

Bedrooms on Paper  
An Analysis of the Textual  
Representation of Children's  
Bedrooms in Britain,  
*c.* 1870-Present

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# Declaration of Authorship

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I, **Jamie Adcock**, hereby declare that this thesis, and the work presented in it, is my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is clearly stated.

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 24th July 2013 \_\_\_\_\_

# Abstract

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This thesis explores the representation of children's bedrooms within three genres of consumer text. Focusing upon texts written and published between the late nineteenth century and the present day, and upon bedrooms within a British context, it examines how the bedroom has been depicted and how different kinds of text present and define the space. Reflecting upon the relationship between specific texts and depicted bedrooms, it engages with the idea that bedrooms on paper point to ideas and beliefs that influence and shape bedrooms in reality. Through an analysis of textual descriptions and visual depictions, it considers how bedrooms have been constructed, consumed and imagined since the late 1800s. The thesis is divided into three main studies. The first explores the nursery of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century through advice printed within child-rearing manuals. Examining the recommendations of publications, it opens up the space that parents were expected to provide for their children to scrutiny and reveals that the 'ideal' nursery was a highly regulated environment designed to support children's bodily health and mental development. The second reviews the representation of the bedroom within interwar (1918-1939) and post-war magazines (1945- ), a space with which most are familiar today. It concentrates specifically upon the material culture of the bedroom and illustrates that the crafting, or materialising, of the space was a complex process involving multiple agencies and fields of practice. The third explores the imaginative geographies of bedrooms within post-war children's picture books and considers how scenes, situations and plotlines in which bedrooms feature may potentially resonate with readers. Together, the three studies provide a sense of how the bedroom has developed since the late nineteenth century, reveal the key constituents and component practices of the space, and underline the value of texts as key material sources through which to explore everyday life.

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# 1.

## Introduction

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What thoughts would come to mind if you were asked to picture and describe a typical child's bedroom? Perhaps you would recall your own childhood bedroom, the space within your home that you laid claim to as a child. Drawn back to a relatively distant or recent past, you may find yourself reminiscing about the room in which you grew up, harking back to and mentally revisiting a space that evokes and triggers memories and sensations of a time gone by, embarking upon an emotional journey to a setting anchored within the personal experience of youth. Others may look toward the bedrooms of their own children or grandchildren and to the rooms that house the youngest members of their families for inspiration. Some may be informed by descriptions and depictions of rooms within books and magazines, by glossy images of furniture and decorative objects within consumer catalogues and directories, or by other representations of bedrooms that have entered into popular consciousness and influenced perception and expectation.

This thesis explores the representation of bedrooms within three genres of text written and published over a period of about one hundred and fifty years. Focusing upon texts produced and read between the late nineteenth century and the present day, it examines how children's bedrooms have been depicted and how different texts work to present the bedroom. Specifically concerned with the bedroom within a British context, it examines textual descriptions and visual images of rooms and considers how the space has been defined and understood since the late 1800s. Reflecting upon the relationship between texts and depicted bedroom space, it explores the geography of bedrooms and confirms the value of texts as key material sources through which to study 'the fabric of everyday life' (Lorimer, 2003a: 200). The thesis engages with the idea that bedrooms on paper reflect something of bedrooms in reality and through a textual analysis of depicted space considers how rooms have been constructed, consumed and imagined since the late nineteenth century. It argues that representations of the bedroom allow for the identifying of social and cultural ideas and values that shape the space, and point to the identities of those associated with it. As such, from its reading of textual bedrooms, it aims to examine how the concept of the bedroom

has changed over time, to isolate the key constituents, or building blocks, of the space, and to explore the practices and identities of children and parents embodied within.

In focusing upon the bedroom, this thesis explores a space that has generally been overlooked within children's geographies and geographies of home. Moreover, its textual and historical approach contrasts with the research methodologies that both areas of study often practise and follow. In each regard, therefore, the thesis makes an original contribution to scholarship. Indeed, children's geographies tends to privilege a direct engagement with children and, to this end, seems to favour participatory, ethnographic and primary-based research techniques. As a result, work regularly fails to look beyond the study of children's lives within the present and frequently ignores childhoods of the past. It also concentrates largely upon children's relationships with public space and tends to neglect the study of children and childhood within domestic contexts. Similarly, children and children's domestic spaces are absent from the majority of work on the home and domesticity, a surprising state of affairs given that the home is 'synonymous' with the notion of family and the rearing of children (Dowling, 2008: 540). Furthermore, research often explores and focuses upon certain kinds of domestic space, most notably, the kitchen, living room and other downstairs spaces as opposed to more private areas of the home, including children's bedrooms. This is reflected not only within ethnographic work, which has dominated recent research on the home and homemaking practice (Jacobs and Cairns, 2008), but also within studies from a range of methodological perspectives (see Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

### **The Three Studies**

This thesis is divided into three analytical studies. Each explores how a certain type of text, or textual genre, works to create a particular kind of bedroom space on paper. Each also focuses upon a specific core period, and the three come together to provide an overlapping history of the bedroom from the late nineteenth century. Three types of text feature that describe and depict children's bedrooms in various ways. All are commercial, or published, texts that exist, or existed, within the public sphere and which are, or were, largely accessible. Each has, or had, some sort of connection with the bedroom; is, or was, produced or written for a different purpose; and speaks, or spoke, to either children, parents or both. The studies combine to illustrate shifts in

room configuration and in the type of space that children were expected to occupy at home, the material development of the bedroom and changes in the material fabric of the space, and how perceptions and meanings of childhood and parenthood have altered with time.

The first study analyses child-rearing manuals and general home-management literature; it explores the ‘ideal’ bedroom space as defined by ‘expert’ authors, and the advice offered to parents with regard to its suitable creation. A particular emphasis is placed upon books published between approximately 1870 and 1930, a period characterised by the publication of many new manuals and by a series of medical, scientific and political developments that collectively came to influence popular conceptions of children and methods of child-rearing practice (Hardyment, 1983, 2007; Cunningham, 1995). Touching upon the notion of responsible parenthood and the idea that there was a right and a wrong way to bring up a child, advice that related to the formation and maintenance of children’s rooms is opened up to explore the kind of bedroom space that many children were expected to inhabit, the space that parents were expected to provide. Historically specific and, considering the likely readership of manuals, class oriented, a focus falls upon advice that pertained to the nursery, a room found within many British upper- and middle-class homes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which was designed to house all the children of a household. From its reading of manuals, the research argues that the nursery was a highly regulated space designed to support children’s bodily health and mental development. Positioned within the wider context of contemporary scientific discoveries and the idea that a child’s domestic surroundings could influence health and character for better or worse (Hardyment, 1983, 2007), an historical and geographical narrative traces the significance attached to environmental conditions, the relationship between aesthetics and hygiene, and the instructional and intellectual objectives of room decoration. It reveals that the nursery was a controlled environment governed by set levels of ventilation, temperature and other intangible qualities, an amalgamation of materials and surfaces recommended for their child-friendly attributes and user-friendliness, and a scenic domestic landscape where specific colours, forms of decoration and material objects featured owing to their perceived educational value to children.

The second study reflects upon the representation of the bedroom within consumer magazines. With reference to a gradual shift in the type of space that children

were expected to occupy within the home – from nurseries of multiple occupancy to rooms intended to house individual children or same-sex siblings – it examines how interwar (1918-1939) and post-war (1945- ) magazines promoted and cultivated a new ideal and considers their contribution to creating a space with which most are familiar today. It focuses particularly upon women's and home-oriented periodicals published between the early 1920s and the mid-1970s, texts that appealed to the aspirations of the expanding middle classes and which almost certainly reached a wider audience than child-rearing manuals because of their relative affordability; a number of serials aimed at children are also included to gain a wider perspective. Framed thematically, the study explores the material culture of the bedroom and deliberates upon the broader social relations, conflicts and compromises involved when creating and inhabiting the space. It argues that the bedroom, as depicted within magazines, was constituted through material objects, and illustrates the significance of materiality within the space. It examines how bedrooms were materially created, how the presence of material things produced recognisable and clearly defined spaces for children, and how the materialising of rooms was a complex and mediated process. It reveals how the materiality of the bedroom developed with children as they grew older, the importance of do-it-yourself and design in overcoming issues associated with cost and restricted space, and the material differences between boys' and girls' bedrooms, and the gendered ideas behind them.

The third study considers the relationship between the bedroom and children's picture books, texts that are often read or used within the space. Focusing upon post-Second World War examples in which bedrooms feature as prominent settings or as important plot elements, it explores how picture books reflect the imaginative geographies that shape and define children's everyday bedroom experiences.<sup>1</sup> It argues that depictions of bedrooms enable picture books to establish some sort of connection with their audiences and allow both child and adult readers to recognise something of themselves within a story. It reflects upon the themes and messages embodied within picture-book bedrooms and analyses how certain scenes, situations and plotlines potentially resonate with readers. For example, with reference to the ritual of bedtime reading – an affectionate and tender activity that enriches the bond between parents

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<sup>1</sup> The picture book in Britain is largely a product of post-Second World War technological advances in lithography and colour printing (Hunt, 1994, 2001; Doonan, 1996).

and children (Spitz, 1999) – the study examines how picture books work as bedtime stories that prepare children for sleep and how they help to bridge the gap between the waking world and the dream world. It shows how the bedroom is a key device that situates readers within the narratives of stories and how the familiarity of the space is intended to ease children’s night-time anxieties. Furthermore, it explores the significance of bedroom-based fantasy and illustrates how bedrooms are presented as spaces of possibility. It reveals how children are encouraged to dream and ‘act out the spectacles of sleep’ (Moebius, 1991: 57), how they are given confidence to face the scary creatures that live under their beds, and how they are invited through their reading to embark upon amazing bedroom adventures without leaving the space.

### **Research Specificity**

As this research is concerned with the bedroom within a British context, the thesis examines texts that were present and read within British culture. Whilst the vast majority of its sources are British, that is, items which were British authored and published, it also includes a relatively small number of American texts. This is particularly relevant with regard to the picture books explored within Chapter Six and, to a lesser extent, the child-rearing manuals surveyed within Chapter Four; all the magazines analysed within Chapter Five, however, are British titles. In many respects, the thesis’s sample of picture books reflects the international nature of the genre, and of literature and publishing more generally, in that works of fiction are often published in multiple territories and markets; it also points to the remarkable development of the genre, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century (for example, see Doonan, 1996). Indeed, many of the picture books within the thesis were written by American authors and were first published in the United States before being published in Britain; a few of the more recent titles have not been published in this country but are available to buy here. Similarly, the sample of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century child-rearing manuals reflects the trans-Atlantic and global nature of parenting advice. For example, manuals were sometimes published simultaneously in Britain and the United States, American works were frequently published in Britain at a later date, and British texts were often revised for American audiences. Moreover, parenting manuals occasionally originated from within the empire. Though the thesis draws mainly upon

British-authored texts, a small number of manuals within its sample were written by Americans for the British market, and a few are British editions of works which were first published in the United States or elsewhere within the empire.

The bedrooms explored within this thesis relate specifically to children between the ages of infancy and pre-adolescence. Each analytical study focuses upon a particular age range, however; for example, Chapter Four covers infants and children up to the age of about seven, Chapter Five extends this upper limit to approximately twelve years old, whilst Chapter Six, much like Chapter Four, is concerned with the rooms of toddlers and younger children. To a large extent, the age deviation between the studies reflects the idiosyncrasies of the texts examined in terms of the rooms and children to which they refer, and their intended audiences. Indeed, the studies explore texts that speak to different readers; the child-rearing manuals within Chapter Four are directed at parents, the magazines within Chapter Five are addressed to both parents and children, and the picture books within Chapter Six are aimed at young children. Despite the variation in the age foci of the studies, together they provide a sense of children's increasing agency within the bedroom. For example, Chapter Four is concerned with children who had little say over the decisions that shaped their lives and who had little individual freedom within communal nurseries, Chapter Five focuses upon children who had an increased level of spatial and material autonomy within the bedroom but who were still subject to adult rules and regulations, and Chapter Six considers how children take control of the space through their imaginations.

For the most part, this thesis is concerned with the bedrooms of middle-class children. Like the ages of children considered, its class focus is largely determined by its textual sources. However, whilst the child-rearing manuals were clearly aimed at a middle-class audience, it is important to note that the class nature of the magazine and picture-book readers is less obvious. Indeed, the magazines and picture books within Chapters Five and Six are less clearly defined in terms of class compared to the child-rearing manuals and were likely read by an audience that extended beyond the middle classes. For example, and as shall be seen, the magazines explored often included articles on subjects which likely appealed to working-class readers; it could also be argued that they not only depicted and reflected who readers were and what they already had, but also who they might want to be and what they might aspire to have. As such, despite the thesis's middle-class focus, the ambiguity of the class status of the

sources and readers within the latter two of the three studies should therefore be noted.

### **Methodology**

Before discussing how the thesis sourced and sampled its material and detailing how it read and approached child-rearing manuals, magazines and picture books, it is first necessary to outline a few basic assumptions and underlying principles of its textual analysis. Indeed, texts are understood to have certain characteristics and important features: first, they are ‘composed of signs and symbols’; second, inscriptions, or codes of meaning, are etched on to a ‘relatively permanent, “readable” medium’; and third, a ‘coherent structure’ (McPhee, 2004: 355-359) enables for processes of ‘decoding, exegesis, interpretation and translation’ (Doel, 2010: 488). That they carry messages that can be deconstructed or deciphered underscores the fourth assumption that texts can be examined for particular histories and that traces of life and past lives are recorded within (see Black, 2010). Recent research, for example, has recreated the domestic interiors and home lives of the Georgian and Victorian periods through the insightful reading of a diverse range of textual sources, including probate inventories, household lists and personal account books (see Weatherill, 1996; Ponsonby, 2007; Vickery, 2009). Based upon the notion that texts can be read to obtain a feel for everyday life and that they index, amongst other things, social and cultural attitudes, behaviour and material artefacts, such work relies upon the written word or visual imagery to infer meaning. Although this thesis focuses upon published texts as opposed to documentary records and sources of quantitative data, it similarly considers its texts to be ‘signifying structure[s]’ (Doel, 2010: 488). As its sources are, or were, widely distributed, freely available, and present and read throughout society, it reasons that audiences recognise, or recognised, something of rooms on paper, and representations of bedrooms are therefore taken as near reflections through which to explore rooms of the past and present. For instance, it is argued that references to material culture and consumer goods allow for a picture of bedrooms to form and point to visual appearance and that depictions of rooms are encoded with the same ideas and values that underscore actual rooms. It is important to note, however, that the thesis does not aim to narrate or document changes in the bedroom historically. Whilst it provides a sense

of how bedrooms have developed since the late nineteenth century, it does not present a linear history. For example, the thesis does not suggest that child-rearing manuals, magazines and picture books existed and were read only within the periods under consideration. Nevertheless, it is conscious of historical developments and acknowledges these as and when appropriate. Moreover, the location of homes – for example, the countryside and the suburbs – was not part of the overall sampling or reading strategy but is noted where it plays an important role in the representation of bedrooms.

