

I love my house.
I am my house.

by

Darcy McNinch

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2011
© Darcy McNinch 2011

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

My first experience of architecture, a nearly universal case, was that of the house I grew up in. A century old, black & white clapboard farmhouse outside of Kingston, Ontario was where I called home. Having grown up and left it behind, I find I have developed a certain amount of nostalgia or homesickness regarding my mostly positive memories and recurring dreams that take place there. The house is not lost, in fact my parents still live there, and I return several times each year to retrace my childhood rituals, sleep in my old room, dream in my old bed, eat, play and reminisce in my old home.

I can return to my home, but not my childhood, and yet the two seem inseparable. This space houses my dreams and memories of childhood; floorboards, doorknobs, and wallpaper are all triggers for recollection, the ornamentation of the home is a connective entity into my past.

As my parents grow older, they are finding they don't want to be so isolated, alone in a house too big for just the two of them. The possibility of them selling the house looms heavily on my mind. I don't want to lose this special place.

This is a study of the way in which an individual becomes bound to architecture, psychologically and physically, using the home to which I feel so connected as a guide.

I've grown apart from my house in the years since I moved out, and much of the connection has been broken. In place of this connection, at my return, there is a certain sense of the unfamiliar in this familiar space.

How can I make this intangible connection both apparent and relevant to someone else?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank-you to my committee members: Robert Jan van Pelt, I greatly appreciate both your intelligence and humour; Donald McKay, thank-you for your honesty and a knack for understanding my hidden intentions; David Lieberman, as my external reader, your discussion was both thought provoking and meaningful; and my advisor, Tracey Eve Winton, you are my hero, I can't put into words how grateful I am for all your encouragement.

I would also like to thank Philip Beesley, for letting me explore in M1, Andrew Levitt, for opening the door to my unconscious in his Inner Studio course, Andri Lima, for helping me with every form I needed to fill out, Carolyn Fearman, Timea Jakab, and Tara Keens-Douglas for modelling my creations, everyone that sat in my studio and offered advice or gave help, and Keith, thank-you for always supporting me, giving me a hand or a shoulder to cry on, and basically putting up with me and my house over the last two years.

DEDICATION

For the house that was my home, I really do love you;
And my parents for raising me there, I love you too.

CONTENTS

<i>AUTHOR'S DECLARATION</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>ABSTRACT</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>DEDICATION</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</i>	<i>xii</i>
INTRODUCTION	1
THE HOME IN MY MIND	13
What is Home?	15
Memories and Ghosts	19
Dreams of Home	23
Homesickness, Nostalgia, Remorse	27
THE HOME IN MY BODY	37
Personal Space: My Own Room	39
Rituals of the Home	41
Decorating the Home	47
Dressing in My Architecture	51
PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMATION	59
Jung and Individuation with the Home	61
A Home Created with Alchemy	65
An Alchemical Dream Journey	67
Furnishings of the Soul	95
Transformed	97
THE HOME IN MY HEART	105
The Story of a House	107
I love my House	111
Coming Home Again	115
Separation of Souls	119
<i>PLATES</i>	<i>137</i>
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	<i>155</i>

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

fig. 1. The house from the road - photograph by author	xvi
fig. 2. Elevations of House by author	2
fig. 3. Home - photograph by author	4
fig. 4. Floor Plans of House by author	6
fig. 5. Floor Plan and Section of House by author	7
fig. 6. Designing Home - photographs by John & Linda McNinch	8
fig. 7. The Home in My Mind - drawing by author	12
fig. 8. Childhood depiction of Home - drawing by author	14
fig. 9. Family Memories - photographs by John & Linda McNinch	16
fig. 10. Hayfield - photograph by author	18
fig. 11. Ghosts - photographs by author	20
fig. 12. <i>The Dream</i> - painting by Marc Chagall	22
fig. 13. Layers of Memories - photo collage by author	24
fig. 14. Photos of the House by John & Linda McNinch	26
fig. 15. Farming - photographs by John & Linda McNinch	28

fig. 16. In the Kitchen - photographs by John & Linda McNinch	30
fig. 17. Beam on the Kitchen Ceiling - photograph by author	32
fig. 18. The Home in My Body - drawing by author	36
fig. 19. My Room - photograph by author	38
fig. 20. My New Room - photograph by author	40
fig. 21. Assemblage - photo collage by author	42
fig. 22. Rituals/Stains - photographs by author	44
fig. 23. Gathering of Mementos - photograph by author	46
fig. 24. Door Knobs - photographs by author	48
fig. 25. Dresses in Landscape - photographs by author	50
fig. 26. The Transformation with Dress - mixed media by author	52
fig. 27. Me in a Dress - photograph by author	54
fig. 28. Processes of Transformation - drawing by author	58
fig. 29. Horse Barn - Photographs by author	60
fig. 30. Closet - photograph by author	62
<i>fig. 31. Azoth of the Philosophers</i> - drawing by Basilius Valentinus	64
fig. 32. Burning House - photo collage by author	72
fig. 33. Crevice House - photo collage by author	76
fig. 34. Mirror House - photo collage by author	80
fig. 35. Nature House - photo collage by author	84
fig. 36. Decadence House - photo collage by author	88

fig. 37. Floating House - photo collage by author	92
fig. 38. Transcendent House - photo collage by author	93
fig. 39. Hay Mow - photographs by author	94
fig. 40. Hay Mow in Snow - photograph by author	96
fig. 41. Mantle Place - photo collage by author	98
fig. 42. Night Walk - photograph by author	100
fig. 43. The Home in My Heart - drawing by author	104
fig. 44. Refurbishing the Hall - photograph by author	106
fig. 45. Stairs - photograph by author	108
fig. 46. Hand Drawn Floor Plan by author	110
fig. 47. The Old Chicken Coop - photograph by author	112
fig. 48. Tractors in Snow - photograph by author	114
fig. 49. The Windy Woods - photograph by author	116
fig. 50. Coming Home Again - photograph by author	118
fig. 51. Site Plan - mixed media by author	120
fig. 52. Site Plan - mixed media by author	122
fig. 53. A Dream of Home #1 - photo collage by author	124
fig. 54. A Dream of Home #2 - photo collage by author	126
fig. 55. A Dream of Home #3 - photo collage by author	128
fig. 56. A Dream of Home #4 - photo collage by author	130
fig. 57. A New Home - photo by author	132

fig. 58. Fragments - photographs by author's family	134
fig. 59. Basement Door - photograph by author	138
fig. 60. Shutter - photograph by author	139
fig. 61. Floor Grate - photograph by author	140
fig. 62. Wood Burning Stove - photograph by author	141
fig. 63. Foundation - photograph by author	142
fig. 64. Hanging Pans - photograph by author	143
fig. 65. Hay Mow (interior) - photograph by author	144
fig. 66. Cow Barn - photograph by author	145
fig. 67. Stable Cleaner - photograph by author	146
fig. 68. Hay Mow (exterior) - photograph by author	147
fig. 69. Tractor in Lean-to - photograph by author	148
fig. 70. Out Buildings - photograph by author	149
fig. 71. Snowy Fields - photograph by author	150
fig. 72. House in Winter - photograph by author	151
fig. 73. The Beaver Pond - photograph by author	152
fig. 74. A Home at the edge of the field - photograph by author	153

fig. 1 The House from the road.

I love my house.
I am my house.



INTRODUCTION

Home is where the heart is.
My home is my castle.

It is nest and garment.
It fits me perfectly.
Like a bird, gathering twigs and strings,
I adorn my house with the objects I collect.

It is a portrait of myself, that ages with me.
Home is my reflection;
It wraps around me.
In its arms I feel safe.

It is a magic place,
a chest full of memories.
It is also full of ghosts;
Haunted with its life.

Home is where I come undone.
Home can bring me pain.
Home is also my salvation.
It is a place of dreams.

I paint my home with love,
Ornament it with my soul.
And my home does the same,
with me.



I spent hours measuring the house, then drawing it in AutoCAD. I thought this would help me discover my home, see it more clearly, and share it with others, but now, I'm not so sure.

fig. 2 Elevations of the house.

I love my house. I am my house.

An investigation of the processes at play in transforming architecture into personal habitats, and rituals that unify the mind and body of the individual with their dwelling.

The connection between the individual and their habitat is of key importance to architecture. The body and mind react to the spaces they occupy and a person appropriates their personal space through the act of dwelling.

The childhood home, no matter its design aesthetic or qualifications as great architecture, is often the first architecture that even architects themselves experience. This house is the place where dreams are dreamt, memories are formed, adventures and dramas unfurl, and hopes and aspirations first take shape.

The childhood home is not easily forgotten, even when the child grows up; the buildings impression stays in the mind as an archetype of what home is. Gaston Bachelard, in his work *The Poetics of Space*, stresses the importance of one's childhood home in their developmental understanding of space, it becomes a reference point for every space inhabited thereafter.

...the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. ...the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme.¹

If not in waking life, we likely revisit the childhood home in our dreams. Perhaps this is because, as Bachelard puts it, "The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams."²

I believe I am privileged to have grown up in a single home from birth until the age of 18, when I moved away for University. My parents still live in this house, and it is my greatest wish to inherit it after them, and keep it present in my life, and the life of my family.

My home was built in the late 19th century as the residence for the owner of Rose Hill Farm, a dairy farm with a small cheese production. My paternal grandfather bought the farm property, excluding the house, in the nineteen-sixties. My father bought the house in the early 70s and my parents first moved in after their marriage in the summer of 1974.

1 Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 14.

2 Ibid.



fig. 3 An idyllic view of Home.

I was born 10 years later, and came home from the hospital to occupy the bedroom in the north-west corner of the 2nd floor.

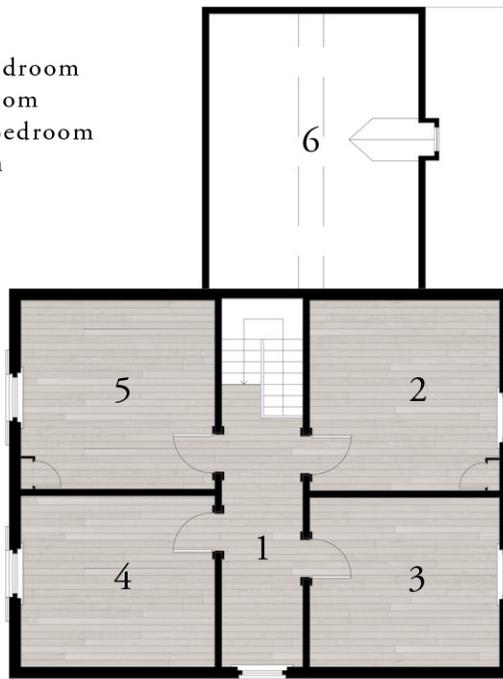
I use my house as case study in this thesis because it is my first architecture, and the most natural place to look in an investigation of the connection between inhabitant and home. I love this house and feel a deep connection with it, not because it is beautiful, but because it is full of memories.

What creates this link between the inhabitant and habitat? What forms this sense of identity associated with place? Clues can be found in the connection between the mind and the home, in how our dreams, memories, and emotions build this bond. Further evidence can be provided exploring the more physical connections: how the body and the act of everyday rituals ties a person to their dwelling. Additional insights may be found looking more closely at analogies of processes of unification between individual and dwelling, such as Jungian notions of individuation, alchemical transformation, religious transcendence, and how this transformation can be initiated by the ornamentation of the home. The dual spirits of house and inhabitant are unified in all these ways.

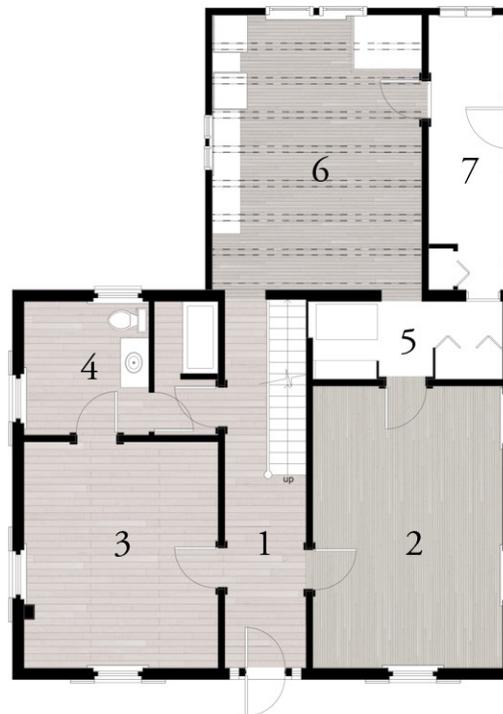
The final task should be to rehabilitate the connection I once had with my childhood home, to unify the spirits of house and inhabitant using my own memories, dreams, and rituals to reinforce this connection, so that someday I may re-inhabit this home.

This project is very personal, containing my own dreams, recollections, fears, and emotions towards my childhood home. Each chapter is related back to my childhood home through poetry, recollections, dreams and interpretations. I don't believe these expressions are mere sentiment; there is something powerful to be discovered in emotion. My hope is that the work created is beautiful and poignant, will be relevant to the readers, will remind them of their own childhood, and will open them up to thinking about their own very personal relationships with spaces. Architecture is not solely created by architects, and perhaps not fully created until it is lived in. Architecture is made by the inhabitants, through the connections their minds and bodies make with it and the transformation that ensues.

- 1 Hall
- 2 My Parents' Bedroom
- 3 My First Bedroom
- 4 My Brothers' Bedroom
- 5 The Pink Room
- 6 The Attic

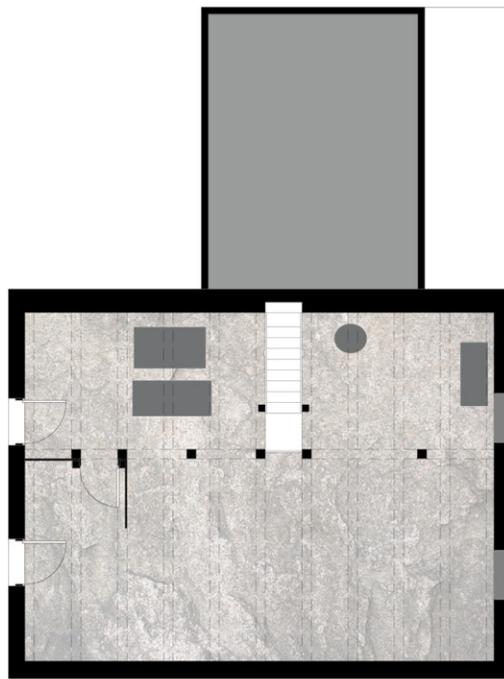


- 1 Hall
- 2 Living Room
- 3 Family Room
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Pantry
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Sun Porch



0 1 2m

fig. 4 Ground and Second Floor Plans



0 1 2m

fig. 5 Basement Floor Plan & Cross Section



fig. 6 Stripping away layers of Home

Things my mother always wanted:

- a porch looking out across the fields with space for outdoor dining
- a second bathroom - w/c on ground floor, full bathroom upstairs
- livable basement
- separate laundry room
- more cupboard and counter space
- formal living room
- bigger closets in bedrooms
- more bookshelves

Design Objectives

- restore original functions to rooms in main house
- keep number of bedrooms, but enlarge one to make master suite.
- make kitchen more functional
- create a playroom/television room
- reference/reintroduce elements from house of my childhood
 - secret staircase
 - wood stove
 - outhouse
 - fake fireplace
- give value to difficult or forgotten pasts without reliving them

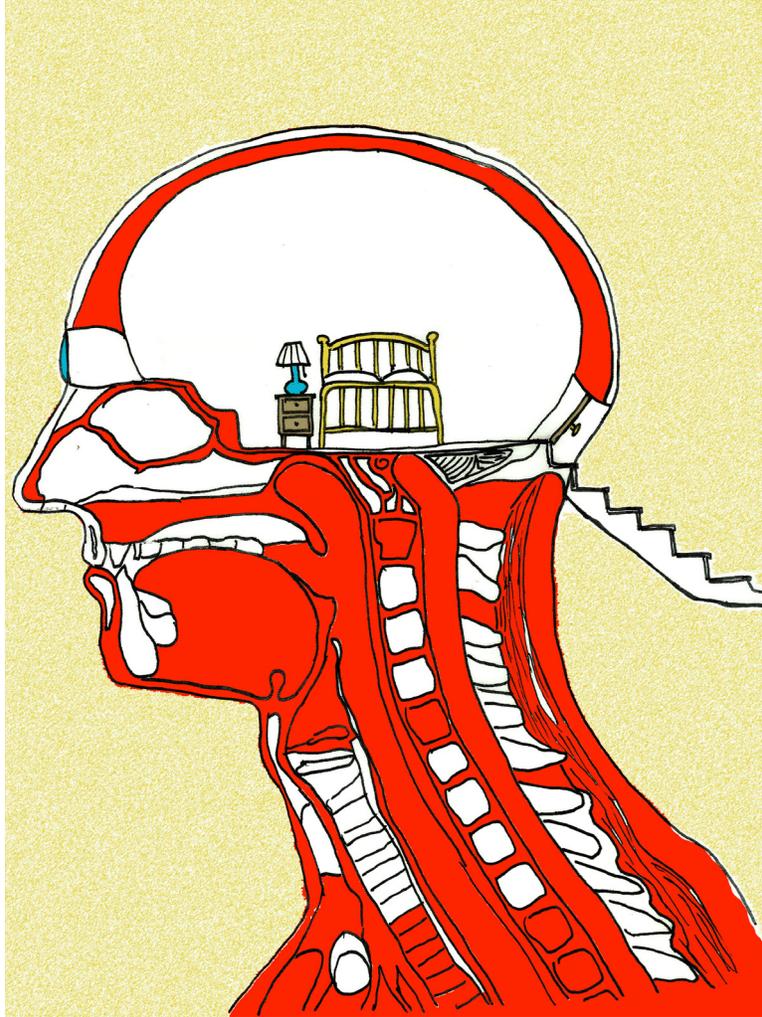


fig. 7 The Home in My Mind (over)

THE HOME IN MY MIND



fig. 8 Childhood depiction of Home

What is Home?

