaze at Jon's furrowed eyebrows. I kiss him on the right earlobe. He asks me what the hell is wrong with me and leaves, and I am alone again.

Now I'm alone in the family room staring at a re-run of *Beverly Hills 90210* on cable. It is the episode where Kelly's Dad kept promising to pick her up and take her out but kept calling her to cancel. At least he calls. Do you even know my cell number?

I am cold in my tank top and shorts, so I consider getting my pillow and comforter like I used to for Saturday morning cartoons when I was seven but I allow myself to shiver. I could stay here all night and let the crisp night air creep through the

open window and surround my body. Maybe I'll become ill. Maybe I'll be hospitalized. Maybe I'll die and you will sit in a hospital waiting room and think about the time you stayed up until three in the morning with me when I was twelve and helped me colour in the maps I drew for my geography project. (I am crying.) I remember how we spread the pages across the large oak kitchen table and discussed what colour the Canadian Shield should be, settling on pale green. We coloured to the rhythm of Olivia Newton John, you occasionally jumped up to dance and sing. "Let me hear your body talk. Oooh." (You made an exaggerated slow-motion rowing action with your arms while I tried to concentrate on colouring evenly but felt guilty that I wasn't watching you perform your silly dance.) *Let me hear your body talk.*

I can only hear my loud sniffles and chattering teeth so I press on the volume button until the television speakers start to sound fuzzy, turning every syllable the TV characters speak into a loud, angry-sounding *Shhhhh!* This sounds like Mother, hissing *Shhh* from the top of the stairs in our old house while you practised the bagpipes in the middle of the kitchen floor. I sometimes joined in with you, playing "The Minstrel Boy" on my recorder. You picked up the bagpipes at age forty and gave them up at age forty-one, when we moved here. I prefer the whining of the bagpipes and Mother's stair-top hiss to the television's reproach, or worse, the silence of these hallways. I close my eyes and picture standing in the kitchen with you again: "Play 'Scotland the Brave,' Dad." Play anything.

I throw the remote control at the picture on the wall of the Scottish moor near where you were born. It grazes the bottom edge of the picture's frame, making the picture swing back and forth for about ten seconds before it falls to the floor, along with

the nail it is hung on. It doesn't crash or shatter, it clunks without breaking. I watch the nail roll in a small circle on the ceramic covered floor. The remote control battery spills out and rolls towards the couch. It rolls until it hits the wall behind the couch, beyond my reach. I can't change the channel. Kelly is crying hysterically, *Shhhhh*, and yelling, *Shhhhhh*, and her father isn't there and I sit silently and watch it all unfold in high volume. People I know do not scream like this. Even in our last house, when you and Mother started fighting, it was in quiet monosyllables forced out through clenched teeth. It was in the slow-motion clenching of your fist. It was the sound of doors closing and the television clicking on quietly.

This house has fewer doors. When you first saw it, you came home and told me everything about it. "A home with potential," you called it. Every time you mentioned it you used the word *potential*. And when we first went to view it you stood on the front lawn with your arm draped over Mother's shoulder and recited to us your vision for the house: level floors, double front doors, new faucets and modernized plumbing, an antique chandelier, an open-concept kitchen. "Plumbing is important," you told me, leaning closer to Mother. "Good faucets keep things flowing and good plumbing keeps flushing out the bad." You pulled me over to your other side and squeezed me without turning your eyes away from this house – this crooked wooden box. But that was just for a moment, because Mother pulled away to examine the weed-filled garden and your cell phone rang.

We moved in to this house on a humid day in early August. You spoke to the man from next door over the fence, punctuating your own comments and the neighbour's comments with bellowing laughter. You have that way of making other

people feel like they are tremendously interesting. It's the way you tilt your head, nod and laugh and say things like, "That's brilliant," or "You're absolutely right, my friend," in a believable tone. They love being with you. But at home I hear you complain that those same people are dimwits with nothing but rubbish to say. My friends used to ask me how you're doing. They didn't know that you didn't know their names and that's why you called them all *Sweetie.* I hated it when you called me Sweetie.

"Your father, is a real charmer," said my grade six French teacher, the day after teacher-parent interviews. I nodded in response, but I really just wanted to say in a loud, firm voice, "No. No he's not."

Our neighbour Mr. Dermer invited all of us over for cocktails on his porch that day we moved in and you burst on to his lawn shouting greetings and holding up a bottle of champagne like a flag in front of you, with Mother and me trailing slightly behind you. You spent the evening talking to Mr. Dermer's wife Carol about our house and her house and the state-of-the-art drill you would put to good use, while I huddled next to Mother on the white wicker love seat, listening to Mr. Dermer: "Don, you didn't tell me you had two beautiful daughters," he chortled, directing his comment to Mother, not you. Mother giggled, leaning forward in the seat, running her French-manicured fibre-glass nails softly along her jaw-line where her latest surgery had removed all evidence of sagging jowls. "You could be sisters," he continued in a deep breathy voice. "No. No, she is not my sister," I want to say. You all continued to speak in hushed tones, while I listened to the honking geese passing overhead, heading across the lake.

The floors of this house slope slightly south, towards the lake. When I look out the front door, I can see the wide walking path that lines the water's edge stretching out in both directions. Sometimes if I stand looking out the door for too long I get dizzy. I have to go outside and focus on the horizon over Lake Ontario in order to feel my equilibrium return. I used to marvel at the things I would find at the front door of the house or along all of the south walls in every room: hairballs, dust, old marbles - gravity calling everything outside to play. Your talk of levelling the floors, tearing up the tiles and propping up the floor board, subsided after the city contractor came by to assess the project. "A Band-Aid solution," the contractor told us. "The foundation is sinking, Mr. Mullins. You'll have to tear this all down and start from scratch." You had no intention of dealing with the foundations.

So we started the cosmetic projects on the house. I helped you with the heat light fixture in the master bathroom. I stood below you on your stepladder, disgusted by the sight of your grey sweat pants sinking below your sagging belly. I handed you the screwdriver and read the side of the box: "All of your problems will melt away with your new HeatLite product." When you and Mother were away, I tried out the lamp. I took my showers in your bathroom and stood shivering under the buzzing orange lamp. The box lied: the cold tiles stayed cold beneath my feet, the water dripping from my body pooled where the tiles began to dip and slope slightly towards the south wall. As I wrestled with my pant zipper I sloshed a socked foot through the cold puddle.

Within the first week in this house you went out to the hardware store, bought all of the items you needed for the faucets and kitchen renovations, and piled them up in the basement, where they stayed for five months untouched. Then you fought with

Mother again. I came home from Francis' house to hear the sound of Mother sniffling and loud television voices behind the closed bedroom door. But you were in the kitchen. You did not respond when I called out a tentative hello. You had removed the cabinet doors below the sink, torn out the counter top, and stood there with your hands on your hips breathing heavily. This was the last renovation you attempted in our house. The next day you left on a business trip, sawdust and nails already gathered along the south wall. It's been five weeks since you left and we still live with this gaping wound in the kitchen.

I stand in the open doorway of this house and wait for your car to pull into the driveway. The sound of Mother's television fills the space behind me. Mr. Dermer waves at me from his front porch. He calls out something to me but I can't hear him through the television buzz and the noisy honking of the geese flying overhead. I should call Francis or Jon and apologize. I should just go to sleep. I wonder how far west the path goes. I look out at the dull grey horizon to steady myself.

Television Set

It has been at least five years since I last saw Sarindra. Probably since my wedding day, when she turned up looking like Bollywood in her blue sari. But I didn't remember how totally beautiful she was. Perhaps she didn't used to be so beautiful. Or perhaps I only notice now because I feel myself getting older and less attractive and feel like the contrast between us is stark. I feel white and unethnic. Her eyes are black, covered partially by thick black curls.

I meet her at 6pm in front of her twelve-storey apartment building on Yonge St. As she runs to hug me, I tell her that she is beautiful. She tells me that she just grew into her face. She then refers to her baby-fat. I make a mental note to take a look at old high school photographs of her when I get home. I notice her slim physique, something I never took note of before, but now I seem to notice the things that might be in contrast to me. I remind myself to be less self-centered.

We're going for Thai food. I walk slowly in my high heels. Sarindra wears a black leather jacket, and flat black dress shoes hidden beneath fashionably long jeans. I'm still shocked by the way she hugged me on the Bloor Street side walk. I don't think we ever hugged before. Strangers standing on the sidewalk waiting for taxi cabs watched our reunion. Sarindra expelled a loud, "Oh my God!" that fuelled their curiosity. She said "God" in two distinct syllables.

I have been dying to ask her about the sling that she wore around her right arm for two full weeks in grade ten. Michelle and I used to bug her in Biology class to tell us what happened to her arm, but she just responded with a provocative "Nothing" that left us wondering. So I ask her about it over our pad thai at dinner and she claims that she

doesn't remember the sling. It's the sling that shaped so many of my memories about her over the years that we didn't see each other. The stupid off-white sling that she wore over her clothes for two weeks coloured so many thoughts I had about her and her family. I imagined that behind the closed door of her large lakeside home in suburban Toronto, she dealt with the most unimaginable abuse. At school she occasionally told us stories about her weekend - how her father forbade her to hang out with her 'rave' friends, how she stayed at work late on Friday night just to avoid eating dinner with her parents. I imagined that her father Mr. Kamil, the tall man who used to slice fruit and cheese for Sarindra and me while we dressed and undressed Barbies in the basement play-room of their old Parkfield home, became an evil ogre behind the doors of their new majestic, neighbourless, castle-like home on the lakeside. "I told you to be home before dinner," he would say under his breath, cornering her in the foyer as she removed her beige sandals.

Between slurps of my pad thai I ask her flat-out, as I imagine Barbara Walters might, "Did your father beat you?" I lean forward and clasp my hands together on the table. She laughs dismissively and says, "My parents would never lay a hand on me." I know she is telling the truth and suddenly her father's image in my vivid memories becomes fuzzy. Her father may never have spoken under his breath.

