

## Chapter 4

### Spaces of Girlhood: Autobiographical Recollections of Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Working-Class

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#### 4.1 Introduction

As shown in several chapters in this collection, many lasting images of the nineteenth-century working-class home derive from written accounts produced by sanitary inspectors, journalists and reformers who documented, assessed and evaluated the living conditions of the poor, as well as novelists who often drew on these reports.<sup>1</sup> Less well utilised, but of rich historical and literary value, are the detailed and varied glimpses of domestic interiors to be found threaded throughout the autobiographies of working-class men and women looking back to their childhoods of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> As well as supplementing the historical record by offering vivid memories of physical aspects of the working-class home, these autobiographies reveal the more personal and intimate dimension of the family home as seen from 'within'. As Jane Humphries notes, using a domestic analogy, this type of life-writing offers 'a rare fenestration of working-class experience', taking in 'dimensions of life that remain beyond the searchlights of the state, hidden even from the investigative efforts of contemporary social commentators and providing a different perspective: a view from below'.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter explores and builds on this premise by addressing, quite literally, the 'view from below' of the child, and specifically, that of the young girl, as captured by a number of autobiographers writing retrospectively in adulthood. While many male autobiographers wrote in detailed and evocative ways about their childhood homes and domestic interiors in their memoirs, the focus here is on the experience of girls in the context of a wider gendered discourse that positioned girls specifically in relation to domestic space.<sup>4</sup> A paucity of material means that it is difficult to recover first-person accounts written by girls, whom, like children generally, are 'some of history's most silent subjects'.<sup>5</sup> But women writing their autobiographies in older age often tried to summon and put into words how the world of the home looked and felt to them in childhood and adolescence. This chapter asks, what happens if we put the gaze of the child at the centre of representations of the working-class home?

What details did the girl's eye light upon as she watched from within? And what is at stake when we take the girl's subjective point of view – reshaped over time and through processes of autobiographical recall – as a serious object of enquiry?

First-person testimonies of girlhood 'at home' offer a contrasting and overlooked contribution to the corpus of writing on working-class domesticity which has been dominated by outsider perspectives. For if middle-class observers presented their reports through an empirical and totalising lens (albeit producing accounts that were deeply subjective and ideological), autobiographical accounts that aim to capture the child's gaze outwardly offer different modes of perceiving and interpreting the home. These life-writers frequently place emphasis precisely on the subjectivity which lies at the heart of their accounts, self-reflexively commenting on the impressionistic and fragmentary ways in which the home is evoked through processes of memory. My analysis thus aims to highlight how female autobiographers looking back on the childhood home give prominence not only on to what they *saw* but on how things *felt*, and their accounts are subsequently resonant with small, sensory and telling detail. This focus on the small detail of the child's world has a wider symbolic function. As Julia Swindells has argued in relation to approaches to working-class memoir, '[p]erhaps it is now possible to allow the autobiographers some of their individuality, that which "distinguishes" as well as that which is "representative". [...] There is no need to diminish subjectivity in representativeness'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, if the method of the social explorers in their *exposés* often resulted in clichéd and repetitive stock images of 'typical' working-class interiors, autobiographies demand that we pay attention to the variability of experience and the richness of distinct and fragmentary memories that endured over the course of a lifetime.

Using a number of published and unpublished autobiographies written by women born between 1876 and 1915, this chapter pays particular attention to the way that these life-writers depict their childhood selves as careful observers of the family home and how they convey a sense of such scrutiny in their accounts.<sup>7</sup> As well as being an interesting feature of these texts in and of itself, the child's watchfulness also serves to disrupt the received 'still-life' image of the working-class interior in both writing and pictorial representation in which the residents of poorer homes – when portrayed at all – were merely absorbed into the domestic scene as silent, observed figures. The broader political implications of recognising the residents of working-class homes as watchful agents are raised in Carolyn Steedman's

landmark autobiographical work *Landscape for a Good Woman*. In an initiatory scene, Steedman recalls her childhood self carefully observing the departure of a brusque health visitor who, like a wicked fairy, has issued the damning edict: 'This house isn't fit for a baby'.<sup>8</sup> Steedman goes on to reflect on how such moments shaped her adult life and work as she comments: 'I think now of all the stories, all the reading, all the dreams that help us to see ourselves in the landscape, *and see ourselves watching as well*'.<sup>9</sup> The memoirist who looks back to see herself watching, as this vignette suggests, captures the sense that subjectivity, knowledge, and resistance are crucially forged at home.

Reading, dreaming, and watching were, of course, not the main designated activities in the home for the working-class girl of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Girls were expected to play an active role in the running of the home and were valued for their 'usefulness', including the ability to assist with household duties, cleaning, needlework, and the care of younger siblings.<sup>10</sup> As Emma Griffin has shown in her illuminating analysis of the complex balance of 'bread winning' within the Victorian household, girls working both inside and outside of the home were often essential to the family's ability to remain economically afloat.<sup>11</sup> The extent of girls' work within and outside of some of the poorest homes in Victorian London did not escape the attention of the social investigator Henry Mayhew, who observed how the life of a coster-girl was framed by her contribution to the running of the household: 'Her time is from the earliest years fully occupied; indeed, her parents cannot afford to keep her without doing and getting *something*'.<sup>12</sup> He noted with some admiration the significance of girls' work for the survival of impoverished households, commenting that 'some will perform acts of marvellous heroism to keep together the little home'.<sup>13</sup> Yet working-class girls' fundamental contribution to the running of the home, including their participation in housework and child-rearing, makes it all the harder to establish how girlhood – that 'contradictory and categorically diffuse place between infancy and womanhood' – might have been experienced.<sup>14</sup> In her study of Victorian and Edwardian girlhood, Carol Dyhouse questions the extent to which a large proportion of working-class girls in the early decades of the twentieth century 'ever experienced anything resembling a state of adolescence at all'. Taking on household duties and acting as 'little mothers', they were 'much less likely than their brothers to have been allowed a period of legitimate freedom, however transitory, removed from adult surveillance and unencumbered by responsibility for domestic chores'.<sup>15</sup>