On a small farm east of Kingston, atop a small hill, a white clapboard house with black shutters sits beneath the shade of one tall oak tree, enjoying the country air. It has sat here for over a century now, and been home to several families. It has witnessed crisis and celebration, family dinners and family disputes. It creaks and sighs in tune with the wind, and lets a trail of smoke out the chimney. The smell of burning wood mixes with mown lawn and manure. Nesting starlings and squirrels can be heard scampering in its eaves and attic. It has changed with its inhabitants, but it has also changed them. Colour schemes, wallpaper, and floor treatments all layer up in the house's memory, helping to form identities.

This is my home.

What is Architecture?

The definition must be more than a highly designed structure, something impressive in its physical complexity, it needs to encompass the emotions built forms can evoke, the feelings architecture creates. We need to look deeper into our perceptions of architecture to define it.

In his book, *Built Upon Love*, Alberto Pérez-Gómez argues that architecture is more than economics and aesthetics. Rather it is something personal, something not only seen but felt.

True architecture is concerned with far more than fashionable form, affordable homes, and sustainable development; it responds to a desire for an eloquent place to dwell, one that lovingly provides a sense of order resonant with our dreams, a gift contributing to our self-understanding as humans inhabiting a mortal world.¹

It is the architect's hope that their building's audience will see both beauty and meaning in its fully realized form, but quite often people will not. The meaning or purpose intended by the architect can often be misinterpreted, misunderstood, change over time or be diminished by new inhabitants, skewed by new owners and obscured by a change in building use.

This idea behind architecture, the meaning given by the architect, evolves based on the people who inhabit the space, the events and rituals that take place within its walls, and also the changing perspectives of society looking in on architecture from the outside.

Architecture becomes a metaphor for society. The most iconic images of past societies is often their architecture: the Pyramids of Egypt, Greek Temples and the Roman Forum, for example.

1 Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love*, 17.



fig. 9 Pieces of me at Home

Architecture is a physical, sensual, and tangible manifestation of creativity, like other fine arts, but it also exists in an intangible, emotional realm, a place of ideas. Architecture resides in the mind before it exists in space and remains there after it is torn down. Quite often, architecture will evoke feelings, house memories, and give birth to dreams that may or may not have recognizable or definable physical form.

Architecture can be the unconscious mind's projection into space. It is our perceptions forming around us. It is the culmination of our five senses recognizing place: Sight and hearing detecting distances, colours, shapes, sounds, touch and taste absorbing the physicality, and smell capturing something more visceral. Architecture is not only what the architect designs, it is what we, the inhabitants create of it. It is a projection of ourselves, our souls pressing out of us against the world. Our ideas and expressions build space. Just as clothing can be a physical representation of that which is inside, our spirit or personality being brought forth consciously, architecture can be a physical representation of our expanded consciousness.

What is Home?

My first concept of Architecture was of something grand and far off: government buildings, museums, palaces and tombs, none of which resembled my familiar surroundings. However, my first experience of architecture was my home.

The lowly home is often not thought of as architecture, unless designed by someone noteworthy, but it is at home, as a child, where we first develop an understanding of architecture, of rooms, buildings, inside and outside, space.

There is also a primal connection between humans and their homes. The home is the first architecture, not only of the individual but of humanity. These first buildings were likely appropriated caves, and then simple huts, a basic shelter from the elements, a personal space to gather one's possessions. Building techniques have evolved quite a bit through our history, but the function and meaning of home remains very much the same.

The house is a physical building; home is much more. Home is a concept. Home is very personal. If architecture is society, then the house is the individual. Our homes serve us on the purely functional level, but also serve as a façade with which we represent ourselves. A picturesque home signifies the perfection of its inhabitants to the neighbours, visitors and in general, to the outside world.

Perhaps my childhood home was not perfect, the exterior paint was chipped, the plaster work crumbling, wallpaper peeling, roof leaking and to this day, it only has one bathroom. It was always a work in progress, but this does not take away from it being my home.

The home is a part of our identity, for good or bad, and our identity



fig. 10 Through the Hay Fields

is also a part of the home. The inhabitant is a product of the life lived within their home's walls. The home is what we make of it, how we take care of it, decorate it, love it. J. Macgregor Wise reiterates this sentiment in his essay on Gilles Deleuze, *Assemblage*:

Home is how we make a place our own, how we arrange artifacts, qualities and affects to express us.²

In her essay on memory, from the collection *Perseus in the Wind*, Freya Stark gives a poetic definition of home created by memories:

In smaller, more familiar things, memory weaves her strongest enchantments, holding us at her mercy with some trifle, some echo, a tone of voice, a scent of tar and seaweed on the quay. . . . This surely is the meaning of home — a place where every day is multiplied by all the days before it.³

Home is ourselves, all our precious memories and possessions collected together in one place.

Memories and Ghosts

Place is a part of every experience, and setting is an important part of all memories. The home that has been the backdrop for these experiences becomes a space rife with memories. Surfaces, ornaments, furniture, and materials become laden with these events. Though the time has past, the feelings they brought stay grounded in the place that witnessed them, reminding us of it when we return to the scene. Our emotions linger in situ, suppressed in our unconscious, to spring forward, without warning, out of the woodwork.

Place can acquire deep meaning for the adult through the steady accretion of sentiment over the years. Every piece of heirloom furniture, or even a stain on the wall, tells a story.⁴

Memories pile up upon the surfaces of the home, coexisting in space. A correlation between the mind and the home is created, in which every memory that can be recalled also exists in a particular area of the house; the home becomes an index for our memories. Like the Memory Theatre technique of classic orators, an imagined journey through the house, walking through its halls, and looking at its furnishings evokes all these memories.

2 Macgregor Wise, *Assemblage*, 79.

3 Stark, *Perseus in the Wind*, 57.

4 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 33.



fig. 11 Ghosts in the Home.

Each object carries with it some significance in this memory theatre, but rather than using each moment to memorize a speech, walking through the house recalls the connections that make it home.

Bachelard comments on the accumulation of memories in the home:

Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. All our lives we come back to them in our daydreams.⁵

He then goes on to create a term for the study of these memories, their placement, and interpretation:

A psychoanalyst should, therefore, turn his attention to this simple localization of our memories. I should like to give the name of topoanalysis to this auxiliary of psychoanalysis. Topoanalysis, then would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives.⁶

Everything has a surface identity or meaning, but is also a gateway into a world inhabited with the ghosts of the past. The door frame we measured our heights on, the spot we found our dog when he died, the piece of wallpaper I pulled off when I was mad, the mantle place where we hung our Christmas stockings, the basement where we used to stack wood in winter, where the pantry once stood –hiding the secret staircase up to the attic– in the kitchen, the time when we ripped up all the linoleum and had the wood floors refinished, the piece of plaster that cracked when I slammed the door too many times. All of these are links into the parallel world of the memory house.

We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images. Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.⁷

The memory house isn't my physical house but a likeness of it in which every

5 Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 8.

6 Ibid., 8.

7 Ibid., 6.



fig. 12 *The Dream*, Marc Chagall, 1939

event is forever playing out. Time does not exist here. Every piece of furniture sits in every location it ever inhabited, every person who ever lived there is still there, doing all the things they did. When I physically walk down the halls of the house, and peer into each room, all of the memories play out in my head.

Home becomes a palimpsest of memories, layered up, one on top of the next. All worlds are ever present in the home, and all memories exist here at once.

Dreams of Home

Sometimes the dreams start out with me escaping from a dream within a dream: I wake up in my old bed and make my way downstairs. Little things are always different, a bit blurred. The space mirrors my thoughts, what I'm not thinking about doesn't exist, planes evaporate behind me, doors appear and disappear, not always in the correct (awake) location. I can somehow simultaneously see into the bathroom and the room where the tub is, as if the wall were transparent or only extended half way to the ceiling. Sometimes past events are revisited, often with different actors and different outcomes. Sometimes there is action, a monster, blood. Sometimes it is mundane, I sit, and eat, and talk to my family. I've dreamt there is an elevator, or that the house is empty, it is being torn down, or that the basement has a swimming pool.

The house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.⁸

When I was younger, still living in the house, I had a recurring dream in which my perspective was split. I was at once in my bed, where I was sleeping and simultaneously out on the lane way, where a group of ominous figures were approaching the house. I could never see them, but rather, saw from their vantage point. I would sit there, awake, until I heard them reach the house, I would shiver, then continue to listen as they made their way upstairs to my room, outside my door. Just as the door would open and I would pull myself under the covers, ready to scream, I would wake up, terrified. The light would be on (as I always insisted), I would get out of bed and scurry to my parents' room for refuge. In retrospect, the part of this dream that I find the oddest isn't its repetitive terror, but the fact that I could see from the point of view of these supposed villains. Was I the villain? Our points of view never converged; we never laid eyes on each other. The door was the last receding veil, waking seconds before it could be pushed fully open.

8 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 6.



fig. 13 Layers of Memories like Wallpaper

In popular dream interpretation, rooms of the house are ascribed with different meanings, as symbols of the unconscious, as well as being connected to personal feelings towards the rooms. The house itself, congruent with my thesis, is predominantly said to represent the self, the conscious mind or personality. I do not condone or condemn these 'dream dictionaries' but certainly see relevance in their inclusion of the rooms of the house as significant dream symbols.

In Raymond Buckland's *Interpretation of Dreams*⁹ he ascribes the following meanings to selected rooms of the house:

- the bathroom - cleansing, eliminating the undesired.
- the basement - refuge, retreat and concealment.
- the bedroom - rest and recovery
- the dining room - sustenance and re-fortification
- the kitchen - preparation
- the living room - socializing

These attributions are basic, and don't really engage the rooms on a subconscious or deeper level of meaning, but rather, solely base their meaning on their main functions. Perhaps the appearance of specific residential rooms have no greater meaning than their everyday function, but I feel there is more to be uncovered.

From a Jungian perspective, the bedroom is linked to early childhood and play, as a place where imagination takes over; a liminal space between the world of reality and magic. This idea of transition between worlds, especially concerning the dream world, continues through our lives, the bedroom being the predominant place in which sleeping and the transition from reality to dreaming occurs. To say the room "represents rest" is understating the bedroom's existence as an ornament of the house dedicated to this journey into the dream world. It is the last space we see before entering our dreams and is the first thing we see when we return.

The unconscious projects dreams into the forefront of our sleeping minds. In dreams, our thoughts are described visually and spatially, encoded in metaphors, as unnavigable palimpsests of memory and experience. In our waking lives, architecture remains as an expanded form of our conscious selves, embedding itself into unseen places, to be regurgitated in these confusing patterns as we sleep.

Our dreams are a clear demonstration of the effects architecture has on our minds, just by the spaces we inhabit in these dreamscapes. The recurrent and often persistent revisiting of past homes in our dreams shows the

9 Buckland, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 86.



fig. 14 Photos my mother took the first time she saw the house.

deep unconscious connection we have formed with our homes.

Robert Johnson, a Jungian psychologist, states in his treatise on dream interpretation, *The Inner Work*, that “most dreams, in one way or another, are portrayals of our individual journeys toward wholeness”¹⁰ Taken in the context of recurring dreams of the childhood home, Johnson’s observation supports the notion that the childhood home is a part of us, that it is a part of our identity and without it perhaps we are not whole?

If we can’t return home in our waking lives we can always go back at night. I have a great affinity towards my childhood home. It holds a special place in my dreams, but since moving out, I feel that I have lost a sense of completeness I once felt with the house. It is no longer my home; It is no longer where I wake up.

Homesickness, Nostalgia, Remorse

I long for the familiar, the wide pine floor boards, the blue and white kitchen, lying awake at night and knowing where every sound I heard came from, if I didn’t, I became concerned. This is where I grew up, but when I lived there I couldn’t wait to leave.

Homesickness is the desire for reunification with the home. It is the soul asking to be returned to the place it feels most comfortable, a longing to be connected with its architectural soul mate. The connective power of Socratic *Eros*, a longing for wholeness, keeps us linked to the childhood home through invisible strings that tug at our heart whenever something reminds us of that far away place we cannot be with.

Nostalgia can be seen as the psychological pain of returning home, if only in our dreams. The Greek etymology of the word reveals:

nostos ‘return home’ + *algos* ‘pain’.¹¹

This pain comes from a fear acknowledged: we may be able to return home in the physical sense and re-walk the corridors of our once beloved homes, but we cannot return to childhood in spirit, we can’t travel back in time to the childlike wonder, imaginative games, and naive perspective on the world we once possessed. The primal home is a symbol of this lost innocence; it is a reminder of all the achievements and mistakes that have taken place since flying out of the nest.

In his book, *The Architectural Uncanny*, Anthony Vidler describes homesickness, in reference to Walter Pater’s *The Child in the House*, as ‘the death of a child’. He says the childhood home is ‘transformed into no more than a locus for dreams’¹² and goes on to speak of this death resulting in a

10 Johnson, *Innerwork*, 15.

11 New Oxford American Dictionary, 2nd ed., s.v. “nostalgia.”

12 Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 58.



fig. 15 Farming

suppression of individuation, in which the child's seamless connection between thoughts and ideas with physical things is shattered; toys lose their magic and cease to have other worlds connected with them.

The psychologist Jacques Lacan also looked at the uncanny in his seminar *Anxiety*, saying that 'Uncanny leads to the study of anxiety, personal shortcomings based on difficulty with environment. Environmental psychology, mirror phase, self-realization'.¹³ Lacan was very interested in the individual's relationship between their body and their surroundings.

Part of what spurred on this thesis was a sense of remorse towards my home. I feel guilty for my relationship with the house when I was a teenager. I was ashamed of my home and my heritage, I did not want to live on a farm or out in the country. Having lived in several large cities since I left home, I am still unsure if I want to live on a farm, in the country. I look back with nostalgia on my childhood of fond memories. I am thankful that I got to grow up away from the city, with lots of room to run and play, explore, make noise, and be a kid. I undoubtedly feel homesickness and yet, I still have not reconciled my feelings of guilt with my home.

13 Jacques Lacan, (Seminar, Book X: Anxiety, Le Seuil, Paris. December 19th, 1962.) Trans. Cormac Gallagher, 67.



fig. 16 in the kitchen, 1988.

kitchen

blue and white china crammed into the shelves
knotty pine cabinets along one wall
rocking chair and wood stove keeping us all
warm
mason jars and cook books filling all the nooks
yellow fridge in corner
porcelain owls hanging by the window
kerosene lamp, so long unused.
this is the kitchen
as it was.
the day I left it.



fig. 17 beam on kitchen ceiling

intersect

our lives... intersect.
we are one in the same.

you are my enemy, but I love you
you are a stranger but my friend

we are two halves of the same whole
or maybe less than half

we are fragments.

your image frightens me but I reach out to it,
long for it.
you are my rival
and my assistant

we press together and move apart
in one breath.



fig. 18 The Home in My Body (over)

THE HOME IN MY BODY



fig. 19 My Old Room

Personal Space: My Own Room

I have my room. It is mine. I go here to play, imagine, and dream. If I'm angry, I can storm up here and slam the door, shut off in my own space. It is full of my things: my bed, my desk, my clothes, my toys. No one else's. This is my place.

The epistemological problem of 'other-minds'¹ follows the line of thought that we are confined to our bodies. All of our knowledge is based on the collection of sensations from our environment. It is impossible to inhabit someone else's skin, so we can only assume there is common ground between us. Our minds are trapped in our own heads, we can never really know that anyone else thinks or feels the way we do. Our only experience of others is the actions of their bodies.

It is our bodies that define us, beyond their borders is unknown territory that we can only grasp through our own five senses. Personal space, at the most basic, is defined by our bodies themselves. It is the home of our minds, our souls, and all the mechanics that keep us alive. It is a personal space that we inhabit wherever we go; it is our mask and armour, and we can not step out of its bounds, except perhaps when we die. To be a mother, I believe, is the closest one can get to experiencing another life.

We define our world by our interaction with it, what passes through our senses, how it effects us and by what we are able to inflect back upon our environment. Personal space is like a bubble that floats around our beings, an aura of presence, safety, ownership and influence. These spheres are somewhat solipsistic spaces wherein we exist alone. Our bodies are our homes and we carry this home with us everywhere, like a snail carries its shell.