"But that house," I say. "It seemed so big and dark from the outside. I mean everything changed…you changed so much when you moved there." I can't tell by the way Sarindra leans both elbows on to the table whether she is trying to imitate me or is just baffled by my flustered words.

"Things did change, I guess. Well, and I got older obviously." She stops there, leans back again and takes a sip of her water. The waitress rushes to fill the half-empty glass, splashing water over Sarindra's plate of food. Trying to conceal her laughter, Sarindra snorts. My words seem amusing to her. I am not laughing. That house on that bare patch of lakeside land, and the events that potentially took place within it, have shaped most of my thoughts about Sarindra.

"Tell me about the house," I say.

"What's with your house fixation?" she asks. "And anyway, what do you want to know about the house? Like, what parts of the house? Do you want me to describe the house?" I pretend to hesitate, as though I'm not sure what I want to hear. "Uh, yeah, just tell me about what the house means – to you or your family," I say. Sarindra squints, leans her head to the left, touches her throat with all four fingertips on her left hand and gazes towards the ceiling. She looks more like a person feigning pensiveness than like a person truly pondering the meaning of a house. I look at the restaurant ceiling to see if there is anything interesting to gaze at while I wait for her to satisfy my curiosity about that house and her family. I notice a small cobweb dangling from the ceiling fan. While I am thinking about the ceiling fan and the cobweb and how much they remind me of the cottage my family used to visit in Magog each summer, I miss the first few sentences of her story. Sarindra's voice saying, "...that's why my dad chose that piece of land..." lures me out of my focused nostalgia. The rest of her story I remember clearly. She stares me in the eye as she talks, rarely blinking, closing her eyes only when she laughs.

* * *

I love that big house. Well, I guess it took a while until I even liked it, but I swear that if my parents died I would never sell the house. I would tear it down – seriously, brick by brick by dark red brick. I think part of my initial dislike for the house was due to the fact that my mom and dad broke the news to me and Sam so suddenly. I never wanted to move from our Parkfield house near our old elementary school, with the awesome sloping roof in the attic and the warm colours all over the house. The maroon carpets, creamy wallpaper, mahogany and everything that seemed so small and cosy. There was that play-room and the room upstairs where we played computer games on the Commodore 64. Remember how I hurt my wrist playing that Winter Olympics game that you sucked at? I could land a triple axel no problem. While I played, you walked around the room and pulled books off the shelves and looked through my family's photo albums. You should know that I used to get in trouble because of the mess you made. Open albums and books all over the place! Visible fingerprints on the photos. And there was the time when you swore that you saw the zebra rug move. We hid behind my Dad's armchair and tried to catch the rug moving. I could never quite relax in that room after that.

I was so surprised to hear that my dad had purchased land for a new house. Frankly, I was pissed – no, that sounds rude, I was upset. But I guess I at least got to pick my own room. Well, in retrospect, I didn't really get to pick the room. Sam was older, so she was automatically given the bedroom with the ensuite bathroom and I got to pick between two rooms. They must have known that I would pick the bigger of the

two. I think I was twelve at the time, so I thought I was choosing my own room, and that was a big deal to me. My dad selected and bought the furniture and paint for my bedroom: a black and white bedroom set and white walls.

We never really renovated anything in the new house, we just had it built and moved there. The house was new and all the stuff in it was old, but my dad kept all his things in perfect condition. Remember the movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*? Well, I guess the house was a bit like Ferris' friend's house: a museum. I think of our house as totally sterile. White tiles and white walls. There were a few splashes of designs or colour like the zebra rug, which was relegated to the living room wall where it hung lifeless above the good furniture, and no one ever sat in there. We cleaned and polished the floors, our appliances and our belongings at least once a week but we never changed anything structurally in the house. We certainly never tore down walls. And, no, nothing really broke, ever. Actually, no, that's wrong, my bed did break once – it was a waterbed and shortly before I started getting into the rave scene and getting in trouble with my dad it burst. I just sat on it and it burst. I don't think it's symbolic of anything though.

When I was thirteen I started babysitting the two young daughters of some family friends from down the street. I remember clopping my way down the street in heavy winter boots, traipsing up their long, un-shovelled driveway and pushing through the toys strewn across the porch and being greeted by their shaggy white dog that made me sneeze. At home after babysitting I used to sit on my bed and pick his long white hairs off my socks and think about the music I could buy with my babysitting earnings. I started collecting tapes and, then later on, CDs and bootlegged tapes of DJs and trance

stuff. I bought them. They were mine. I arranged them alphabetically and dusted their cases almost daily. Dusting was always my chore. I dusted the banisters, the picture frames, the shelves and most importantly, my dad's old wooden television set. Each time I dusted it, I had to remove the ancient VCR, dust underneath and then reassemble it exactly as it was, with the clunky remote control centered on top of it. I would always dust the TV screen carefully, usually practising my silliest facial expressions for a moment before finishing the task.

Sam and I used to watch cartoons on that TV. Then, as we got older we watched our soaps. Three thirty to five was our TV time, unless there was a soccer game or cricket match on, in which case dad sat directly in front of the TV and yelled at the players, while Sam and I steered clear of the family room. I'd go up to my room and play my music.

I had to move all my stuff bit by bit before breaking the news to my parents that I was moving out. I started with my music and then the clothes that I had bought over the years, and maybe one or two bath towels, but I left all the other stuff because it wasn't really mine. I carted it all over to my tiny one bedroom apartment in my dad's car discreetly because I knew that I wouldn't be able to use his car after I moved. And as I suspected, there were threats of being disowned when I moved out of my dad's house and I'm pretty sure my dad and I never talked during those two years living away from his house. I would call my mom and she would tell me that my father missed me and worried about me, but sometimes I could hear him in the background asking, "Who is it?" When mom would answer that it was me, there was no response.

The first time we talked was when I called to let my mom and dad know that I was planning to move back in. It's actually kind of funny. I decorated my apartment with cheap tables and furniture from Zellers and Sears. I had new mismatched lamps and a couch from a friend's house, but everything was always well dusted and totally in order. And my dad saw my apartment once: when he was helping me move out of it. He looked around the apartment, ran his fingers over the television set and flicked the lamps on and off. He didn't say so, but I think he was surprised that I had done so well for myself. Once I moved back in to the lakefront house, I fit back into the surroundings as his daughter without any screaming matches. The first thing I did was turn up my music, clean my bathroom and take a shower.

About a week after I moved back in I sat down one afternoon to watch a soap with Sam. I remember being amazed at the clarity of the image. I couldn't figure out what was different. When I took a closer look at the screen during a commercial break, I noticed that the television was new. My father had actually cut out the screen from the larger wooden television set and replaced it with the new screen.

* * *

Sarindra is putting on her jacket and I am struggling to remember if there's anything else I want to ask her. I think about the television set and the stereo system and I say instead, "The waterbed – I think it could be symbolic?"

"You do, do you," she says.

We are on our way to pay at the exit. "It's on me," I say, reaching to take the bill out of her grasp. She pulls her hand back so I can't get at it. "It's mine," she says.

Annie

I am far away now, Annie scribbles in the diary where she writes down her daily goals and thoughts. *Life with Brad is warm and full of new things. New stuff: a leather couch, and a good bed. New food: Brad took me to Quesas where we ate genuine Tex-Mex last night. New climate: everything is dry and warm here. I still can't believe the cactus outside our apartment building is over twenty feet tall! There is a gaping hole half way up it– one of the arms (branches?) filled up with too much liquid and crashed to the ground. All of my old stuff is sold or in storage in Quebec and I am surrounded by desert dust that doesn't bother me at all. This is a good day. I will eat three meals, run for 45 minutes and stretch before bed.*

She uses a photograph of a sapphire blue sky spotted with fluffy white clouds, that she took while visiting the Grand Canyon, to mark her page in the diary and closes the book. She tucks the book into her desk drawer, under the printer paper and miscellaneous gel pens, switches on her computer and turns to stare out at the horizon though the bay window.

Annie pictures her old backyard. There were no housing developments behind her parents' house at the time, just a big field of mud. Annie, her younger brother Marc and older sister Genevieve were crossing the field to get to the depanneur. Eleven-year old Marc had just finished telling a joke about two nuns in a bar and was kicking mud and giggling uncontrollably. Genevieve whacked him in the back of the head with her small denim purse and shouted, "That's sick, you dork." Genevieve always spoke like she had a cold, each syllable sounding rounded and soft. Annie walked duck footed behind Marc

and Genevieve, her boots suctioning to the mud making her feel heavy and grounded, and listened to them argue, switching between French and English.

* * *

Annie is watching a fat pigeon scrounge around near the dumpster in the parking lot below. She wonders if people would like pigeons more if they avoided garbage and ate cleaner food. She laughs at herself for thinking this. She is downloading early nineties pop music from the internet onto her computer. Each song represents a memory from her past. Her first boyfriend. Their break up. Her second boyfriend. Their break up. Her brother's rebellion. Her parents' fifteenth anniversary party when her dad had too much wine and not enough food and passed out in the middle of the hallway while saying goodbye to guests. Her parents' split up. She sends instant messages to a few of her old friends from Quebec: "Where are you?" she writes. Some of them respond in short, typo-filled phrases that leave her wanting more information. Some of them don't respond. It is noon in Tempe; 3 p.m. in Quebec. Her friends are at work or at home with their babies. Only eight hours until Brad comes home. She spends an hour surfing a job search site. Then she re-opens the desk drawer, takes out her diary, opens to a blank page and writes, *I feel bloated today. But life is good. I might take a nap.*

Annie pictures her parents' bed. She used to crawl into it when she woke up from one of her nightmares, the memory of the murderer she encountered in her sleep disappearing once she snuggled in next to her mom. Her dad snored noisily on his side of the bed and her mom whispered soothing words in her ear. Annie's room was decorated

with grey, pink and white striped wall-paper. Her favourite part of her room was the cloud-shaped plastic light above her bed. At night when her mom switched off the ceiling light, Annie read underneath the bright cloud, and then she turned it off and watched its outline slowly fade into the darkness until sleep returned.