Flora Thompson, the writer of a semi-autobiographical trilogy discussed in more detail in the next section, pointed out that the visitor to the small Oxfordshire hamlet in which she grew up in the late nineteenth century would have been struck by the very absence of girls, since so many were 'pushed out into the world' by entering the domestic service workforce. 'There was no girl over twelve or thirteen living permanently at home', she observes of her environment.<sup>16</sup> Writing from her own experience, Thompson notes how, as the girl reached school-leaving age, she was swiftly made to 'feel herself one too many in the overcrowded home' and would become aware that 'the departure of even one small girl of twelve made a little more room for those remaining'.<sup>17</sup> Given the discursive tradition surrounding notions of girls' 'usefulness' within the home, aligned to the quantification of the valuable space she was deemed to occupy, this chapter seeks to move away from this more functional framing of the girl at home to explore the role of domestic space within autobiographical accounts of girlhood. My final section looks specifically at the evocation of memories of dolls and dollhouses in autobiography in order to examine how the working-class home was also experienced as a space for interiority and the imaginative life.

#### **4.2 Girls at home: re-capturing the child's gaze**

Flora Thompson drew on her memories of growing up in Juniper Hill, a small village in Oxfordshire, for her autobiographical trilogy *Lark Rise to Candleford* (1945), offering a unique insight into family and community life in an impoverished rural environment in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The daughter of a father who worked as a stonemason and builder's labourer, Thompson was the eldest surviving child of a family of ten siblings. Intimacy and detachment are cleverly interwoven into the book's form and tone, most notably through Thompson's use of a third person voice to narrate the experiences of the young girl 'Laura' – a protagonist whose background and life-trajectory closely follow those of the author. The third person voice, which observes the young protagonist Laura at a distance, mirrors the girl's own characteristic stance as a close observer of her environment. This sense of semi-detachment marks Laura out; she is perceived by members of her own family, and by the inhabitants of Lark Rise, as 'odd' and a girl with 'queer ideas', while Laura's mother likened her to that most still and watchful bird – the 'moll heron'.<sup>18</sup> As Juliet Dusinberre comments, the narrative of *Lark Rise* expresses an 'extreme clarity of vision [which] belongs to the watchfulness of the child, feeding into the shaping adult mind the raw

material of a changing way of life'.<sup>19</sup> From an early age, Thompson notes, it is 'some peculiarity of mental outlook' – specifically an attention to detail – that distinguished Laura and her brother from other children. She adds: 'Small things which passed unnoticed by others interested, delighted, or saddened them. Nothing that took place around them went unnoted; words spoken and forgotten the next moment by the speaker were recorded in their memoirs, and the actions and reactions of others were impressed on their minds, until a clear, indelible impression of their little world remained with them for life'.<sup>20</sup>

The family home is one of the objects of Laura's insistently watchful gaze. As in many working-class autobiographies, the word 'slum' hovers ambiguously at the margins of the prose and is invoked in the opening pages as the narrator insists that the hamlet 'must not be thought of as a slum set down in the country'.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, she recalls how the children of Lark Rise, living in two-bed cottages with 'eight, ten, or even more in some families', enjoyed tales of the 'London slums' documented in their Sunday School Lending Library books, a reading experience which gave them 'a cheering sense of superiority': 'Thank God, the reader had a whole house to herself with an upstairs and downstairs and did not have to "pig" it in one room; and real beds, and clean ones, not bundles of rags in corners to sleep on'.<sup>22</sup> Deviating from the image of leaky, cramped and darkened rooms generically associated with poor housing conditions, Thompson instead lays emphasis on the openness of the hamlet homes which extended out to the surrounding countryside, typified by her description of hollyhocks and other tall flowers pushing their way into the cottage living-room to mingle with the potted geraniums and fuchsias on the window-sill.<sup>23</sup> The narrative insists that 'though poor, there was nothing sordid about their lives' and there is thus a political aspect underpinning the intense lyricism of Thompson's recollections of life in an impoverished small village.<sup>24</sup> Richness of detail and the evocation of a complex sensory world make this representation of childhood a landscape that militates against a viewpoint that has historically castigated or romanticized working-class domestic life.<sup>25</sup> The insistently subjective mode which focalises all that is seen through Laura's point of view works precisely against the totalising empirical gaze that underpinned so much commentary on working-class homes in 'sordid' conditions of poverty. In this sense, along with its 'semi-autobiographical' mode, *Lark Rise* radically insists on the value of the immersive and sensory point of view which is derived, literally, from within the interior, and that settles its gaze on particular details that have personal, emotional,

aesthetic or indeed nostalgic resonance. As Raymond Williams comments towards the end of *The Country and the City* (1993), while '[g]reat confusion is caused if the real childhood memory is projected, unqualified as history', it is reductive to simply dismiss childhood memory as merely sentimental or nostalgic. For he argues that it is not the content of the memory itself, the 'village or the backstreet' which is significant, but the attempt to lay hold of 'what was once close, absorbing, accepted, familiar' – an evocation of the place where the individual felt themselves to be 'a member, a discoverer, in a shared source of life'.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, it is the form, as much as the content, of the autobiographer's memories that bears political significance.