My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body insofar as the house was already an indication of my body.²

Lacan's '*mirror stage*' is a period of development in infants when they first start recognizing their own reflection. Through this recognition a series of emotional responses take place; at first the reflection is a stranger, the alterity, which creates fear and separation, but then through time, is understood to be an image of one's self. This grasping of one's image as being a part of identity is key to the formation of the ego, and also body consciousness. In Lacan's Mirror Stage once one relates himself to his image he leaves the mirror

1 Challenge of knowing whether or not humans, other than oneself, have minds based on observation.

2 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 341.



fig. 20 My New Room

stage for other stages in psychological development, but do we ever actually end this cycle of fighting with our own image and coming to terms with it, not just by looking in a looking glass but in seeing ourselves mirrored in the rest of humanity? We judge our own image based on what we see in front of us. We compare and find further understanding in looking at others, whether it is about mimicry, self esteem, or desire, we gauge ourselves on what we see of us reflected in others.

Accordingly, with Lacan's developmental stages, it follows that there can be a disconnect between how others see us and how we see our selves, and that the notion of truly knowing the self is near impossible.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposes that with the discovery of non-euclidean geometry came the realization that space and the objects that inhabit it, including human bodies, are not as distinguishable as previously thought, and so too that the intellect and the body are not wholly separate.

Man is a mind with a body, a being who can only get to the truth of things because its body is, as it were, embedded in those things.³

The phenomenological nature of our lives reveals the true interconnectedness that exists between ourselves and our habitations. Yi-Fu Tuan elaborates:

Human beings not only discern geometric patterns in nature and create abstract spaces in the mind, they also try to embody their feelings, images, and thoughts in tangible material. The result is sculptural and architectural space.⁴

Rituals of the Home

Everyday the house witnesses our rituals: Taking turns in the bathroom ('hurry up! I have to pee!'), cooking breakfast, or eating cold cereal, or skipping it all together when I wake up late, getting ready for school, more or less. Everyday, up and down the stairs, forgetting what I'm doing, in and out of rooms, turning on its faucets, leaving the TV on, turning out its lights. Smudges collect on surfaces, fingerprints of life, routes get worn into the floor, a path of life.

In Robert Johnson's *Inner Work* he lays out four steps in the process of dream

3 Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, 43.

4 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 17.



fig. 21 Assemblage

interpretation, which he calls the 'dream work'. The interpretation of dreams is a part of what Jung termed 'individuation', the process by which an individual becomes aware of the whole self, and finds unity between their conscious and unconscious states.

The four steps in Johnson's process of interpretation are the making of associations, the connecting of images to dynamics, the actual interpretation of images and finally, the part I am most interested in, the creating of rituals to bring the dream out of the unconscious, dream reality, and into the physical world. One simple example of a ritual to bring a dream into reality from Johnson's book was the instruction for a man dreaming about tomatoes to go out and eat some real tomatoes.

In this context, rituals are acts that can range from monotonous, everyday activities, such as washing dishes, to sacred acts of purification.

Rituals not only have the power to connect our dream realities with physical ones, they can also connect our personal selves to our surroundings, and often a larger group or community of others. The ritual part of dream interpretation is to make the interpreter more mindful of her unconscious dream worlds and her connection with reality. Ritual has the potential to take everyday, common place, and also sacred rituals, and connect them to our minds and bodies, and our bodies to a built environment and a community. This is combined with the hypothesis that real/physical architecture cannot exist without this connection of mind and body through ritual.

I liken this process to the expression 'making a house a home'. Through ritualizing our lives we impart our unconscious onto space, and expose our surroundings to our inner selves.

There are many small acts that can be done as a means of integrating self and space. These acts can include, but are not limited to, the preparation of a meal, as well as dining and possibly sharing this meal. Getting acquainted with one's kitchen and all its resources, quirks, shortcomings and successes is sure to endear the home to one's self. Bathing, the ritual of cleansing is, in western culture especially, often regarded as a private act and doing so often takes place in reassuringly personal space. The repetition of this act in one space can mark it as your personal domain. Sleeping is certainly a daily ritual which helps cement the bond. Many of us find it difficult to sleep unless we are in our own bed, in our own safe space, where we are comfortable and at ease.

My parents and I have discussed the possibility of selling the house to me, as they consider moving somewhere smaller, more convenient and all on one level as they get older. Though the negotiations are still quite hypothetical, I have based my thesis on this home and the notion of my grand return. This return will require that I perform the ritual of turning the house into my home.



fig. 22 Rituals/Stains

It is a winter morning. My father wakes up while it is still dark out. No alarm. He goes down the stairs, I hear them creaking in the darkness and fall back asleep. He pokes the coals, starts the fire in the wood stove so it will be warm when we wake up. He has a bowl of cereal, puts on his coveralls and goes down to milk the cows, entering the crisp silence of the cold, early morning. Still half asleep, in the pale dawn light I hear my mother going down the creaky stairs, dog at her side, faster than my father, down to the bathroom. After this I hear her feeding the animals in the kitchen, kibble in the bowls. Then she starts to make coffee. The coffee grinder whirring is sometimes the first noise I hear in the morning. The sun is peaking past the horizon as I make my way downstairs, my brothers still asleep. No school today.

As we wake up we congregate in the kitchen, the warmest room in the house, sitting at the kitchen table near the wood stove. We are running low on wood and I have to go get some while my mother starts breakfast; pancakes. Pancakes aren't my favourite, but it is still special. It requires a great deal of bundling up in order to make the trek to the wood shed at the other end of the old garage. My boots, liners removed sitting by the fire, still smell damp from getting snow in them last night. I get my tuque and mittens out of the wooden bench in the sun porch, and put on my coat.

The snow crunches beneath my feet as I trod to the wood shed. I look down to the barn, I can hear the milk machines running; he will be done soon. The woodshed is dark and creepy. Little lines of snow collect where it has blown through the cracks between boards. The logs are piled high. Just last weekend my father had cut up a tree in the woods with his chain saw, brought it back in the truck, and while he cut the pieces with the axe my brothers and I stacked them in the shed.

Back in the house my mother has gotten out the frying pan. She is thawing some frozen fruit (picked in the summer), and making the batter. I take off my snow clothes and open the top of the stove to drop a log in. The smell of burning wood fills the kitchen, as well as some smoke. I will set the table.

'Don't use the good dishes'. I set each place with a plate and a bowl, which I need a stool to get down from the shelf. Knives, forks, spoons? Glasses, napkins. Maybe we need separate plates for toast? I put the little maple syrup pitcher on the table. Soon it will be time to start putting up buckets and collecting sap to make more maple syrup. It smells fresher and is thinner than the stuff from the store. More flavour, less sweet. I get out yoghurt



fig. 23 Gathering of Mementos

and juice and place the fruit on the table. I can smell the pancakes frying. My mother flips them and places them on a plate next to the stove, then covers them up with a towel.

We all jump at a large thud from above, snow falling onto the kitchen roof from the main house. My father comes in and starts taking off his boots. We are all ready to eat.

Decorating the Home

The ritual of decorating our personal spaces is a process by which the imaginary world transforms into reality, and it is one of the primary ways in which we connect ourselves to our environments and turn our houses into homes.

I don't feel I am too different from the rest of society in admitting I have a certain fantasy or day dream that I often revel in. Perhaps, being trained in architecture, I spend a bit more time thinking about it and all the details of it, but still I think it is fairly commonplace. It is the dream of the perfect home, the fantasy of having a house out of a magazine, a home where everything fits, where all the colours are a true representation of self, all the rooms are useful or maybe in the dream home there are so many rooms they couldn't possibly all have uses.

Few are able to live this fantasy out, but we can all try. In decorating our studio apartments or slowly working away on our fixer-upper that needs a lot of fixing, we get a little bit closer. The dream home may not come true the way we envision it, but the process of taking our real homes, channeling those desires, and applying them to what we've got, in some way does bring it closer. The acting out of dream-home images is without a doubt a process that brings us towards wholeness, both an individual wholeness and sense of oneness with our homes. Through striving to reconcile the differences between the reality of our homes and the home of our fantasies an affinity with our homes is surely created.

We bring home trinkets, gather mementos and photos, items that personify us adorn the walls and shelves. Our personal taste, our accomplishments, our family and friends, are all embodied in our home. The process of redecoration has long been a way of connecting with our habitations, of leaving our mark, our personality on the space. From cave paintings to the royal redesign of palaces that seem to come with each new English monarch, one of the most basic ways of forming a bond with our homes, and to make them our own, is by having control over how they are decorated.

Assemblages create territories. Territories are more than just spaces: they have a stake, a claim, they express.⁵

5 Macgregor Wise, *Assemblage*, 78.

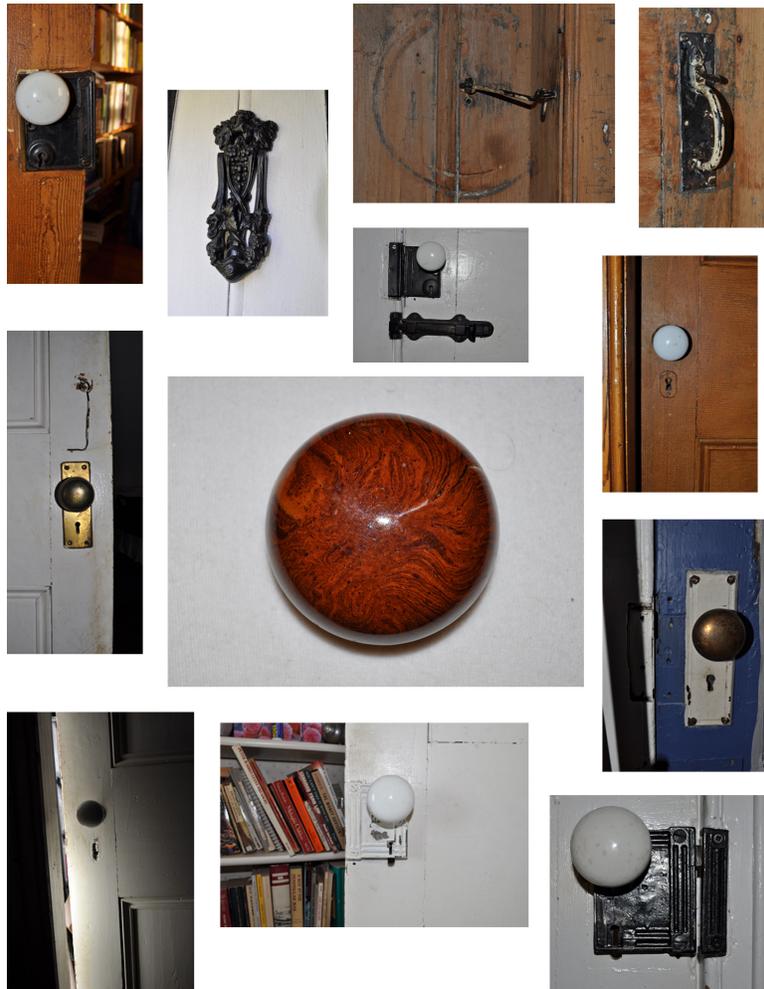


fig. 24 Door Knobs

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the story of the sculptor Pygmalion shows love being expressed by decoration, through the adorning of the statue he has carved. His love for this statue, his dressing of it in expensive and rare materials prompts the statue, with the divine intervention of the Goddess Venus, to come to life.

*Now with words he woos,
And now with gifts no maiden can refuse:
Bright beads, and birds, and flowers of varied hues,
Tears of the sun-god's daughters from their tree,
Lilies, and shells, and pebbles from the sea.
And then in garments gay her limbs he dressed,
With rings for fingers, sashes for her breast.⁶*

- Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

This type of affection also has the power to bring life to the home. The home becomes a place for collecting objects, a museum of our lives.

It is almost a rite of passage in life when a child is able to have a say in the look of their own room, for some children with decoratively strict parents this may not come until they have a home of their own, and for others it is a process that takes place with every change of taste.

I believe I was 12 when my room was re-wallpapered. It was at the height of my obsession with astrology, so I had decided to have the whole room redecorated in midnight blue and gold. The wallpaper we found was perfect, deep, mottled blue with a pattern of little gold triangles, and a matching border with alternating suns and moons along the ceiling. My light fixture was already golden. I got a golden curtain rod and a perfectly matching, blue and gold, sun and moon motif fabric for the curtains. My new bed frame was a dark metallic blue, everything was perfect. We got sheets to match and a comforter, candles, amulets, all sorts of objects. Never before or since have I had such an all encompassing, cohesive decorating scheme. I loved it. This was my room.

I grew tired of my room within a year. Instead of redecorating again I settled for taking over my older brother's larger bedroom when he moved out for University.

My old room is still all decked out in deep blue and gold.

6 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10. 6. 263-269.



fig. 25 Dresses in Landscape

Dressing in My Architecture

...what you see outside of you, you see inside of you;
it is visible and it is your garment.
- *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*⁷

Fashion designers play with proportions, colour, pattern, and texture to incite specific emotions. This attracts clientele that wish to project this message from their person. Quite often this message is simplified down to a display of status, but there is no denying what a person wears projects an image into the eyes of others.

Aside from carrying messages, or being a status symbol, fashion at its base is still utilitarian, it serves as protection from the outside world, just like a personal building. Our clothing can keep us warm when it's cold, dry when it's wet or even decent when we aren't. Our clothing is a personal shield; its forms are bubble of existence.

I have developed a set of four phases in a transformational process, related to alchemy and psychology. I then imagined the process as a series of garments, and my body's relationship to them:

Aura

I know this place, I've been here before. I reach to touch the surface, but am pushed back by an invisible force. It is all around me, containing me in myself. The world outside of me is an unreachable place, intangible stimulus. It is my gown. The great, voluminous, flouncing skirt, the petticoats and crinoline, the layers of fabric, and boning, and horse hair that hold me back. It encircles my person, and I inhabit the space it creates for me, protected. As I walk along, it brushes with the walls, the paintings, artifacts, earth. Relaying messages of sensation to me so that I should not have to experience them first hand. Through the china room, I am daunted by the uncontrollable mass that surrounds me, but we –yes, we– the dress and myself exit unscathed. The dress is my home, it is my retreat, it covers me from prying eyes. It is my shelter from the elements. Then, without warning, my dress breaks open, cracking like an egg. I, the yoke tumble out, exposing what was once hidden.

Extimacy

A flash of skin. I know how to grab attention. Structure, push up bra, bustle. Look at the shape of my body, how the clothing accentuates these curves. The codpiece shows my virility. I want to tell my story, and I use my body to do so. I shout to the audience across the proscenium, I break the fourth wall. My

7 Robinson. ed. *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*, 105.



fig. 26 The Transformation with Dress

senses are heightened by the world around me. I feel the elements reach out to touch me.

The dress is my theatre.

But soon my brashness becomes too much. What I've said becomes louder than myself. My dress wears me.

Psychasthenia

Suddenly my confidence wanes. I feel a shift of energy. My dress sprawls out from me, or is it the wallpaper eating my dress? The curtains are louder than I, and my voice falters at the immensity of the upholstery. My dress has become a part of the environment, and I shrink in it, overwhelmed by its own pattern and colour. I feel at once that all eyes are on me, but unseeing, unrecognizing. Am I the person, or is the person my dress.

Transcendence

I remove the garment. I step out and on, let it sit beneath my feet. I still feel its presence, but now I feel my own presence in the space, the dress and I are one being, but I am self reliant. I have come to resolution.

The titles '*extimacy*' and '*psychasthenia*' are terms coined by Lacan and Roger Caillois, respectively. Extimacy is described as a rejection of the container by the contained, breaking away from confinement. Psychasthenia is a psychological disorder in which sufferers cannot distinguish between themselves and the world around them.

The relationship between clothing and the body, and the body and the home are very similar, it's just a matter of scale. A connection with the clothes we wear is important as we go out into the world, but in general, in our society, clothing is something we can change everyday, whereas the home is much more permanent, the bond needs to be stronger, more committed, deeper.

The soft curves of the carved furniture were a counterpart to the rich costumes... and complemented the voluminous gowns of the women and the lace fronts and elaborate wigs of the men. Skirted chairs and gathered draperies imitated the details of how cloth was used in skirts and gowns, and wallpaper copied the designs used in fabrics.⁸

8 Rybczynski, *Home*, 5.



fig. 27 Me in a Dress

what will happen now?

we've drifted away from the woods
and each other
will they still be there?
time is cut short.

the spirit of the woods remains
though our forts are empty.
no more time for dress up
no more time to play

behind us we have left
broken bottles
fallen branches
our imaginations

the wind has changed.
no one waits inside,
rocking by the fire
or singing nursery rhymes

inside the house is empty
inside of me is everything.