* * *

Annie props her open diary up against the computer speakers, takes three slow, deep breaths and moves back into the bedroom. She lies down in the bed, pulls the sheets up to her chin and remembers that she needs to go for a run. She rolls out of bed and pulls the covers tightly over the mattress to eliminate any bulge or puff. While she rearranges Brad's pillow, she notices the black golf-shirt that he wore yesterday crumpled on the chair. She picks it up and folds it carefully, taking a moment to hold it to her nose. It has a distinctly musky male scent like her dad's smell at breakfast before leaving for work. Every morning when it was sunny, he sat at the table with his work jacket hanging over the back of his chair, raised his spoon up to the sunlight coming through the window and twisted his spoon, casting rays of light on the kitchen walls. He gasped each time he did this as though genuinely surprised every day that he could create these designs on the wall with a piece of cutlery, which made Genevieve roll her eyes, made Marc giggle and made Annie feel like telling Marc and Genevieve that their dad wasn't stupid, but she giggled along with them anyway.

Most of Annie's time with her dad was spent at that table. He attempted to help her with her French homework, sitting close to her at the table and answering her

questions with long stories about his own childhood. As he spoke his eyes wandered to the window, while Annie repeatedly scribbled individual words he used on the surface of the table and then erased them. *Mon enfance. La maison de mon enfance. Mon petit lit. Mes devoirs.* Then she usually tried to blow all the eraser bits up into the air.

She doesn't want to go back. It was Quebec that depressed her with its bitter fall days, dirty snow that melted into the drains and eventually overflowed in the streets. Her dad's badly dressed girlfriend who insisted on a kitchen table for two in the new apartment she shared with Annie's dad. Her mom's rented townhouse where Genevieve slept upstairs and Marc slept in the basement. Where Annie would have had to share her mom's bed, with the loud fan humming by her head, and without Brad.

She chose to follow Brad to Tempe. He moved to take up a position at a prestigious sport clinic as their principal massage therapist. Six days after he was offered the job, he kissed Annie goodbye and jumped on a plane. One month later, Annie packed up three suitcases, filled her old Ford with pillows, blankets and her computer and began her three day drive to Tempe.

She regularly calls her mother and brags about the weather. "I never have to rake leaves again, Maman." But she does have to sweep her small balcony once a week, the dust swirling with each pass of the broom and then settling again on the balcony floor. She used to love raking. She loved pushing brown and yellow leaves into huge piles. She loved the satisfaction of a cleared lawn. Marc would hold open the orange garbage bag afterwards and Annie would lift the leaves into it. Once they raked all the leaves in to a huge pile and talked about jumping off the roof into the colourful mound. Annie's dad must have heard them chatting because he climbed up the television antenna onto the

roof and launched himself up into the air, pounding his chest and shouting like Tarzan. Marc laughed wildly as his dad flailed through the air. Annie held both hands over her mouth as he fell. When he hit the pile the leaves spread out along the ground. He stood up slowly, laughing, and walked away. Annie noticed his limp.

As Annie got older, the satisfaction of a cleared lawn became harder to achieve. No matter how thoroughly she raked, the leaves would fall again. Sometimes she would collect the stray leaves one by one, run to the bag, throw them in, and turn to see another stray leaf blowing across the browned grass.

After Annie moved into Brad's sparsely decorated two bedroom apartment in Tempe, she started to decorate it bit by bit. She bought a kitchen table. She bought glasses and four complete table settings. She hung photographs and maps of the world on the wall just like her mother used to in her old home. She painted their bedroom blue. She bought a rug and arranged the couch, television and chairs around it to create a family room. She unpacked all of her clothes and pushed her suitcases to the back of the storage room.

* * *

Annie watches the moon in the sky. Brad is on his way home from work. She contemplates the ways she could greet him when he arrives. She wonders if she should change out of her shorts into her nice Capri pants. She thinks about putting on makeup. She takes her journal from its hiding spot and takes it to the table. A wine glass, half full of white wine shakes as Annie presses down hard with her pen. She writes about the

weather, the dusty film on the kitchen window that turns the outside world into a weighty and earthy place. She confesses that she stayed inside and missed her run today and that she had three small snacks instead of three meals. She writes that she is tired, that Brad is coming home to her and that she will do an hour long run tomorrow.

Where Her Bedroom is Now

The space where Penny's dad used to lie on the tattered red couch and watch the Expos, while listening to the Habs game on the radio, is now her bedroom. Sometimes she sits on the bed, leans against the wall and thinks about him lying there after work, with his work clothes and name tag still on, with his eyes half shut, screaming at the players. Her mom's faux tiffany lamp on the glass side-table would shed a yellowy-red light on the side of his face, accentuating the dark bags under his eyes.

Her bed is now exactly where the couch used to be. She insisted on placing it there. A few times, Penny's mother tried to get rid of the couch, but her father insisted that it had to stay, that it was his 'good luck' couch. After he died, the couch was placed at the end of the driveway and disappeared during the night. There's a new wall that divides Penny's bedroom from a larger room, which is now painted bright blue and cluttered with a second-hand slate pool table, and a Queen Anne style round table with a chess board set up on it but unused. She stares at herself in the mirror on her closet door. She notices that her eyes are the same deep brown as her father's.

Her room used to be upstairs until her mom decided to renovate. Closets became hallways, hallways became rooms, hard-wood replaced linoleum, and her bedroom was moved to the main floor. If her dad came back to life now, he wouldn't recognize anything. He would walk in after work, whistling, and hurry to the couch to see the opening pitch of the Jays game, only to bump into the new pool table then find a wall and door blocking the entrance to the space where his television used to be. He might open the door to find her sitting there, on the edge of her bed waiting for him. She

imagines seeing the toes of his tattered brown penny loafers through the space under the door.

After he died, her father's grease-stained driveway was broken by pick-axes and spades, and buried beneath the perfect symmetry of interlocking bricks. She helped her uncles and brother Brent break it. They watched the driveway turn into what seemed like a map of Canada. She jumped up and down all over Canada until it broke into smaller pieces. "Hey! It's Quebec!" Brent said as the cracks in the map widened. She took the biggest sample of Quebec, wrapped it in an old, brown bath towel that no longer matched the bathroom, and used it as a door stop for her bedroom door.

It's difficult for her to remember the way things used to be when her dad was around. She keeps a journal where she writes things about her father. Most of what she writes is what Brent tells her. Brent talks about their dad's sense of humour and the way he used to carry his car keys in the side of his mouth when he carried his tool box. Brent claims that her dad could sing 50s songs perfectly in tune or carry on a conversation with someone while holding the set of keys in his mouth. She pretends that she doesn't really care, but she can't hear "Blue Suede Shoes" without thinking of keys. She can't see a set of keys without thinking of Dad and Elvis. She writes down the lyrics to "Blue Suede Shoes" in her journal. She keeps a postcard picture of Elvis taped to the back of her headboard.

She sits on the edge of her new bed and tries to recall her dad's laugh or some of the stories he told. She remembers the family wrestling matches on the kitchen floor - when it was still linoleum. Brent would pin their father down and she would go for his feet and tickle them. She remembers the way her dad curled his toes and kicked his

feet in an attempt to obstruct her assaulting fingers. She remembers Brent's hiccup-sounding laughter and the thumps of her dad's heels against the linoleum, rattling the pans and dishes in the cupboards. She remembers Mom's half-laughing, half-serious warning for Brent to calm down before he had another asthma attack, but in her memory her dad's face is blocked by Brent's body, and she can't hear his voice.

She remembers his routines, like how he occasionally came into her room to replace the light bulb or check on the state of her windows. "They don't need replacement yet," he would say to her, and she would nod. And how he used to re-caulk the windows in the first week of May every year.

Penny was ten when Dad told her that he was never going to die. She had awakened disoriented in the middle of the night. She thought she could see the shadow of a man wearing a hat sitting at her desk chair. She sensed that there was something lurking underneath her bed, so she lay in the middle of her bed on her back and squeezed both her arms close to her sides and pulled the covers up to her trembling chin. She tried holding her breath. She tried silently praying to God that she would fall asleep. Then she begged God loudly, hoping that invoking his name would at least scare these creatures away. She yelled "Please God," over and over. The door opened and the hallway light leaked into the room. The man with the hat transformed into her open school bag. She forgot about what was underneath her bed. Her dad entered the room and sat down next to her. He put both arms around her shoulders. "Shhhhh," he said, trying to comfort her, but sounding much too loud and his voice much too raspy to be soothing. Her mother entered the room and sat on her other side. She gently stroked

Penny's hair. She told her not to be scared and that she would never be alone. "But what if you die?" she asked. Her dad answered.

She was twelve when her dad told her that he was dying of a brain tumour. He sat on the edge of her unmade bed. The green gingham comforter was crumpled in her lap and she dragged it across her face to wipe her eyes. His voice shook as he told her. The ceiling fan rattled. Sondra, the Cabbage Patch Kid, that had been sitting untouched on her shelf for months, watched them with round unemotional eyes. Her tattered brown teddy bear lay face down in the green sheets.

* * *

She's fifteen and it's been eight months since her dad died. Her dreams all take place in the house pre-renovation. In a recurring dream, she's afraid and running away from something (but she doesn't know what), down the hallway past the kitchen. Her feet pound against the cold, uneven linoleum (she doesn't feel the cold, but she knows that it's cold), past the bathroom, past the linen closet, past Brent's bedroom and the doors are closed. She can't find her bedroom. She is cold and dirty and keeps pulling a cardigan over her shoulders. She doesn't feel the cardigan fall, but there's always a new cardigan waiting somewhere beyond the edges of her dream that appears when she needs it. She is still cold. She can hear rain somewhere and someone sniffling. The wall sconce made of thick yellow glass next to the bathroom flickers, making a tinny sound. She hears muffled swearing behind one of the doors. And she stands next to

the long wall of the hallway by herself, with another new cardigan over her shoulder. There is running water in the bathroom.

