

ism. A non-essentialist approach begins from the position that women's experiences are socially constituted, and recognizes that such experiences are constituted differently for women of colour, immigrant women, poor women, women with disabilities, and lesbians.

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## PATIENCE WHEATLEY

### Some Houses

Some houses wrap themselves around you bodily, covering you like a nutshell as if nothing will ever crack you out. Ours was like that, its wooden walls so full of large windows in front and behind, they seemed to be only half there, and were friendly, showing all we were inside.

We saw from the top of our thirty foot cliff the yards where the city repaired benches and swings, and the gravel space where firemen played baseball through golden afternoons. From our attic windows, we looked across to Nun's Island, the bridges, and the white streak of the river.

A wooden house, a hundred years old, our house groaned and shook when the wind battered its south-west corner. The acacia tree in front, covered with dangling candle-wax flowers, sheltered us, kept the sun from shrivelling us up. Behind, the garden flourished in the tree's moving shade: roses, begonias, irises.

Our kitchen faced north (or north-west, if you remember Montreal is skewed and south is really south-east) with a window so low the dog, coming back from a tryst with the lady cop in the park, put her head right into the room, scooped food off the table.

When we cracked eggs for Christmas puddings, every child on the street came in to stir, make a secret wish with closed eyes, lick a finger dipped in spicy batter. Those winters, snow reached up to the windows, sealed cracks in the stone foundation, was shoulder high along the front path.

One spring there came a change. The elm in the garden behind, only a little older than its owner at a hundred and fifty years, put out green leaves. But on one side only.

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