### Sourcing and Sampling Texts

The first analytical study drew upon a sample of approximately one hundred child-rearing manuals. Although most were written and published between 1870 and 1930, the study's core period of interest, the thesis took into account that texts are read and remain influential for many years and so also included several publications that were published before 1870. Moreover, because manuals were frequently revised and updated, sometimes by different authors, it surveyed different editions of selected works to determine how opinions and viewpoints about children and parenting might have changed over time. To identify potential sources, the thesis used bibliographies and library records; Hardyment's (1983, 2007) seminal work on the history of childcare advice was particularly useful in guiding the research toward the most important texts and influential authors, and a search of the British Library's catalogue using the subject field pointed toward further examples. Given the specific nature of the information sought, the thesis examined each of the texts in detail to ascertain the presence of relevant material on the bedroom; it was suspected that not all of the manuals would contain advice on the space, hence the large sample size. The original intention of the study was to explore the decline of the communal nursery and the emergence of the bedroom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the preferred space in which to house children within middle-class households (see Chapter Three). However, little reference to this development and a vast amount of material on how to create and maintain an appropriate nursery led the study to refocus its attention toward the space. Indeed, amongst chapters on such subjects as feeding, bathing and clothing children, most manuals had a dedicated chapter on the nursery and children's sleeping arrangements, which generally advised upon furniture, fixtures and fittings, and toys, amongst other things. The thesis therefore concentrated its reading on these chapters

but also examined separate sections on children's play and amusements where this was not incorporated. Many of the manuals were indexed, and contents pages were often very detailed, with sub-headings and key themes of chapters listed, thus allowing the thesis to locate the nursery beyond individual chapters and throughout a publication with ease. It also read prefaces and introductions to gain a sense of the objectives of manuals, their intended audiences, and attitudes toward children and child-rearing, as well as for background information on writers.

Women's and home-interior magazines published between the early 1920s and the mid-1970s constituted the main source material for the second analytical study; a number of children's periodicals from the same period were also surveyed, however, to obtain a wider perspective on children's lives and interests.<sup>2</sup> The research focused upon a relatively small number of titles; like the identifying of child-rearing manuals, secondary reading and a search of the British Library catalogue pointed the study toward magazines of interest. By no means a random sample, each was selected to provide for a variety of possible audiences, themes and article niches, as well as for their ease of access and availability within the archive, key issues to consider when doing historical and archival research (see Gidley, 2004; Ogborn, 2010).<sup>3</sup> Earlier pilot studies had suggested that articles and features on the bedroom would be sporadic at best and that it would be necessary to explore as many issues of a magazine as possible. The thesis therefore opted to examine all available editions of a title published within its designated period rather than take a more systematic sample. As a consequence, the frequency of a magazine's publication was an important consideration when deciding upon the titles to focus upon. For instance, to review a year's worth of material published within a monthly magazine is considerably less time-consuming than for a weekly magazine, and it was for this reason that the research chose to concentrate exclusively upon periodicals published on a monthly basis. Despite this, however, the study still examined nearly two thousand five hundred individual magazines in detail, a significant undertaking which involved a lengthy process of reading and careful

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<sup>2</sup> Though the sampled children's magazines were largely authored and produced by adults, it must be noted that articles and features were often written by children and young people.

<sup>3</sup> One should not normally take a book by its cover or, indeed, a magazine by its title, but the latter certainly influenced the research's magazine selection. Magazine titles illustrate that genres are not mutually exclusive and that topics and themes often interweave and become blurred (McLoughlin, 2000), as demonstrated, for example, by *Mother and Home* and *Woman and Home*.

scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, though most magazines had a contents page, a feature particularly useful in guiding the research quickly to material of interest, only selected or main features tended to be listed, and it was often necessary to embark upon a thorough and exhaustive reading to locate minor articles and to determine the subject matter of editorials and readers' letters.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, and as is customary with this type of text, the magazines were indexed neither internally nor externally; as a result, each issue was approached blind and without knowing whether it would contain any relevant or useful information. Nevertheless, approximately one hundred and thirty unique items that relate to the bedroom were discovered, including articles on the look and layout of the space, features that reviewed 'real' houses and which provided snapshots of 'actual' rooms, and illustrations and photographs from miscellaneous stories.

As regards the third analytical study, identifying picture books in which bedrooms appear required an extensive search and much investigation. To locate the bedroom within the vast field of published post-war picture books, the research made use of cross-searchable Internet databases that catalogue and review children's literature, including the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database and the Children's Picture Book Database; read book reviews published on online forums, in newspapers and in academic journals, including *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* and *The Looking Glass*; and made contact with public libraries and children's librarians. This initial exercise yielded approximately fifty picture books of interest and was subsequently followed by a close reading of individual works to determine the extent to which the bedroom featured. Given the large number of books detected, however, the research decided to focus upon a smaller sample of titles for further analysis. Indeed, a preliminary reading of narratives and illustrations revealed that bedrooms were often used and depicted in similar ways, thus allowing the thesis to group picture books into categories based upon their portrayal of rooms and to select works to explore in more

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<sup>4</sup> Issues of the following women's and home-based magazines published between 1922 and 1975 were surveyed: *Good Housekeeping* (1922-1967), *Home* (1957-1960), *Modern Home* (1929-1932), *Mother* (1937-1942, 1949-1968), *Mother and Home* (1943-1944, 1950-1955), *My Home* (1929-1944, 1952-1959), *My Home and Family* (1965-1968) and *Woman and Home* (1927-1937, 1947-1950, 1956-1975). The children's magazines explored were *Boy's Own Paper* (1932-1966) and *Girl's Own Paper* (1930-1947) and its later titles *Girl's Own Paper and Heiress* (1947-1949) and *Heiress* (1950-1956). For a comprehensive history and review of children's magazines and a background to these specific titles, see Drotner (1988).

<sup>5</sup> Magazines published between the 1920s and 1940s often had no contents page, however.

detail.<sup>6</sup> The picture books analysed within the study are therefore far from random. From each category, one or more titles were chosen for inclusion based upon their use and representation of bedrooms, the richness of their storylines and illustrations, and their underlying themes and ideas, as well as through a consideration of how, when, why and by whom they might be read. The research also desired a mix of classic and relatively recent, or less well-known, titles and a sample which would provide the study with an interesting and engaging narrative.

It must be noted that the majority of the characters within the original sample of picture books were male; the prevalence of male protagonists within picture books has been observed by others (for example, Spitz, 1999) and is typical of children's literature more generally (see Jones, 1999). Nevertheless, because it is not possible to make assumptions about how this impacts upon readership – for instance, one cannot argue that girls do not read these books (see Spitz, 1999) – the thesis did not specifically search for picture books that featured female protagonists. As such, the sample of texts taken forward for further examination, and which feature within Chapter Six, reflects the gender specificity of picture-book characters.

### Reading and Analysing Texts

The thesis looked upon child-rearing manuals as a form of instructional discourse that determined and dictated without question how children ought to be raised and the form that parenting should take. With a particular focus upon chapters and advice that related to the nursery, manuals were approached as discursive structures that sought to influence thinking and conduct by specifying how parents should act with respect to the care of their children and by outlining the kind of space that they were expected to provide for them. The analysis of manuals essentially began at the sampling stage. Owing to issues of cost and, in some cases, the delicacy of the texts under examination, the thesis decided to transcribe chapters and relevant advice into an electronic document rather than photocopy individual sections; that the manuals were constituted entirely through prose and contained few, if any, images made this possible. In many ways, this process of data-gathering allowed the research to immerse itself

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<sup>6</sup> A number of overlapping themes were identified, including the bedroom as a portal into daytime and night-time dream worlds, the bedroom as a space of fear and comfort, and the bedroom as a home for imaginary creatures.

within the texts and to become more familiar with its source material; it also facilitated an initial observation of important topics and ideas and enabled chapters and advice from multiple publications to be compiled into a single document to be used for further analysis. Indeed, it allowed for the simultaneous evaluation of manuals, for key themes to become apparent and for the thesis to analyse its material through a kind of coding exercise.

As Cope (2010: 440) observes, coding refers to ‘the assigning of interpretive tags to text (or other material) based on categories or themes that are relevant to the research’. It facilitates the identification of ‘categories and patterns’ within a text and enables individuals ‘to make more sense of the data’ (Cope, 2010: 441). It typically takes the form of ‘an iterative process’ of reading and rereading, with general codes emerging initially from the researcher’s first observations followed by more detailed coding after a return to secondary literature and much reflection (Crang, 2005: 224). In this case, the transcribing of chapters and advice essentially served as a first round of coding in that it highlighted a number of themes and ideas to explore further; these included recommendations regarding the environment of the nursery, for example, in terms of ventilation and room temperature, as well as hygiene, aesthetics and children’s playthings. Each theme was given a distinct colour code, and individual sections, paragraphs and words within the transcript were marked where appropriate. Upon reflection, however, it became clear that a core theme underlying the material was a concern with children’s physical health and mental development. With this in mind, the thesis re-examined and recoded the material; children’s well-being formed a kind of lens through which to read the manuals (Cope, 2010), and the original themes were broken down into more detailed descriptions and labels. For example, in terms of ventilation, the research noted the ‘health benefits’ of fresh air; the ‘dangers’ of stuffy atmospheres; the significance of ‘open windows’, ‘chimneys’ and the ‘flow of air’; and the ideal ‘arrangement’ of the nursery with regard to the placement of furniture. This was subsequently followed by a reading of secondary literature to explore the historical context of the material and to understand the contemporary ideas and influences behind it, for instance, in terms of scientific theories and developments, and social and cultural beliefs.

As for the magazines, the textual and visual nature of the genre meant that the majority of the material recovered from the sampled titles was made up of both words

and images. In most cases, therefore, it was not practical to transcribe the material at the sampling stage, and relevant articles and features on the bedroom had to be reproduced through colour scans and black-and-white photocopies; transcription was possible, however, where there were no images accompanying text, for example, in editorials and readers' correspondence. With much of the material containing both textual and visual data, the thesis decided to focus upon each element separately when both were present. As such, like the analysis of the child-rearing manuals, text was first coded, and descriptive labels were applied to written passages. As an initial evaluation of the material had identified that material culture was a key theme, the thesis took a more 'systematic', or 'selective', approach to coding (Cope, 2010: 446); for instance, text was marked with such codes as 'home-made', 'space-saving', 'adaptability', 'creativity' and 'gender'. The research then explored any images associated with the text, with a particular focus upon the material content and 'symbolic elements' of bedrooms depicted (Bartram, 2010: 136). For example, it noted the presence of common, or standard, objects, their location within rooms and their spatial relation to each other, how material things denoted the age and gender of occupants, the visual differences between boys' and girls' bedrooms, and the activities expected to take place within.

Because magazines rely upon regular readers for their survival and tend to reflect their beliefs and consumer choices (Beetham, 1996), the textual descriptions and visual depictions of bedrooms observed were taken as accurate representations of actual rooms. Indeed, magazines were understood 'to enter into a dialogue', or conversation, with readers based upon shared social experiences and expectations (Barker, 1989: 261), and rooms on paper were considered suggestions that both child and adult readers could look at, comment upon and draw inspiration from. However, as well as presenting and describing ideas for bedrooms using hand-drawn illustrations or rooms constructed within studios, the magazines sampled often explored the homes of readers and writers and ventured into children's bedrooms. In some cases written by readers themselves, articles typically described the author's personal experience of a bedroom, for example, with reference to the activities that took place within, the making and purchasing of furniture and other objects, and the process of creating rooms more generally. Though the authenticity of such accounts cannot be verified – for instance, they could have been staged – they opened up bedrooms through a kind of ethnogra-

phy and allowed the thesis to write a number of case-study stories, or vignettes, focused upon specific themes and individuals. Facilitating an engagement with an actuality, several of these are presented within Chapter Five and are set apart from the main text to exemplify key points and arguments.

In contrast to the examination of the magazine material, the thesis's analysis of picture books reflected upon words and images simultaneously. As others have observed, a distinctive feature of the genre is the relationship between the two, and both are required for a narrative, or story, to progress and move forward (Nodelman, 1988; Sipe, 1998); for example, Nodelman (1988: viii) argues that 'the words and the pictures in picture books both define and amplify each other'. With this in mind, the analysis of picture books took the form of an intensive reading of the individual titles selected for further examination at the sampling stage. It focused upon a number of key aspects, including the overall theme and subject matter of stories, the characters depicted, and, particularly, the representation and use of bedrooms. It noted important words and phrases and, as with the magazine images, explored the content and composition of pictures; for instance, it deliberated upon what was happening within bedrooms, the relationship between protagonists and the space, and how readers might interact and identify with characters and rooms. It also considered when, where and the circumstances in which each book might be read – for example, at bedtime and within the bedroom – and the underlying messages, or morals, of stories for both child and adult readers. Furthermore, given that the sample consisted of several classics which have been subjected to numerous readings, the thesis read the analyses and thoughts of others and consulted studies and biographies of authors and illustrators to understand their creative intentions and beliefs.