She wakes up, turns on the light and writes down details of her dream in her journal.

Sometimes she sits in her dad's old Mustang that her family keeps in the garage. It smells like gas and leather. Brent begged her mom to keep it for him to drive when he got his license. She climbs into it, inhales, and imagines going for a long, fast drive with a boy, maybe a grade eleven boy. He would lean across the gear shift and kiss her gently and hold her hand. She imagines the sound of rain on the windshield, the pressure of her back against the seat and the blur of signs and fields as they sped past.

She writes stories about her dad in her journal. She tries to imagine him as a child, collecting baseball pennants and arranging them around his room. He would carefully measure the distance from the ceiling and line them up one by one, the Expos pennant centered above his bed. When she closes her eyes and tries to picture his face, she sees her own face creased with concentration, pushing a tack into the wall.

* * *

For her school art project Penny is creating a collage of old family photos. She carefully selects the photos from the large black trunk of photos her mother keeps in her bedroom closet, cuts them into squares and circles and lays them out on the floor. She removes some old family photos from the white frames on her bedroom wall and adds them to the pile. She looks carefully at every photo, naming old family friends,

giggling at old fashioned haircuts. She takes the pictures of herself with her Dad, collects them in a separate pile and slips them into her bedside table drawer.

The project takes her a full day. She sprawls out on her bed, spreads out a large piece of red cardboard and arranges and rearranges the photos. She saves the picture of her grandfather, her dad's father, taken during his last visit to their house, waits until all the other photos are glued on, and then glues it over the centre of the collage. The seams of the overlapping photos underneath it make it bulge and curve, giving it texture and dimension. The picture was taken just a few weeks after her dad's funeral. Her grandfather had arrived in his 1989 Chevrolet Corsica, claiming that he had driven past the house because he didn't recognize it. He sat in the lilac wingback chair in the living room, flipping through an old photo album that Penny had asked him to bring with him. Brent and Penny are looking at the album over his shoulder, resting their chins on the top edge of the chair. Penny remembers the squeakiness of her grandfather's breathing and how his bony fingers turned each page carefully. Brent got impatient at the way his grandfather ran his middle finger over the edges of each picture, sighed, and repeatedly closed his eyes, so he temporarily left the room. "My eyes are getting old," Grandfather said, looking up at Penny. "They get tired of looking at things, so I close them. But after a while I also get tired of looking at the pictures behind my eyelids." Penny nodded. The album featured pictures of Penny's dad progressing from a child to a teenager. Ordinary shots of him on a bike. Two or three of him posing with his baseball team. A series of school pictures. But at the back of the album there were three photos that seemed to be more crinkled than the others, like they had been kept in a cramped drawer for decades and only added recently. They were three photos of her

dad at about the age of three holding his baby sister, Auntie Diane. In the first photo, he was struggling to lift Diane's hand to get her to wave at the camera. In the second photo, Diane was crying and he was staring in to the camera with an apologetic look on his face. In the third photo, he was holding the crying baby's face between his chubby toddler hands while gently kissing her forehead. Penny's grandfather stared at this page for a long time. Long enough for Brent to return to the living room and take a picture of him without him knowing. Penny's head is cut off in the picture, but you can see her hand curled over her grandfather's slumped shoulder.

Penny stares at her collage, runs her finger over the bulging photo edges, and carefully dabs a tissue over her eyes, her nose and the tear drops that are beginning to leave small round stains on the exposed cardboard.

Afterword

The Boundaries of Fiction and Non-Fiction

This project began with a simple question: is it possible for a reader to know the difference between a work of fiction and a work of non-fiction without being told which is which? To explore this question, I created a collection of narratives that would test the boundaries of fiction and non-fiction. All the narratives deal with the theme of domestic space and its impact on father-daughter relationships and vice versa. As I developed this theme in each narrative, I began to wonder if the reader's knowing in advance whether my narratives were fiction or non-fiction would colour his/her attention to details and their symbolism, and influence his/her interpretation of the physical space represented in each narrative. Would a reader be surprised by, and therefore unreceptive to the presence of symbolism in a work he/she had been told was non-fiction? Does the need for symbolic interpretation negate a work's status as non-fiction? Based on the results of my experiment, I contend that a narrative's status as non-fiction can only be determined by looking outside the text. There is no reliable way to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction: that is, we cannot look at the text alone to determine its status; we must measure the text against known facts as much as possible.

Edmund Morris, Ronald Reagan's official biographer, toyed notoriously with the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. In October of 1999, reviewers reacted with outrage to the discovery that Morris had inserted a handful of elaborate fictional characters into *Dutch*, his ostensibly non-fictional biography of the former president. A

litany of articles written by literary critics, librarians and publishers criticized Morris for "fraudulently" marketing his book as non-fiction. One particularly annoyed reviewer commented, "There is no need for me to waste your time with another review of *Dutch*. The controversy guarantees your library will purchase it...Everyone is entitled to waste their time in whatever manner seems appropriate" (Manley 664). I do not see Morris's experiment as a waste of time; rather, it is a valuable opportunity to engage in a reasonable discussion of the nature of non-fiction.

The overwhelmingly negative reaction to Morris's work is indicative of a widely accepted and inflexible definition of non-fiction writing. The reaction, perhaps rightfully, addresses the potentially explosive implications of an assault on the boundaries of this definition. The Morris case is of particular interest because it highlights the perceived political and social ramifications of blurring the lines between fiction and non-fiction. For example, Morris's biographical work, because it deals with a public figure whose persona and beliefs were once highly influential, could potentially affect public opinion regarding the Republican Party. If Morris (or any other political non-fiction writer) uses the authority of non-fiction to espouse false information or to disseminate views and opinions that do not enhance the truth claims made by the factual material, but rather drastically alter them, then he is abusing the classification of non-fiction – or so the reviewers seem to feel.

Morris's critics seem sure that since this work contains fictional characters and imagined interactions between the author and subject, which do not fit into their notion of the non-fiction mode, it should therefore be classified as fictional. Their assumptions leave Morris, other biographers, documentary writers and film-makers

with little freedom to experiment with new ways of representing or challenging notions of truth. Should we, like Morris's reviewers, simply equate non-fiction with truth? How can we best represent truth? In this afterword to my fictional and non-fiction narratives, I would first like to explore the widely accepted parameters of non-fiction, the pronouncements of literary theorists on the nature of fiction and non-fiction, and the influence of these definitions on my own writing experiment.

As I created my own fictional and non-fiction narratives in order to test the boundary between fiction and non-fiction writing. I hypothesized that there is something essentially unequivocal about the differences between fiction and non-fiction, beyond the mere perception of them. They are not relative states dependent solely on the author's intentions or the reader's expectations. The modes are different because of their relation to fact. My non-fiction narratives are based on real stories told to me by real people. Ultimately, my fictional narratives are fictional because they possess the common attribute of being developed from my imagination. In my project, although some of the settings, characters, and plots in the fictional narratives may intentionally or unintentionally possess elements of truth, or partial truths, the fictional narratives are mostly manufactured from imagined events. I was so sure of my hypothetical distinction that I set out deliberately to obscure all the conventional internal markers of fiction and non-fiction in my narratives. This seemed the best way to demonstrate my conviction that only factors external to the text – relation to fact or to imagination – could determine a narrative's status as fiction or non-fiction.

I wrote eight narratives, three fiction and five non-fiction. All of the narratives had the same basic preoccupation with father-daughter relationships and the effect of

these relationships on the home. I settled on the themes of fathers and daughters and renovation because I had many opportunities for non-fiction writing in this area, as well as my personal experience of such relations. In all of the narratives, the notion of a house-in-flux – that is, under renovation – served as a vehicle for the figurative tension between family and family space. My goal was to make these non-fiction narratives indistinguishable from the fiction, by avoiding highly factual and reportorial language and by avoiding any written indication preceding the non-fiction narratives to identify them as such.

I placed the narratives in the following order: "Skylight" (non-fiction), "Photographer Daughter" (non-fiction), "Mirrors in the Guestroom" (fiction), "Shattered" (non-fiction), "Sloping Floors" (fiction), "Television Set" (non-fiction), "Annie" (non-fiction), and "Where Her Bedroom is Now" (fiction). As I arranged the collection, I avoided placing the non-fiction and fiction narratives in separate groupings or regular alternation to eliminate the possibility that the order of the narratives would hint at their fictional or non-fictional status. By blurring, as much as possible, the line between fiction and non-fiction, I demonstrate that there is no marker or effect internal to the narrative that can determine a work's mode. It is the proportion of measurable factuality vis-à-vis imagination that I rely on to determine the difference between fiction and non-fiction.

Gregory Currie in *The Nature of Fiction* would agree with my claim that there is no reliable structural or stylistic difference to which we can point in trying to distinguish fiction and non-fiction (3). For Currie, however, the distinction between fiction and non-fiction resides in the underlying intentions and motivations of the

assertion-maker, and fiction emerges when the author engages in a particular kind of communicative act - "An act that involves having a certain kind of intention: the intention that the audience shall make believe the content of the story that is told" (24). He furthermore claims that for communicative purposes it is important that the audience recognize this intention (25). By blurring the distinction between the non-fiction and fiction modes, however, I have hoped to show that it is not necessary to my work's fictional or non-fictional status that my readers recognize my intention. The women I interviewed in preparing my non-fiction narratives exist in the real world, whether or not my reader recognizes my intention of representing those women non-fictionally in these narratives.