Lark Rise is the place in which Flora/Laura has spent what she calls her most 'impressionable years', of which she would 'bear their imprint through life'.<sup>27</sup> Written from the point of view of someone who has moved away from this formative environment, the autobiographical trilogy therefore provides an acute and sensitive account of the girl's simultaneous sense of deep attachment to family and place, and the developing autonomy that would push her away from home. In this sense *Lark Rise* is typical, for as John Burnett has noted, autobiographies of childhood often mark the turning point at which the individual comes to 'the first consciousness of identity – the realization of self as having thoughts, emotions and desires distinct from those of the adults who have hitherto constituted the child's world [...] the first recognition of self is, for some, the experiencing of deep emotion which is individual and not shared by others'.<sup>28</sup> Thus in the chapter 'Growing Pains', Thompson describes returning home from holidays in the nearby town of Candleford having reached a stage of girlhood, startlingly described in the villagers' idiom as 'an ok'ard age, neither 'ooman nor child, when they oughter be shut up in a box for a year or two'. She goes on to trace the subtle shift in relations at home as experienced by the sensitive and observant Laura. While at first giving herself the 'airs of a returned traveller', she quickly 'slipped back into her own place again [...] the plain spotlessness of her own home, with a few ornaments and no padding to obscure the homely outline, was good, too. She felt she belonged there'.<sup>29</sup> But the girl is also aware that various shifts in the household mean that there is increasingly less space for her at home. Laura can no longer read as much indoors for there is a baby to look after, and her mother's bedtime stories, which so captivated her as a child, are now directed at her younger siblings with whom she still shares a bed. She senses her 'growing sense of inability to fit

herself into the scheme of things as she knew it',<sup>30</sup> including an increasing resistance to the demands of domestic duties (for example, she senses her mother's disapproval as she feeds a younger sibling in one arm with a book distractingly held in the other). Yet for Thompson, as indeed for Williams and other 'scholarship' boys and girls later in the century, Laura's process of self-formation and the acquisition of new forms of knowledge are shown to be precisely rooted in a sense of a powerful sense of belonging to a region and place, as well as what she refers to as a 'protected home life'.<sup>31</sup>

The autobiographer's careful attention to the home as a place of a formative and shifting sense of awareness is also manifest in Alice Foley's *A Bolton Childhood* (1973) – an urban counterpart to Thompson's *Lark Rise*. Born in 1891 to a boiler stoker father, and a mother who earned money as a washer woman, Foley was raised in a 'two up, two down dwelling in the middle of a row' in the Irish Catholic quarter of Bolton.<sup>32</sup> Like Thompson, Foley's descriptions of family life are notably framed by an awareness of the derogatory attitude to the place she terms 'home', and she is quick to appropriate that condemnatory word 'slum' early in her account: 'We were true denizens of the street, born in slums and cramped spaces, and there we tended to stay'.<sup>33</sup> Foley describes the family home as a 'haphazard household', where the family's circumstances were subject to the vagaries of her father's precarious employment.<sup>34</sup> Overcrowding, so often seen from the viewpoint of the social investigator, is unusually rendered here from the point of view of the young child. In one instance, Foley describes how '[t]he growth of infantile consciousness and the awakening of awareness arouses misty visions of a crowded room with many figures moving around, the family being herded in that one small compass'.<sup>35</sup> Other details are captured from a child's perspective: her 'infant gaze' runs its eye across the contents of the spaces of the family home to document a pair of china dogs with golden neck-chains, a clock and tea-caddy, the false cornice over the fire-place with a faded brocade pelmet hiding the string on which damp laundry would be set to dry, an 'old dilapidated horse-hair sofa [whose] hairy arms unrebukingly received our confidences in infantile griefs and joys', and a brass latch on the front door 'which caught my childish vision because it was kept brightly polished'.<sup>36</sup>

Here it is not so much the material objects in themselves that are meaningful, as Foley's evocation of the emotional register of these household furnishings: this is a sensory inventory.<sup>37</sup> As Megan Doolittle has noted, domestic objects, as recalled in life-writing, 'are

not just containers for sets of meanings, but have a material presence that can be remembered through the senses: what they looked like, how they felt, smelled, tasted and sounded. [...] In these accounts, the feel of a chair and the sound of a clock can be deeply embedded in the shaping of autobiographical accounts'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in the manner of other working-class autobiographers, Foley provides a detailed recall of the images that hung on the wall of the home. While these may have been 'shabby pictures', whose meanings were mostly unfathomable to the young child, she recounts how they attracted her 'infant curiosity and wonder', especially on dark evenings 'when the lamp-light threw ghostly shadows round the room'.<sup>39</sup> Of particular fascination to the young girl was an image depicting the return of the prodigal son 'recreating a moment of ecstatic joy and comprehension in the mind of a questing child, brooding in the dusk and absorbing queer images from fading, yellow pictures'.<sup>40</sup> As with Thompson, the childhood home is studiously observed by the girl of the writer's memory who tries to make sense of the 'queer images' that adorn the walls of the family home. Foley does not seek to ascribe a narrative meaning to these fragments of recollection. Despite a tendency in some autobiographical criticism to emphasise the writer's apparent urge to shape and order the past into a coherent and chronological account, numerous memoirs, such as Foley's, provide evidence of the way in which authors allow the strangeness and dis-ordered impressions of childhood to permeate the form of their accounts.