### **Thesis Structure**

To place the research within an academic context, the thesis begins by reviewing the research fields of children's geographies and the geography of home. Developing arguments first articulated above, Chapter Two claims that children's geographies overlooks the study of children in historical and domestic contexts, and that children are rarely considered within research on the home and domesticity. Reflecting upon the diversity of scholarship within both areas of study, it argues that the two share a num-

ber of common interests and concerns and suggests that each may benefit from some kind of engagement with the other.

Drawing upon a reading of secondary literature, Chapter Three presents a brief contextual history of the bedroom and, in many ways, formally introduces the space. It describes the bedroom's development from the mid-nineteenth century and provides a wider context to the analytical chapters. Framing much of the history that shaped children's bedrooms within the thesis's period of interest, it discusses how the nursery flourished within middle-class households in the nineteenth century and how broader social and cultural happenings contributed to its decline at the turn of the twentieth. It also considers how the bedroom subsequently became a universal space that children of all classes were expected to have access to and how rooms today are defined by material culture.

Chapters Four, Five and Six constitute the analytical studies of the thesis. Each examines the representation of the bedroom within a specific genre of text, and together they illuminate the various ways in which bedrooms have been constructed, consumed and imagined since the late nineteenth century. As described above, Chapter Four explores the nursery of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as defined by child-rearing manuals, Chapter Five focuses upon the material significance of the bedroom as depicted within consumer magazines between the early 1920s and the mid-1970s, and Chapter Six examines the relationship between the bedroom and post-Second World War children's picture books.

To conclude the thesis, Chapter Seven reviews the three analytical studies and identifies a number of themes and ideas common to each. It also reflects upon its contribution to children's geographies and geographies of home and discusses the thesis's progression in terms of possible future research.

## 2.

# Geographies of Childhood and Home

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To place this thesis in academic context, this chapter reviews the broad and extensive research fields of children's geographies and the geography of home. Divided into two distinct sections, it argues that children's geographies has neglected the study of children in both historical and domestic contexts, and that children are absent from the majority of work on the home and domesticity. Describing how the thesis advances both areas of study in this respect, it identifies potential synergies between children's geographies and the geography of home and suggests that each may benefit from an interaction, or dialogue, with the other. Beginning with a comprehensive overview of the prevalent themes and foci of children's geographies, the chapter first traces the origins and rapid development of the field and outlines how its theoretical principles and founding values frequently cause it to methodologically privilege an engagement with children and overlook the structural geographies of childhood. This argument is developed through subsequent discussions that highlight the dearth of historical and textual work within children's geographies and its tendency to focus upon children's relationships with public spaces. The second part of the chapter reflects upon the diversity of work that pertains to the geography of home. With reference to a number of key studies, it problematises the absence of children within research before moving to discuss the material culture of the home and homemaking, textual representations of the home and domesticity, the relationship between imaginaries of home and embodied domestic practice, and architectural geographies. It argues that work tends to concentrate upon particular kinds of domestic space, identifies a lack of research on children's bedrooms and spaces, and suggests that a greater acknowledgement of children would produce more-rounded accounts of domesticity.

### **Children's Geographies**

Children's geographies is a rapidly expanding realm of scholarship and a thriving sub-field of human geography. Its academic arrival, or 'coming of age', is well illustrated by the launch of the new interdisciplinary journal *Children's Geographies* (Matthews,

2003) and the re-establishment of *Children, Youth and Environments* online (Hart *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b), by the recent forming of the Geographies of Children, Youth and Families research group of the Royal Geographical Society and by the spread of children throughout the discipline more generally (Katz, 2009; Skelton, 2009; Holt, 2011a). As Skelton (2009: 1431) notes, ‘a dramatic increase in knowledge production related to children’s geographies’ has taken place since the mid-1990s (for example, see Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Holloway and Valentine, 2000a; Aitken, 2001a; Katz, 2004; Holt, 2011b). Linked, in part, to broader interdisciplinary developments in approaches to childhood that recognise that children are socially and spatially constructed as well as ‘subjects and social actors in their own right’ (Katz, 2009: 81; see James *et al.*, 1998), a significant volume of work has emerged and is ‘ever growing’ (Skelton, 2009: 1431). Moreover, as McKendrick’s (2000) ‘annotated’ and rather-encyclopaedic bibliography highlights, the subject matter and themes developed and explored within children’s geographies are vast and diverse (also see McKendrick, 2004). For example, as Katz (2009) and Skelton (2009) observe, recent work has examined how children are constructions of, and agents within, both urban and rural environments; everyday spaces of childhood, including the home, school, playground and local neighbourhood; children in relation to cyberspace; geographies of risk and children’s consumption practices (for principal examples, see Jones, 1997; Valentine, 1997a; McKendrick *et al.*, 2000a, 2000b; Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; Holloway and Valentine, 2003; Pain, 2004). Concerned with the ‘diverse nature’ of childhood and children’s lives, researchers have also studied the ‘embodied’ and emotional experiences of children, children’s ‘mobility’ at a variety of spatial scales, ‘transitions’ from childhood and youth into adulthood, and how differences associated with age, ‘gender’, ‘race [and] ethnicity’, ‘dis/ability’ and ‘sexuality’ structure and impact upon the everyday experiences of children and young people (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011: 13; Katz, 2009; notable examples include Valentine, 2003; Thomas, 2004; Wridt, 2004; Brown *et al.*, 2008; Barker *et al.*, 2009; Colls and Hörschelmann, 2009; Janssen, 2009; Pyer *et al.*, 2010). Though children’s geographies is often accused of focusing predominantly upon children and childhoods situated within the global North (Ansell and van Blerk, 2005; Holt and Holloway, 2006; Skelton, 2009), geographers are increasingly exploring children’s lives and childhood within the global South and in Third World contexts (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; for

instance, Ansell, 2002; Young, 2003, 2004; Robson, 2004) and how children are affected by and active within such ‘global processes’ as globalisation and social and economic development (Ansell, 2005: 1; see Ruddick, 2003; Katz, 2004; Aitken *et al.*, 2008).

In many ways, work within children’s geographies has ‘reached a critical mass’ (Aitken, 2004: 171). This is shown not only by the vibrancy and broad range of the scholarship involved, but also by the growth of organised workshops, seminars, stand-alone conferences and special sessions at annual geography meetings (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Katz, 2009; Holt, 2011a). There can also be no doubt that children’s geographies has come a long way in a relatively short period of time; two decades ago, for example, children were such a minority concern that James (1990) could legitimately pose the question, ‘Is there a “place” for children in geography?’ (cited in Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 8; also see Sibley, 1991; Winchester, 1991; Philo, 1992; Matthews and Limb, 1999). However, the sheer volume of work that testifies to the remarkable development of children’s geographies potentially masks an overemphasis upon empiricism and primary-based research (Philo, 2000a; Halfacree, 2004; Matthews, 2005; Holt, 2006) and a sub-discipline that is perhaps rather repetitive, limited in its scope of enquiry and lacking in innovation (Aitken, 2004; Horton *et al.*, 2008). Recent analyses of the field, for instance, have questioned its approach to theory (Horton and Kraftl, 2005; Beale, 2006), the usefulness, or purpose, of its research and whether it makes a real difference to children’s lives (Matthews, 2005), its ‘preoccupation’ with the local, or micro-scale (Philo, 2000a; Ansell, 2009), the lack of debate between researchers and practitioners (Vanderbeck, 2008) and its absence within wider policy processes (Smith, 2004). Valentine (2006) has even gone as far as to suggest that children’s geographies is composed of the ‘[s]ame old stuff’ and that it has become ‘boring’ because it has failed to develop and move away from a reliance upon ‘empirical studies of different aspects of children’s lives’ (cited in Vanderbeck, 2008: 395).<sup>1</sup> Whilst this thesis does not agree that children’s geographies is, or has become, ‘boring’, it similarly observes that work within the sub-field tends to converge around, or recycle (Horton *et al.*, 2008), the same sort of issues, debates, research questions and methodologies. It therefore responds by following a dif-

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<sup>1</sup> See Horton *et al.* (2008) and Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) for detailed overviews of the perceived ‘challenges’ currently facing children’s geographies.

ferent path: one which moves away from an emphasis upon empiricism and a direct engagement with children toward one that facilitates the study of childhood and children's lives beyond the present. It is suggested that as a line of enquiry which is largely absent within children's geographies, a text-based historical approach breaks the mould and may stimulate fresh debate and the posing of new research questions within the field.

### Children's Geographies and the New Social Studies of Childhood

The emergence of children's geographies, and its development into a 'recognizable' and well-defined sub-field, was fuelled by the growing realisation in the early 1990s that children and young people, and their experiences and perspectives, were excluded from the geographical agenda (Vanderbeck and Dunkley, 2004: 178; Vanderbeck, 2008; see James, 1990; Sibley, 1991; Winchester, 1991). Related to broader debates generated by the 'cultural turn' (Crang, 2000; Philo, 2000b) and evident within what has been described as the 'new' cultural geography (Crang, 2009) – a body of work that emphasises the 'difference', 'diversity' and 'shared subjectivities' within society and which recognises that 'different social groups occupy unequal positions of power and autonomy' (Matthews and Limb, 1999: 62; see Jackson, 1989; Philo, 1991; Sibley, 1995a) – children's geographies was inspired by a 'paradigm shift' (see Prout and James, 1990) that came to see children as another 'human grouping' whose lives are shaped and experienced through complex and distinct geographies worthy of study (Philo, 1992: 202; Gagen, 2004a).

The development of children's geographies and the recognition that children's experiences and perspectives matter were not only results of developments and ideas specific to the discipline of geography, but were also effects of outside influences and the 'cross-fertilisation of ideas' between the social sciences (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 6; 2000c: 764; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). An engagement with sociological ideas about children and childhood has been of particular importance (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b) and has contributed to the rise of a line of work which identifies itself as 'the new social studies of childhood' (James *et al.*, 1998). A response also to the perceived absence of children within sociological work (for example, see Ambert, 1986), this new interdisciplinary field is predicated upon two underlying principles. The first maintains that childhood is socially constituted and that

ideas about it are temporally specific (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011) and is the inspiration for a range of research that explores childhood as a social and spatial phenomenon that differs historically, culturally and according to social context, group and place (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; see Cunningham, 1991, 1995; Hendrick, 1997a, 1997b). The second challenges, and ‘claim[s] an epistemological break from’ (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 5), the traditional sociological approach of studying children as ‘adults in the making rather than children in the state of being’ (Brannen and O’Brien, 1995: 730, cited in Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 5; 2000c: 763; see Mayall, 1994; Qvortrup *et al.*, 1994; Brannen and O’Brien, 1996). Whilst children were previously understood and examined as ‘pre-adult becomings’ who are socialised into ‘fully human adult beings’, the new social studies of childhood regard children ‘as beings in their own right’ and demand that they be studied and recognised as social actors ‘whose agency is important in the creation of their own life-worlds’ (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 5-6). Prout and James (1990: 8), for example, argue that ‘[c]hildren are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes’ and that they ‘must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of societies in which they live’ (cited in Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 6).<sup>2</sup>

The influence of ideas developed within the new social studies of childhood is reflected within the widespread adoption of its ‘theoretical scaffold’ throughout children’s geographies (Aitken *et al.*, 2006: 1013). Also contributing back toward the development of ideas within the interdisciplinary field itself (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011), research over the past decade has engaged with the ideas that childhood and youth are socially and spatially constructed and that children are ‘competent decision-makers, self-aware individuals and creative

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<sup>2</sup> Such thinking has also been influenced by social, economic and political developments outside of academia (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the United Nations in 1989, officially recognises that children are individual subjects with human rights. Article 12 of the Convention, Respect for the Views of the Child, is of particular interest, for it acknowledges that children are ‘capable of forming [their] own views’ and affords them ‘the right to express those views freely’ (cited in Detrick, 1999: 213). For a comprehensive overview of the Convention, see Detrick (1999) and Sinclair Taylor (2000); for more on how it has affected the doing and themes of research more generally, see Alderson and Morrow (2004), Beazley *et al.* (2009) and Twum-Danso (2009).

participants in social life' (Gagen, 2004a: 406; Vanderbeck, 2008).<sup>3</sup> This latter theme is evident within a variety of methodologies that embrace children as social actors and subjects as opposed to 'objects of learning or vessels for knowledge' (Katz, 2009: 81). Working *with* children rather than *on* children, researchers have increasingly prioritised the participation of children in the research process (Gagen, 2004a) and fostered a range of 'child-centred methodologies' that enable 'children to construct accounts of their lives in their own terms' (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 8; see Barker and Weller, 2003; O'Kane, 2008; for the ethical and methodological issues of doing research with children, see Matthews *et al.*, 1998; Valentine, 1999a; Valentine *et al.*, 2001; Hopkins and Bell, 2008). In a number of studies, for example, children have shared in the design and doing of research and in the analysis of results, whilst in others they have drawn maps and pictures, taken photographs and kept diaries, amongst other things (Katz, 2009; for instance, see Aitken and Wingate, 1993; Skelton, 2001; Young and Barrett, 2001; Dodman, 2003; Thomson and Philo, 2004; Coad and Evans, 2008; Schäfer and Yarwood, 2008). Intended to provide children, as 'a minority group', with 'a voice in an adultist world' (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 8), such strategies are designed to negate the 'power imbalance' between adults and children (Gagen, 2004a: 413; see Matthews, 2001) and to avoid the charge that research and findings reflect adult assumptions. Indeed, the very 'otherness' of children (Jones, 2001, 2008; Cloke and Jones, 2005) has produced a raft of work dominated by methods which seek to facilitate and maintain an interaction or relationship between researcher and child. As well as drawing upon ethnography and participant observation, researchers have recently begun to engage with non-representational theories and the non-cognitive, performative, embodied and affective aspects of children's everyday geographies (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011) in an attempt 'to penetrate yet further into the worlds of children' and to bridge the 'gap' between adult's and children's

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<sup>3</sup> One is able to detect aspects of Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration within the new social studies of childhood. A social theory that 'seeks to elucidate the intersections between human subjects and the social structures in which they are involved' (Gregory, 2009: 726), structuration theory recognises the 'duality of structure' and the 'duality of structure and agency' (Cloke and Johnston, 2005: 14) and argues that structure 'is both the medium and the outcome of the social practices that constitute social systems' (Gregory, 2009: 726). As such, social structures, or 'rules and resources' (Dyck and Kearns, 2006: 87), both enable and constrain individual action, but individuals are also agents whose behaviour is capable of shaping and modifying those structures (Cloke *et al.*, 1991; Goodwin, 1999; Gregory, 2000, 2009; Cloke and Johnston, 2005). Its influence is perhaps most obvious within children's geographies' emphasising that children are social actors who are active rather than passive in context. A small number of studies within the field have also drawn upon structuration theory methodologically and conceptually (for example, see McGrath, 2001; Robson, 2004).

perspectives and to the 'unknowable' (Jones, 2008: 197-200; for example, Harker, 2005; Horton and Kraftl, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Woodyer, 2008).