If authorial intention and the reader's recognition of that intention are of utmost importance in determining a narrative's mode, how would we judge the case of a completely unreliable or delusional writer? For example, a writer believes that he saw a UFO land on his home, and then attempts to represent that event in his writing. This delusional writer both believes that the UFO landing actually occurred and he *intends* that his representation of it be non-fictional. It is unsatisfactory to assert that this intention alone grants the work status as "non-fiction." The writer's intentions and beliefs, and his desire to communicate them, do not make the event even remotely factual. While the delusional writer intends his narrative to appear non-fictional, I intend for my non-fiction narratives to appear fictional. By Currie's definition, my intention would automatically grant all of my narratives the status of fiction. Wouldn't the fact that a narrative is based on actual life events of an actual person, as some of mine are, serve as a better measure of that narrative's mode?

Currie admits that fiction and non-fiction can have "the semantic properties of truth value" (9), but he contends that truth-value offers no theoretically decisive test for either mode. In *What is Non-Fiction Cinema*, Trevor Ponech, whose work is highly influenced by that of Currie, attempts to offer scholars a precise and commonsensical definition of non-fiction. First, he follows Currie's lead by accepting that authorial intentions and actions fully determine a work's non-fictionality. He claims that a non-fiction film "results from the filmmaker having been directly guided by a particular purpose, namely, an intention to produce non-fiction" (8). I disagree with both Ponech and Currie's underlying claim that the essential difference between non-fiction and fiction is in the creator's intentions, because it essentially dismisses the role of fact and/or imagination in the distinction of these modes, and because of the possibility of delusion in the creators of either mode.

Unlike Currie and Ponech, Richard Meran Barsam centralizes the role of fact in his definition of non-fiction. He claims that the non-fiction mode is "*re*-presentation, the act of presenting actual physical reality in a form that strives creatively to record and interpret the world and be faithful to actuality" (Barsam 131). I favour this definition because it foregrounds the role of fact in a manner that allows for flexibility in the representation of that fact. While writing my non-fiction narratives, I began to see the necessity of adopting a flexible application of my definition of non-fiction. I found myself repeatedly forced to make slight additions and adaptations to fact in order to faithfully re-present the actual reality of my interviewees' lives and personalities in writing (see section below entitled "Fragmenting and Fleshing Out"). Ponech would discount both Barsam's and my argument by claiming that creative representations of

fact only present a view of the world that is reflective of the ideological imperatives, gender and specific desires of the author/film maker (Ponech 9). Ponech would go on to argue that making non-fictional status contingent on a "positive epistemic relation between the [work] and the actual world merely facilitates the sceptic's hasty rejection of [the non-fiction genre]" (10) because determining the relation between the work and the world would entail analysis by human beings who are bound to filter information about the world in a subjective or skewed manner. But Ponech's claim that the core of non-fiction consists of an action of indication (the author openly indicating something to someone else) should be equally unsatisfactory to a sceptic. While writing my own work, I purposely hid my intentions to produce non-fiction narratives while nonetheless writing non-fiction narratives. The superficial markers I employed indicated that the narratives were all fictional, while I was aware that some of the narratives were based on fact. To accept my "action of indication" as a method of determining the mode of my narratives would be unsatisfactory. Like Barsam, then, I assert that a work is non-fiction if the events documented are faithful to what actually happened. This definition allows room for the *re*-presenter to be creative in the interpretation of reality.

While writing my non-fiction narratives, I granted myself the creative latitude offered by Barsam's definition of non-fiction and made some stylistic choices that eliminated the indicators that a reader might normally associate with non-fiction narratives. I avoided any written indication preceding the non-fiction narratives to identify them as non-fiction, such as a preamble explaining a project's intention, which Ponech's sceptic might look for, or marketing quotes on the cover of the book, such as "True story," or "Based on a true story." Although these may not always be taken at

face value, their obviousness could predetermine a reader's perception of the work. By eliminating these usual signifiers of non-fiction work and by introducing conventions normally associated with fiction, such as fragmentation, shifts of point of view, and symbolism, I am encouraging readers to assume on first reading that all my narratives are fiction, to challenge their beliefs and assumptions about the nature of fiction and non-fiction. Ironically, the method of my experiment—which I originally intended to demonstrate the durable distinctions of fiction and non-fiction – may have led the reader to believe that I was trying to *collapse* the distinctions of fiction and non-fiction altogether—an error which can only be made known to them through this afterword. Once again, these errors on the reader's part – these misinterpretations of intention and indication – do nothing to change the narratives' status as fiction or non-fiction.

Family Room: Material Culture

Would readers "read" the importance and symbolism of space differently in non-fiction and fictional narratives if they were aware of the narrative's mode? My narratives suggest that in both modes the description of space can be a vital part of the story-telling process. Space can be a powerful narrator. Since space narrates, we must read it. The notion of a house in flux—that is, under renovation or redecoration—which I focus on in my collection of narratives serves as a vehicle, a word I use intentionally because spatial relations drive family interaction and move the reader's thoughts towards symbolic imagery depicting the tension between family members. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard finds it fitting to "read" houses, rooms and various spaces. He claims that "it is not enough to consider the house as an 'object'"

(3); we should properly refer to a house as something that is 'lived' rather than lived in. In my narratives, the changing home tells its own story.

Bachelard further explains that the intimate space of a home is a "privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space" (3). In her study of home decoration and culture, Marianne Gullestad also acknowledges the symbolic power of homes: "The home is a rich, flexible and ambiguous symbol; it can simultaneously signify individual identity, family solidarity and a whole range of other values" (330). Those who write and present to a reader images of their own homes invite us into the space behind closed doors - a space that is not usually open to our viewing but that has tremendous revelatory potential. The home is "our corner of the world" (Bachelard 4), an intimate and deeply personal space, a place where individuals take root—and ultimately, a space which takes root in the individuals who live there. Bachelard also acknowledges the "profound reality of all the subtle shadings of our attachment for a chosen spot" (4). In other words, every element of the material culture that surrounds us has real, living meaning that we internalize and that becomes the wallpaper of family and household memories. Likewise, when we read narratives, descriptions of homes can give us a unique view into the intimate space of the families and individuals who dwell in them.

My narratives are particularly interested in the "material culture" of domestic space: the way the characters manipulate, change and shape the space around them to produce some kind of reaction in their relationships with family members, and the way in which space and human interactions in space are structured to fulfill relational functions. Historical archaeologist James A. Delle claims that this type of creation,

mediation and definition of space by human behaviour is what turns "space" into "material culture" (37). According to Delle, space is a dimension of material culture that can be used to manipulate human behaviours. He bases his research on an analysis of colonialist intentions and, specifically, the manipulation of plantation space and plantation workers in the Blue Mountains area of Jamaica. In *An Archaeology of Social Space: Analyzing Coffee Plantations in Jamaica's Blue Mountains*, Delle defines three different types of space: material space, which is the "empirically measurable universe that has been created and/or defined by humans" (38); social space, which refers to spatial relationships that "exist between people and that are experienced in material space" (38); and cognitive space, which is the "mental process by which people interpret social and material spaces" (39). Edward Soja uses the term "Spaciality" (Soja 3-4) to describe the connection of these three types of space. Soja's conception of spaciality defines space as both the product and producer of social and political relations. It is the created space of social organization and production (Soja 3). Occasionally, people are able to manipulate spacialities to define specific behaviours and social relations. Material spaces can be designed or even altered with the intention, conscious or unconscious, of instigating, halting or hindering specific behaviours.

When I set out on my own investigations into "spaciality" and its repercussions in the lives of fathers and daughters, I began with a much less defined understanding of space. My premise was simply that the changes we undergo in our family relationships influence the way we view and remember the material culture and spaces we occupy. Likewise, the changes that we make in the space that surrounds us, through renovation or moving, have the power to mediate and alter our thoughts, memory and behaviour. I

presumed that behaviour and an individual's emotional state were highly connected with one another, but it was only through my study of Delle and Soja that I began to see material space, cognitive space and social space as a sort of trinity, three separate spaces embodied in a holistic concept of spaciality. In my narratives, I noted that as the subjects' thoughts (cognitive space) changed, so did their family relationships (social space), and their descriptions of their homes (material space); each seemingly separate space was inextricably intertwined with the others. As I engaged in the process of interviewing and writing the stories of my subjects, I became increasingly aware of the power of human relationships to affect the cognitive space and perception of physical space. In "Shattered," for example, Rachel's parents' break-up coincides with mass renovation of Rachel's childhood home. As an adult, Rachel fears household change of any kind. Furthermore, her memories of the spaciality of her childhood affect her perception and reaction to the spaciality of her adulthood.

In *Living Rooms: Domestic Material Culture in Fiction by Joan Barfoot, Marion Quednau, and Diane Schoemperlen*, a study of material culture in contemporary Canadian novels, Susan Elmslie notes that the main tension of a novel is often embedded in the author's descriptions of domestic space and material culture (i-ii). She draws on cultural anthropologist Grant McCracken's studies on culture and consumption of objects, reiterating his suggestion that artefacts and household items have the ability to communicate below the level of the consciousness, but that they are nonetheless received and internalized by the reader (56). In her discussion of Marion Quednau's *Butterfly Chair*, for example, Elmslie remarks that "Interpersonal relationships are consistently represented in [Quednau's] fiction as mediated through

domestic objects and spaces. Her characters' struggles over issues of control, and the ambivalence characteristically associated with these struggles, often materialize in their manipulations of their domestic environments" (ii). The characters reinforce their autonomy and power, either intentionally or subconsciously, through their creation or renovation of the space and material culture around them. McCracken claims that material culture can awaken self-awareness in an individual: "[G]oods can help the individual contemplate the possession of an emotional condition, a social circumstance, even an entire style of life, by somehow concretizing these things in themselves" (McCracken 110). Essentially, Quednau's characters re-assert their selfhood through the reinvention and rearrangement of their homes.