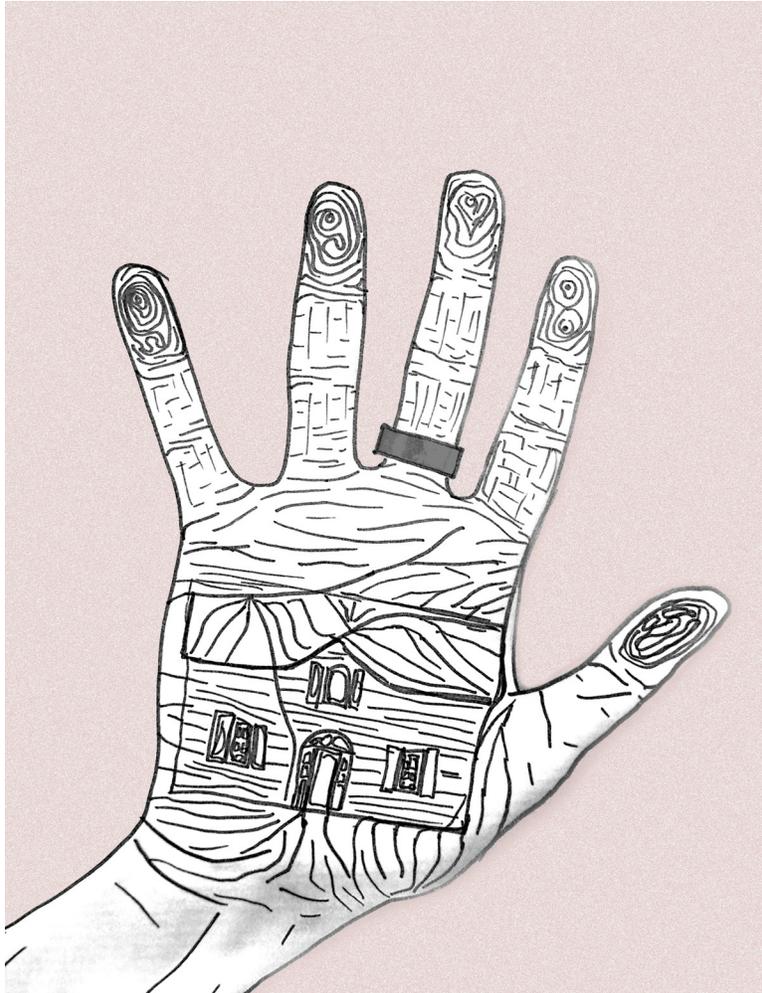


fig. 28 Processes of Transformation (over)

PROCESSES OF TRANSFORMATION



fig. 29 Horse Barn

Jung and Individuation with the Home

I had dreamed repeatedly dreams that treated each time the same theme: next to my house was another one, more precisely a wing or an added construction that was strange to me. Each time I would amaze myself in my dream because I did not know this part of the house, which apparently was there from the beginning. This strange part of the house revealed its meaning finally: The unknown wing was a part of my personality, an aspect of myself...¹

-Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.

For Jung Individuation of the Self is the realization of the whole self, breaking down a barrier between the conscious and unconscious mind. It can be a long process of hard-earned enlightenment. Individuation is conducted through several methods, such as dream recording, both written accounts and visual depictions of encountered imagery, followed by the interpretation of these dreams, preferably with the guidance of a psycho-analyst.

Individuation of the house would have to be the discovery and breaking down of the boundary between the human soul and the soul of the building, which are linked through inhabitation, but not yet fully realized. The distance created by leaving home also compounds this separation. The link of inhabitation is nearly severed, still remaining as a thin thread through memories and dreams of the home. Perhaps the role of the psycho-analyst, in terms of individuation with the home, is transposed onto the architect. In new construction it is certainly one of the architect's jobs to try to foster a cohesive connection between their client and the building they create for them, but what about with already existing structures?

...it [individuation] is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation.²

-Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.

To Jung the home was a representation of the self in dreams. Dark areas of the house are dream metaphors for dark parts of the psyche, our shadow. He strongly believed in the process of bringing dream imagery into the real world through ritual. The Tower of Bollingen was Jung's castle like retreat. In a process mirroring his own individuation, he added to Bollingen's architecture as significant life events took place; the building embodied these events, even personified them. He also added parts to represent important

1 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 202.

2 Ibid., 221.



fig. 30 Closet

relationships he had, adding the actual tower when his wife died, as a monument of their life together.

The Individuation with the house need not be as complex as building whole new wings or towers onto the personal home. In most urban situations this could prove most problematic. Individuation can be more about discovering the home rather than adding to it, noticing the interactions, how it feels to live there, and then, to celebrate your life with the home.

closet poem

hiding in the closet,
a bricked up vestal virgin
trapped behind the wall from sin.
I sit here when I'm sad and lonely.
I hide here when I'm bad.
trapped here by my nature.
in the closet I feel safe.

through the cracks between pine boards,
thickly slathered with white paint,
streaks of light come through
illuminate me
comfort me
tell me of the sun.

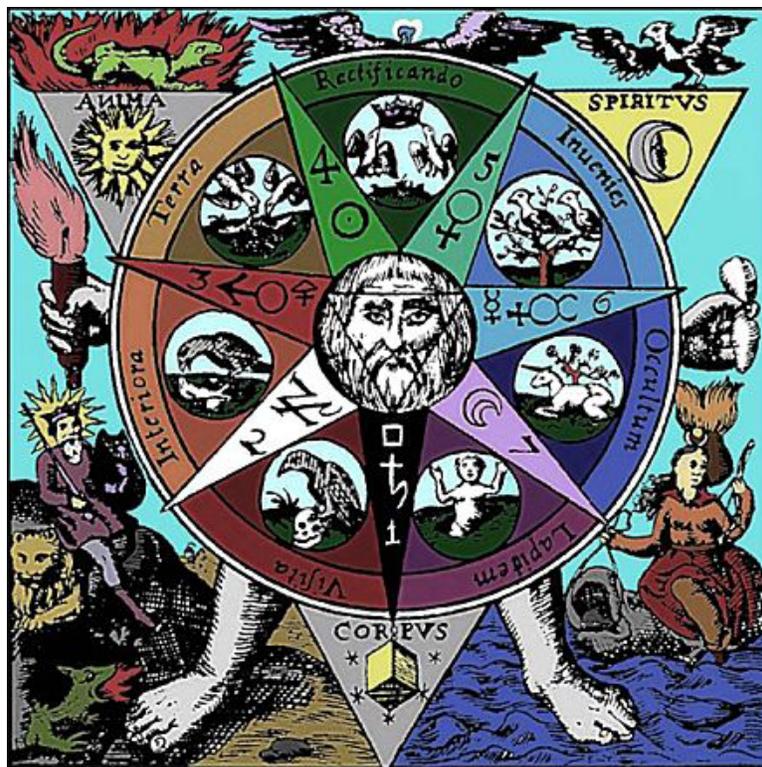


fig. 31 *Azoth of the Philosophers* by Basilus Valentinus, 1659

A Home Created with Alchemy

Alchemy... throws a bridge to the past, the gnosis, and also to the future, the modern psychology of the unconscious.³

-Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

Although the original form of the masque seems to have died out, from its ashes has grown the opera; often an extravagant display of ornamentation in sets, costumes and even the singers' voices (falsetto, contralto). In his book *The Magic Flute: An Alchemical Allegory*,⁴ Matheus Franciscus Maria Berk compares Mozart's opera to the alchemical process, pointing out many congruencies between the opera and alchemy. Carl Jung saw this 'pseudoscience' as analogous with processes and goals of psychoanalysis. All sorts of transformation from popular culture, such as TV shows, movies, and even the lives of pop singers, have been compared to the alchemical work; why not the process of turning a house into a home?

Alchemy is based upon the search for truth, the changing of the invaluable into a valuable substance, and the search for eternal life or the philosopher's stone. The process of turning the house into a home, like the alchemical process to create the philosopher's stone, some form of transcendence or a connection to a higher power or the whole self, as described by Jung, must occur. Taking the house with no reverberative effect on the inhabitant's soul and bringing them to an ultimate goal of oneness.

Many versions of the alchemical process have existed throughout history, with wide ranges in steps, the number of steps and to what degree these steps were metaphorical or magical, and the desired outcome. The process of turning lead to gold is a common analogy for the process but was also the sole desired outcome for some alchemists, others attempted to create the elixir of life or the philosopher's stone.

In an alchemical process described by Basilus Valentinus⁵, which lays out 7 steps, each step describes the physical reactions that should be taking place in the substance which is being transformed. Wondering what alchemy could do to my house, I decided to take these 7 steps and make them my own. In my appropriation of the process, the transformation is being performed on my childhood home. The process is illustrated with collages.

The alchemical dream journey is like a *dérive*, it is the subconscious travels through my house, with the hope of discovering new and enlightening experiences that may better inform my relationship with home. It serves as a study in psycho-geography, but rather than enacted on a city, it is used at the small scale of residential home

3 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 201.

4 Berk, *Die Zauberflöte*, .

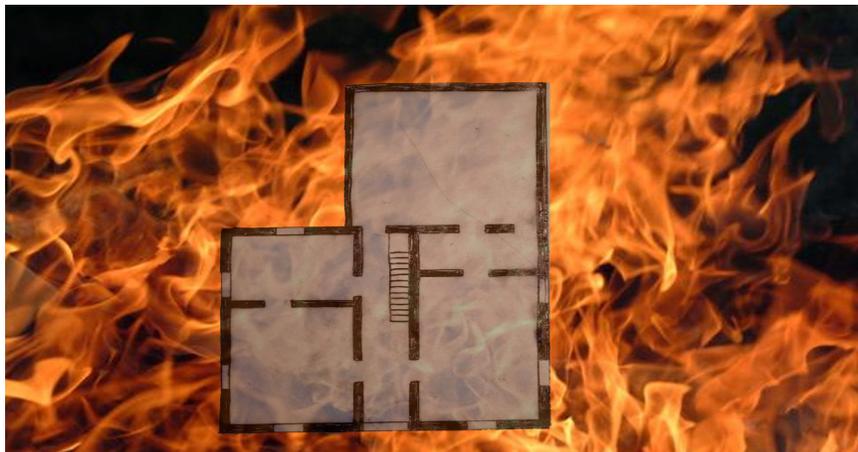
5 Glauber, *A Compendium of Alchemical Processes*.

An Alchemical Dream Journey

The Burning House

I wake to realize I've dozed off at the kitchen table, sitting in the candle light. The room hangs full of shadows, dancing with the flicker of the flames. It is January, 1998. It is the winter of the ice storm, when our power was out for several days. I am 13 years old. I sit all day, poking at the dripping wax from candles. It is so cold I am wearing my coat inside. I stare into the flames of the wood stove every time I add a new log. We are running low. I see myself in the orange tongues of heat lapping at the wood; I feel their warmth touch my face. Ice hangs heavy on all the trees, covering the windows. The house is dark and quiet. Blankets hang over the door ways into the rest of the house; an attempt to keep the heat in the kitchen. As it gets darker my eyes strain by the candle light, I try to read but can't, and soon the fire is the only thing I see. The flames fill my vision as they pour out over the table, like the wax, like molten lava, seeping across the table, and before I can do anything the fire has taken over. The fire is in charge now, it encircles me, it knows what has to be done and I let it go about its work. This is calcination.

The flames spread across the kitchen, melting the linoleum flooring away, it gives off an acrid odour. The knotty-pine cupboards burn to ashes, even the blue dishes and the fake Dutch tiles burn away. The oven and fridge, who had both survived another fire, cannot survive this one. Every aspect of myself in this room burns up, every ounce of connection I feel, any object that holds significance or memories, the kerosene lamps burst with flames and vanish, and when only the unrecognizable bones of the kitchen remain the fire moves on. Ravishing the hallway and living room, pulling of the wallpaper from the walls and burning it up, even the spot where I naughtily drew on the wall with markers when I knew I shouldn't, gone. The old change table in the bathroom, where we always kept our bathing suits and suntan lotion, and my mom's big yellow beach bag with the white polka dots, it all burns up.



The fire makes its way up the stairs, holding no mercy, it tears them away from my soul. The flame burns bare my brother's room, the one that would one day be mine. It is only ashes. My parents' room burns up. Goodbye to my mother's christening gown that I liked to dress up in when I was little, it burns away. All the memories burn away. And finally the fire reaches my room, pausing momentarily on the threshold, peering in, it plays with the idea of reserving the only things that I have left and then devours them. All my toys, my stuffed animals, the playmobil, gone. Everything that I held onto in the vain and impossible hope that I would one day be a child again, gone. The flame tears these dreams from my heart. All the feelings are lost. The flame burns off the facade, destroying the clapboard, the shutters, the windows and the roof and finally it ceases, it goes out and the hot glowing embers soon turn black.

All that remains is a house and a man, no longer connected. Not only has the fire burnt up all my memories in the house, it has also burnt up all the memories of the house in me. I am alone in this black shell.

I brush my fingers along the desecrated surface, thick calcined walls hold the buildings form, but all else is gone, it is now just a concrete shell of the house that once stood, reduced down to nothing but an essence of its physical self. I feel around for memories, for any ties to my home that remain. My fingers claw at sooted walls, hard and unknowing, and yet I still know that this burned out shell of a house is a part of me. I can feel this all consuming fire has made us stronger; we have been set free of our material trappings. We have been forged anew in the fire today.





fig. 32 Burning House (over)

The Crevice House

I find myself letting go. I am crying, the tears roll down my cheeks in this dark place. I wake up. I am back in the womb. I let the tears flow freely. You cannot see them through the embryonic fluid. Then, out of nowhere, the moment I have waited for: a teensy, tiny crack opens, I emerge fully formed out of the walls of my house. Light hits my eyes for the first time and I let out my primal scream. Everything is familiar yet foreign, I know this house that I've been born into, I've known it all my life, even though it is just beginning. I face my own home, my own soul. Is this real or a dream? Things are not quite right. The air gets thick in places, I feel a shift in the floor, or is it my feet? The floor boards grow beneath me, the cracks between them ever widening until it is a struggle to leap across their chasmic depth. Meanwhile, empty space begins to open up, showing folds in the fabric of the house, exposing new and hidden rooms. The doors in the mantle lead to rooms inside the fireplace that didn't exist, where Santa emerges from every Christmas. But Santa isn't real, is he? The yellow pantry is still in the kitchen, it was just hidden from view. Or is it there at all? I crawl through these new spaces, hidden in walls. There is a door in the bathroom that leads to a small library behind the family room. I thought I imagined it existed, but now I know it really does. I realize all the spaces are my own thoughts and memories, some repressed so much that they have become physical objects in this house, formed like diamonds from such compression.



All memories overlap on themselves in this house, with ever increasing space still contained in the same walls. All the locked doors become open, I can go in the pink room and riffle through the boxes, they are filled with painful feelings, all the bad memories are boxed up and ready to be shipped away. I begin tearing through them, ripping things up. This is the calculus test I nearly failed, and this is throwing myself on my bed, crying, knowing I needed a good mark to get into Architecture school. I rip them up. I rip it all up. I didn't retake the class because I hated it. I took literature instead, and I still got into Architecture School. I tear up the hatred I once had for this house, the embarrassment that once consumed me, of growing up on a farm. I destroy these bad feelings.

I wear myself out and fall asleep amidst a pile of torn up memories.

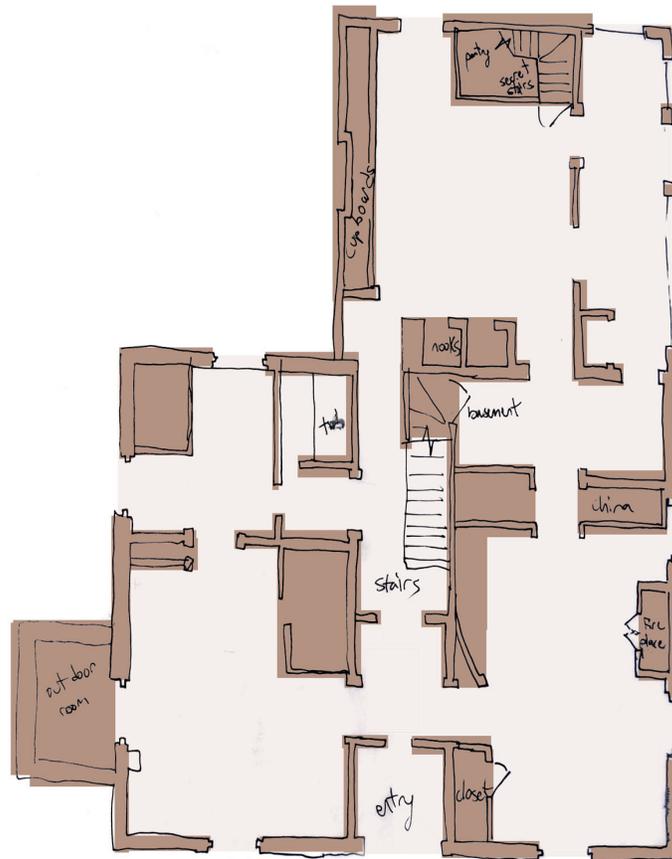


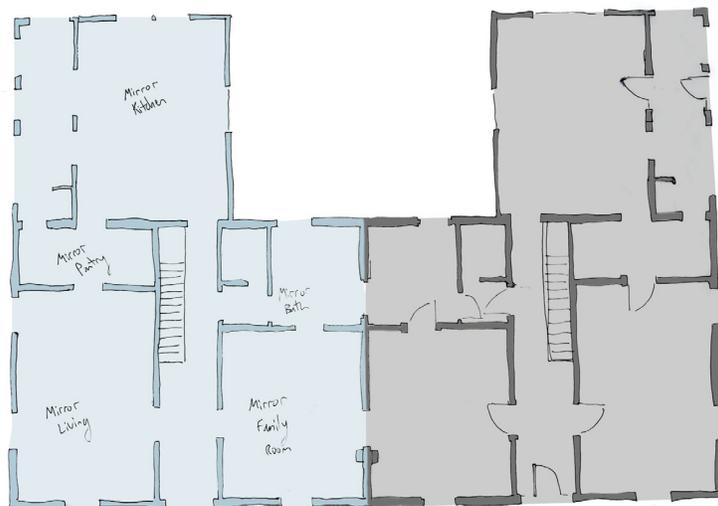


fig. 33 Crevice House (over)

The Mirror House

When I wake, I notice a curtain hanging across the far wall, a veil covering the window; sheer, white lace allowing the light to come through. I go in to look at it, peek behind it and I see the glass window panes have been replaced with mirror, and through the mirror lays my reflection. Me in my house, everything is the same, but it is different. The house on the other side of the mirror seems brighter and healthier. In this mirror house there isn't the clutter I am surrounded in here. I stare into the mirror world, transfixed. As I move in for a closer look I find myself pressing my hands up to the mirror, but instead of feeling the cold, hard surface, I feel the warmth of my own hands. My fingers clasp together with my reflections and gently pull me through. I am stepping right through the glass, into the mirror image of the house.