Children's Geographies: 'The Same Old Stuff'?

As it stands, we sometimes feel a little let down by what feels like a predominantly unimaginative, uncreative, unreflective, set-in-its-ways sensibility in and of 'Children's Geographies'. We worry that 'Children's Geographies' is too-often predominately atheoretical (or rather, we feel that 'Children's Geographies' has a particular theoretical backing, but it is so taken-for-granted and so unreflected-upon that it feels atheoretical, which is doubly troubling).

(Horton and Kraftl, 2005: 134)

For the most part, the theoretical principles and underlying values of the new social studies of childhood have yet to receive any serious scrutiny from within geography, sociology and the social sciences in general (for exceptions, however, see Lee, 1998, 1999; King, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2008). Contemplating the ubiquity of the approach that underpins much of the work within children's geographies, Horton and Kraftl (2005) allude to the lack of a critical analysis within their own evaluation of the sub-field. Their concern that children's geographies is 'set in its ways' resonates strongly with this research, for it is similarly concerned that the ideas generated within the new social studies of childhood have contributed to the development of a 'formal structure' for research from which few dare to deviate, or even challenge (Aitken, 2004: 174). In leaving its theoretical framework unchecked and unquestioned, children's geographies has arguably narrowed its 'range of admissible and acceptable academic practices' (Aitken, 2004: 174) and created a field of work where research is methodologically and empirically similar, and devoid of creativity. Aitken (2004: 174), for example, has described children's geographies as 'a secure intellectual haven' and worries that the 'block politics' upon which the field is founded could transform it into a 'gated community'. Though his comments relate to children's geographies' wider relevance and influence throughout the discipline of geography as a whole, this research is anxious that the reasoning, or 'block politics', that originally inspired researchers to establish the field might exclude or marginalise work that fails to fit the

prescribed framework methodologically or conceptually. As Horton and Kraftl (2005: 134) explain:

[W]e worry that there is a great deal of new and emergent theoretical, philosophical and conceptual work ‘out there’ which might be directly and profoundly salient, useful and enabling for ‘Children’s Geographies’, but which has, as yet, remained largely unprocessed and ‘off the map’ for ‘Children’s Geographers’.

Identifying an absence of critique and debate within the sub-field, Vanderbeck (2008, 394, 399) argues that children’s geographies effectively operates within ‘a consensus-based mode’ and that ‘its critical energies have largely been directed outward’ and away from its theoretical underpinnings. However, with its text-based methodology and historical focus largely ‘off the map’, this research aims to stimulate debate as to the influence of the new social studies of childhood within children’s geographies. Although children’s geographies has admirably provided children with a voice in an adult world, dissected ideas and destabilised assumptions about children and childhood, and brought into focus a range of issues that children and young people face and experience every day (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Holt, 2011a), its ‘theoretical scaffold’ has potentially limited research to studies of children within the present and privileged an engagement with children above other kinds of work.

#### Children’s Geographies or Geographies of Children?

According to Holloway and Valentine (2000b: 6), the new social studies of childhood aim ‘not to celebrate children’s creativity and resourcefulness to the detriment of an analysis of wider social [and spatial] structures’; written at the beginning of the last decade, however, this early review was informed by a paucity of work compared to that available today. With an increased volume of research to draw upon, a more up-to-date assessment of both the field and children’s geographies would instead suggest that work tends to underplay, and in many cases overlook, the socio-spatial contexts and structural conditions that shape children’s everyday lives (Holt, 2011a). For example, Aitken (2007: 119) argues that the ‘distinction between “being” and “becoming” ... has warped discussions in the new social studies of childhood’, and he suggests that children’s geographies has been forced ‘into a simplistic dichotomy’

whereby children are either ‘pre-adult becomings’ or ‘social actors in their own right’. With its focus predominantly upon the latter of the two, he claims that work over-emphasises the agency of children and leans toward ‘a reification of the child as a universal and self-serving category of existence and policy’ (Aitken, 2007: 119). Indeed, children’s geographies’ reliance upon the theories developed within the new social studies of childhood sees it dominated by a post-positivist emphasis (Holt, 2006) which affords children an ‘epistemological privilege’ within research (Holt, 2011a: 3). Tied to the discourse and politics of children’s rights, it assumes that children are ‘the most authentic source of knowledge about themselves and their lives’ and that each child is ‘a discrete and identifiable knowing subject’ (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008: 502). It recognises that children are ‘agents with important perspectives that can inform knowledge production’ (Holt, 2006: 145) and prioritises an approach to research that incorporates children’s voices and experiences. As Valentine (1999a: 142) explains, ‘[V]alid accounts of children’s lives can only be obtained by engaging directly with children and treating them as independent actors’ (cited in Gagen, 2004a: 413).<sup>4</sup> This idea forms the basis for a children’s geographies that appears to favour participatory, ethnographic and primary-based work – for example, see van Blerk and Kesby (2008) for an overview of the ‘doing’ of children’s geographies – and one which largely fails to look beyond the agency-based micro-scale geographies of children within the here and now (Philo, 2000a; Ansell, 2009).

As noted, the development of children’s geographies was predicated upon a desire to address and recover the geographies and experiences of children and young people that had been ignored by the ‘mainstream’ of human geography. Its aim to record ‘the “missing” geographies’ of children and to make their voices heard remains a central concern (Horton *et al.*, 2008: 338), yet its preoccupation with ‘engaging directly with children’ (Valentine, 1999a: 142) frequently causes it to neglect the broader social, cultural and political structures that define and determine childhood and children’s lives. As Kjørholt (2007: 39) suggests, an emphasis upon agency and giving children ‘a voice’ reflects an ‘essentialistic construction[ ] of children’ and, as observed by Vanderbeck (2008: 397), ‘potentially limits the analysis of the wider fields of power in which children’s lives unfold’ (also see Ansell, 2009). Like all

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<sup>4</sup> This viewpoint is also broadly reflected within Matthews’s (2003) opening editorial to *Children’s Geographies* in which he invites contributions to the new journal (Vanderbeck, 2008).

‘agents’, children are not always aware of, and therefore able to identify, how their lives are affected and structured by outside influences (Holt, 2011a).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, research tends to rely upon, and promote, a rather ‘narrow’, ‘uncritical’ and ‘modernist’ understanding of agency (Holt, 2011a: 3-4; see Ruddick, 2007) and assumes that children are autonomous beings in much the same way as adults, who are imagined to have ‘a kind of “full” autonomy and ability to execute decisions and to realize rights’ (Cook, 2011: 3).<sup>6</sup> This not only underestimates the degree to which children’s agency and social practices are influenced and shaped by socio-cultural constructions, transformations and other ‘normative values’ associated with children and childhood (Holt, 2011a: 4; Kj rholt, 2007), but it also removes questions of parental responsibility and adult authority from the equation (Vanderbeck, 2008). As such, whilst work attends to children’s geographies, that is, those perspectives and experiences that belong or relate personally to particular children involved or engaged within research, it often fails to address the wider structural geographies of children and childhood.

As James and Prout (1995: 81) have argued elsewhere, ‘A more satisfactory theoretical perspective would ... address both structure and agency in the same movement’ (cited in Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 6). This research, for instance, recognises children’s autonomy but does so whilst considering the macro-scale forces and external processes that act upon children and shape their lives. Breaking with sub-disciplinary ‘tradition’, it moves away from a direct engagement with *children* and returns to an appreciation of the social and cultural construction of *childhood*; this allows for a consideration of the ‘structure-based geographies of childhood’ and opens up the broader geographies of children (Philo, 2000a: 253). It acknowledges the geographical, historical, socially situated and symbolic nature of childhood (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008) and understands that children’s agency and social practices are constituted in relation to adult-defined values, and normative practices and processes. Furthermore, it returns to a consideration of the family and the home as key social and

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<sup>5</sup> Though the outside structures that affect children’s lives are largely constituted by adults (Kj rholt, 2007), one must acknowledge that adult geographers may fail to recognise the structures that children might otherwise identify because their perspectives may be clouded by adult experiences (Aitken and Herman, 1997; Matthews and Limb, 1999; Philo, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> This idea of agency fails to recognise that children are not always able to attain such levels of autonomy. According to Holt (2011a: 3), it also marginalises those in society who are unable to enjoy such an ‘ideal of independence’ and broadly explains why the geographies and experiences of particular groups of children – such as babies and toddlers (Holt, 2009), and the ‘disabled’ (Pyer *et al.*, 2010) – are under-explored within children’s geographies.

spatial contexts of childhood. Because early research tended to absorb children within the family, or familialise children (Brannen and O'Brien, 1995), children's geographies has often avoided the study of children within 'familial contexts' (for exceptions, however, see Valentine, 1997b, 1997c, 1999b; Christensen *et al.*, 2000; Barker, 2003; Backett-Milburn *et al.*, 2010; Lewis, 2011), and there is continued anxiety that an emphasis upon the family might again reduce children to 'familial "objects"' and fail to see them as 'active subjects' (Holt, 2011a: 3; see James *et al.*, 1998). This research, however, looks upon the family, the household, and other adult institutions and cultures as enabling and contributing to childhood subjectivity. It argues that children's subjectivity is actively produced, contested and negotiated by children, parents and other adult actors. Though children's voices do not directly feature and children have not been observed at first hand, the thesis illustrates, through its textual analyses of children's bedrooms, that children's lives are constituted through various 'axes of power relations' (Butler, 1990: 4, cited in Holt, 2006: 144) and that children are not exclusively active, or alone, in forming their life worlds.

#### Historical Geographies of Children and Childhood

With a major focus upon agency, and through its emphasising that children and young people are able 'to reflect upon and affect change in their worlds' (Holt, 2011a: 2), children's geographies tends to converge around 'current or recent childhood settings' (Gagen, 2001: 54). For the most part, research has avoided the study of children and childhood within historical contexts (Gagen, 2001; notable exceptions include Gagen, 2000a, 2000b, 2004b; Murnaghan, 2009), and the small amount of work that has taken an historical perspective is often affiliated with cultural or historical geography as opposed to children's geographies (Gagen, 2007; for instance, Ploszajska, 1994, 1998; Lorimer, 2003a, 2003b; Gagen, 2006, 2007). This is due, in part, to children's geographies' general preference for primary-based research techniques and qualitative analyses, which, as Holt (2006: 145) argues, stems from a range of 'methodological, political and theoretical concerns about the politics and power of knowledge production'. Issues of representation are also pertinent, however. Although a central concern of work within the sub-discipline, the representation of children's experiences and perspectives is a particular issue for historical research (Gagen, 2004a). For example, historical geographies of children and childhood do not allow for a direct en-

agement with children; one is unable to communicate with or observe children in person, and there are ‘no opportunities to seek consent, design participatory research and intervene directly in children’s lives’ (Gagen, 2004a: 414). One is instead restricted to reading and interpreting documentary sources, material artefacts and other representations and depictions of children. This is also problematic given that there is considerable unease within children’s geographies about researchers speaking about, for or on behalf of children as adults (see Matthews and Limb, 1999). As Qvortrup notes, for instance, it is an ethical complexity that ‘children ... have to leave the interpretation of their own lives to another age group, whose interests are potentially at odds with those of themselves’ (quoted in Morrow and Richards, 1996: 99, cited in Hendrick, 2008: 47; for more on issues of interpretation, see Bellingham, 1988; Jordanova, 1990). Furthermore, children are rarely involved in the production or documenting of their histories (Gagen, 2001), as the texts that evidence and record their lives are usually created by adults (Gagen, 2004a). As such, whilst children may be ‘the conspicuous subjects of evidentiary material’ (Gagen, 2001: 53), they are generally ‘without an authorial voice’, and some are therefore concerned that their perspectives might be masked by an ‘adultist outlook’ (Hendrick, 2008: 46) and that their experiences are ‘irreducible to a knowable account’ (Gagen, 2004a: 414; for more on the methodological and ethical challenges of historical and archival research within children’s geographies, see Mills, 2012).<sup>7</sup>

Although children’s geographies recognises that childhood is temporally specific (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011), its methodological preference for a direct engagement with children has caused it to overlook childhoods of the past and to exclude from its research the many children who are no longer able to represent or speak for themselves. Despite its challenging of dominant and ubiquitous concepts of childhood – for example, the sub-discipline increasingly emphasises the heterogeneity of childhood and explores how children’s lives are variously structured in relation to such identity positionings as age and gen-

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<sup>7</sup> Even though children do produce and sometimes leave diaries and other personal recordings behind, Cunningham (1995: 2) argues that researchers often learn ‘more about the genre of diary writing and the desires and expectations of adult readers than about the experience of being a child’. As West and Petrik (1992) observe, interpretative issues can arise because researchers approach such material from an adult perspective. For more on the relationship between adulthood and childhood, and for a discussion about whether it is possible for adult researchers to access and adequately represent children’s worlds, see Philo (2003) and Jones (2003).

der (Holt and Holloway, 2006) – its ignoring of history and focus upon the present fails to convey the extent to which ideas and experiences of childhood change over time. However, histories of children and childhood have long been explored outside of children's geographies, particularly within a body of work that allies itself to the 'new' social history (see Stearns, 1994). An 'historiographical tradition' that dates primarily from the late 1960s and early 1970s, the 'history of children and childhood' acknowledges that childhood is a complex social and cultural construction and examines how ideas about childhood, as well as children's experiences, fluctuate historically (Hendrick, 2008: 42). Such work illustrates that '[c]hildhood cannot be studied in isolation from society as a whole' and that children's lives are tied to, and affected by, a raft of social, economic, political and other macro-scale structures and developments (Cunningham, 1995: 3).