Elmslie agrees that readers should think about domestic objects and spaces as "material culture, a perspective that foregrounds their reflexive nature as products of human design" (20). Objects and household spaces can function as repositories for memories, emotions, and even values. In other words, we need to resist dismissing domestic space as a *setting* wherein the action unfolds, and instead investigate the deeply embedded meaning that is communicated through the shape and characteristics of that space—ergo, as a *symbol.*

Fathers, Daughters and Home in Three Contemporary Novels

Much of my critical thinking about father-daughter relationships was fuelled and informed by my encounters with other contemporary writers on this subject. Like Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers, I originally sought writers who have attempted to chart the unmapped discourses and silence that have historically enveloped father-

daughter relationships (Boose 1-4). What I discovered during my creative research is that my fascination with the ways in which home space interacts not just with father-daughter relationships, but with family relationships in general, is shared with a handful of contemporary novelists. These novelists use houses as symbols that connect the state of the home to the relational tension that occurs within it. I noticed this particular trend in novels by J.M. Coetzee (*Disgrace*, 1999), Marion Quednau (*Butterfly Chair*, 1987) and Andre Dubus (*House of Sand and Fog*, 1999), in which the houses, as material culture, embody the psychological and emotional unrest of the characters in the stories. Like the narratives in my own collection, these novels all deal with the same themes and similar symbolism, but each is distinct, in style, in the characters' cultural background and social status, and in tone. Nonetheless, a reader will come away from reading all of these books with the sense that the power-struggle between fathers and daughters is partly negotiated through the manipulation of space.

Elmslie's dissertation pointed me towards Marion Quednau's *Butterfly Chair* as a point of departure for my project. *Butterfly Chair* explores the communicative potentiality of rooms, natural spaces and homes: characters interact with and renovate space in attempts to navigate their own preoccupations with control. The novel is about Else Rainer, a young woman sorting through complex feelings about her family relationships and childhood memories, particularly about her abusive father. Throughout the story, Else investigates the symbolic meanings found in a number of spaces from her past, particularly her father's architectural creations and the household possessions she refuses to part with. She does much of this through a letter she writes to her dead father, Gerhard, which takes up about one third of the novel. She writes the

letter while sitting in the butterfly chair, which Elmslie describes as a "seat of conflict" because it literally supports Else as she sorts through memories of her father. The chair embodies her family's conflicts: its metal frame represents her father's rigid character and the pliant yellow sling cover is reminiscent of her mother's tendency to bend to Gerhard's will (Elmslie 102). In this chair, Else writes the letter – her own non-fiction narrative – as a means of rejecting the fictional narrative of her life that she invented to protect herself from the horrors of her family history. She uses the space created by the written word to negotiate her relationship to the past and with her dead father.

In reaction to her boyfriend Dean's tendency to deny or avoid Else's past, Else uses material culture and the space in their home to manipulate Dean into facing her history. From her storage, Else pulls out old items from her parents' home, like the butterfly chair (Quednau 57), to instigate argumentative encounters with Dean. Elmslie asserts that "characters who lack control in their lives typically look to the small rooms they inhabit for opportunities to exert control. They avert or cope with distressing occurrences by controlling their (and others') experience of inhabiting rooms" (149). Through writing her letter to her father (which is really a narrative about her relationship with him) Else creates a symbolic room in which she carefully selects and arranges her words, memories and images, just as she arranged her family's old possessions in her home. The letter provides an opportunity to control her own and her reader's experience of that "room" or memory.

As well, the tension between modernist and traditionalist styles of architecture is figured in the violent relationship of Else's parents: Gerhard, a domineering architect

who designs modern style buildings, and Charlotte, who is a "traditional wife, mother and helpmate to her husband" (Elmslie 100-1). When Else's mother runs away with her daughter to escape Gerhard's violent behaviour, she hides in the countryside at a friend's trailer. Gerhard eventually rents a sterile, modern apartment to brood in, until he decides to intrude on Charlotte and Else's quiet and traditional life and ultimately shoots Charlotte and himself on a deserted country road. The vast, open spaces and quiet of the rural setting symbolize Charlotte's newfound freedom and sense of peacefulness in her life. The sterile, geometric space of Gerhard's apartment represents his need for order and control. Else's adult rebellion against her father is played out in her choice to surround herself in inherited historical material that highlights her allegiance to the memory of her traditionalist mother.

J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* also touches on the notions of space as a means of negotiating power relationships, particularly the power-struggles between a father and daughter. Like Quednau's work, it cleverly depicts the biased perspective of a father as he invents an idealized narrative about his daughter. Coetzee establishes space and a father-daughter relationship as media through which the main character negotiates his sexual identity and emotional state. After years as a professor, David Lurie is summoned before a committee of inquiry where he admits that he engaged in a sexual relationship with a student but refuses to repent publicly. He explains his reasons for fleeing the university and Cape Town to his daughter Lucy: "I was offered a compromise, which I wouldn't accept…reformation of character" (66). To avoid enduring social, moral and psychological "spacial change," in Soja's sense, David chooses to change his physical surroundings. Following my earlier description of

spaciality, physical change must be paired with, or entail, social and cognitive change. When David moves in with his daughter Lucy in an isolated smallholding, he quickly discovers the dangers in the physical backdrop of Lucy's compound. The vicious dogs, wild animals, isolation, barren land and particularly the violent rape and break-in that Lucy suffers, force him to think about his character, his role as Lucy's father, and his predatory attitude toward women.

Although the main problem of the novel is David's attitude towards women and himself, the father-daughter relationship becomes the terrain on which this problem is negotiated. Moreover, the space of Lucy's home becomes the focal point of the tension between David and Lucy. Repeatedly, Lucy's frustration with David's insistence that she move to a safer area is punctuated by the slamming of doors. During the break-in and Lucy's rape, David is locked in the bathroom. When David tells Lucy's friend Bev Shaw that he understands what Lucy is suffering, she responds, "But you weren't there, David. She told me. You weren't" (140). She emphasizes his physical separation from what really occurred that afternoon. David is angered by the claim that he was not present: "Where, according to Bev Shaw, according to Lucy, was he not? In the room where the intruders committed their outrages? Do they think he does not know what rape is? Do they think he has not suffered with his daughter? What more could he have witnessed than he is capable of imagining? Whatever the answer, he is outraged, outraged at being treated like an outsider" (140-1). David cannot stand the fact that the narrative he has created about the rape and his daughter's emotions is being questioned. His feelings of being an outsider are reinforced by physical separation from Lucy within the home when Lucy begins to lock herself inside her room. David's projection

of what Lucy is thinking or doing behind the locked door is yet another example of his desire to impose his presence over his daughter's physical and emotional space. He remains locked out of that female space, which symbolizes the real divisions in his relationship with his daughter and his increasing powerlessness in his relationships with women.

From the moment David arrives on Lucy's small-holding, after years of absence, he begins to create and believe idealized fictional narratives about her, her needs, her desires, her thoughts and her personality. This is David's way of exerting control and even ownership over Lucy. After the rape, David does not ask Lucy what really happened, but he insists that her story be told. To prevent him from telling it for her, Lucy warns David to tell only his story, not hers: "David, when people ask, would you mind keeping to your own story, to what happened to you... You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me" (99). David had invented a narrative about Lucy's experience and was attempting to own her narrative. Lucy denies him that power by withholding the non-fictional narrative about herself and her experiences from him.

I chose to study the third novel, *House of Sand and Fog,* by Andre Dubus, because it deals with the tensions of father-daughter relations in a more symbolic manner, much less directly than in Coetzee and Quednau's novels. In Dubus' novel, the notion of a house as space that can be manipulated to negotiate power-relationships comes to the foreground. The house becomes the focal point of conflict between the main characters, Kathy Nicolo, a recovering drug addict, and Massoud Amir Behrani, a former Iranian Colonel, now a struggling immigrant. Mr. Behrani's self-worth is tied

to the home. As soon as Mr. Behrani takes possession of the house, like Else Rainer, he uses it as his opportunity to exert control. He becomes verbally aggressive with his employer and demonstrates considerable physical aggression with Kathy when she trespasses on his property. He averts the distressing reality of losing financial power, his daughter in marriage, and his homeland, by inhabiting and engrossing himself in alterations to the house. The most symbolic renovation he attempts in the home is the addition of a widow's walk – essentially a rooftop deck. By commissioning the building of the walk, which offers a view of the ocean like that of his home in Iran, Mr. Behrani uses the physical space of his home as a vehicle to recapture a sense of the personal power and prestige he lost when he left Iran. Moreover, the widow's walk literally elevates him in the neighbourhood, and allows him to assume a symbolic position of power. He manipulates the physical space of the home to negotiate his social power. Moreover, by changing the home, he is showing Kathy that the physical space is now his. Mr. Behrani's original plan to re-sell the house almost immediately after its purchase is delayed as his identity becomes increasingly entwined in the home.

The house of the title becomes the space in which both characters invest their entire personal and emotional identities. To Kathy, the house is physical space that reflects the social space of her family relationships – losing the house means losing her family. The house had belonged to Kathy's dead father and was repossessed by the county. The county promptly auctions off the house to Mr. Behrani. Kathy spends the remainder of the novel fighting to regain possession of the home. The motivation to re-possess her home extends further than a need to have a place to live; losing her home symbolizes her failure as a person and as a daughter: "Losing my father's house had

been the final shove in a long drift to the edge" (Dubus, 181). As Kathy interacts with other characters in the story, she repeatedly imagines her mother, brother or father's disappointment in her on the other characters' faces. She consistently notes that the house is "her father's home" (38), reminding us that her effort to win back the home is as much a battle to remain in favour with her father's memory, as it is a fight to maintain her own sanity.