As I look back to where I've been the room seems darker, more awkward, confusing. I realize I am still looking at myself, just from a new angle. I see how my relationship with the house has been. I see myself ripping wallpaper, cramming closets full of junk, drawing on the walls, picking at the drywall and peeling off chipped paint. I see myself throwing the soccer ball across the kitchen, smashing the big, blue, glass jar. I have not loved this house. I have treated it badly. I have caused pain to it and myself. I have vandalized and mutilated its walls and the scars show up in me as well.



Splinters of mirror, strewn about, adorn the floor, reflecting me back at myself.

I must return to the real world, to set it right. I step back through the mirror and let this part of me shatter into pieces. Shards of glass explode into tiny fragments until there is nothing left but dust that blows away.

In a vacant trance, my body leads me back down stairs.



fig. 34 Mirror House (over)

The Nature House

At the bottom of the stairs it is day. A warm breeze blows through the open screen door. It is summer, I am just a child. I can hear the cicadas outside, birds chirping, and the rustle of full, green leaves swaying together in the wind. The sun glares outside, insects crawl about, rodents burrow, the wind gets harsher. I feel protected inside this house, stuck in the side of the hill, the woods break the west wind. Part of nature removed: foundation of limestone, quarried locally, timber frame from trees, fell on this very site. The house can still feel the natural world running through it.

The walls shift and curve, ever so slightly and then, out of nowhere, little shoots appear from behind picture frames and in the corners of rooms. The posts are coming out of dormancy. The potted plants put their roots down, the plaster crumbles revealing the structure of the house: living trees, their branches fanning out, leaves budding, flowers blooming. The floor returns to earth and grass is born out of it. Nature is coming in, breaking the boundaries. I am letting this chaos rush in, filling up the space within until inside and out are one in the same. The house feels raw and energetic, it brings forth life, ever giving. The new leafy boundaries curve to form new spaces, the tub becomes a natural spring, water gurgling forth.



Mother Nature, Venus, Earth Goddess asserting her power; she is greater than me and my house. From the earth we grew out of, we shall return. It is love that gives us this brief glimpse of life. This house is a site of love and birth. Thick foliage abounds now, the house has given way to nature.

It feels amazing to be free, out in the open, observing the awe of the world. My heart beats, pumping blood through my veins, my lungs draw in the fresh air. My eyes open wide, taking in all the green. I am lucky to be here. I sit and enjoy it, hugging in life.

Then the leaves curl back up and withdraw back into the beams, the floor boards yawn. Roots are pulled back up, the limestone gets back into orthogonal lines. Flower petals fall and vanish. Nature goes back to sleep within these walls. But I know its great force resides right outside, and I can still hear life singing in every fibre of this house. I drift away, curled up on the floor.

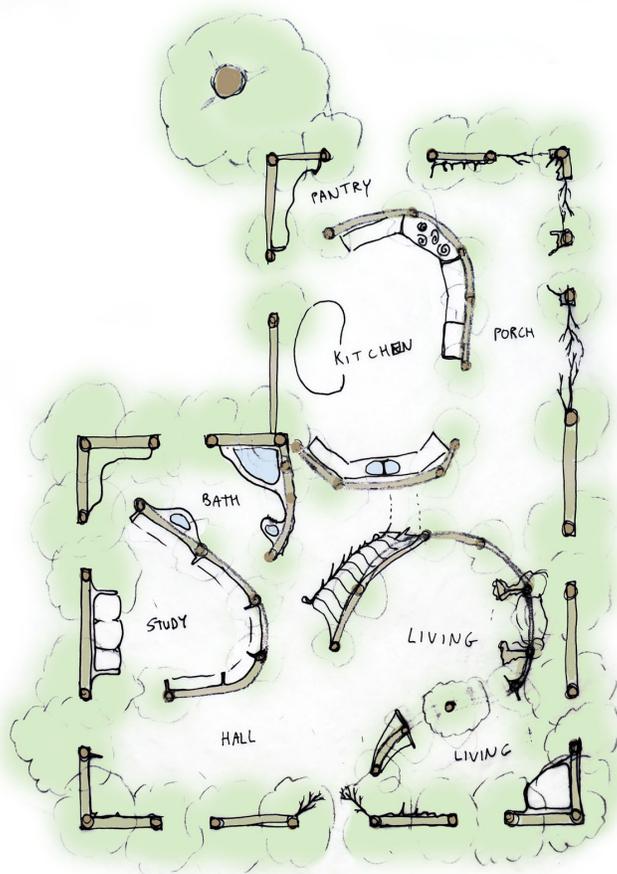




fig. 35 Nature House (over)

The Decadence House

I've always had the fantasy of living in a sprawling Baroque Palace, a Georgian Mansion, or a Jacobean Manor, rather than a simple farm house. My imagination had always been adequate enough to decorate this house, but as I wake I see the dream is coming true before my eyes.

Some specks appear on the wall, growing and spreading, bleeding out like ink soaking through cloth. Gently it scrolls across the wall's surface, leaving an organic patterning that grows, and spins, and swirls into a damask. Pillars surge forth from the walls, then begin pushing the ceilings up, they lift and curve into the heavens. I am overcome by the marble walls, and floors of pure white Parian, and dark green, rich and veiny Verde Antique. The carpet swirls with new colours, shapes, figures. A story unfurls in these rugs, it is a tale of opulence and wealth, the conquering of enemies and victory. Horses gallop after stags, Arabian princes on their backs. Spears soar, blood pours, spilling across the floor and giving birth to more and more patterns, each one infinitely more intricate than the ones before. Velvety drapes grow out along the windows, dark emerald and ebony, thick, billowing and piling on the floors. Recesses form, the walls moan as they curve inwards. Within the hollows, urns, vases, and busts grow out of plinths, faces form out of the stone, curving, crying, escaping; more arresting than any Michelangelo. Glossy, lacquered tables sprout forth, inlaid with exotic woods and ivories. Unnameable oddities spill forth from their surfaces, surrounded by pearls and rhinoceros horns. A stuffed peacock comes forth, its feathers fluttering across the room, each one landing to beget stools and pillows and rugs in the peacock's iridescent hues of radiant sapphires and turquoises. Chandeliers drop from unseen heights, illuminated with a hundred candles, thousands of thick cut crystals sparkling amidst the golden candelabras. More tapestries topple down across deeply carved mahogany panels. Paintings of overwhelming beauty unfurl from swirling, gilded frames, carrying themes of love and war, depicting sex and violence, each one more audacious than the last.



It is too fantastic.

A lion's stuffed head roars from the wall where it hangs, rubies, like a fountain of blood, gush forth from its jaws. The midnight black drapes grow denser, thicker, gold embroidery dances around its edges, then moves across it, engulfing it. The curtains grow, taking over the windows, blocking out the light. The room hangs in shadows, created by the myriad candles in all the chandeliers. The patterns beneath me continue to swirl, the rugs pile up beneath me. Deep cornice molding grows out from the domed ceilings, slithering down towards me. The room is spinning.

It is too much.

Then I see it, the rotting, I smell the stench. The jewels are all maggots, the carpets are oozing sludge. Insects rain from the ceiling, getting caught in chandeliers, extinguishing the candles, burning up.

Is this what I always wanted? Is this a part of me?

The room grows dim as the candles go out, and soon I am again in darkness. I make my way to the last flickering candle, alight on a table, wading through the filth. When I reach it I hold it up in front of me, looking out across the room, I see the room is empty. Then the light goes out.

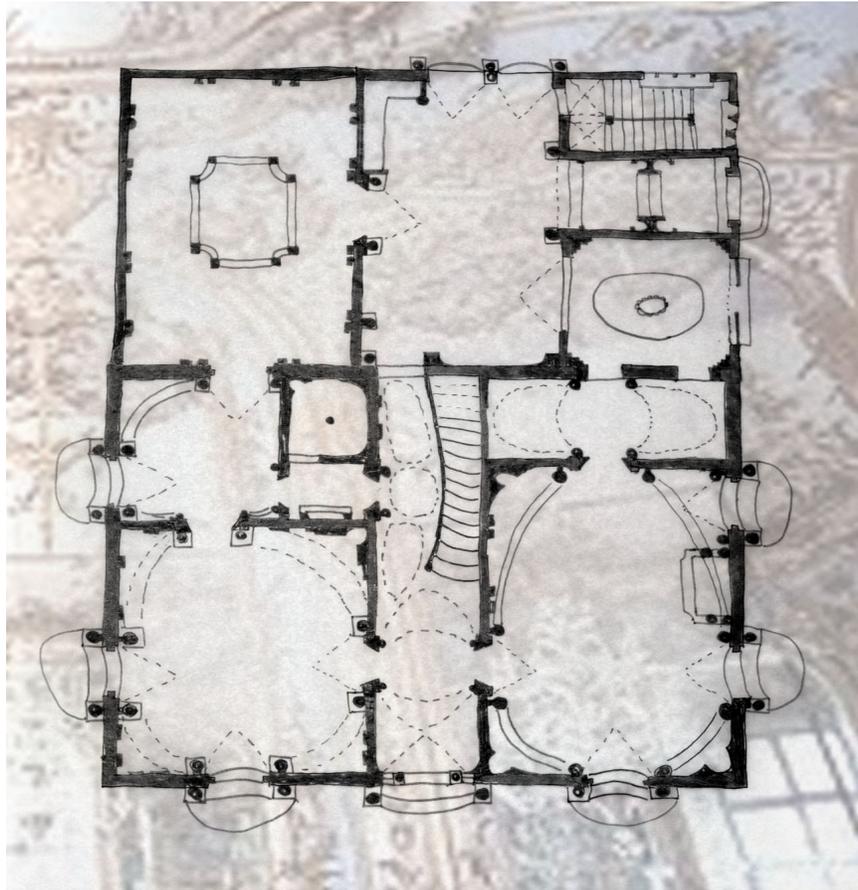




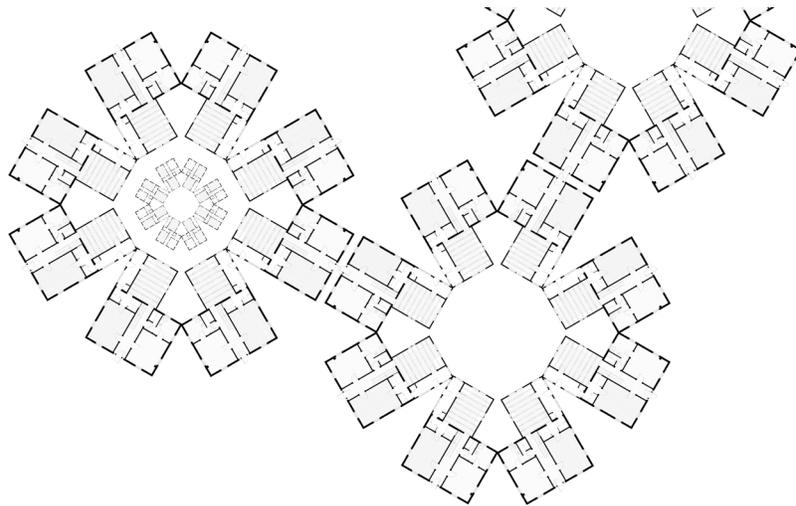
fig. 36 Decadence House (over)

The Floating House

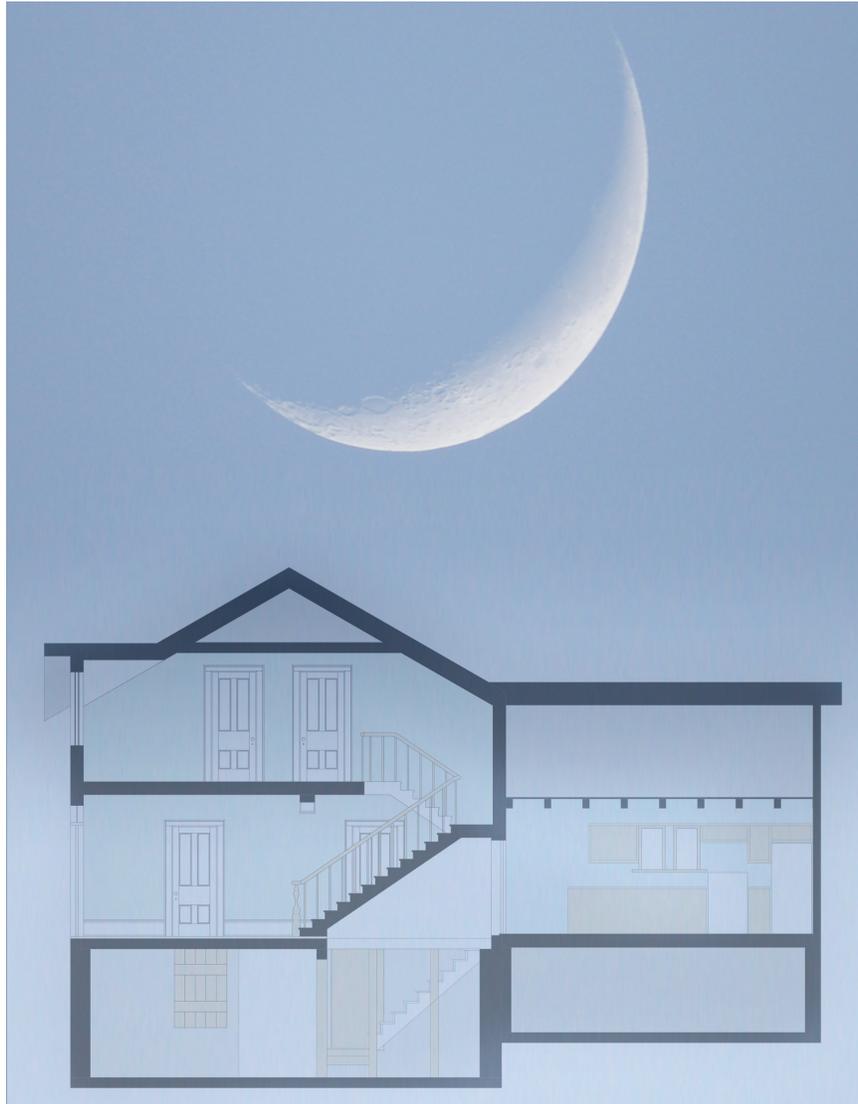
A pale light glows in the kitchen, and I make my way there. It is moon light, streaming in through the windows. In the middle of the kitchen, where the table normally sits, is my bed, inviting and cozy looking, stacked up with pillows and duvet. Everything else in the kitchen is gone. I climb into the bed, rest my head on the pillows, and turn to look out the window.

In the sky hangs the largest crescent moon I've ever seen, it takes up the whole window. Silvery, white light pours out from the moon, bathing the little house and me, illuminating the sky as if it were day. The walls glow silver, then become translucent to better let the moon's light in.

The house takes flight. We are soaring through the sky. The sparkling stars lend their light to create the glassy walls. My dreams flow freely from my head, taking form, becoming solid, then turning to clouds hanging in the air. I float freely. Every room is one room and all rooms at once. The thought of space, the idea of architecture, takes on physical manifestations. They last only briefly before becoming clouds. My mind projects itself into space. Out of me tumbles this house as I at once tumble through it, passing through walls which are nothing more than shadows on the moon.



The moonlight washes over me, cleansing me of my earlier bad dreams, then they too are reduced to clouds. All my bad feelings, my worries, every material object that holds me down through bad memories, becomes light and airy and drifts off as a cloud. I let go of everything as I drift through the night sky. My flaws, my fixations, my ego: all gone. The bed I lay in becomes cloud, and finally my very body becomes cloud, dissipating little wisps across the moon.