Ariès's (1960, 1962) seminal work on the social history of the school and family is widely credited as 'the most important progenitor' of the idea that childhood is an historically specific concept (Aitken, 2001a: 120). Indeed, it is generally agreed that Ariès pioneered the notion that childhood today has little in common with that of the past (Aitken, 2001a, 2001b), and that he 'effected something of a paradigm shift in scholarly circles' with his claim that childhood is a 'social invention' that has come into being only relatively recently in Western society (Cook, 2004: 23). Through an interpretative analysis of paintings, literature, clothing, games and other cultural objects – sources hitherto considered to reveal little about individual subjects and thus rarely consulted by historians (Aitken, 2001a; see Burton, 1989) – Ariès concluded that the modern understanding, or concept, of childhood as a distinct 'age' or 'stage of life' developed in Europe from approximately the fifteenth century onward (Prout and James, 1997). Observing that children were missing within medieval art forms and that when they were present they were depicted as 'miniature adults', he argued that the idea of childhood did not exist and was not recognised during the Middle Ages (Pollock, 1983). He claimed that the development and growth of childhood as a concept in subsequent centuries was reflected in the appearance and increased visibility of children within paintings, with distinctive clothing and physical features illustrating a growing awareness that children were different from adults (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Cook, 2004). Even though there have always been children in society, Ariès recognised significantly that childhood has a history, that children have not al-

ways been acknowledged as children, and that their lives, experiences and relationships with adults have varied and evolved over time (Jenks, 1996; for more detailed analyses of Ariès's thesis, see Burton, 1989; Jenks, 1996; Aitken, 2001a).<sup>8</sup>

Though 'Ariès is not without his critics' – for example, several historians have questioned his methods, assumptions and overall conclusions (Aitken, 2001a: 121; see Wilson, 1980; Vann, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Hanawalt, 2003) – his landmark study is generally accepted as having inspired a range of historical work on children and childhood (Prout and James, 1997; Koops, 2003).<sup>9</sup> Despite differences in scope and ideology, much of this work shares a number of common arguments and beliefs. These include claims that childhood has not always been recognised within society, that 'the experience of childhood in contemporary society supersedes all previous historical manifestations', and that childhood and forms of childcare have developed alongside ideas associated with the 'philosophies of human nature, theories of education, economies of human capital, and the politics of human rights' (James *et al.*, 1998: 153). For instance, various studies have explored family life, parental attitudes and methods of child-rearing across the centuries; changes in social policy with respect to children; children's schooling; and the material and cultural worlds of children in general (for principal examples, see Opie and Opie, 1959, 1969, 1985; de-Mause, 1974; Horn, 1974, 1989, 1994; Shorter, 1976; Stone, 1977; Kline, 1993; Hendrick, 1994). Others have traced the meaning and experience of childhood across a wide range of historical contexts, attempted to give children a 'voice' and imagine their experiences 'from a position of informed sympathy', and sought to retrieve more-recent child histories through the use of oral history and adult autobiographies<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ariès's (1962) *Centuries of Childhood* is an English translation of his earlier *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Ariès, 1960). Though Ariès drew his conclusions from French sources and culture – the title of his original work translates as 'The Child and Family Life under the *Ancien Régime*', that is, in pre-revolutionary France – he believed that his arguments could be applied to the Western world in general (Pollock, 1983; Calvert, 1992a).

<sup>9</sup> Before the publication of Ariès's thesis, the little scholarship concerned with childhood and children in the past was generally confined to histories of social policy or was rather 'antiquarian in approach' (Cunningham, 1995: 4). For a 1950s approach to the study of children and childhood, see Mead and Wolfenstein (1955).

<sup>10</sup> Geographers have long questioned the reliability of adult reflections and memories of childhood. For example, Aitken (1994: 30) suggests that 'by the time we [adults] are old enough to reflect on what is it like to be a young child ... [o]ur mental structures have changed to the extent that we have great difficulty in imagining the world of the child' (cited in Philo, 2003: 8; also see Sibley, 1991; Aitken and Herman, 1997; Jones, 2001). In contrast, Jones and Cunningham (1999: 31) argue that '[m]emories of childhood remain clear in the minds of most adults' and 'may provide ideas for the examination of

(Hendrick, 2008: 45; for example, see Humphries, 1981; Burnett, 1982; Seabrook, 1982; Walvin, 1982; Cunningham, 1995; Heywood, 2001; Fletcher, 2008).<sup>11</sup>

Inspired by such work, this thesis aims to add to the dearth of historical research within children's geographies. Whilst it acknowledges that there are issues with the writing of 'child-centred histories' (Gagen, 2004a: 414) – for instance, within much of the work above, children are mediated through adult-produced materials, perceptions and reminiscences – it argues that an historical approach allows for new and many different kinds of childhood to be explored; in line with Gagen's (2007: 17) assessment, it suggests that it 'can broaden [children's geographies'] preoccupation with the present'. Its focus upon the development of children's bedrooms, a key site where ideas about childhood manifest, illuminates the extent to which childhood is an ongoing social and cultural construction and how children's lives and experiences can change immeasurably between generations and within a relatively short period of time. Despite concerns that historical studies discover little about children themselves (see Hendrick, 2008), and contrary to Valentine's (1999a: 142) argument, this research illustrates that 'valid accounts of children's lives' *can* be achieved *without* a direct engagement with children and that texts and other representational sources do in fact reveal a great deal about children of the past. Even though children are often 'elusive' and 'obscure' within documentary sources and other records and reflections of childhood (Stainton-Rogers *et al.*, 1989: 54, cited in Jenks, 1996: 61), an analysis of texts, in this instance, reveals the ideas and historically specific interpretations about children and childhood that have shaped bedrooms and influenced children's experiences of the space over time.

### Reading Geographies of Children and Childhood

Given children's geographies' preference for primary-based research, its desire for a direct engagement with children and concerns regarding the 'representational politics' of textual material (Gagen, 2001: 53), it is perhaps of little surprise that so few studies

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childhood today' (cited in Philo, 2003: 19). Philo (2003) suggests that the issue is most significant with regard to younger children, however, for he notes how the adult contributors to Skelton and Valentine's (1998) edited collection on the geographies of youth successfully tap into their teenage memories.

<sup>11</sup> For a summary of the broad range of literature on the histories of children and childhood and a guide to further reading, see Hendrick (2008) and Cunningham (2006) respectively.

within the sub-discipline read texts to explore childhood and the lives of children. Of those that have engaged with texts and documentary sources, however, childhoods in both historical and contemporary contexts have been studied. Drawing upon a diverse range of texts, or textual genres, such research often focuses upon and highlights the socio-cultural ideas, norms and discourses that affect children's everyday lives and the experience of childhood. Though relatively limited in number, it further illustrates that there are other ways in which to study children's geographies and that researchers should not overlook the value of texts and other representational sources in exploring the broader structure-based geographies of children and childhood.

In many ways, the most significant text-based research to have emerged out of children's geographies in recent years is Gagen's historical work on early-twentieth-century American playgrounds. Through an in-depth analysis of municipal records and contemporary literature published by the Playground Association of America, she explores, in a series of papers, the development of public playgrounds in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, examining how they worked to encourage and produce gendered and national identities within children (Gagen, 2000a, 2000b, 2004b). Concerned with the institutionalisation of childhood and the everyday lives of children, she argues that playgrounds not only served to remove children from the streets, therefore isolating them from the dangers of the hustle and bustle of city life and averting their potential for mischief-making, but that they also sought 'to acculturate children toward social norms' and certain ideals (Gagen, 2000a: 214). She reveals that supervised playground activities were designed to prepare boys and girls for manhood and womanhood respectively by inculcating within them certain masculine and feminine tendencies; for example, boys' playgrounds centred around sport, games and other activities designed to cultivate the 'physical prowess, good sportsmanship, and team loyalty' that boys would need in 'their future role as active citizens' (Gagen, 2000b: 607), whilst girls' playgrounds promoted 'quiet, non-competitive activities like sewing, craft work, and knitting' in order to train girls for future 'domestic duty' (Gagen, 2000a: 219). Gagen also notes that playgrounds often organised exhibitions and demonstrations to showcase children's activities publicly and that children's gendered performances were seen as potent symbols of the nation state. She suggests that the activities represented and reflected ideas about nationhood and that their public display reinforced notions of national identity and pointed to the

future success of the state in both the public and private spheres; she also claims that playgrounds exposed migrant children to American values and taught them how to be more American (Gagen, 2000a, 2000b, 2004b).

Identifying a symbolic link between the bodily fitness of children and ideas of nationhood, Gagen (2004b) further explores how psychological theories informed and underlay children's playground activities. Focusing particularly upon the parades and public spectacles organised by playground authorities, she observes that the formation of character was linked to physical exercise and that the display of physicality through dancing, gymnastics and sport competitions was thought to attest to national character and to the effectiveness of American principles. In a related study, Gagen (2006: 827) also considers the significance of emergent psychology in 'establishing the contours' of both physical and mental health in early-twentieth-century children. Examining archival records and the published work of Granville Stanley Hall, a pioneer within the field of child psychology, she traces how psychological ideas, which hypothesised a link between children's physical, mental and moral development, contributed to the invention of new games and team sports, to the creation of new public spaces where children could exercise and be active, and to the establishment of health-testing and physical-education lessons and programmes in schools.

Similarly concerned with the institutional frameworks that shape and organise children's everyday lives, Ploszajska (1994: 413) explores the ideas and assumptions that influenced the design and location of two nineteenth-century British reformatory schools, establishments set up as a 'response' to 'juvenile delinquency' and which spoke to contemporary thinking regarding the malleability of children and 'the latent power of the social and physical environment to influence behaviour'. Through an analytical reading of the archival records of both schools, a farm school for boys and a reformatory for girls, she argues that the policy and practice of the two institutions were influenced by 'Victorian ideologies of gender and class' (Ploszajska, 1994: 414). She reveals that the sites of the schools, the countryside and the suburbs respectively, reflected their curricula of educating children in how to be 'respectable' working-class citizens, and that they were related to ideas regarding the suitable future employment of working-class children. For example, country settings were thought 'to provide a natural antidote for the worst social ills of cities' and to be ideal for boys who would most likely become farm labourers, whilst the suburbs were believed to be particularly

appropriate for girls in anticipation of their future role as domestic servants within middle-class households (Ploszajska, 1994: 426; Holloway and Valentine, 2000b). She also claims that middle-class notions of family lay behind the spatial organisation and disciplinary regimes of the schools; in order to foster a sense of belonging, loyalty and community within their children, for instance, the boys' school was divided into separate 'houses', and the girls' school described itself as a household.

Reflecting upon the 'moral didacticism' of mid-nineteenth-century American children's stories, MacLeod (1975: 16) points to the value of children's literature for the study of social and cultural history. Recognising that fiction tracks and indexes changes in the concept and understanding of childhood over time (Hunt, 1995), she argues that children's literature is an important historical resource that records 'the values [that] authors hoped to teach children', and that it evidences the 'beliefs and assumptions which go into the cultural outlook of a particular society in a particular era' (MacLeod, 1975: 11). Similarly interested in how children's literature reflects and contributes to prevailing ideas about childhood, Murray (1998: xv) further notes that it often projects an 'image of the ideal child that society would like to produce'.

With this in mind, Phillips (1997) explores the geographies and identities constructed and depicted within British Victorian adventure stories aimed at children and young adults. Likening story narratives to maps, he claims that tales tended to 'naturalise' and 'normalise' a particular view of the world and examines the ways in which they presented, or 'mapped', certain beliefs and principles (Phillips, 1997: 15). For example, he reveals how nineteenth-century ideas and ideals about boyhood and manhood were inscribed within the setting and plot of R.M. Ballantyne's (1856) *The Young Fur Traders*, a classic adventure story for boys set within the Canadian wilderness (also see Phillips, 1995). Locating the tale within the context of an increasingly gendered Victorian society, and with reference to changing contemporary ideas about what it meant to be masculine or feminine, he argues that its wild and undomesticated backdrop and exclusively male action reflected and furthered an ideology of masculinity that was based upon ideas of bodily strength, high-spiritedness, courage and friendship, and that its characters served as important role models for male readers. In addition, he suggests that the absence of female characters within the wilderness and their rare depiction outside of settlement settings, or their obscuring within the home, pointed to and reinforced the notion that women and girls belonged within the domes-

tic sphere and that men and boys were to ‘venture[ ] into the territory beyond’ (Phillips, 1997: 60). However, observing that maps are texts that can be redrawn, and that they are open to interpretation and multiple readings, he also considers how such ideas and ideologies were contested and resisted, or ‘unmapped’ and ‘remapped’, within other stories. For example, he argues that the female protagonist within Bessie Marchant’s (1909) *Daughters of the Dominion* – a story primarily intended for girls – subverted the predominantly male domain of adventure and challenged prevalent understandings about men and women by highlighting that girls could travel and emigrate as well. As such, noting that male and female readers might have interpreted the story in different ways, he underlines that textual meaning is neither fixed nor stable, that ‘no literary mapping is definitive’ and that ‘dominant ways of seeing [may be] countered with currents of resistance’ (Phillips, 1997: 111).