Each time Kathy enters the Behrani home, she compares herself to the photographic images of Soraya, Mr. Behrani's daughter. She openly wishes she could be more like Soraya, not simply because of Soraya's physical beauty, but also because she is so clearly admired, loved and accepted by her father, which contrasts with Kathy's relationship with her own parents. Kathy makes many aggressive attempts to repossess her home, including a visit that ends with a physical struggle with Mr. Behrani. She even sends her policeman boyfriend to frighten the Behrani family with threats of deportation. When Mr. Behrani rescues Kathy from suicide and voluntarily carries her into his home (214-5), the power struggle has shifted: she is no longer a threat to him, she is in a position of vulnerability and he is in control. In this scene, the violent tension between Mr. Behrani and Kathy begins to transform into a caring and nurturing relationship, perhaps even an idealized father-daughter relationship. He stands over her un-threatening sleeping body and thinks about his daughter (217), emphasizing his position as a symbolic power-figure and father-figure to Kathy.

Reflecting on these three novels helped me to focus my own narratives, both in their thematic emphasis on home and father-daughter relationships and in the way they explored the use of space as negotiator and symbolic narrator. The novels' characters

explore the way narratives can be used to establish their power over threatening figures. Else uses the medium of writing to gain control and power in her relationship with her father. David uses imagination and internal scripts to gain a spurious sense of understanding of his daughter's life, and therefore control, in his relationship with Lucy, while Lucy withholds information from David specifically to deny him that power.

From a stylistic standpoint, the novels of Quednau and Dubus encouraged me to approach like themes and symbols from a variety of perspectives and with a variety of tones. I chose to mimic Quednau's use of the letter form in my fictional narrative, "Sloping Floors." Dubus uses the first person to convey the confusion and angst of the main antagonists, which I emulated in my non-fiction narrative, "Photographer Daughter," by moving from one perspective to another from section to section. My ultimate choice to study these three novels was due to their poignant depictions of the living nature of material culture and space as reflections and mediators of father-daughter relationships.

Fragmenting and Fleshing Out

My non-fiction narratives are developed from actual interview dialogue with female subjects about actual life events, real homes and real people. The subjects' spoken narratives are re-presented in my writing. I allowed the subject's speech patterns to influence my form in order to produce a "true to life" quality in the narratives. In some of the narratives the degree of fragmentation reflects the outcome of the interview process. When I interviewed the subject for "Shattered," she answered

my questions by describing short anecdotes about her family's experiences. Her abrupt manner is reflected in the choppy scenes of that narrative. In other narratives I purposely fragment the story to emphasize the theme of familial breakdown. The long, conversational sequence that composes the main body of text in "Television Set" represents the casual and fast-paced verbosity of the subject during that interview session. The subject interviewed for "Photographer Daughter" provided ample descriptions of her father's actions and speech, leaving me with enough content to produce entire sections of the narrative from his perspective, which resulted in a very fragmented narrative.

While writing the fictional narratives I attempted to be slightly more experimental. In "Sloping Floors" I use a direct, letter-writing style, styled after Quednau's *Butterfly Chair*, where the narrator is able to address her father directly. In "Mirrors in the Guestroom," I present new subject matter by thoroughly describing the significance and role of the mother in the protagonist's life. I set the story in the time frame of the early 1970's, as a contrast to the other stories in the collection, which are set in more recent years. By making the mother a more prominent figure, I was able explore the manner in which the daughter Meredith becomes a reflection of the mother. In "Where Her Bedroom is Now" I introduce the concept of the protagonist dealing with the death of her father. I believe that this approach helped me explore the way the way in which a daughter remembers material culture and her father. Despite these variances in subject matter, tone, perspective and fragmentation, the completed narratives are bound together by their common themes of father-daughter relationships and the house in flux.

Perhaps my most fascinating discovery during this experiment was that a transcript of an interview does not convey accurately the full experience of listening to and seeing someone interviewed. When revisiting one of my transcripts from an interview with a subject, I noted that my emotional, physical and psychological responses to the words in the transcript greatly contrasted with my initial reactions to the same words when they had been spoken and acted out by the subject in the live interview setting. The one-dimensional perspective offered by the transcript muted the subtleties in the tone, rhythm, eye movement and body language of the subject in interview. The transcript lacked the multi-sensorial experience of listening to a live storyteller.

When attempting to transpose the interview proceedings into a written narrative form, I struggled to re-present accurately this multi-faceted experience, while simultaneously remaining true to the exact transcript. Copying the transcript (one of which I have included as an appendix to the collection), essentially offering a word-for-word recitation, seemed shallow and insufficient, and risked leading the reader to make inaccurate judgements regarding the subject's personality and character. For example, the subject I interviewed for "Television Set" told her story in a vibrant and animated manner, often using an exaggerated tone and body language to indicate intentional sarcasm or to physically contradict her words. Her speech was littered with "like" and "you know," which, when read in the transcript, may give the reader the distinct impression that the subject is immature and perhaps even unintelligent: "Like, my dad would love for me and my sister to move back home right now, you know. Um, but then he's always had that as also kind of like, you know, like, I moved out the first time

and he was like, you know, 'You move out of this house, like, you don't ever come back.' Like, 'Nothing in this house is yours. I have one daughter, and blah blah blah.' And he'd stick to it, you know" (see Appendix). I was faced with the choices of representing this subject's, and the other subjects', stories in four ways: direct transcription; direct quotation; indirect dialogue; or omniscient narrator. In "Television Set," I noted that the change of medium, from spoken word to written word, distorted and muted the subject's personality. I felt compelled to make slight changes in the dialogue, such as the removal of "like" and "you know," which could distract a reader from the subject's actual story. I did not have to make these changes in all of the non-fiction stories. While the transfer of medium from live story-telling and conversation to transcript flattened the experience of the story and gave misleading cues about the subject's character traits and personality, it also allowed me to be selective about the dialogue I chose to re-present in the narrative. Furthermore, it gave me license to enhance images and scenes in the subject's story to offer a clearer perspective of the subject herself. To build on Barsam's definition, it was through creative re-presentation that I could be most faithful to actuality.

In an interview about the addition of fictional characters in *Dutch*, Morris defended his authorial decision by asking, "To what extent may a writer honestly distort in order to make the truth more clear" (Lizza 18)? Edmund Morris must have struggled to decide how best to re-present faithfully his subject after his privileged and supposedly unsatisfactory interviews with Ronald Reagan. Although I have chosen to take a considerably more conservative approach to clarification or development of full truth than Morris may have – I did not insert any fictional characters into my non-

fiction narratives – I can see how some of my own characters were rendered more "true" to life with some adjustments to wording and added physical description.

The exercise of taking spoken words and fleshing them out into non-fiction narratives increased my awareness of the serious responsibilities and power of a non-fiction writer. Essentially, I claim that I am telling the true stories of my interviewees' lives and life events. As a non-fiction writer, it is my responsibility to ensure that my non-fiction work re-presents reality as accurately as possible.

Under Her Roof: Constant Renovation

Through my experiment I have also attempted to address Boose and Flowers's challenge of charting the unmapped discourses and silence that have historically enveloped father-daughter relationships. By creatively re-presenting the stories of my subjects' relationships with their fathers, I endeavour to create space for dialogue about the nature of father-daughter relationships.

The daughters who spoke to me about life in the houses of their fathers revealed to me that they were much more powerful in creating change and exerting power than I had originally suspected. The daughters boldly shared their memories of the homes they lived in. They described the ways in which their relationships shifted and moved through those domestic spaces, and they talked about the way they adjusted or could not adjust to family change. One subject confirmed my belief that the spaces and the homes she remembered continue to live and shape her memories. "It's weird," she confessed. "I still dream about the house I grew up in. I still see my dad holding his briefcase in the hallway. But it's a bit different now – the house I mean. It's brighter

and I can see everything in it more clearly than I used to." As this subject re-presents the non-fiction narrative of her life, she acknowledges the changing nature of space. Its symbolism changes, yet it still remains an integral part of her non-fiction narrative. As I re-present her story in a new medium, the symbolism of space changes once again, creating a new non-fiction. As a reader reads that narrative, the meaning of spaces in it is filtered through the reader's perception; once again, the symbol can change but the mode remains constant. Space is a producer of ideas and it is also a product – a narrator and narrative in itself. What we accept as symbols, purposefully placed by the author in fiction to help elucidate a theme or an idea – as in the novels I have quoted – actually occur in non-fiction as well. These symbols are present in real life and are not just literary tools.

Just as the hands of the characters in my narratives move into spaces and adjust or re-analyze material items to re-represent a new perspective, manipulate a family situation, or negotiate a power position, the authorial hand and reader's eye have the power to take over a narrative and manipulate it to re-present a particular view. No matter what the intentions, motivations or results of these renovations, the narrative's status as fiction or non-fiction remains undeterminable by internal evidence but absolute. It is the proportion of factuality vis-à-vis imagination that determines the difference between fiction and non-fiction.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once more that I based half of my narratives on the *actual* experiences of *actual* daughters. I sat face to face with these women and listened to them speak candidly about their homes and lives. They showed me photographs, drew the floor plans of their homes, cried, laughed and told their

stories. No theories of fiction or non-fiction can legitimately change the reality of their experiences.

Appendix 1: Excerpt of Transcript for "Television Set"

CD: In the two houses that your family lived in, did you ever do any renovation or redecoration?

Sarindra: No, and it's funny, my bedroom has stayed the same since I was twelve. The only thing that changed was the bed because I had a waterbed, and, um, and the waterbed broke at one point and we had to get a new bed, and that actually, funnily, funnily enough…the time that I changed from my waterbed and got the bed I have now was kinda when I started getting into *everything*, but I don't really know if you can make a link there because, I mean, the bed just popped.

CD: Anthropomorphism in a way?