These autobiographers' detailed descriptions of the everyday personal items that furnished girlhood homes are furthermore an important addition to the obsessive inventories of working-class interiors produced by inspectors and reformers, which either remarked on the dilapidated furnishings and absence of domestic items, or approvingly recorded objects signifying 'respectability' – such as polished fire grates, hanging clocks, pianos and well-tended flower-pots which were approvingly marked as evidence of healthy domestic standards.<sup>41</sup> In Foley's account, however, the respectable aspidistra plant is described as a much-cherished family possession, and she recalls the pride and pleasure she took in sponging and polishing with milk the leaves of this domestic plant. She recounts that '[u]nder these ministrations our aspidistra flourished prodigiously, and though in after years this household favourite of the poor became despised and rejected, for me, in those formative decades, it was a much-loved green oasis in a flowerless home'.<sup>42</sup>

Autobiographical recollections of working-class homes centre not only on domestic items and objects, but also on the sensory memory of the presence of family members as they engaged in activities around the home. One of Foley's 'most cherished memories', for example, consists of her mother:

sitting by the fireside near a gleaming steel-topped fender, and the lamplight falling on the bent head as she firmly held an old, cracked bobbin inside the heel of a stocking, zigzagging the needle of coarse black wool across a gaping hole. [...] And so, my little cracked treasure, worn and polished by time and usage, remains a cherished symbol of those fragmentary, yet imperishable moments, crystallised by the passing years, of a mother's cheerful acceptance and benign endurance of the sum of human frailties and fecklessness – a strange blossoming of spirit in an odd corner of strife and poverty.<sup>43</sup>

In her unpublished autobiography, Kathleen Betterton, born in 1913 in Fulham, recalls a similar sense of security in sensing her mother's presence through the repetitive sounds of the work she took on as dressmaker: 'I grew up to the burr of a sewing-machine, often whirring far into the night when all other sounds were stilled, and my infant fingers played happily with buttons and cotton reels and spools'.<sup>44</sup> For Lilian Hine, the gleaming kitchen in the small three-bedroomed house in Poplar which housed the family of thirteen, was viewed proudly by the daughter as evidence of her mother's constant household efforts: 'I can see the kitchen now, the "Home Sweet Home" brass fender, which shone when the firelight was on it. The kitchener also shone, it was cleaned once a week with emery paper and Blacklead. Our kitchen table, which was made of whitewood, was scrubbed white as milk every day'.<sup>45</sup> And Eleanor Hutchinson, one of eight children born in 1915 in a first floor house in Paddington in what she calls the 'London slums', also furnishes her memories of home by recalling her mother's domestic labour: 'It was in this [front] room where I often found myself alone, looking out of the window or playing out my fantasies, while my mother busied herself in the back'.<sup>46</sup> As observed by Burnett, a 'concern with cleanliness and polish, order and tidiness, both inside and outside the home, is constantly mentioned by autobiographers except those from the poorest homes', reflecting their learned sense that domestic orderliness was a marker of working-class 'respectability'.<sup>47</sup> If many of the daughters moved away from the kind of domestic labour through which they filter these intimate recollections of their mother's

work and presence in the home, their autobiographies nevertheless express a sense of pride – and incredulity – at the relentless requirements of domestic upkeep.<sup>48</sup>

Yet if the mother's presence as she engaged in work provided a source of comfort in these recollections, autobiographers also offer glimpses of how the mother's place in the home could not be taken for granted. Foley's memories of her mother are underscored by the knowledge that, through life, she 'plodded gamely on, battling with a feckless husband whom she neither loved nor understood, and succouring her six children whom she never really wanted'. Indeed, Foley grows to fear her mother's abandonment, prompting her to seek 'ways of pleasing mother in the hope that she would not leave us'. Thus, for the young girl, a seemingly carefree game of Snakes and Ladders played by the fire on a quiet evening carried undue significance:

I cheerfully manoeuvred to send my counter down a long snake so that my mother's could reach 'home' safely. Then clapping my hands in glee there would be a shout, 'Oh, mam, you've won again.' If there was an answering twinkle in those dear brown eyes, a foolish, childish heart pulsed freely again with joy and relief.<sup>49</sup>

Hutchinson, who would be sent to live in a convent after her mother's death from consumption and malnutrition, experienced a foreboding sense of the precarity of home from an unsettling encounter. At the age of seven, she had witnessed a 'strange woman' walk through the open door of the house like a 'female henchman' before summoning her mother to follow her to an uncertain destination.<sup>50</sup> Before leaving with the visitor, Hutchinson's mother attempted to change out of her indoor shoes into a pair of neat, laced shoes she reserved for formal occasions, for which she was severely and humiliatingly rebuked:

'Take your foot down from the chair this instant!' she ordered. My mother obeyed and with difficulty bent down to the floor to finish doing up the laces. To have argued would have been futile and my mother knew it. That was not enough. 'You people want to learn to look after your chairs. Using them as foot-rests doesn't improve them!'<sup>51</sup>

The emphasis Hutchinson places on her memory of witnessing this scene, and the strength of emotion it provokes, is not incidental. Noting that the woman 'was not aware of my presence

as I stood behind her in the doorway summing up her huge frame and big, fat, shapeless legs', Hutchinson describes herself as 'helpless and speechless' to this exchange before 'the picture fades'.<sup>52</sup> Yet the adult autobiographer also ascribes to the young girl a crucial watchful agency within this scene of domestic intrusion, unjust humiliation and class conflict. The girl here, once again, is shown to be a type of social observer, watching and registering the way in which the space of home could be both a refuge and interface for broader tensions relating to poverty, propriety, femininity and class.