Some have focused upon the textual representation of children and childhood to explore how contemporary children are ‘seen’ and understood within society. For example, examining a range of textual genres, including literature for adults and children, and academic and professional studies and reports, Cloke and Jones (2005: 312) argue that ‘childhood is [often] associated with places and spaces which are seen to be outside of adult control and ordering’. Reflecting upon a number of literary and photographic descriptions and depictions of children, they observe that children’s use and occupation of ‘disordered’ space within rural and urban settings elicits different social and cultural responses, and that this contrast – which is based upon the positive association of childhood with nature and negative connotations of children within city spaces – illustrates that children and childhood should be defined ‘less in terms of innocence and more in terms of otherness’ (Cloke and Jones, 2005: 311). In a similar vein, Jones (1997: 158) separately draws upon a number of ‘cultural texts’ to explore how childhood and children within the countryside are perceived. Reading children’s stories, autobiographical recollections of past childhoods and poetry in which the countryside features as a key theme or backdrop, he claims that ‘country childhoods are seen powerfully in terms of a synthesis of innocence, wildness, play, adventure, the companionship of other children, contact with nature, agricultural spaces and practices, healthiness, spatial freedom, and freedom from adult surveillance’ (Jones, 1997: 162). Elsewhere, he also notes that ‘constructions of country childhood revolve around male children’ (Jones, 1999: 118). Observing possible tension between ideas

associated with femininity and nature, he argues that the countryside within children's literature and other literary accounts of rural childhood is generally a masculine space populated by boys and that girls, where present, are often depicted as tomboys.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Bavidge (2006) examines the representation of city space within children's fiction. Reasoning that children's literature does not present a child's perspective, or view, but one which often '*coincide[s]* with children's own readings of their world', she identifies, describes and categorises the different ways in which cities are depicted within children's stories and questions the extent to which they may reflect children's own experiences of urban space (Bavidge, 2006: 321, original emphasis).

### The Spatiality of Children's Geographies

Children's geographies' concern with spatiality is perhaps its biggest contribution to the new social studies of childhood (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). Described by Horton *et al.* (2008: 339) as 'a dense cataloguing of multifarious ways in which spatialities matter in [and] for children and young people's everyday lives', children's geographies has attended to the spaces and institutions that affect and shape dominant concepts of childhood, explored children's lived experiences of many different kinds of space, and studied the power relations embedded within children's occupation and use of space (Gagen, 2004a). It has considered 'the importance of place' within both the social construction of childhood and the everyday experiences of children at the global and local level (see Katz, 1993, 1994), explored the ways in which 'everyday spaces' determine and structure children's lives and identities, and examined how ideas about childhood influence 'spatial discourses' and 'socio-spatial practices', and vice versa (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011: 13; see Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 9-18). However, whilst children's geographies has done much to emphasise the spatialised nature of childhood and children's lives, it has tended to concentrate upon public as opposed to more private, or domestic, space. This is problematical and rather paradoxical given that childhood has become more and more domesticated over the last two centuries (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b, 2000c).

The domestication of childhood is both 'material' and 'ideological'; not only are children today spending more of their time at home, but there is also a perception

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<sup>12</sup> See Horton (2003) for an interesting account of how the representation of the countryside within children's literature is historically specific.

that they *ought* to be spending their time there (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 15). The contemporary practice of associating the home with childhood can be traced to the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century (James *et al.*, 1998); with men assigned to the public sphere of work and women to the private sphere of the family, the home subsequently became a key ‘space of childhood’ (James *et al.*, 1998: 53, cited in Gagen, 2004a: 407) and ‘*the proper place for children*’ (Gagen, 2004a: 407; original emphasis).<sup>13</sup> Through the ‘binding of the concepts of “family” and “home” into “the modern domestic ideal”’ (James *et al.*, 1998: 53, cited in Gagen, 2004a: 407; also see Allan and Crow, 1989), the idea of home has developed into one of care and nurture, and the space itself is expected to offer children a place of safety and comfort in which to grow and mature.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the home, as both a concept and an actual physical space, is a powerful influence that shapes dominant ideas about child-rearing and parenting (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b, 2000c). For example, it is frequently defined as the best place of care for young children, and this is often reflected within the childcare arrangements of many working parents who seek to ‘reproduce home-style environments for their children’ (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 16, cited in Gagen, 2004a: 407; see Gregson and Lowe, 1995; England, 1996; Holloway, 1998, 1999; Laurie *et al.*, 1999).

Understandings that children are both vulnerable and threatening within public space have also reinforced the idea that a child’s place is within the home (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b, 2000c). In her work on the geographies of children and young people, Valentine (1996a, 1996b, 2004) highlights the ways in which public space is ‘produced’ and defined as ‘adult space’; she suggests that a binary opposition based upon historical notions of children as either ‘innocent’ or ‘evil’ is at the root of their exclusion from such spaces (Valentine, 2001; Gagen, 2004a).<sup>15</sup> For example, the Apollonian view of the child (Jenks, 1996), an imagining that stems from the eight-

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<sup>13</sup> As Gagen (2004a: 407, original emphasis) also observes, the private sphere of the home simultaneously ‘emerged as *the proper place*’ for women.

<sup>14</sup> This idealised image of home is problematic, however, for it is not always a reality for many children; for example, the sexual and physical abuse of children often takes place within the home, some children have to care for disabled parents and relatives, and others may sometimes feel that they have little control or autonomy within or over domestic space (James *et al.*, 1998; see Jenks, 1996; Stables and Smith, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Valentine’s (1996a) invoking of the classic innocent-evil binary usefully illustrates how an historical perspective can inform and enhance studies of children and childhood within the present.

eenth and nineteenth centuries (Valentine, 2001), looks upon children as innocent ‘angels’ and sees public space as potentially dangerous and hazardous for children (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b, 2000c). Here, the discourse of ‘stranger-danger’ and heightened anxiety about such things as abduction, violence and high levels of traffic have prompted many parents to restrict their children’s outdoor freedom, leading to an increase in supervised activities both inside and outside the home (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b, 2000c; also see Valentine, 1997b, 1997c, 1999b, 2004; Kelley *et al.*, 1998). In contrast, the Dionysian image of the child (Jenks, 1996), a perspective directly linked to the pre-nineteenth-century understanding of children as naturally sinful, animalistic and badly behaved (Gagen, 2004a), has mobilised various discourses and concerns that children within public space are ‘dangerous, unruly and potentially out of control’ (Valentine, 2001: 50). As Valentine (1996a) notes, this is reflected within a number of adult-imposed restrictions which are designed to regulate the behaviour of children within public spaces; these include the enforcement of curfews and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV), the policing of space with security guards and other such personnel, and the requirement that children be accompanied by adults in order to gain access to certain places (Skelton, 2000; see Matthews *et al.*, 1999; Matthews, Taylor, Percy-Smith and Limb, 2000; Collins and Kearns, 2001; Manning *et al.*, 2011; for early examples of work on the oppression of children within the built environment, see Bunge, 1973; Bunge and Bordessa, 1975). As Gagen (2004a: 408) observes, children’s occupation of space has a profound effect upon how they are publicly perceived, and discourses about deviance and delinquency are generally associated with ‘children’s occupation of the wrong space’ and performances of childhood being seen as ‘out of place’.<sup>16</sup>

The strength and pervasiveness of the ideology that a child’s place is within the home, as well as the ‘impulse to reinvent children as independent social actors’ (Gagen, 2004a: 411), has stimulated a raft of work within children’s geographies that explores the relationship between children and public space (Woodyer, 2009). With a focus upon the various ways in which children use and negotiate access to different

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<sup>16</sup> Gagen (2004a) invokes Cresswell’s (1996) ‘theory of transgression’ to highlight the ways in which childhood and children are spatially defined. A concept that draws attention to how behaviour and practice are considered either appropriate or inappropriate, and normal or abnormal, depending upon geographical or social situation (Pinder, 2009), transgression emphasises the thin line that exists between Apollonian and Dionysian children, as well as the idea that ‘there are proper and improper places for children to live, work, and play’ (Gagen, 2004a: 410; see Valentine, 1996b; Nolan, 2003).

kinds of spaces (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b), much of this work takes the view that children and young people are ‘creative individuals’ who are able to challenge and adapt themselves to the ‘adultist’ structure of the public realm (Gagen, 2004a: 411). For example, several studies have observed how children imaginatively appropriate and manipulate public space, objects and everyday situations to create new fantastical worlds and opportunities for spontaneous play and games, and some have noted how they produce their own geographies by taking short cuts, renaming places and generally re-interpreting spatial, material and symbolic boundaries defined by adults (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Jones, 2000; Gagen, 2004a; see Wood, 1985a, 1985b; Thomson and Philo, 2004; Cloke and Jones, 2005; Ross, 2007). Others have explored children’s use of the ‘street’ in both the global North and South,<sup>17</sup> the spatial agency of children in both the countryside and the institutional space of the school, and how individual mobility is affected by such identity markers as age, gender and ethnicity, and where one lives (for example, Fielding, 2000; Jones, 2000; Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; O’Brien *et al.*, 2000; Young, 2003; Giddings and Yarwood, 2005; Brown *et al.*, 2008). A number of studies have also traced how the development of public playgrounds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was driven by concerns about the safety and welfare of children within the urban environment, as well as about children’s physical and mental development (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; for instance, Gagen, 2000a, 2000b; Murnaghan, 2009),<sup>18</sup> and others have revealed how playgrounds today reflect ‘adult expectations of what children *should* do’, but how they are also sites for creative play and behaviour (Skelton, 2009: 1436, original emphasis; see Karsten, 2003; Baylina Ferré *et al.*, 2006; for the commercialisation of indoor play space, see McKendrick *et al.*, 2000a, 2000b; for school playgrounds, see Tranter and Malone, 2004; Thomson, 2005).

Moving indoors, a small number of prominent geographers have highlighted that the home is equally structured around adult-defined values and that it is a ‘locus of power relations’ (Sibley, 1995a: 92, cited in Holloway and Valentine, 2000b: 14).

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<sup>17</sup> The ‘street’ is a generic term often used to refer to public, outdoor and predominantly urban spaces (Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 2000; Skelton, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Jacobson (1997) has also explored how play within the home was promoted in the United States in the early twentieth century as a positive and healthy alternative to commercial recreation (for example, amusement parks and the public screening of films), the growth of which was seen as a threat to moral values, the institution of the family and parental authority.

For example, Wood and Beck (1994: 1) observe that the home is ‘a field of rules’ that requires children to act, or behave, in certain ways (also see Wood and Beck, 1990); focusing upon a typical living room, they isolate over two hundred rules that define how the space and the objects within should or should not be used (Valentine, 2001).<sup>19</sup> Sibley and Lowe (1992) similarly explore the maintenance of behavioural boundaries by parents within the home, and Sibley (1995b) individually examines the spatial tension between children and parents, and their domestic ‘boundary disputes’ (Valentine, 2001, 2004: 83). Through an analysis of Mass Observation material and memories of childhood derived from individual adult interviews, he illustrates that the family home is spatially and temporally divided and that this affects children’s use and experience of domestic space. Interestingly, he notes that bedrooms are important spaces where children are able to carve out their identities and express themselves, but that they are also subject to parental authority and regulation. Though bedrooms are shown to offer children a degree of domestic privacy and autonomy, he suggests that adult rules ultimately determine what can take place within and when, much like the rest of the home.

For the most part, however, children’s geographers have neglected the study of children’s domestic geographies, and the examination of children’s lives within the home has been lost within a mass of work that concentrates upon their relationships with public space. This lack of research reflects the privatisation of childhood and the ‘insulating role’ of the home (James *et al.*, 1998: 54; Holloway and Valentine, 2000c). The home is an awkward space to research because it is imbued with emotion, family and the value of privacy, and what takes place behind closed doors is conventionally supposed to remain out of sight and beyond public concern (Hood *et al.*, 1996). Nevertheless, the realisation that children spend much of their time within the home has started to stimulate a greater level of interest in children’s domestic lives (Nilsen and Rogers, 2005). Building upon the innovative work of the early to mid-1990s that explored the relations of power between adults and children within domestic space (Wood and Beck, 1990, 1994; Sibley, 1995b), a number of studies have focused upon cultures of parenting, intra-household relations between parents and children, and geographies of family life more generally (for example, England, 1996; Valentine,

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<sup>19</sup> See Jacobs (2003: 262) for an interesting account of the ‘awkward place’ that Wood and Beck’s (1994) *Home Rules* occupies within her personal library.

1997b, 1997c, 1999b; Aitken, 2000, 2009; Holt, 2011b).<sup>20</sup> Children's micro-geographies of home are still relatively absent, though; this is related to children's geographies' preference for a direct engagement with children and to the difficulties associated with gaining access to a space that is, by definition, intended to protect children from 'strangers' and the potentially dangerous world of outside others (see Hood *et al.*, 1996; Valentine, 1999a; Bushin, 2007). As Horton (2001) highlights, this is a particular issue for male researchers, especially given contemporary fears with regard to paedophilia. Indeed, Nilsen and Rogers (2005) observe that research on children's domestic practices and experiences has often been carried out within such settings as the school or day-care centre rather than within the home itself (for example, see Christensen *et al.*, 2000; Halldén, 2003), therefore allowing it to avoid the methodological and ethical issues associated with intrusive fieldwork and negotiating with parental gatekeepers.<sup>21</sup> More recently, however, a small number of researchers have successfully crossed the boundary into the private sphere. Most notably, Hancock and Gillen (2007) and Woodyer (2008, 2009) have examined children's domestic play and situated themselves and their research within the home: the former, by observing and filming children at play, and the latter, by getting involved and immersing herself in the play activities that take place within children's bedrooms.

One of the most private and intimate spaces within the home, the child's bedroom is perhaps the most problematic household space to study and is under-explored within children's geographies. Although it does feature occasionally within research, it is generally subsumed within broader studies, for example, on family dynamics (Sibley, 1995b), gender relations within domestic space (McNamee, 1998), children's use of computers within the home (Holloway and Valentine, 2001) and, indeed, children's domestic play (Hancock and Gillen, 2007; Woodyer, 2008, 2009). The bedroom has been explored in greater detail outside of the sub-discipline, however, and has formed the basis for a small number of anthropological and cultural-based studies. Illustrating the complexity of researching a space that can even be off limits for rela-

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<sup>20</sup> Valentine (2008) argues that studies of the family within geography tend to focus upon relationships between parents and children and that a range of other relationships – including those between adult children and parents, siblings, grandchildren and grandparents, and stepchildren and step-parents – remain largely unexplored.