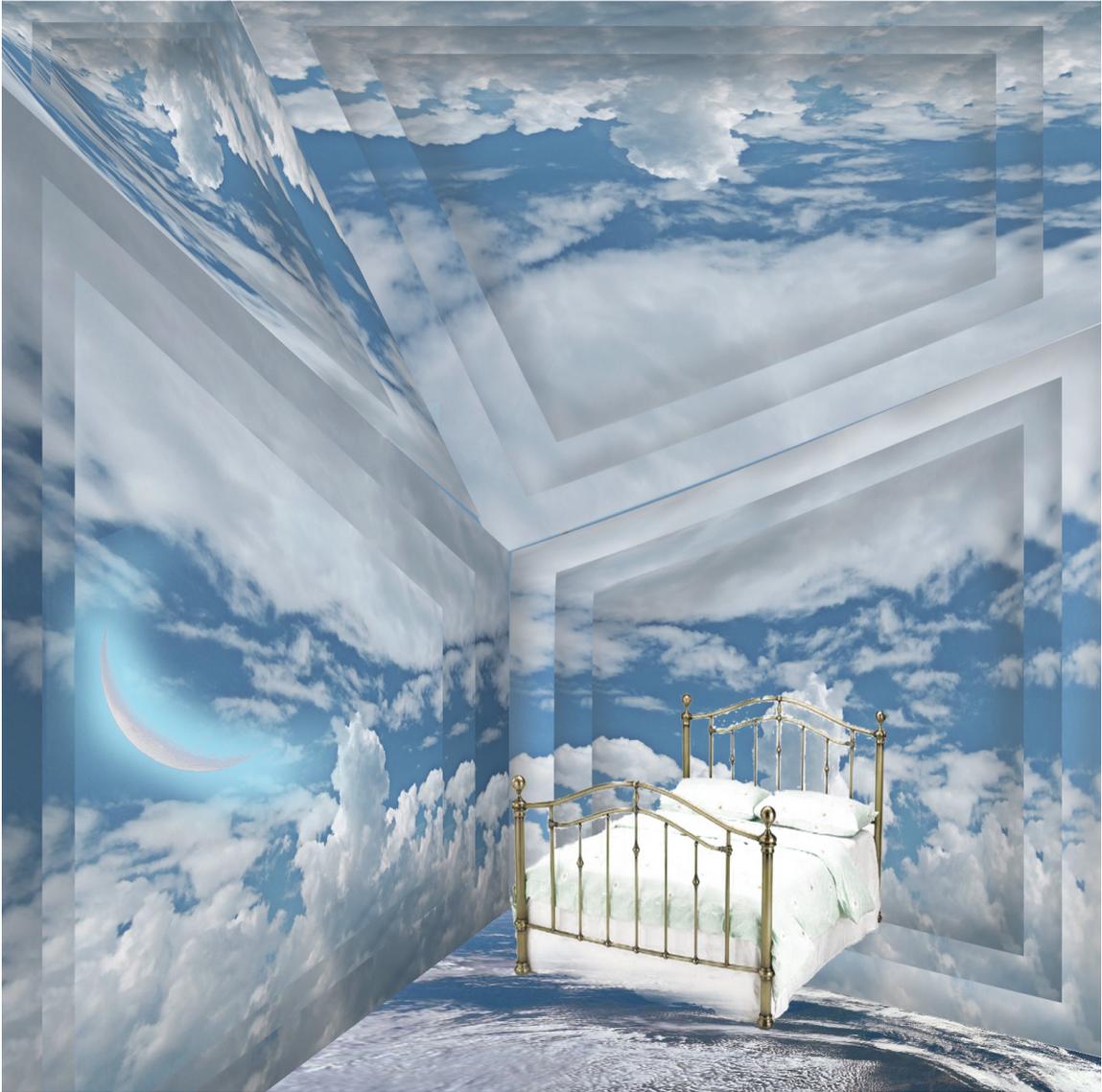


fig. 37 Floating House (over)

My Transcendent Home

When I wake up I am back in my old room. I am 11 again. It is the summer of 1996.

This was my first night sleeping in my newly decorated room. Everything is navy blue and gold.

The wallpaper is a mottled blue with a gold diamond pattern; my new bed is a dark iridescent blue. My new dresser is dark blue, my sheets and comforter and curtains are all blue and gold, with smiling suns and stars. Hanging in my window is a big golden sun.

The entire cosmos are lain out, the sun and the moon and all the planets are represented as glow-in-the dark shapes stuck all over the ceiling, their phosphorescent green glow hangs above at night when I sleep, just like real stars in the sky.

This is my room, I am at home. I feel safe, content and proud.



fig. 38 Transcendent House



fig. 39 Hay-Mow

Furnishings of the Soul

Home is an intimate place. We think of the house as home and place, but enchanted images of the past are evoked not so much by the entire building, which can only be seen, as by its components and furnishings, which can be touched and smelled as well: the attic and the cellar, the fireplace and the bay window, the hidden corners, a stool, a gilded mirror, a chipped shell.⁶

-Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*.

The emotional expression of architecture is only capable through the articulation of details. Ornamentation is what the architect must use to create a physical connection, on the part of the viewer, with what has been built. This is not to say that an unornamented building does not have the power to move the inhabitant, but it does so because of its lack of articulation, just as a blank page in a book gives the reader a start. "This page has been intentionally left blank" is what the reader senses, and the inhabitant of the minimalist building, in the same way senses "this building has intentionally been left unadorned". Why? They may never know, but for some, the unadorned building expresses a sense of freedom, cleanliness, opportunity, and truth; for others it denotes a cold, deathly sterility. No matter how one perceives it, the expressive possibilities of the unadorned building are rather limited, while ornamentation gives an infinite catalogue of messages. Patterns and shapes pour over the surfaces, masking, exaggerating, complicating, questioning, implicating and divulging all the secrets the building can hold. Above all, the ornament has the ability to unify the elements of architecture and transform them into something new.

The main unification orchestrated by ornamentation is the literal connection of the elements which it physically borders, such as the way a window frame can act as a unifying instrument between the translucent glass panes of the window and the opaque wall surface. The window frame accentuates the connection, highlighting the windows place within the wall.

As in psychology, where the bedroom can be seen as a link between reality and the imaginary, in his book *The Nature of Ornament* Kent Bloomer suggests that ornamentation can also serve this function⁷.

Transformation is a potent effect of ornamentation, the power to change something from what it originates as into something else entirely. This transformation is catalyzed by the ornaments unifying ability. At a basic level, the ornament acts as a place of transformation in the same way it acts as unifier. Continuing with the example of the window frame, the ornament starts off abutting the wall on all sides but as you move in from wall to window a

6 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 144.

7 Bloomer, *The Nature of Ornament*, .



fig. 40 Cow Barn and Hay Mow

transformation takes place. Aside from this there is often an act of transformation contained entirely within the ornament such as when a window frame made of wood twists and curves to become flowers, circles, lions, and faces; from wood to objects not naturally wooden.

Transformed

In my mind, all inanimate objects have a certain level of life in them, their own personality, feelings, and desires.

A stair not worn hollow by footsteps is, regarded from its own point of view, only a boring something made of wood.⁸

-Kafka, *Blue Octavo Notebooks*

To touch a material is to transform it, to breathe life into it, to weather and wear it through use. I and many others have walked up and down the stairs countless times, the treads are faded by this traffic, the bannister worn smooth in spots.

To curl up belongs to the phenomenology of the verb to inhabit, and only those who have learned to do so can inhabit with intensity.⁹

-Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

Appropriation is another way to transform, the old barn board is taken, reclaimed, and used to clad a new addition, boards lain out horizontally instead of vertically. Grounded, no longer reaching, transformed. Taking the boards ties the house's surrounding and the farm's past into the new homes future, and designing this connects me to the house's present. This integration brings me and my house together. The act of design binds the designer to their project; there is nothing better than to create your own space.

Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience.¹⁰

-Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*.

In psychoanalytics, art is seen as the artist's expression of self. The artist's creation represents or reflects the artist's internal conflicts and concerns. Ar-

8 Kafka, *Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 92.

9 Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, xxxviii.

10 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 18.



fig. 41 Mantle-Place

chitecture is undeniably an art of creation, so it follows that the architect's creation would also represent his inner turmoil. Phil S. Lebovitz does a study on this subject for the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis in his short paper *Houses as Self-Portraits: Notes on Architects Who Design Their Own Houses*, in which he notes this catch: most architects' creations are based quite highly on demands, restrictions, and the requirements of others, i.e. The client. This expression can be somewhat stifled, unless the architect is her own client, as is the case when architects design their own homes.

Lebovitz goes on to speculate about what he can learn about each architect's personality, life, and inner self through looking at their houses and talking about their development. Based solely on the appearance of their homes, he questions intimate aspects of their lives, such as their relationships with their mothers.

He concludes by saying that it is true, when architects design their own homes, it is an expression of themselves, comparable to a painters' self-portraits.¹¹

There is no finished home. The habitation, like the inhabitant, must keep evolving. The home should become a place of great comfort, a place that the inhabitant can feel at one with themselves and their environment. There will be a sense of knowing where everything is and where everything belongs.

That very night in Max's room a forest grew and grew -
and grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls
became the world all around.¹²

-Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*

11 Phil S Lebovitz, "Houses as Self Portraits," in Winer, *Psychoanalysis and Architecture*, 67-75.

12 Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*, 15-19.



fig. 42 Night Walk

night walk

*the beautiful
succulent
cranky
night moans at me.
tells me how he watches me.*

*bejeweled, damp and dark.
sweat drips from its back.
diamonds falling from a raven.*

we can carry on or we can sleep.

a thousand times i've said i'm sorry for the thousand times i've made mistakes.

everyone yells and fights.

*the black cold night drops tears down on us
they shatter in the snow*

floating

the big white round of cheese moon is smiling while your back is turned.

*this little house has survived a hundred winters without me but i can't survive
one without it.*

*my voice freezes as soon as it escapes my white pink lips, my words frozen in the
air, they hover and vanish.*

*and we know how small we are starring up, craning our necks till it feels as
though they are meant to be this way.*

*the smoke is sucked up and away, vanishing between the oaks tangled
branches.*

he grabs it and twists it but my eyes are too slow or too fast to see it move.

the house sighs unheard, it feels better when we are inside.

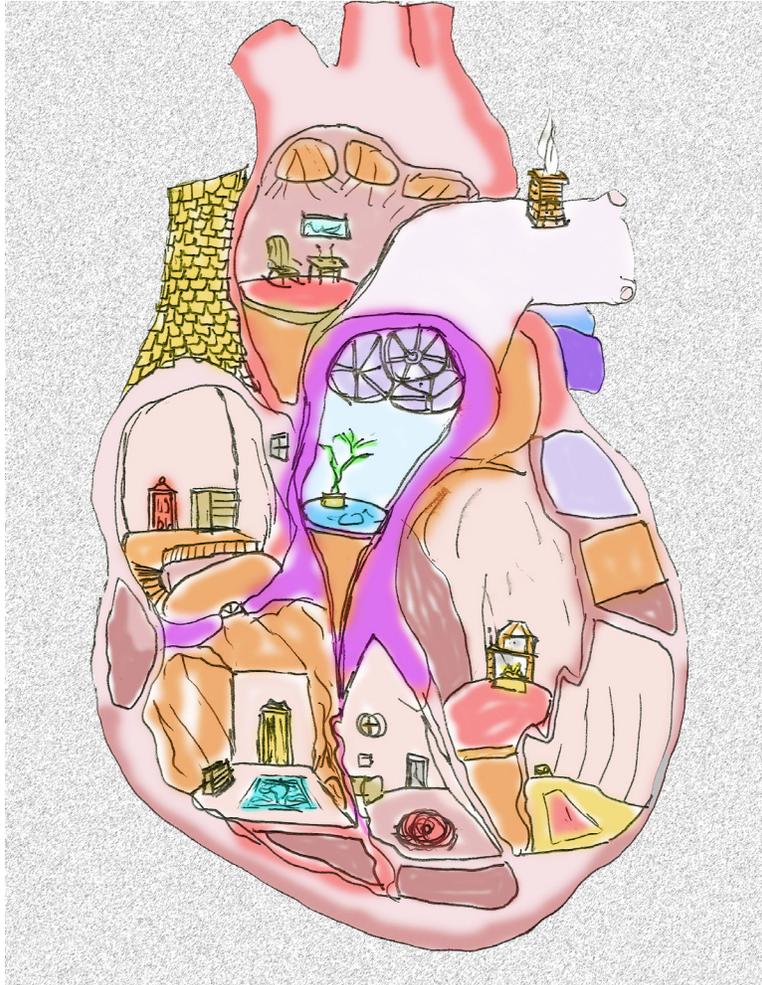


fig. 43 The Home in My Heart (over)

THE HOME IN MY HEART



fig. 44 Refurbishing the Hall

The Story of a House

The house may not have the myriad of rooms described by Melville in *I and My Chimney*, some with 9 doors, or its impressive, central chimney. It may not be a Piranesian labyrinth, or possess the gloomy grandiosity of Poe's *House of Usher*. It does not have the magnificent setting of Victor Hugo's cottage on the Isle of Guernsey, or the methodology of Hoffmann's Krespel house. However, it does fit Vidler's description of the *uncanny home*. When I return, it feels somehow unfamiliar and 'unhomely'¹. It is also the only house where I can explore the deep personal connection between individual and architecture because it is the only house in which I grew up. It is the house I came to from birth, and it was my home until I left for university.

This house has a huge presence in my dreams and memories, my understanding of architecture, and how I inhabit space. It holds archetypal images of rooms for me, what is *kitchen* or *bedroom* or *bath*. There is, however, something uncanny about it, especially now that I have spent some years away from it.

I have discovered that dreams and memories are not always as accurate as I once believed. Spaces that once seemed so comfortable and homey now seem odd and ill-sized, and what was once expansive seems much smaller. What I loved once, without question, now appears in bad taste.

The complete history of the house's heating systems are a mystery, but at some point a wood burning stove was installed in what was originally a parlour (and now the living room). At this time, it took on the role of kitchen. Until recently, two pieces of evidence still existed: the stove itself, still sitting in a barn on the property, the other was a weird hole in the living room ceiling that went up to my parent's bedroom. It was a continuous source of joy for some and consternation for others, until we covered it over when we replaced the living room's ceiling. When the living room still had the added function of TV room, the hole became a portal for noise, a listening place for my parents during late night sleep-overs involving scary movies. My favourite use for the hole was a bit different; I loved to take the grate off the top and dangle things down into the living room, sometimes a body part to garner attention, sometimes a toy on a string. I recall once, during a party my parents were having, taking a friend upstairs and letting a toy on a string drop down, just low enough to graze the heads of the tallest in attendance and see how long it took the adults to realize there was something hanging from the ceiling. I think our giggling gave us away.

The grate and hole remain from upstairs but it is only a foot deep and ends with a piece of dry wall.

1 Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny*, 11.



fig. 45 Stairs

If there were any actual fireplaces, they had been removed before I was born, and the chimney was removed from the roof and covered up. What remained as reminders of their existence were the ‘chimney cupboards’ in the upstairs bedrooms, small floor to ceiling closets in the corners of the two southern bedrooms, outfitted with shelves. Above the door, a circular bulge behind the wallpaper gives evidence of where a large stovepipe was once connected. I am not sure of the exact workings of this, but I assume it prevented smoke and soot from entering the room, while allowing hot air to circulate.

The other remnant of a fireplace’s existence was a fake fireplace comprised of a wooden mantle, and where the actual hearth would be, two wooden panels, as though it was a set of double doors that led to the mysteriously hidden chimney. Perhaps it was original; it is unknown.

For most of my childhood, this imitation fireplace resided as the focal point of the living room, until my parents redecorated the room when I was in my early teens. A large mirror from my aunt hung above the mantle, and pewter candlesticks sat at either end. A series of knickknacks, dependent on the season, filled the space between. The faux-fireplace fascinated me year round, but this grew tenfold at Christmas, with stories of Santa Claus coming down the chimney. An eternal optimist and believer in all forms of magic, I did not fear that we didn’t have a proper fireplace for Santa, but thought that he alone had the key to open the doors, and that once a year those wooden doors would open up in the mantle, and a real brick hearth would lay behind them. Santa would emerge, as he did from every other child’s fireplace, covered in soot. I would leave cookies, milk, and carrots (for the reindeer) and go to bed early, knowing it was a special kind of magic that couldn’t take place in my presence. The odd Christian appropriation of the pagan festival of Yule, and its central figure, idolized by commercialization, connected me to this strange, somewhat distasteful ornament in my childhood house.

This ornament was the site of magic. This is why I objected to its removal in my early teens, though my whole-hearted belief in Santa had waned. The mantle still held some aspect of wonder for me, but I lost the battle and it was ripped away from the wall with a crowbar, revealing nothing but more wall behind it. The wall was plastered over and painted in ‘cranberry’, and my beloved mantle was sent to rot out in the horse barn.

Santa Claus would never visit again.