#### **4.3 Playing house: dolls, dollhouses and interior worlds**

As noted above, autobiographies recounting experiences of girlhood can help to expand the set of images associated with the working-class interior, offering a visual, sensory and emotional record of these places as perceived through the doubled perspective of the writer, who attempts to capture the child's point of view. But as well as documenting the space of the home, these accounts can concomitantly contribute to an understanding of girlhood and the way in which the girl's inner life is portrayed through memoir. Outsider observers who surveyed, reported on and photographed working-class children's leisure activities have tended to emphasise how it was the open space of the street, rather than the interior confines of the home, which afforded space for working-class children to play.<sup>53</sup> In her 1913 survey of poor households in London's Kennington district, for example, the Fabian reformer Maud Pember Reeves observed that 'indoors there are no amusements. There are no books and no games, nor any place to play the games should they exist'.<sup>54</sup> Yet while many autobiographies support the idea that the street served as a playground and place of relative freedom for young children, others offer important and overlooked accounts of the way in which domestic space could also house the girl's imaginative life and developing sense of autonomy.<sup>55</sup>

In this context, even simple recollections of daydreaming – that state of mundane transcendence – function as a telling detail in autobiographical accounts of girlhood. Edna Bold grew up above the shop in which her father made a precarious living as a baker, among blackened terraced houses in 'the mean, intricate streets' of turn-of-the-century Beswick, Manchester. Bold's father headed a single-parent household after his wife was admitted into an institution in Lancaster following a mental breakdown.<sup>56</sup> Despite these hardships, Bold describes how an imaginative world of 'play and dreaming' formed a key part of her childhood: 'I loved my dreaming life. I loved my waking life. The one was undoubtedly a

reflection of the other', she writes in her autobiography.<sup>57</sup> Daydreaming in the space of her grandmother's neighbouring house allowed Bold to 'escape the fraught world where every moment seemed to be crammed with activity', providing her with what she calls a sense of 'otherness' and a vivid sense of 'complete isolation with its miraculous momentary awareness'.<sup>58</sup> For Betterton, being able to find the space to play at home, a flat in a small subdivided terraced house in Fulham, was a problem: 'Indoors there was almost no room to play without getting under grown-up feet'.<sup>59</sup> Despite the physical limitations, she played where she could: 'I played school with my dolls on the backstairs and "kept house" behind my father's chair. [...] Makebelieve made up a large part of my life at home and with a few "properties" I was able to play countless parts'.<sup>60</sup>

Memories of playing with dolls and dollhouses recur with frequency throughout women's autobiographies across the social scale, and a small but suggestive number of those can be found in working-class life-writing.<sup>61</sup> In Mayhew's well-known interview with the little watercress girl on the streets of London in the late 1840s, described by Steedman as 'an almost unique piece of evidence about working-class childhood',<sup>62</sup> the girl is eager to impart not only details of the outdoor and indoor work she undertakes, but her knowledge of a 'good many games' and what is presumably her small collection miniature toys. 'Oh, yes; I've got some toys at home. I've a fire-place, and a box of toys, and a knife and fork, and two little chairs', she tells Mayhew, although she adds, 'I never had no doll'.<sup>63</sup> These details have a disruptive and even unsettling effect; as Steedman points out, 'toys, the possible symbols of easier childhoods, rest uneasily in a reading of the child's account'.<sup>64</sup> With reference to how descriptions of play feature in even the most impoverished accounts of childhood, Burnett refers to an autobiographer born in 1901, Norah P., who, in her words, 'had forgotten how to play' following her traumatic separation from family and entrance into Basford Workhouse in Nottingham. Nevertheless she retained memories of her home life before the move to the workhouse and how 'she had happily played dressing up a clothes peg as substitute for a doll'.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, such is the power of the doll in childhood that autobiographers recall not only the dolls they possessed, but the ones they sorely longed for: veritable objects of desire. Amy Langley recalls pressing her nose to a shop window, 'gazing hard at a particular doll's pram which I longed to have for Christmas, but alas and alas! I never had such a wonderful Christmas gift!'<sup>66</sup> Grace Foakes, in turn, was spellbound as a child after glimpsing in the

window of a Clerkenwell toyshop ‘the most wonderful doll’s pram [in which] sat a beautiful doll’. Aware that she and her sister would never be able to buy these coveted items for themselves, they allowed themselves to pretend that they possessed them: ‘Oh! the games we played in our imagination! [...] Never have two children played a stranger game – with a doll and pram that they could never handle or have’. They were inconsolable, however, when the window display was eventually changed and ‘cried all the way home, mourning for toys we never possessed’.<sup>67</sup> In her autobiography, Hutchinson recalls how a few weeks before the cataclysmic event of her mother’s death she had begged her grandmother to buy her a ‘chestnut beauty’ glimpsed in the toy department of a local shop. But the doll was said to be unaffordable, and her physical efforts to detain her grandmother were in vain: ‘I lost the tug o’ war & reluctantly followed her out of the shop, but not without turning to give the doll a long, lingering look as I secretly claimed her as my own’.<sup>68</sup> Foley went one step further in her pursuit of a coveted doll; accompanying her mother on a washing job, she hid under her pinafore a ‘knitted doll’s frock’ she had found and took the purloined item home. But her pleasure was short-lived. ‘On reaching home, I slipped it over a battered dolly and gazed in wonder and admiration at her transformation’; yet as soon as her misdemeanour was discovered, ‘the little pink treasure was immediately returned to its rightful owner’.<sup>69</sup>

Usually considered an object-marker of the middle-class childhood, descriptions of dollhouses crop up in a small number of working-class autobiographies. Here too, these miniaturised domestic interiors function as a peculiarly charged object whose affective power clearly extended beyond the period of childhood. As Joanne Begiato argues, the dollhouse may serve as a powerful ‘emotional object’, one that has as much a hold on the imagination of the adult who looks back to childhood as it had on the child who played with it.<sup>70</sup> Like dolls, dollhouses could seemingly be yielded from the most rudimentary material. In an unpublished journal entry written around 1895, for example, Sarah Dyson recalled playing ‘baby-house’ (an older term for dollhouse) on the family farm as a child. Like other families who made ingenious use of empty food boxes in the home,<sup>71</sup> Dyson describes a precious dollhouse in her bedroom ‘made out of an orange box with two compartments upstairs and downstairs and [which] had lace curtains and toy furniture’.<sup>72</sup>

A more lavish account is given by Alice Chase, the Portsmouth-born daughter of a carpenter raised in a large working-class family in the 1880s. In her unpublished memoir she vividly

recalls the dollhouse she shared with her sister (possibly a product of her father's handiwork) which provided the main form of play at home during the winter months. The girl's close-up, microscopic gaze and realist attention to detail reveal themselves in the future dressmaker's descriptions of this cherished plaything:

It was a simple affair, made of an oblong box divided across the middle into two rooms and set up on end. The hinged lid had four windows – real glass, with lace curtains and a false door painted on it. Oh, that little dolls' house: – how we loved it. It had a small suite of four chairs and a sofa, covered in chintz with a pattern of small pink rosebuds. A little fireplace with red tinsel in the grate to look like fire, and a wool rug in front of the fire, a round marble-topped table in the middle of the room, and a clock in one corner.