<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, it is interesting to note that Wood and Beck (1990, 1994) chose to study Wood's own living room and that they elicited the rules governing the use of the space from his two children (Nilsen and Rogers, 2005).

tives and family friends let alone for outside researchers, many studies approach and engage with bedrooms and children textually. Cieraad (2007), for instance, examines the 'decor differences between boys' and girls' bedrooms' and contrasts images of rooms within home-decorating magazines and catalogues with photographs of real-life rooms extracted from another researcher's photographic study of the space. Similarly, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) explore photographs of young children's bedrooms provided by parents, as well as images of teenage rooms within adolescent magazines, and argue that bedrooms are cultural texts that reflect children's taste and awareness of popular culture, whilst Croft (2006) considers the relationship between bedrooms and adolescent subjectivity through representations within literary texts. Several studies have also focused upon what McRobbie and Garber (1976) refer to as 'bedroom culture', that is, the practices and activities that take place within the bedrooms of adolescents and teenagers and which underscore their identities and sense of selves (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002; Kehily, 2003). For example, research has illustrated how bedrooms are key sites for music and media consumption, and other subcultures (Brown *et al.*, 1993, 1994; Larson, 1995; Steele and Brown, 1995; Bloustien, 1998; Lincoln, 2005; Livingstone, 2007), places where friends 'hang out' socially (Lincoln, 2004), and repositories that materially catalogue children's personal interests, fantasies and aspirations, both past and present (Salinger, 1995). It is interesting to note that within much of this work researchers place themselves within the 'culture' itself and observe children at first hand, suggesting that it is less problematic to carry out research within the bedrooms of older children than it is within those occupied by younger children. Nevertheless, given that most of these researchers are female, it is reasonable to expect that this remains inherently difficult for those of the opposite sex (see Horton, 2001).

In focusing attention upon the bedroom, this thesis therefore explores a space that has generally been overlooked within children's geographies, and contributes to a small, but growing, number of studies that engage with children's domestic geographies. For methodological and practical reasons, it does not access children's bedrooms directly but argues that an analysis of their depiction within various texts allows for an engagement with the social and cultural ideas that shape rooms and the experience of space. Moreover, by concentrating upon children's lives indoors rather than outdoors, the research contributes to broader geographies of home and domes-

ticity (see Blunt and Varley, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006), a line of work where children are, for the most part, noticeably and surprisingly absent. It shows how children's geographies is able to engage with geographical work that lies outside the sub-disciplinary field, something with which it has often struggled (Aitken, 2004), and how another strand of research within human geography stands to benefit from a greater consideration of children and childhood (see Horton *et al.*, 2008).

### **Geographies of Home**

Blunt (2009a: 339-340) defines 'home' as an 'emotive place and spatial imaginary that encompasses lived experiences of everyday, domestic life alongside a wider sense of being and belonging in the world'. More than simply a house, material structure or site where one lives (Blunt and Dowling, 2006), home is also an emotional construct, feeling and idea that shapes individual practice, relationships and everyday life in general (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Blunt, 2009a). Proposing 'a critical geography of home', Blunt and Dowling (2006: 21-29) argue that home is 'simultaneously material and imaginative' and that experiences and imaginaries of home are mutually constitutive, that experiences and ideas of home contribute to an individual's sense of identity and that meanings and experiences of home differ according to social group, and that home is 'multi-scalar' and stretches from a domestic to a global sense (Blunt, 2009a). From this latter perspective, home might therefore refer to a physical dwelling, neighbourhood, home town, home city, homeland or even planet and influence individual experiences, popular opinion and state politics and policies associated with such things as national security, immigration, nation-building and empire (Duncan and Lambert, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Reflecting the ambiguity of home and its wide-ranging connotations (Duncan and Lambert, 2004), the geography of home is a diverse and vibrant area of scholarship (see Blunt, 2005a; Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Although home, as Blunt (2009a: 341) argues, 'has long been part of a geographical imagination', the study of the home within geography, as well as within the humanities and social sciences in general, has increased of late (Mallett, 2004). Indeed, studies from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives have focused upon the home and domesticity (for example, Bryden and Floyd, 1999a; Chapman and Hockey, 1999; Cieraad, 1999; Miller, 2001a;

Pink, 2004; Vickery, 2009), and the recently established journal *Home Cultures* (Buchli *et al.*, 2004) provides a forum for interdisciplinary research on the domestic sphere (Blunt, 2005a; Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Within geography specifically, recent interest in the home has been influenced by humanistic, feminist and post-colonial thinking (Blunt, 2009a) and has paralleled an increased interest in emotions, psychoanalysis, the body and everyday life more generally (Duncan and Lambert, 2004; for example, see Nast and Pile, 1998; Philo and Parr, 2003; Davidson *et al.*, 2005; Smith *et al.*, 2009). Drawing upon the humanistic understanding of home that developed in the 1970s and 1980s (see Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Seamon, 1979; Lewis, 1985), and inspired by the poetic musings of Bachelard (1994 [1958]) on domestic space, research has explored the home as a meaningful, foundational and intimate place infused with emotion, memory, personal experience, feelings of belonging and a sense of self (Blunt, 2003, 2009a; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; see Bunkše, 2004; Tuan, 2004). Broadly reflecting the philosophical ideas of Heidegger (1971) – who suggested that dwelling activities involve some sort of engagement, or ‘relational encounter’, with the natural world (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001: 69; Cresswell, 2004) – several studies have also examined how the home is shaped by human and non-human agents, and others have considered how the inhabitation and everyday experience of domestic space is influenced by ‘the entangled geographies and complex co-habitations of nature and culture’ (Blunt, 2005a, 2009a: 341; see Anker, 2003; Hitchings, 2003, 2004; Kaika, 2004). In contrast, feminist geographers and other researchers have interrogated the humanistic and ‘masculinist’ idea that the home is a haven and have highlighted how domestic space can be violent, frightening and oppressive for women (Blunt, 2003, 2009a; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; for example, Rose, 1993; Duncan, 1996; Pain, 1997; Young, 1997; Domosh, 1998; Goldsack, 1999). Some have also argued that the heterosexuality of the nuclear family and the ‘ideal home’ restricts and undermines the domestic performance of gay and lesbian identities, whilst others have examined the home as a site of resistance and empowerment that provides inhabitants with some kind of racial, religious and sexual freedom (Valentine, 2001; Cresswell, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; see Pratt, 1984; Collins, 1991; hooks, 1991; Valentine, 1993; Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Elwood, 2000). In a similar vein, post-colonial geographers have studied ‘the contested politics of identity and belonging within metropolitan, indigenous, imperial,

settler and diasporic homes’, and others have explored the global nature of the domestic economy and the transnational geographies of everyday domesticity (Blunt, 2005a: 509, 2009a; Blunt and Varley, 2004; see Blunt, 1999, 2002, 2005b; Pratt, 1999, 2004; Asis *et al.*, 2004; Walsh, 2006). In addition, a number of studies have focused upon ‘domestic interiors’ (Fincher, 2004; Freeman, 2004), ‘embodied domestic practices’ (Bryden, 2004; Dohmen, 2004), ‘domestic material cultures’ (Rose, 2003; Tolia-Kelly, 2004a, 2004b) and ‘domestic technologies and rationalities’ (Shove, 2003; Shove *et al.*, 2007), and how they ‘reproduce, recast and resist ideas’ about home and domesticity (Blunt, 2009b: 172).<sup>22</sup>

### ‘Missing’ Children<sup>23</sup>

According to Horton *et al.* (2008: 338), human geography is ‘largely unaffected by the challenge of “Children’s Geographies”’. Noting the observations of others, they argue that children and young people are missing from the majority of work within economic, political and urban geography (see Philo and Smith, 2003; Crewe and Collins, 2006; Skelton, 2010) and from social-scientific studies on consumption and embodiment (see Metcalfe *et al.*, 2008; Woodyer, 2008). Similarly, and despite the diversity of work on the subject, children are also relatively absent from work that engages with the home and domesticity, both within and beyond geography. This is surprising given that the home is ‘synonymous’ with the notion of the family and the rearing of children (Dowling, 2008: 540; see Allan and Crow, 1989) and considering the ideology that a child’s place is within the home. Horton *et al.* (2008: 338) surmise that the lack of research with or on children within ‘mainstream’ geography speaks to ‘the existence of a distinct subdiscipline’ and speculate that others might see children’s geographies ‘as sufficient “in taking care of the kids”’. This thesis instead suggests that for geographies of home and domesticity at least, the absence of children from research reflects their integration within the family (Holt, 2011a), that the home is shaped by adult values and subject to ‘parental control’, and that children have little or no say in ‘the running or representation’ of their homes (Blunt and Dowling, 2006:

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<sup>22</sup> For a comprehensive overview of geographical work on the home, see Blunt (2005a) and Blunt and Dowling (2006).

<sup>23</sup> Horton *et al.* (2008: 338) use this title to introduce their argument that children are rarely considered within geographical research outside of children’s geographies.

115). For instance, and as highlighted by Blunt and Dowling (2006), Wood and Beck (1990, 1994) have exposed the adult 'rules' that govern children's use and experience of the family home, whilst Sibley (1995b) has drawn attention to children's spatial and behavioural boundaries within domestic space (Valentine, 2001). Dowling (2008) has also more recently explored the place of children within the home and illustrated how they are often banished from living areas by parents who are anxious to maintain their material and aesthetic values (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Moreover, research tends to concentrate upon certain kinds of domestic space, particularly kitchens (Gullestad, 1984; Floyd, 2004; Hand and Shove, 2004; Llewellyn, 2004a; van Caudenberg and Heynen, 2004), living rooms (Riggins, 1990, 1994; Hurdley, 2006; Money, 2007) and other spaces potentially open to company and outside visitors as opposed to more private, or personal, spaces such as bedrooms, bathrooms and children's spaces. This is reflected not only within ethnographic work – 'an intrusive form of fieldwork that demands a presence behind closed doors ... in the midst of the private domain' (Miller, 2002a: 239, cited in Gregson, 2007: 6) – but also within studies from a range of methodological perspectives (see Blunt and Dowling, 2006; for more on the 'spatial ordering' of domestic space and its division into public and private areas, see Allan, 1989; Munro and Madigan, 1993; Twigg, 1999).

The relative absence of children within studies of home and domesticity is problematic, however. For example, in their archaeological survey of an abandoned council house, Buchli and Lucas (2000, 2001) illustrate that children are an important presence within the home (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002). Indeed, their tracing of the life of a young single mother and her two children through the remnants of left-over material culture confirms that children are at the heart of everyday domestic life. The large number of toys, clothes and other 'child-associated artefacts' that they find throughout the house point toward the 'ubiquity' of children within domestic space, whilst the quality and quantity of the objects speak to the complexity and ethics of domestic and parental consumption, to the 'sacrifice of resources' and to the devotion of a single mother with limited means (Buchli and Lucas, 2000: 134-135; for similar accounts of household consumption as shaped by sacrifice, devotion and love, see Miller, 1998; Gregson *et al.*, 2007a). Furthermore, the discovery of a 'distinct child's sphere' set apart from other rooms through its decoration and material structuring reflects the importance attached to the idea and reality of children having a room of

their own, even in reduced circumstances and where domestic space is restricted (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002). Although only a brief study of a single household, Buchli and Lucas's (2000) examination of domestic life underlines the need for researchers to produce more-rounded accounts of domesticity that acknowledge children and their influence upon the structuring, experience and understanding of home. Even though children have limited agency within the home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006), it highlights that they still shape and affect the ways in which homes are lived, materialised and imagined and that research on home and domesticity should pay greater attention to children, children's spaces and parent-child relations.

### Material Culture and the Home

In line with relatively recent calls to re-materialise social and cultural geography (for example, see Jackson, 2000; Philo, 2000b; Lees, 2002), much geographical work on the home focuses upon material culture, domestic architecture and interior design (Blunt, 2005a, 2009a). Central to such research is the idea that the home 'is *both* a place [or] physical location *and* a set of feelings' rather than just a house or household (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 22, original emphasis; for a critical discussion of the ways in which such thinking influences and potentially limits research, see Jacobs and Smith, 2008). Reflecting Blunt and Dowling's (2006: 22) understanding that home is 'both material and imaginative', studies have explored how experiences and ideas of home are inherently connected, the relationship between the home and individual identity, and how the home is shaped by an interplay of emotions, feelings and homemaking practices. Importantly, they illustrate that the home 'does not simply exist', but that it is an ongoing 'process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 23).

The home has long been an important setting for interdisciplinary studies of material culture (Miller, 2001b; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Gregson, 2007). Indeed, material geographies of the home form part of a wider body of literature that explores the relationships between individuals, domestic space and material objects. As Blunt and Dowling (2006: 74) observe, in 'both historical and contemporary contexts', work from a variety of theoretical perspectives has focused upon 'particular objects within the home, their changing use and meanings over time, and the broader politics and practices of domestic consumption and display'. Such research reveals the 'meaning-

making process[es]’ through which homes are made and remade (Hurdley, 2006: 719) and the material and emotional relationships upon which the home is founded. An early catalyst and inspiration for much scholarship (Jacobs and Smith, 2008), Miller’s (1988) classic study of the ways in which council-flat tenants work to personalise their kitchens illustrates that the home is very much constituted by the things within it. Through interviews and observing kitchens at first hand, Miller (1988: 353) explored how tea towels, holiday souvenirs, postcards, and other decorative and personal items were used ‘to transform alienable goods into inalienable culture’ (cited in Jacobs and Smith, 2008: 515) and how activities of decoration and replacement enabled residents to claim possession of a space that had been provided by the state.

Miller (2002b: 119) describes the placing of objects and the use of decorative schemes as ‘a kind of core to living in the modern world’ and, in a range of research, has explored the significance of home-based consumption practices and the processes through which dwellings become meaningful (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; see Miller, 1995, 2001a, 2010a). Reflecting upon a number of studies concerned with domestic consumption and decoration, he argues that home, as both a physical entity and a state of mind, is formed through practices of appropriation and accommodation (Gregson, 2007), that is, a combination of material, emotional, social and imaginative activities through which the home is made ‘suitable for the relationships we have with ourselves and with other people’ (Miller, 2002b: 124).<sup>24</sup> Importantly, however, he also identifies the need for individuals to adapt, or accommodate, themselves to houses and dwelling structures and suggests that home further involves a ‘benign agreement to compromise on behalf of the other’ (Miller, 2002b: 115; 2010a: 96). For example, Miller (2001c: 119) argues that ‘the very longevity of homes and material culture may create a sense that agency lies in these things rather than in the relatively transient persons who occupy or own them’. Speaking from personal experience, he (2001c) examines how inhabitants of older houses may feel intimidated or ‘haunted’ by original decorative features and period designs and explores how aesthetic choices and house purchases can be influenced by a desire or pressure to remain authentic and to stay in period. Moreover, and as illustrated within his earlier study on council-house kitch-

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<sup>24</sup> For example, several studies have shown how the display of family photographs within the home creates a homely space and how the practice of collating and looking at pictures reinforces family relationships, friendships and emotional ties across a range of spatial scales and temporal registers (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; see Chambers, 2003; Rose, 2003, 2004, 2010; Tolia-Kelly, 2004a, 2004b).

ens (Miller, 1988), he reveals that individuals do not always have sufficient financial and emotional assets to transform or personalise their living environments and that some often feel compelled to live with the insufferable tastes and decorative preferences of former occupants (Miller, 2002b).