Long ago, before I started high school, I had an affinity for symbolism. The Mexican sink, as it was called, because it was a gift that was purchased in Mexico (again long before my birth) mystified me. I always felt that it must signify something greater than I could comprehend, and would often ponder its possible meanings. Now, after studying about the origins and history of alchemy, magic, and the four humours, I am certain that its markings are more than merely aesthetic. The symbol in the base of the sink is four flowers, arranged together with leaves or vines spreading out around them. The

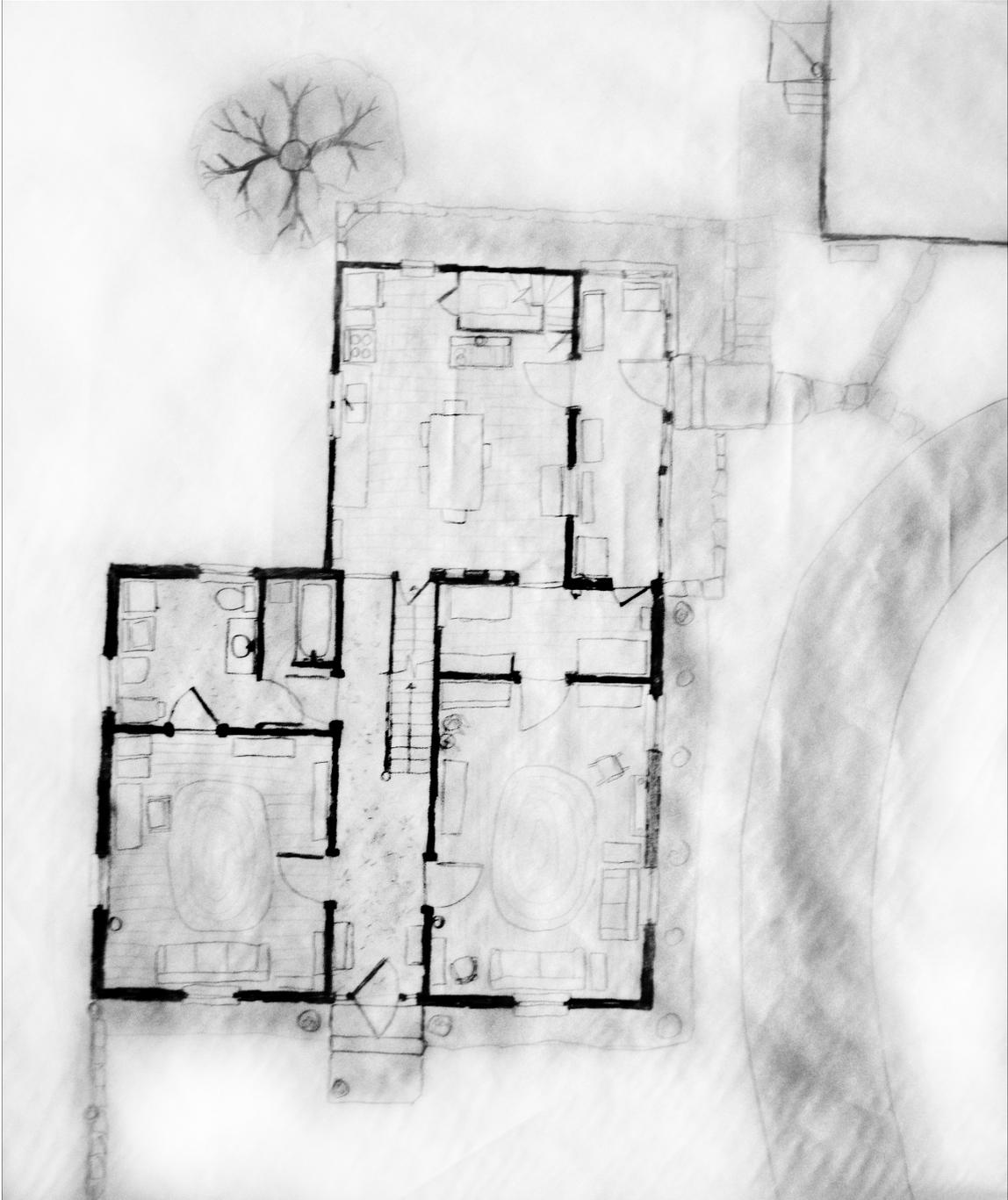


fig. 46 Hand-drawn floor plan.

same motif is duplicated above the drain, and then one of each flower adorns four points of the sinks rim. The flowers could represent the cardinal directions, the four humours, some forms of alchemy, ancient Aztec medicine or many other magical symbols. On top, sits a dark purplish-black flower (north, earth, melancholy), below it, to the right is a white flower (east, wind, phlegmatic), to the left is a yellow flower (west, water, choleric) and at the bottom is a red flower (south, fire, sanguine).

Sometimes, when we were little, we would get our sleeping bags and take them to the top of the stairs. They all matched. My brothers had a green and a red one, their usual colours for when we all got the same gifts. Mine however, instead of being the standard blue, was brown. I don't know why. At the top of the stairs, we would get into them, zipped up with only our heads sticking out, sitting up, usually with pillows stuffed inside to protect ourselves; then we would push off. It was a ride, a short-lived, sometimes slightly painful, yet still joyous ride. It was comparable to tobogganing, inside, on a very small hill.

I would always count the number of steps when I went up, an auspicious 13 before the landing and 4 more to the top. I can recall the missing balusters, and the ones that were a bit rickety, and their subsequent replacement. I remember when there used to be a linoleum runner of sorts centered on each tread, and I remember when we removed it. The floors of the upstairs and downstairs halls were sanded and refinished but the stairs were left still rough and two toned, paler where the linoleum had been. My mother still hangs a garland along the balustrade at Christmas time, imitation holly and ivy that made it impossible to slide down the bannister or even run one's hand along it continually.

I love my House

In Plato's *Symposium*, a group of noteworthy men discuss both the origin and meaning of love, in its various forms, presenting a wide range of opinions. The famed playwright, Aristophanes explains that Love originates when humans are split in half by Zeus; prior to this everyone was made up of two bodies. Love is defined as a desire to find this other half. Though we are born separately, an innate feeling of missing our other half remains. Aristophanes says, "The desire for the whole and the pursuit of it is named Love."²

Later in the *Symposium*, Socrates gives his account of love, also defining it as the lacking of someone or something. He says love is the desire for something we cannot attain, that love is a flaw within ourselves, something

2 Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, 88.



fig. 47 The Chicken-Coop

we are missing. He goes on to say that the highest form of love is for knowledge, something we will always be lacking.³

The 15th century Italian philosopher, Marsilio Ficino revisited Plato's Symposium, and interpreted it under Christian ideology. In *Built Upon Love*, Pérez-Gómez looks at Ficino's reading of Plato, in which Ficino says, "Desire to return to one's source is called love."⁴ The 'source' Ficino refers to is the Christian Heaven and God as a place of origin, to which we long to return. This could also apply to the home in which one grew up.

I want to look at the separation from our other half as a possible reason for love between inhabitant and habitat. Is it only when circumstances have separated us from a place of long residence that we develop love for it? Perhaps not, but as the saying goes *Absence makes the heart grow fonder*.

When I was younger, while my parents were having work done to the house, I used to fantasize what I would do with it. What could I do if I was in charge? Where would I put an addition? What cladding would I use? And where could a second bathroom go?

It was these fantasies, and the drawings I did to capture them that led me to architecture in the first place. Now, with a boundary created by time, distanced from the house, I feel a much greater pull to leave the house as I remember it, in some cases even backtrack the improvements my parents have made to return the house to its appearance in my earliest memories of it. A certain amount of nostalgia and homesickness has crept in, making it more difficult to embrace change; any possible alteration for improvement seems to have the risk of eradicating a cherished memory. I know that if I am to return to the house, both the house and I must go through a transformation in order to unite ourselves. Perhaps, like Jung, I must base my alterations on important life events, pieces of the building can personify influential moments in my development as a person, and changes to the house will reflect the changes I have endured. The house is me and I am my house, I must adorn myself, my walls, my windows, my floors in such a way that I strengthen this unity.

The alchemical process, from nothing of value to all and everything can help me achieve individuation with the home. The initial floor plan, the space that I was born into is the first stage; it is where I have started. My whole life with this home has been a transition from one stage to the next. To complete the process, to reach this transcendent place where inhabitant and habitation form a perfect bond, I know I must be honest with not only my memories but also my dreams and desires, I cannot be held back by nostalgia. Change and even some destruction are necessary to reach my final goal.

3 Plato, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, 96.

4 Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love*, 75.



fig. 48 Tractors in the Snow

Coming Home Again

In his novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, Thomas Wolfe writes, "You can't go back home to your family, back home to your childhood ... back home to a young man's dreams of glory and of fame ... back home to places in the country, back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time — back home to the escapes of time and memory."⁵

In *Space and Place* Yi-Fu Tuan also speaks of the difficulty of returning home, "An introspective return to our own childhood is often disappointing, for the bright and dark landscapes of our early years tend to fade while only a few landmarks such as birthdays and the first day at school remain."⁶

It is very difficult to come home again, to return to the once known home is impossible. The moments of childhood are gone, and yet the return, initiated by my thesis, has brought back so many memories, not only of my childhood home and my life there, but also refreshed my memory of all the other events that took place in my life while I was living there. This re-evaluation of my past has made me realize that I have buried many painful memories, times that were not so good were replaced in my mind by better days. The reason my house and my memories of home have remained more prevalent in my mind, while memories of school, friends, and relationships have faded is, I'm surmising, something to do with them being positive and not needing to be covered over. I love my home, and because of that, it has remained an integral part of me, other parts of my life, that certainly defined me, have become disemboweled from me. The house is my greatest memory of childhood, and it is where I have returned, but it is also there that I have found all my dark shadows.

My Journey Home

Exit 623 on the 401. The off ramp has been torn down and relocated since I was young. Now there is a traffic light at the top, and you can drive straight on to Middle Road instead of turning twice. At the exit, there is a motel and a gas station, but down Middle Road, there is nothing but houses and farms. There are some new houses, a short cul-de-sac of larger homes that was built recently, but for the most part the road remains as a remember it. I used to ride the school bus along this route everyday. I recall where the bus picked up and dropped off my classmates. Eventually you get to a small hill, other cars will pass if you slow down, but we need to because my home is at the bottom, at the end of a long gravel driveway.

5 Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*, 85.

6 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 19.



fig. 49 The Windy-Woods

It is a two-story house with a limestone foundation. It is clad in wide, horizontal clapboards, their white paint is chipping, revealing the greying boards beneath. It has a standard, side gable roof with a wall dormer on the front facade. The symmetrical north side features the front door, a window on both sides and an arched window in the centered dormer. The gabled east and west sides of the original house have four windows, two on each story. The eight side windows and three front windows are all flanked by decorative black shutters, with pine-tree-shapes cut into them. On the south side is the kitchen addition.

Entering through the front door, one comes into the central hall. The staircase hugs the right side, going up 13 steps to a landing at the back end of the old house, from there the stair turns and goes up four more steps to the upper floor. Before the stairs though, there is a door on either side of the hall, to the left is what has been called the family room and to the right, the larger living room.

In my earliest memories of the family room, it is almost bare. The rough and uneven pine floorboards were covered with a giant, brown and yellow, braided rug. There was my father's desk, with metal chair and orange vinyl cushion, the wardrobe, our toy box and a giant, old TV set we did not watch, built into a wooden frame with fake drawers. This was our playroom and my dad's office. There is a window on the north and east walls, the door to the hall is on the west and at the south end of this not quite square room is a door into the bathroom.

Later on, we had the big toy box at one end and our Nintendo and wicker bucket chairs in the opposite corner. As we got older, we seldom used this room, the Nintendo was taken to goodwill and the toy box was put away. For a while, it was solely my father's office, it had his desk, filing cabinets and a large set of open shelves. When I was a bit older, the room was re-wallpapered, the floor was refinished and it became the computer room. When the living room was redone to become a more formal sitting room this became the home of the television as well.

The living room seems to have gotten more and more formal as time went by, until it was too formal for us to spend any time in at all. The biggest shift in this process took place when I was maybe 12 or 13. The walls were covered in drywall and painted a cranberry colour, the hot air duct was built in, the hole in the ceiling covered over, the base boards refinished, the windows painted, and the mantle place removed. I think a room needs a central focus, the mantle place, despite not containing a real fire, took on this role, its removal brought on the death of the living room. The room did have a slight resurgence when a new audio system with turntable and CD player took the role of focal point, and my brother commandeered the room as his place to listen to records and practice the guitar. When my brother left for University, the room again became empty.

There was also a short-lived period when we had a second dining



fig. 50 Coming Home Again

table placed in this room to eat dinner.

The mantle place came and went, as did the dining table and the sound system; there have been two constant pieces of furniture in the Living Room, at least from my eyes, though they've changed location a dozen times, they have always been there: The buffet and the Quebec Cupboard.

Every original door and window in the house is the same size, no hierarchy, except for the front door and the smaller, arched window in the upstairs hall, over the front door.

The house stands on one-hundred-sixty acres. The site is a little less than a 1/2 farm lot because a triangle at the back, where the pond is, was sold to the neighbours. The road that runs along the cliff was used as the dividing line.

My mother would always take us for walks back through the woods. When I was younger I didn't like walking and would often end up being carried home. Perhaps ironically, I didn't really enjoy walking until I moved away from the country and started walking around the city.

In the winter, we would go cross-country skiing or snow shoeing through the fields and along the paths in the woods, through the spruce trees laden with snow. There was always lots of wildlife to see; there are always deer, all sorts of birds, grouse, porcupines and occasionally a skunk or even a coyote.

In the spring, the fields are plowed and cleared of rocks, then planted with grass seed. In the summer, it is hay season. Cutting, raking, bailing, and mowing the grass.

Despite the constant fantasies of what I would do with the house if it were mine, when faced with the task of actually re-appropriating the house in my adult life, with the distance that has grown between me and the house, I find it increasingly difficult to do anything that would alter the space or obscure my memories of it. I have realized that the house exists more in my heart than it does anywhere physically, and I have no intention to change this.

Separation of Souls

For many years, I have wavered between wanting to be a writer or an architect. I find the two inseparable. Seeing an inspiring building makes me want to write a story about what happens there; designing a building, I cannot begin without imagining the people that inhabit it. I have tried writing fiction and I always seem to get tied up in the architecture. The only character I develop or describe adequately is the building in which the action takes place. The setting always overshadows the people. In order for the characters to de-

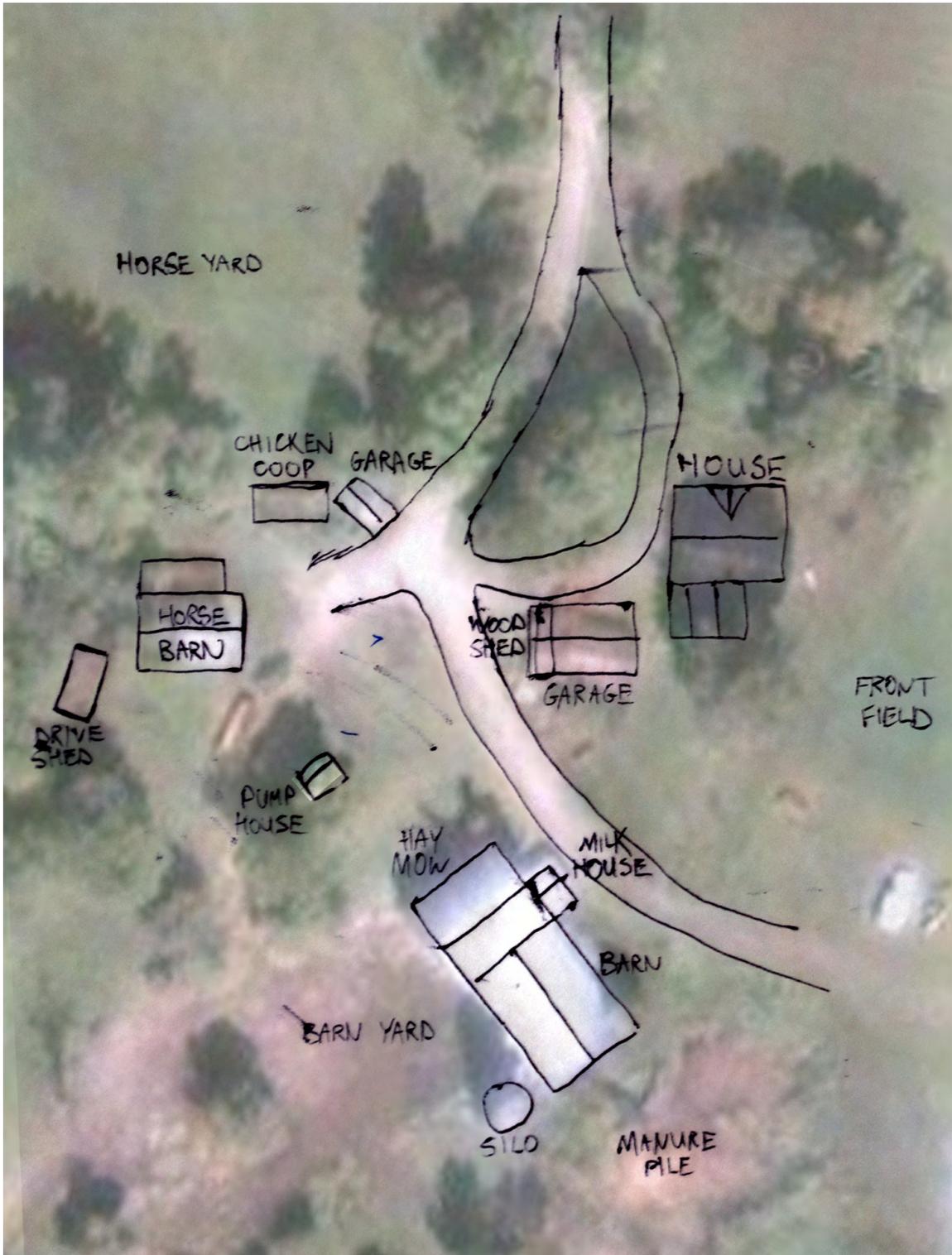


fig. 51 Site Plan

velop they must be isolated from their homes, seen on their own, meditated on as individuals, unfettered by their homes. Perhaps this is the same case with this story, the story of me and my house: In order for the human being to be shown behind the architecture, for a clear portrait to be painted, they must be separated. I am not just my home, it is clear to me that it has built a strong foundation for the person I am today, but I cannot let this house be my soul definition, there are other great buildings for me yet to mingle with, explore and create. All architects are storytellers but sometimes the structure overshadows the narrative and plot.