This latter object was the source of great delight: 'The clock was of bright shiny tin, ornamented with flowers and on the top a bird. [...] It was a peach of a clock and we were very proud of it and wound it up once each time we played with the house'. Just as writers linger over the domestic objects of the childhood interior in their memoirs, Chase surveys the miniature fixtures and furnishings of her dollhouse in this alternative domestic inventory. Even in the parallel, imaginary world of the dollhouse, simple materials had been repurposed to great effect. 'The bed was masterpiece of ingenuity', Chase proudly comments:

Mama made it out of a fix box. She nailed the two pieces of wood, which had formed the lid of the box, onto the box to form the head and foot. The box was padded and covered with white calico, the head and foot disguised with frills of chintz; a half of a round collar box covered in chintz with curtains hanging on each side was fastened to the bed-head to make a hood and the counterpane of chintz had a strip of white sewn across the top to look like a top sheet turned back.

Five small plain dolls resided within this interior. 'Four of them were pudding dolls', Chase admits, 'like you put into the Christmas pud, and cost a farthing each.'<sup>73</sup> But the two sisters also inhabited the small house through the semi-private world of the shared imagination:

How we loved that little house and lived in it in a way. [...] I may say of that dolls' house that we never asked anyone to share it with us. It was ours. We

played all sorts of games – whip top, marbles, hoops and swings, shuttle-cock, tip-cat, tag, skipping rope, and higher and higher, with all the other children round about and enjoyed ourselves hugely, but indoors we two kept our dolls' house private. We never quarrelled while we played with it, but made up all kinds of stories about it and forgot the world outside.<sup>74</sup>

As Nancy Wei-Ning Chen writes, playing with dollhouses might be seen as a means of affording girls a means to 'express imagination, creativity, and agency'.<sup>75</sup> Dolls and dollhouses, where they appear in working-class autobiographies, therefore function as 'emotional objects', which, no matter how plain or improvised in form, signify the child's investment and desire for an object through its promise of an imaginative world of play: a small place of one's own within the shared, and often crowded, space of the family home. It is ironically not so much the fact that they symbolise the home or domesticity, but that they signify precisely the use-lessness of the daydream and the world of the imagination, that makes dollhouses an especially important object within these accounts of working-class girlhood. In Susan Sontag's words:

To miniaturize means to make useless. For what is so grotesquely reduced is, in a sense, liberated from its meaning – its tininess being the outstanding thing about it. It is both a whole (that is, complete) and a fragment (so tiny, the wrong scale). It becomes an object of disinterested contemplation or reverie.<sup>76</sup>

In this sense, dollhouses are symbols of domesticity in outward appearance alone; in terms of the role they played in young girls' lives, they are decidedly anti-utilitarian, representing the more escapist pleasures of play and privacy.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

While recognised as a slippery form of historical source material, autobiography undoubtedly offers a rich repository for anyone seeking to explore what Michael Roper has defined as the 'deep, complex and varied individual emotional experiences that constitute the domain of subjectivity'.<sup>77</sup> With its ability to represent fragmentary and impressionistic memories, autobiography can movingly capture the child's close-up and sensory view of the interior, alongside the adult writer's retroactive interpretation of the emotional significance of the domestic scene. Life-writing therefore has the capacity to offer rare insights into the

experiences of girls – a social group that has generally eluded the gaze of surveyors, social explorers, and indeed historians, of the working-class home. As I have argued, the working-class autobiography offers descriptions and experiences relating to the domestic environment which can usefully stand in contradistinction to some of the more entrenched and received images of working-class homes, from the sentimentalised cottage interior to the shared rooms of the crowded tenement. Autobiographies often seek to convey the child's gaze within the home, showing this to be a point of view which attends to small, fragmentary and sensory detail, thus breaking away from the dominant modes of realism and sensationalism that have characterised so much writing about the homes of working people. As Alison Light evocatively writes:

The child's world is perhaps always amorphous, searching for shapes to contain, drifting between parallel universes, overlapping with, but not matching, where the adults live, full of multiple, shifting dimensions, more like a kaleidoscope of patterns than a stable view. This inner world is protean, can make infinite space of a nutshell; its walls are thin and airy, yet they can also stretch and insulate. This is the boundlessness of boredom, of fear and of play; the place where the child is perhaps most itself and most inaccessible, and where even at the bleakest of times, where all the colour is drained and the walls begin to buckle rather than bend, something which is isolated is also preserved.<sup>78</sup>

Light's attention to the way in which the child may exist in 'parallel universes, overlapping with, but not matching, where the adults live' is especially significant for accounts of working-class girlhood. In such cases home was, after all, the place in which the girl learned not only how she was seen, but also how to observe and interpret the world as she learned to inhabit her multiple roles as daughter, sister, helpmate, worker, daydreamer, and writer.

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## Notes

I am very grateful to Katie Flanagan at Special Collections, Brunel University London, for her help in providing access to materials held in the Burnett Archive of Working-Class Autobiography.