Sarindra: (Laughter) What? No. But I 'member when I moved out – just talking about surroundings and stuff – like, when I moved, it was like my first job after graduating and I wasn't making very much money or anything. I had a one-bedroom near Lionel-Groulx, it wasn't the nicest area, but it was like *my* house. And for the longest time, like, one of the controls my dad had over us since (muffled) was through money. We were really fortunate we never had to, like, work. Like, the part-time jobs: I never really needed them, it was just to have my spending money or whatever, right. School: I never had to worry, you know. Um, I could be 35 and if I wanted to move back home I would. Like, my parents would never kick me out, right. Like, my dad would love for me and my sister to move back home right now, you know. Um, but then he's

always had that as also as a kind of like, you know, like, I moved out the first time and he was like, you know, "You move out of this house, like you don't ever come back." Like, "Nothing in this house is yours. I have one daughter, and blah blah blah." And he'd stick to it, you know.

CD: He would actually say that?

Sarindra: Yeah, oh, of course. He told me that. And I didn't come back. Well, my mom's the one who was like, you know, "Do you want to…" you know, like, "Are you ready to come home?" you know, and, "Your father misses you." And he would never say it, but I mean, my mom would tell me, you know. And like I told you, when I *did* move home it was with thoughts of it not having to be a permanent thing. But, um, when I moved out, like it was really cool because, like, everything I had was basically Wal-Mart or Ikea or Zellers, like a girl's best friend. But it was mine and I bought it with my own money.

CD: That sounds a bit like your dad.

Sarindra: Yeah. The reason we don't get along is because we both have too much pride and we're both really stubborn. And the funny thing is when, um…Like at home, we have really nice furniture or whatever, but it's not mine. And I don't feel like it's mine. But when I earn these things, like I bought everything, and like, nobody can take that away from me.

Out of pride, when I moved, um, I packed my music first – all my records and all my CDs and my clothes, and maybe one or two bath towels. I literally didn't take anything else from home because I knew the way my dad would be. He was like, "If you move out," he was like, "You move out with the clothes on your back and that's it. You don't get anything."

I'm like, "Okay." And I knew he would be like that. Because I knew that, I'd planned it. I'd already taken a day off work and moved everything out because he wouldn't let me use his car to move. So I'd already done that before I told him I was moving. I had all my measly possessions and then I literally bought everything from scratch. Like a cheese grater. Like things you don't even think about, you know. Um, everything.

And I 'member when I finally moved back, he helped me move back home because I was coming back home, right. So the first day and only time he saw my place, the first and the last time, when I was moving, he walked around the main room and like, he saw the TV unit and everything else. Well, the couch Veronica's family had given me, but other than that everything else I bought on my own. A Canadian Tire table. And he was like, "So, where did you get all this stuff?" You know.

And I was like, "I bought it."

He was like, "Everything? Like, the TV and all?"

And I was like, "Yeah."

And he was like, "Oh."

And he would never say it, but I know there's like this…almost a proud-ness…that he was proud of me, but he would never admit it.

CD: Pride?

Sarindra: Yeah. Pride didn't let him admit that he was proud of me. Because I mean, he had done that too, so he has a lot of respect for that.

* * *

Sarindra: But I tell you now, my sister and I talk about this all the time, when that house, like I get emotional just thinking about it, when they have to eventually sell that house, I'm not prepared to sell that house. I think my sister and I, like when it finally comes time to sell the house, if it only happens when my parents, you know, depart for a better life, um, my sister and I plan on tearing down the house and selling the land - even though we'll probably lose a lot of money like that. It's just because, I cannot stand the - I'm not exaggerating, it makes me want to vomit - the thought of somebody in *my* kitchen, in *my* bedroom, in *my* bathroom. We're the only ones who have been there. Like, I can't fathom the thought.

* * *

Sarindra: A lot of the electronic stuff is really old. Finally, the TV conked out one day, so what does my dad do? …Because it's a nice piece of furniture and it's a big TV and you actually, like, sit the VCR and stuff on it…He hollowed out the TV and put,

like, a smaller TV in it! But it's so well done that a lot of time people don't notice it. I didn't at first either. They think it's the real TV until they actually go really close, and then they're like, "Oh my god, that's an empty shell and there's another TV in it."

McGill

esearch Ethics Board Office
cGill University
15 Sherbrooke Street West
mes Administration Bldg., rm 429
ontreal, QC H3A 2T5

Tel: (514) 398-6831
Fax: (514) 398-4853
Ethics website: www.mcgill.ca/rgo/ethics/human

Research Ethics Board I
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

roject Title: Under His Roof: Father-Daughter Relationships Under Renovation

pplicant's Name: Claire Dias **Department**: English

tatus: Master's student

upervisor's Name (if applicable): Prof. Brian Trehearne

ranting Agency and Title (if applicable): N/A

his project was reviewed on Nov 20, 2003 by

Expedited Review ✓
Full Review ____

ignature/Date Nov. 20/03

ohn Galaty, Ph.D.
hair, REB I

pproval Period: December 9, 2003 **to** December 8, 2004

EB File #: 60-1103

: English Dept.
Prof. B. Trehearne

Works Cited and Consulted

Primary Sources

Badami, Anita Rau. *The Hero's Walk.* Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2000.

Coetzee, J.M. *Disgrace.* London: Vintage, 2000.

Diamant, Anita. *The Red Tent.* New York: St. Martin's, 1997.

Dubus III, Andre. *House of Sand and Fog.* New York: Random House, 1999.

Mistry, Rohinton. *Family Matters.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2002

Quednau, Marion. *The Butterfly Chair.* Toronto: Random House, 1987.

---. *Nerves Out Loud: Critical Moments in the Lives of Seven Teen Girls.* Ed. Susan Musgrave. Toronto: Annick, 2001.

Roth, Philip. *American Pastoral.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Secondary Sources

Arnold, Eugene L., ed. *Parents, Children and Change.* Massachusetts: Lexington, 1985.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Barsam, Richard Meran. "American Direct Cinema: The Representation of Reality." *Persistence of Vision* 3 (1986): 131-156.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter.* 1949. Cleveland: World, 1959.

Benjamin, Jessica. "Authority and the Family Re-visited." *New German Criticism* 13 (1978): 35-37.

Boose, Lynda E. and Betty S. Flowers, eds. *Daughters and Fathers.* London: John Hopkins UP, 1989.

Brod, Harry and Michael Kaufman. *Theorizing Masculinities.* Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994.

Browne, Kelvin. "Cottage Living: Days of Glory." *Canadian House and Home* April 2003: 132-37.

Bueno, Eva P., Terry Caesar, and William Hummel, eds. *Naming the Father: Legacies, Genealogies and Explorations of Fatherhood in Modern and Contemporary Literature.* Oxford: Lexington, 2000.

Carroll, Noell. "Fiction, Non-Fiction, and the Film of Presumptive Assertion." *Film Theory and Philosophy.* Eds. Richard Allen and Murray Smith. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

Christensen, Pia and Margaret O'Brien, eds. *Children in the City: Home, Neighborhood and Community.* London: Routledge, 2003.

Currie, Gregory. *The Nature of Fiction.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.

Delle, James A. *An Archeology of Social Space: Analyzing Coffee Plantations in Jamaica's Blue Mountains.* New York: Plennum, 1998.

Elmslie, Susan. *Living Rooms: Domestic Material Culture in Fiction by Joan Barfoot, Marion Quednau, and Diane Schoemperlen.* Diss. McGill U, 1999.

Fialkoff, Francine. "Getting in Dutch with Fact and Fiction." *Library Journal* 124:19 (1999): 53.

Gullenstad, Marianne. "Home Decoration as Popular Culture." *The Politics of Domestic Consumption: Critical Readings.* Eds. Stevi Jackson and Shaun Moores. London: Prentice Hall, 1995.

Henderson, Ronald W, ed. *Parent-Child Interaction: Theory, Research, and Prospects.* New York: Academic Press, 1981.

Howell, Robert. "Fictional Objects: How They Are and How They Aren't." *Poetics* 8 (1979): 129-77.

Kahane, Clair. "Gender and Paternity." *Differences* 9.1 (1997): 49-67.

Kay, Jonathan. "A Dutch Treat." *National Post* 4 Dec 1999: R9.

Lasker, David. "Modern Comfort: A Family Home that Says Contemporary Doesn't Have to be Cold." *Canadian House and Home* June 2003: 96-101.

Lewis, D.K. "Truth in Fiction." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978): 37-46.

Lizza, Ryan. "Edmund Morris's Twice-Told Tale." *The New Republic* 221:20 (1999): 15-8.

Luxton, Meg. *Through the Kitchen Window: The Politics of Home and Family.* Toronto: Garamond, 1990.

Manley, William. "Fiction!" *The Booklist* 96.7 (1999): 664.

Marchese, Ronald T. "Material Culture and Artifact Classification." *Journal of American Culture* 3.4 (1980): 605-18.

Margolis, Joseph. "The Logic and Structure of Fictional Narrative." *Philosophy and Literature* 7 (1983): 162-81.

McCracken, Grant. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.

Melchionne, Kevin. "Living in Glass Houses: Domesticity, Interior Decoration, and Environmental Aesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56.2 (1998): 191-200.

Miller, Daniel. "Why Some Things Matter." *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*. Ed. Daniel Miller. London: UCL, 1998. 3-21.

Ohmann, Richard. "Speech Acts and the Definition of Literature." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4 (1971): 1-19.

Ponech, Trevor. "What is Non-Fiction Cinema." *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Eds. Richard Allen and Murray Smith. Oxford: Clarendon, 1997.

Reichert, John. *Making Sense of Literature*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1977.

Sharpe, Sue. *Fathers and Daughters.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Soja, Edward W. *The Political Organization of Space*. Association of American Geographers, 1971.

Thompson, Eleanor., ed. *The American Home: Material Culture, Domestic Space, and Family Life.* Winterthur: New England UP, 1998.

Walton, Kendall. "Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of Representational Arts." *Philosophical Quarterly* 45:178 (1995): 93-99.

Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language. 3rd ed. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1981.

Zion, Adi Shamir. *Open House: Unbound Space in the Modern Dwelling.* New York: Rizzoli, 2002.