In classical alchemy the seven step process is heavily associated with the seven known heavenly bodies of the time (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn). When this plan was devised, Earth was seen as the center of the universe, planets, the moon, and the sun were objects in the sky, circling us. Astronomy followed the Ptolemaic model, a geocentric scheme: Earth is the center, our home, our everything. This all changed during the Renaissance, when Copernicus and other astronomers challenged this system with the heliocentric solar system. The earth is not the center. Emphasis shifts away from our home to acknowledge something greater. As with the Copernican solar system, we had to accept a decentralized concept of earth, I have to accept the center of my universe is no longer my childhood home.

Perhaps, what I have learnt is the importance of connecting with my environment. I do not live in my childhood home anymore, this does not mean I should stop trying to bond with my habitation.

I live in a one-bedroom apartment in Midtown Toronto with my partner; we have had this apartment for nearly 2 years. I have little doubt that this apartment will ever hold the same meaning for me as the farmhouse I grew up in, this is for many reasons, but the biggest one is simply that it is not where I grew-up. Memorable experiences have taken place in this apartment but the experiences of 20 months in my mid 20s cannot compete with the 17 years from birth that I lived at my first home.

How can I feel connected with this apartment though? How can I make it meaningful? Part of this question's answer depends on commitment, how long do I plan to spend here? Probably not long, certainly nowhere near 17 years. There is less time to form a bond and I do not want the pain of homesickness when the time comes that I do leave. It is also a rental so drastic changes are either prohibited or feel like a waste of time and money.

Despite all of these obstacles, there are ways to connect with this home, one of the easiest is through decoration: this home is full of my belongings, my partner's belongings and our two cats. Just by being the place where I gather my things, it becomes meaningful. Although I will not be changing the flooring or the kitchen cabinets, I did choose the wall colours, the colour scheme, which is another way of making the space my own.



fig. 52 Site Plans

Everyday rituals are connecting me with this space, although it was originally counter-intuitive, I have learnt the location of all the light switches and their use has become unconscious. I have cooked in the kitchen, I know the tricks of the oven. I have learnt how to deal with the difficult shower faucets, how to get the right temperature and pressure by turning the hot on all the way and barely turning the cold on at all. I think I am more afraid of going into the basement alone here than when I was a child. I still get vertigo going on to the balcony, but this is a part of my home I am learning to embrace as well, that said, if and when we move we will never live on a floor this high (19th) again.



fig. 53 A Dream, #1

I wake up into my bedroom, in my parent's house, but it isn't quite right. The bed is just a small day bed up against the low wall, and the room is done all in a teal chinoiserie; it is much smaller than in real life. My room is almost bare, as if all of my possessions have migrated into the wallpaper, which is very busy with plants and things spreading out across it. It seems to be growing in front of me.

I can hear, and somehow visually sense that someone is downstairs, making noise in the family room. Instead of going out into the hall to get downstairs, I float down through the house to the family room.



fig. 54 A Dream, #2

The room is all red, a deep orange-red. I immediately recognize Carl Jung (although when I wake up I realize he looked much more like Vincent van Gogh). He is sitting on a sofa on the north wall, where there actually is a sofa but this one is piled with tapestries and is itself a red floral fabric.

He has a copy of my thesis.

(Van Gogh as) Jung tells me that it isn't good enough, he would not let me graduate with what I have. He explains that he is redecorating my house to fit my dreams. He tells me I'm not being true to him or the individuation process, myself or my dreams, and that I should explore my dreams more and find a greater connection to my house through them.

I realize I need to produce more imagery demonstrating the connection that is in fact taking place.

Next to the sofa is a round table full of books and photos, he sets my thesis, in a red duotang, on top of the pile and begins showing me the room. He has made reproductions of furniture and covered it in red fabric. One wall is covered in a mass of Christmas lights, all white and pale pink, glowing; it is a work of art, a curtain.



fig. 55 A Dream, #3

From here, I enter the bathroom alone. Thinking about what he has told me. I am very flustered and worried about my thesis. The bathroom is completely white, ominous; everything feels faded out a bit, but it is still beautiful, elaborate. I stare at myself in the mirror, which has a gold frame. I am wearing blue chambray shirt. I feel as though this is my own home, the rest of my family is not here. The windows are missing. There are little bottles and jars everywhere, with gold.

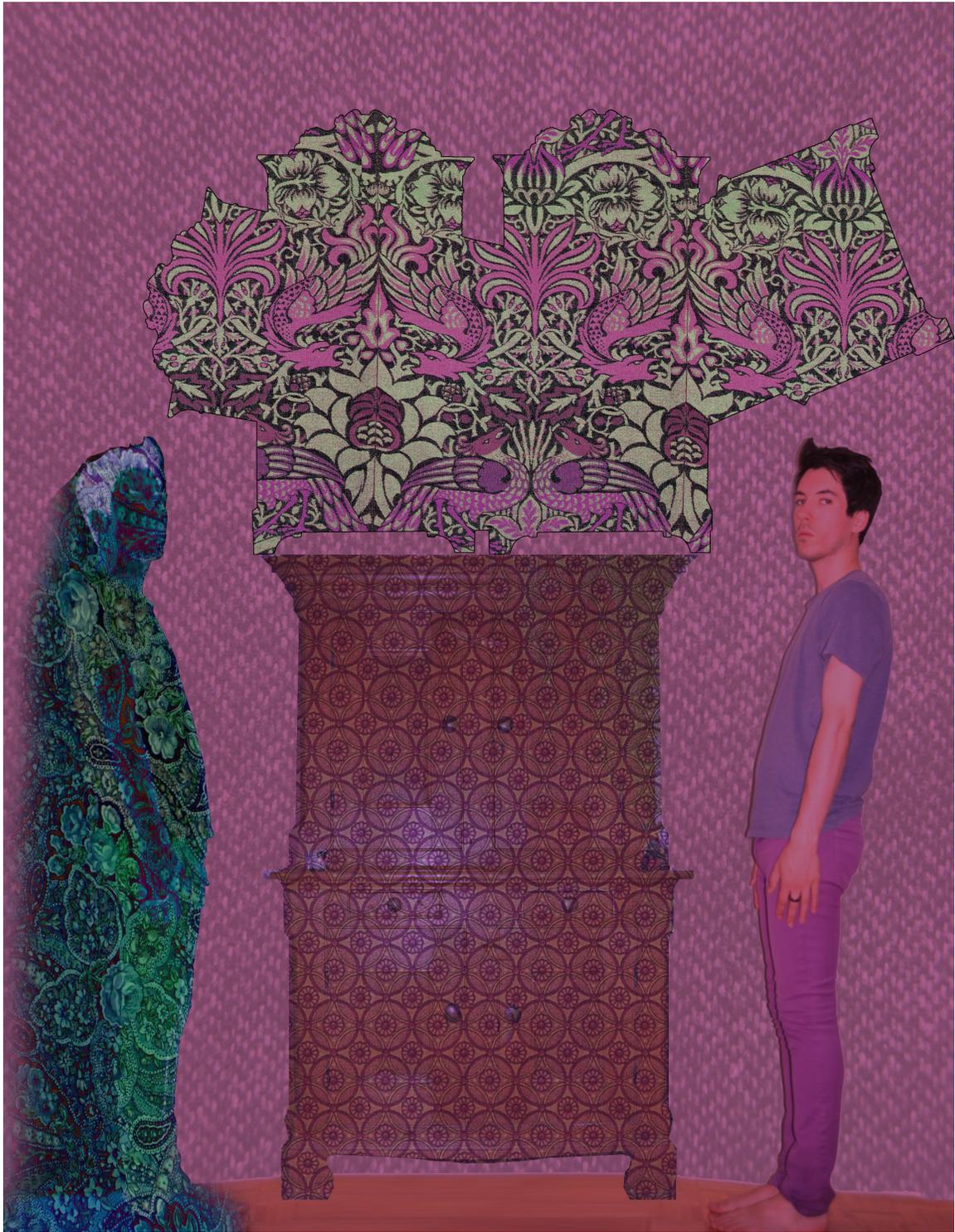


fig. 56 A Dream, #4

I then find myself in the living room. Everything is in shades of deep purple, Tyrian, plum, and maroon. Again, the furniture has been upholstered and draped in matching fabric, some fabrics seem to contain more than one piece, mirrors of themselves wrapped together.

I am thinking 'what wonderful collages these would make' and am so happy with what he has done with my house; it is exactly what I want.

I go to kiss Carl Jung but as I embrace him, he turns into a puppet of himself and I fall onto a violet sofa with the limp doll.

I wake up into my room again. The objects are back in the room to an almost claustrophobic effect, but the room is still teal or turquoise, even more so than before, it is almost as if I am submerged in turquoise water.

This time I exit into the hall, which seems bland and colourless aside from brown wooden floor. I go downstairs and hear noise in the bathroom. I wonder if it is as it was in my dream. It is not. My father is there stuffing incredibly dirty laundry into an oddly dangerous looking washing machine, that is almost overflowing with dirty water. I ask about redecorating the house and he isn't certain what I'm talking about. I feel panicked, frantic to find evidence of what happened. I run out to the kitchen to try to draw the rooms, as if by drawing images of them it will bring it back to life.

As soon as I find some paper and sit down, I wake up, back in my Toronto apartment.



fig. 57 New Home

I have lived in 11 different homes since leaving my parent's house, a few of them for only 4 months due to the nature of Waterloo's co-op program, some of them I have felt more comfortable in than others, some I have connected with far easier, a couple I never really felt at home in, but it is impossible to say that each one didn't have some effect, an impact, on my identity, on my relationship and understanding of space, and of what home means.



fig. 58 Fragments I'll remember

Time Line of Home

- 1870s -The Young family builds house on the 100 acre lot 11 of Concession II, in Pittsburgh Township, Frontenac County, Ontario.
-The House is built with a stone foundation, heavy timber frame and clapboard façade, a less popular style than limestone houses in the area.
- 1880s - The Youngs build the kitchen addition and a porch onto the house's south side. It is also built with stone foundation and heavy timber frame.
- 1908 - The existing stone barn is built after the previous barn burnt down. While the new barn is being built livestock is kept in the basement of the house.
- 1900s - The two 100 acre lots of the Young brothers' are merged into one farm.
- The back end of the lot, considered no good for farming, is sold to the new neighbours, the Smiths. The property line is marked by a steep cliff, below which is a beaver damn and pond.
- the farm passes through several owners, including a priest, before being bought by the Allison family.
- 1965 - The property is divided into two parts: the house, garage, front and back yard and lane way becomes one property kept by the Allison family and the second parcel, the farm, all the fields and barn are sold to Robert McNinch.
- 1973 - John A. McNinch buys the remaining parcel of land containing the house for \$ 18,500 from Mrs. Knox (nee Allison) after the death of her father.
- 1974 - John and Linda McNinch move into the house.
- 1977 - The new, red barn is built as an addition to the existing stone barn and the McNinch milking operation is moved in. In door plumbing is added to new barn and house.
- 1980 - Bathroom is built.
- 1984 - Darcy Shaun McNinch is born and brought to live in the house.
- 1990s - The house's address is updated and numbered to reflect more efficient mailing system from simply RR2 to 1861 Middle Rd.
-The kitchen porch is removed, a cement foundation is poured and the sun porch is built.
- 2001 - The farm is inherited by John McNinch from his mother but the two parcels remain on two separate land deeds.
- 2011 - I write this thesis on my Home

PLATES

Photographs from Home



fig. 58 Basement Door



fig. 58 Shutter



fig. 58 Floor Grate



fig. 58 Wood Burning Stove



fig. 58 Foundation



fig. 58 Hanging Pans



fig. 58 Hay Mow (interior)



fig. 58 Cow Barn



fig. 58 Stable Cleaner



fig. 58 Hay Mow (exterior)



fig. 58 Tractor in lean-to



fig. 58 Out buildings.



fig. 58 Snowy Fields



fig. 58 House in Winter



fig. 58 The Beaver Pond



fig. 58 A Home at the edge of the field.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bachelard, Gaston and Maria Jolas. *The Poetics of Space*. Toronto: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Ballantyne, Andrew. *What Is Architecture?*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Berk, Matheus Franciscus Maria. *The magic flute = Die Zauberflöte : an alchemical allegory*. Leiden Boston: Brill, 2004.
- Bloomer, Kent and Charles Moore. *Body, Memory, and Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Bloomer, Kent. *The Nature of Ornament: Rhythm and Metamorphosis in Architecture*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.
- Bonnemaison, Sarah and Christine Macy Eds. *Festival Architecture*. Routledge, New York, 2008.
- Caillois, Roger. *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*. 1935
- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Dodds, George et.al. *Body and Building*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.
- Ficino, Marsilio. *The Book of Life*. Irving: Spring Publications, 1980.
- Fortmeyer, Russell. *Dressing Up Fashion, Dressing Down Architecture*. Architectural Record, January 1, 2007. Pg. 47 Vol. 195 No. 1 New York.
- Glauber, Johann Rudolf. *A Compendium of Alchemical Processes*. Pennsylvania State University, Samuel Weiser, 1981.
- Hollander, Anne. *Fabrics of Vision: Dress and Drapery in Painting*. National Gallery Company, London, 2002.

- Janus, Horst. *Nature as Architect*. Frederick Ungar Publishing, New York, 1957.
- Jaffé, Aniela Ed. C.G. Jung. *Word and Image*. Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Johnson, Robert. *Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*. Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991.
- Kurokawa, Kisho. *The Philosophy of Symbiosis*. London: Academy Editions, 1994.
- Lörzing, Han. *The Nature of Landscape*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2001.
- Macgregor Wise, John. *Gilles Deleuze : Key Concepts. Assemblage*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.
- Marble, Scott. *Architecture and Body*. New York: Rizzoli, 1988.
- Markus, Thomas. *Buildings & Power*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Markus, Thomas and Deborah Cameron. *The Words between the Spaces*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Mehrabian, Albert. *Public Places and Private Spaces*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Melville, Herman. *I and My Chimney*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004.
- Menin, Sarah. *Constructing Place*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The World of Perception*. London New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955.
- Perez-Gomez, Alberto and Gómez Pérez. *Built upon Love*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.
- Plato. English Translation: Rouse, W.H.D. *Great dialogues of Plato*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Robinson, James M. ed. *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*. The Nag Hammadi Library, revised Edition. Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1990.
- Rybczynski, Witold. *Home : A Short History of an Idea*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking, 1986.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and nothingness : an essay in phenomenological ontology*. New York: Citadel

Press, 2001.

Schlemmer, Oskar and Heimo Kuchling. *Man: Teaching Notes from the Bauhaus*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971.

Schlemmer, Oskar. English Translation. *The Theatre of the Bauhaus*. John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Schwenk, Theodor. *Sensitive Chaos*. Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1965.

Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. New York: Harper & Row, Inc, 1963.

Shonfield, Katherine. *Walls Have Feelings*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Stark, Freya. *Perseus in the Wind*. Beason Press, Boston, 1956.

Stevens, Peter S. *Patterns in Nature*. Atlantic Monthly Press, Toronto, 1974.

Tracy, Robert and Isamu Noguchi. *Spaces of the Mind*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Wanders, Marcel. *Behind the Ceiling*. Gestalten, Berlin, 2009.

Wertheim, Margaret. <http://www.theiff.org/> The Institute For Figuring, Los Angeles, 2009.

Whatmore, Sarah. *Hybrid Geographies: Natures Cultures Spaces*. SAGE Publications Ltd. London. 2002

Williams, Gareth. *Telling Tales: Fantasy and Fear in Contemporary Design*. Oxford Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Winer, Jerome A. et.al. Ed. *Psychoanalysis and Architecture*. Catskill, NY: Mental Health Resources, 2005.

Winston, Richard et.al. C.G. Jung: *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Oxford, Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Wolfe, Thomas. *You Can't Go Home Again*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1998.