<sup>1</sup> These accounts have been widely collected and discussed. See, for example, P. Keating (ed), *Into Unknown England, 1866–1913: Selections from the Social Explorers* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1976); R. Livesey, 'Reading for Character: Women Social Reformers and Narratives of the Urban Poor in Late Victorian and Edwardian London', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 9 (2004), pp. 43–67; E. Ross (ed), *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty, 1860–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); N. Wilson, *Home in British Working-Class Fiction* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 15–35; E. Cuming, *Housing, Class and Gender in Modern British Writing, 1880–2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 23–72; B. Leckie, *Poverty, the Novel, and the Architectural Idea in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Key studies of working-class selfhood, family life, leisure and work practices that draw on the extensive corpus of working-class autobiographies include: D. Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Methuen, 1981); J. Burnett, *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London: Penguin, 1984); R. Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); J. Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); J. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); E. Griffin, *Bread Winner: An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Humphries, *Childhood*, pp. 6, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, many published nineteenth-century working-class autobiographies by male writers include an artist's impression of the family home as an illustrative plate.

<sup>5</sup> J. Helgren and C.A. Vasconcellos, 'Introduction', in J. Helgren and C.A. Vasconcellos (eds), *Girlhood: A Global History*, (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> J. Swindells, *Victorian Writing and Working Women: The Other Side of Silence* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1985), 205.

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<sup>7</sup> Most published working-class autobiographies by writers born in the period 1876–1915 were male, and surveys of this body of writing have tended to focus on the experience of boys and men. However, the use of unpublished autobiographical writing by ‘amateur’ authors, such as the accounts collected by John Burnett, David Vincent and David Mayall, now deposited in the Burnett Archive of Working-Class Autobiography, offer unique insight into the lived experiences of women and girls. For an overview of the Burnett Archive, and the changing demographic of working-class life-writing, see H. Rogers and E. Cuming, ‘Revealing Fragments: Close and Distant Reading of Working-Class Autobiography’, *Family and Community History*, 21 (2018), pp. 180–201; and Griffin, *Bread Winner*, pp. 8–23.

<sup>8</sup> C. Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Steedman, *Landscape*, p. 24. Emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> The settlement worker May Craske provides a detailed description of the ‘little girl, aged from nine to fourteen, who is the drudge of the family’ in ‘Girl Life in a Slum’, *Economic Review* 18 (1908), p. 186. See also Ellen Ross’s exploration of ‘little mothers’ in *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 154–55; A. Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870–1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996); Griffin, *Bread Winner*, pp. 27–36.

<sup>11</sup> Griffin, *Bread Winner*, pp. 27–36.

<sup>12</sup> H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour*, pp. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Steedman, *Landscape*, p. 127. Sally Mitchell explores what she calls the ‘separate culture’ of girlhood in this period by tracing the ‘fantasies, the dreams, the mental climate, and the desires of girls themselves’, see S. Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian London* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 119.

<sup>16</sup> F. Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 155–6.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, pp. 268, 380, 95.

<sup>19</sup> J. Dusinger, ‘The Child’s Eye and the Adult’s Voice: Flora Thompson’s *Lark Rise to Candleford*’, *The Review of English Studies*, 35 (1984), p. 61.

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<sup>20</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, pp. 46–7.

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 253. The expression ‘to pig it’ means ‘to live in an untidy or slovenly fashion; to live in cheap or inferior accommodation’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Comparing the homes of the very poor to ‘pigsties’ was a common phrase in the parlance of nineteenth-century social investigation.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 264.

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> As Dusinberre notes, ‘[f]or Thompson the story of real people and their lives offers fictions as artistically open-ended and inexhaustible as any writer could invent’, see Dusinberre, ‘Child’s Eye’, p. 66.

<sup>26</sup> R. Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1993), pp. 297–8.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 387.

<sup>28</sup> Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, pp. 26–7.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 374.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 379.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 318. Williams drew on his own experiences of family and community life in rural South Wales for his semi-autobiographical novel *Border Country* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), further exploring his attachment to place in autobiographically-inflected sections of *The Country and the City* and ‘Culture is Ordinary’, in idem, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 3–14.

<sup>32</sup> A. Foley, *A Bolton Childhood* (Bolton: Manchester University Extra-Mural Department, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 29. Working-class autobiographers’ own uses of the word ‘slum’, overlooked in received histories of the term, deserves further consideration. I discuss one such reclamation of the word as it occurs in Pat O’Mara’s *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Slummy* (London: Martin Hopkinson, 1934), see Cuming, *Housing*, pp. 69–71.

<sup>34</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>37</sup> As Burnett observes, many autobiographers describe in photographic detail the physical arrangement of the home as ‘the place where consciousness first dawned’. Yet as he points out, there is a paradox in that the items

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described are often prosaic, utilitarian and of little monetary value: ‘the tables and chairs, wash-tubs and fire-irons, tin tea-caddies and china dogs – are usually totally ordinary and unremarkable, hardly worthy, one would think, of recall or mention’, see Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p. 223. On the affective role of objects in autobiography and their containment of family stories, see L. Gloyn, V. Crewe, L. King, A. Woodham, ‘The Ties that Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the “Things” Families Keep’, *Journal of Family History*, 43 (2018), pp. 157–76.

<sup>38</sup> M. Doolittle, ‘Time, Space, and Memories: The Father’s Chair and Grandfather Clocks in Victorian Working-Class Domestic Lives’, *Home Cultures*, 8 (2011), pp. 248–9. See also Julie-Marie Strange’s exploration of tables, chairs and family relationships in ‘Fatherhood, Furniture and the Inter-Personal Dynamics of Working-Class Homes, c. 1870–1914’, *Urban History*, 40 (2013), pp. 271–86.

<sup>39</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> As Leckie notes, ‘these are homes defined in part – and in housing of the poor as described by middle-class commentators, in main – by the ways things signify’, see Leckie, *Open Houses*, p. 24. On the ‘moral botany’ deployed by social reformers in relation to the cultivation of flowers and plants in the working-class home, see A.M. Lawrence, ‘Morals and Mignonette; Or, the Use of Flowers in the Moral Regulation of the Working Classes in High Victorian London’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 70 (2020): pp. 24–35.

<sup>42</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>44</sup> K. Betterton, ‘White Pinnies, Black Aprons...’, Burnett Archive of Working Class Autobiography, Special Collections, Brunel University London, 2:71, 11.

<sup>45</sup> L. Hine, ‘A Poplar Childhood’, *East London Record* 3 (1980), p. 40.

<sup>46</sup> E. Hutchinson, ‘The Bells of St Mary’s’, Burnett Archive, 2:429, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, 218.

<sup>48</sup> Humphries notes that in working-class memoir ‘[w]omen’s struggles against dirt were celebrated with almost as much frequency as their struggles against want, suggesting the error that is made in overlooking the contribution of cleanliness to comfort’, see Humphries, *Childhood*, p.140.

<sup>49</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 9.

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<sup>50</sup> Hutchinson, 'Bells of St Mary's', 38. The exact identity of the official is never confirmed, although Hutchinson considers the fact that it may have been a council official or prison worker (her father had been imprisoned for union activities).

<sup>51</sup> Hutchinson, "Bells of St Mary's", p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> Hutchinson, "Bells of St Mary's", pp. 38–9.

<sup>53</sup> Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 63–68.

<sup>54</sup> M. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914), p. 192.

<sup>55</sup> Reading, of course, was one way in which children could inhabit worlds of their own indoors, and Rose's *The Intellectual Life* provides multiple examples of how working-class children found the space, time and means to become avid readers in the home. More generally, sending children to play outdoors may have seemed a safer option for working-class parents; nineteenth-century coroners' reports, for example, supply evidence of children who died from burns and scalding injuries related to indoor play see V. Holmes, 'Dangerous Spaces: Working-Class Homes and Fatal Household Accidents in Suffolk, 1840-1900' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> E. Bold, 'The Long and Short of It. Being the Recollections and Reminiscences of Edna Bold', Burnett Archive, 2:85, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Bold, 'The Long and Short of It', 14, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Bold, 'The Long and Short Of It', 32.

<sup>59</sup> Betterton, 'White Pinnies', p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Betterton, 'White Pinnies', pp. 8, 21.

<sup>61</sup> For an account of dollhouses as they feature in middle-class autobiographies, see N. Wei-Ning Chen, 'Playing with Size and Reality: The Fascination of a Dolls' House World', *Children's Literature in Education*, 46 (2015), pp. 278–295.

<sup>62</sup> Steedman, *Landscape*, p. 127.

<sup>63</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour*, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup> Steedman, *Landscape*, p. 137.

<sup>65</sup> Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, p. 240. By contrast, Samuel Bamford details how he played lively games with his 'playmates', made up of the pauper boys and girls at the Salford poor law workhouse overseen by his father; see

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Bamford, *The Autobiography of Samuel Bamford: Volume One: Early Days* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), pp. 69–70.

<sup>66</sup> A. Langley, [Untitled], Burnett Archive, 2:466, 22.

<sup>67</sup> G. Foakes, *Four Meals for Fourpence* (London: Virago, 2011), p. 57.

<sup>68</sup> Hutchinson, 'Bells of St Mary's', p. 53.

<sup>69</sup> Foley, *Bolton Childhood*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> J. Begiato, 'Moving Objects: Emotional Transformation, Tangibility, and Time Travel', in S. Downes, S. Holloway and S. Randles (eds), *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions Through History*, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 239–41.

<sup>71</sup> Jack Lawson converted an ordinary orange box into a bookcase, while Arthur Harding recalled how such boxes served in the family home, alternatively, as chairs, storage and a baby's cot; see Lawson, *A Man's Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) 80-1, and R. Samuel, *Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 21. Holmes addresses the makeshift use of ordinary objects in poor homes in her paper 'The Egg-Box Cot: Renewing and Repurposing in the Victorian Working-Class Home', *British Association of Victorian Studies (BAVS) Annual Conference, 'Victorian Renewals'*, University of Dundee (2019).

<sup>72</sup> Sarah Sutcliff's (née Dyson) unpublished journal, in *The Voices of Children 1700–1914*, ed. I. Stickland (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 194. This passage is cited in N. Wei-Ning Chen, 'The Art of Housekeeping: Dolls' Houses and the Victorian Domestic Interior', V&A Museum of Childhood website <https://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/small-stories-thinking-small/art-housekeeping-dolls-houses-victorian-domestic-interior/>, accessed 1 October 2020.

<sup>73</sup> A. M. Chase, 'The Memoirs of Alice Maud Chase', Burnett Archive, 1:141, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Chase, 'Memoirs', p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> Chen, 'Playing with Size', p. 278.

<sup>76</sup> S. Sontag, 'Introduction', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, Walter Benjamin (London: NLB, 1979) 20. In a similar vein, Susan Stewart argues: 'That the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life [...] is a constant daydream that the miniature presents', see Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 54. The functional uselessness of the dollhouse is nicely illustrated in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (London: Frederick Warne and

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Co., 1904) in which Tom Thumb and his wife Hunca Munca remain desperately frustrated in their attempts to enjoy the domestic comforts of the miniature home.

<sup>77</sup> M. Roper, 'Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005), p. 59.

<sup>78</sup> A. Light, *Common People: The History of an English Family* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 2.