Similarly, Gregson (2007: 6) claims that the achievement of home involves both 'human and non-human agencies'. Exploring routine and everyday household activities ethnographically, she examines the import and role of consumption within the making and experience of home and argues that home is attained not only through practices of appropriation and acquisition, but also through acts of sorting, storing, divestment and ridding (also see Gregson *et al.*, 2007a, 2007b). For Gregson, home is produced through a range of dwelling practices that involve the use and manipulation of objects and an engagement with things, other people and materiality in general. She suggests that home is about co-habitation, or 'living with things', that it is shaped and sustained through such habitual actions as tidying up, doing the laundry, opening the fridge or turning the television on, and that it resides in a diverse range of objects that stay with us for both long and relatively short periods of time.

A raft of ethnographic work has focused upon domestic material culture and examined the relationships between individuals and the things within their homes. Often anthropological in nature, a number of studies have explored how the material culture of the home is influenced and mediated by wider social, cultural and familial networks. For example, in her research on Japanese interiors, Daniels (2001: 205) argues that material objects underline 'the complexities, conflicts and compromises involved in creating a home' (cited in Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 78; also see Reimer and Leslie, 2004). Illustrating that Japanese homes are 'complex and cluttered' and that they bear little resemblance to the imaginary that houses are minimalistic and defined by an air of simplicity, she examines how material artefacts and decorative objects reflect and objectify family identity, domestic life and the dynamic social relationships of individuals within the home (Daniels, 2001: 225; also see Daniels, 2010). She reveals that material items frame and materialise both family and cultural values, that they display, structure and mediate between individual and collective identities, and that they play an important part in the construction and living of everyday life. In a landmark study of the home and home decoration, Gullestad (1984) explored the significance of the kitchen table for a group of working-class women in Norway and

observed how it provided a stage, or ‘frame for social interaction’, that formed ‘the basis for normativity’ (Miller, 2002b: 119). A device used for chatting with friends, relatives and other housewives, the kitchen table is shown to lie at the centre of a society in which membership is secured by women adhering to a common decorative standard and by having the right kind of kitchen (Miller, 2002b). Though the participants within her study stated that their homes reflected their own individuality and personalities, Gullestad noted that the interiors of houses were rather similar (Garvey, 2001) and that there was consensus amongst the women in terms of what constituted appropriate forms of decoration, cleanliness and levels of upkeep (Miller, 2002b). Miller (2002b: 119) suggests that such aesthetic conformity resulted from a shared sense of identity and from an understanding of the decorative boundaries of respectability and that it enabled the women to ‘determine their own behaviour and judge others’.<sup>25</sup> Several studies have similarly analysed the influence of household and social relations in constituting taste and how it is more than simply representative of personal preference (Clarke, 2002; see Bourdieu, 1984). For example, Clarke (2002) explores how aesthetic choices within the home are made in conjunction with other people and uncovers how taste develops through a process of collective judgement. Like Gullestad (1984), she illustrates that decor is related and central to the construction and maintenance of relationships both inside and outside the home and that individuals ‘place their taste within ... an immediate and intimate network of social relations with potentially hazardous consequences’ (Clarke, 2002: 131; also see Dowling, 1998; Gurney, 1999).

Miller (2002b) suggests that domestic material culture is an ongoing process through which ‘we explore and narrate the complexities of self’ (Gregson, 2007: 24). Drawing upon Garvey’s (2001) research on experimentation and small-scale aesthetic changes, he argues that the decoration of the home involves both long- and short-term expressions of identity and that it provides ‘a sense of the multiplicity of persons we might be, or in different contexts are’ (Miller, 2002b: 120). Observing the decorative activities of working-class women at home in Norway – and, in many ways, expanding upon Gullestad’s (1984) earlier findings (Miller, 2001b, 2002b) – Garvey (2001:

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<sup>25</sup> Research from within the field of design history has also explored how the relationship between domestic space and material objects contributes to the development and maintenance of individual and collective identities (Hurdley, 2006; for example, see Forty, 1986; Rybczynski, 1986; Kwint *et al.*, 1999).

66) identifies the significance of smaller and more ‘ephemeral’ routines in constituting the domestic environment and argues that relatively minor practices, such as reordering furniture and moving things around a room, allow for ‘individual empowerment in the face of social conformity’. She reveals how experimenting with the place of furniture within a room provides short-term relief to longer-term narratives of domesticity and how the materiality that informs ‘normative expectations of the social self [is both] playful and alterable’ (Garvey, 2001: 66). She claims that whilst major, or large-scale, projects of decoration involve projecting the self to others, the moving of furniture and other seemingly trivial activities satisfy ‘more “individualising” needs’ (Garvey, 2001: 49). Illustrating that the material culture of the home is dynamic rather than static (Miller, 2001b, 2002b, 2010a), she shows how individuals are able to generate ‘a feeling of newness and difference in an environment that is otherwise characterised by a large degree of normativity’ (Garvey, 2001: 65), and she brings into focus various tensions associated with being normative and representing the self (Miller, 2002b). Similarly, Clarke (2001) explores the decoration of the home as a process, or practice, through which individuals and households project their aspirations and ambitions. As Miller (2001b: 6; 2002b: 122) observes, she refutes the notion that people are concerned with emulating their neighbours, or ‘keeping up with the Joneses’, and suggests that they are more often conscious about ‘the discrepancy between the actual home they live in and the images they possess of aspirational or ideal homes’ (Miller, 2010a: 97). Her ethnographic work on a North London council estate reveals that individuals tend to have ‘very little contact with any actual “Joneses” as neighbours’ (Miller, 2002b: 122) – something which appears to be increasingly common throughout society (for example, see Butterworth, 2010) – and that the material culture of the home is based upon ‘an internalized vision’, or assumption, of what those others may think constitutes an ideal home (Clarke, 2001: 42). She argues that the home ‘objectifies the vision the occupants have of themselves in the eyes of others’ and that this ‘interiorized image’ shapes and influences individual aspirations and understandings of the ideal, and what people do with or to their homes (Clarke, 2001: 42; for more on the idea and reality of the ideal home, see Chapman and Hockey, 1999).

In contrast with the vast majority of work on domestic material cultures, which is marked by an ‘ethnographic emphasis’ (Jacobs and Cairns, 2008: 573), this

thesis focuses upon the textual representation of domestic space. Whilst most studies therefore explore domestic material culture and consumption practices within present, or contemporary, home settings, this research is able to engage with domestic space and materiality within an historical context. Unaffected by issues of privacy and the ‘spatial ordering’ of homes in this respect (Twigg, 1999), the textual focus of the thesis also allows it to venture upstairs and away from the downstairs rooms that form the basis of much ethnographic work unimpeded. Moreover, by examining children’s bedrooms, it draws attention to a space which has, for the most part, been overlooked within such scholarship (for an exception, however, see Cieraad, 2007), a space which is perhaps defined and shaped by material culture more than any other within the home (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002). Though textual depictions of rooms do not necessarily provide an accurate insight into actual bedroom consumption practices – for example, one is unable to observe how objects are used and manipulated or the relationships between children, parents and things – they point to the significance of wider society in shaping the bedroom and household space more generally. Like other studies discussed above, they underline that rooms do not simply materialise or emerge in domestic isolation, and suggest that they are mediated and influenced by ideas and ideals that develop and derive from outside the home, for instance, in terms of what they should look like, what they should contain and how they should be used (Jacobs and Cairns, 2008).

### Representing and Imagining Home

The ideal home is an imagining or image of home that draws upon frequently shared ideas, values and aspirations regarding domesticity. As Blunt and Dowling (2006: 100) observe, ‘[C]ertain dwelling structures and social relations are [often] imagined to be “better”, more socially appropriate and an ideal to be aspired to.’ A ‘culturally and historically specific’ phenomenon, the ideal home is generally thought to be a privately owned suburban detached or semi-detached house inhabited by a family and is often presented as such within the ‘the media’, ‘popular culture’ and ‘public policy’ (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 100-101). Indeed, a number of studies have explored the development and spread of ideal and ‘normative’ understandings of home throughout society. Like this research, some have examined the representation of domestic space within general advice literature, magazines and fiction, whilst others have focused

upon depictions of home within art, photography, advertisements, films and television programmes, amongst other media (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; for example, Johnson, 1993; Floyd, 2004; Hand and Shove, 2004; Blunt *et al.*, 2007; Jacobs and Cairns, 2008). Such work often considers how the idea and reality of home is ‘inscribed with meanings, values and beliefs that both reflect and reproduce ideas about gender, class, sexuality [and] family’ (Blunt, 2005a: 507; Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 57).

With a particular focus upon domestic advice literature, magazines and fiction, several studies have explored the relationship between ideas of home, femininity and domesticity. Drawing upon an array of texts published and read within both historical and contemporary contexts, and from a range of national perspectives, much work has examined how the home has been imagined and defined as a female domain, and the shaping of women’s identities and subjectivities in relation to domestic space. With reference to the discursive separation of the public and private, such research often considers how texts have promoted and attempted to normalise notions of ‘feminized domesticity’, and how the responsibility for the domestic sphere has fallen principally upon women (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 52). It reveals how the achievement and running of the home has been delegated to women and how they, in the process, have been constructed as wives, mothers and homemakers.

For example, examining home-economics manuals published in the 1950s and 1960s, Tasca (2004) explores how the housewife in post-Second World War Italy was defined in relation to her role within the home. With reference to the social, economic and political developments that followed the end of Fascism, she reveals that the ideal image of the housewife within the publications was that of a ‘full-time homemaker’ (Tasca, 2004: 92). Reflecting upon women’s domestic duties and responsibilities, she argues that manuals promoted ‘a “cult of domesticity” that beckoned the pre-Fascist period’, one which was based upon ‘the rhetoric of sacrifice and dedication to the home’, and ‘the love for husband and children’ (Tasca, 2004: 100). She observes that women were to fully devote themselves to caring for their families and to managing their households and that manuals placed great emphasis upon such tasks as cleaning, washing clothes and preparing meals.

Focusing upon women’s magazines published between the 1920s and 1950s in Britain, Giles (2007: 21) likewise notes that homemaking was considered ‘a labour of love and a professionally skilled occupation’ within these publications. Exploring the

identities of women readers through an analysis of the content and editorial address of such magazines as *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Weekly* and *Woman and Home*, she argues that the housewife was presented and constructed as a 'competent manager' of the home, the principal consumer of household goods and 'the arbiter of taste' (Giles, 2007: 23).<sup>26</sup> In a similar study, Lloyd and Johnson (2004) have explored the domestic subjectivity of women within post-war Australia (also see Johnson and Lloyd, 2004). Through a critical reading of the articles, images and advertisements printed within a variety of home-oriented magazines published between 1940 and 1960, they reveal that interior design was popularised as 'a form of household management' for women during the 1940s and 1950s (Lloyd and Johnson, 2004: 255). They suggest that an emphasis upon decoration and aesthetics, or 'the look of things', as well as women's reading of magazines and depicted ideals, tied women to the home as housewives and mothers, furthering the notion of female domestic responsibility, and that the process of furnishing domestic space was understood as a means for women 'to shape (their part of) the world' (Lloyd and Johnson, 2004: 251, 255, also cited in Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 54). Similarly, Hackney (2006: 23) has argued that the prevalence of home-craft and handicraft features within British women's magazines published in the 1920s and 1930s 'offered women opportunities for self-expression, agency and self-determination' at home, Teasley (2005: 93) has revealed how Japanese magazines in the 1920s encouraged women 'to participate in the design and creation' of domestic space, whilst Berry (2005) has examined how a particular French magazine linked female subjectivity to the domestic interior in the early twentieth century.

Observing that the division between private and public, female and male, and home and work has recently become more tenuous and difficult to maintain, Leslie (1993: 690) has explored how magazine advertising within the American editions of *Good Housekeeping* and *Family Circle* sought 'to resituate women in the home' in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). She argues that a discourse of 'new traditionalism' pervades the advertisements and that it attempts 'to recreate old forms of gendered space and difference, reinforcing women's familial and domestic responsibilities' (Leslie, 1993: 704). She notes that the adverts draw upon and depict

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<sup>26</sup> In contrast, Osgerby (2005: 99) argues that there was 'a significant masculine presence within mid-twentieth-century commodity culture'. Exploring the representation of the 'bachelor pad' within men's magazines published in the United States between 1930 and 1965, he suggests that 'the "masculine" arena of production and the "feminine" domain of consumption were not neatly and clearly divided'.

ideas and ‘meanings associated with small-town America, rurality and nature’ and that the imagery presented has much in common with the political ideologies of the New Right which emphasise the importance of family values within society (Leslie, 1993: 690). However, examining the promotion of modern furniture design and aesthetics in the late 1990s, Leslie and Reimer (2003) claim that new home-design and lifestyle magazines appear to have moved away from the new-traditionalist discourse of their longer-running peers. Focusing particularly upon the title *Wallpaper\**, they argue that this new breed of magazine downplays ‘the gender specificity of homemaking’ and that it seeks to address ‘a highly mobile young urban professional who might be male or female, straight or gay’ (Leslie and Reimer, 2003: 305, also cited in Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 56).

Several studies from within a range of disciplinary perspectives have explored the fictional representation of home, with many observing a ‘particular affinity’, or relationship, between domestic space and the novel (Grant, 2005: 235). According to Grant (2006: 134), for example, the rise of the novel as a distinct literary form has been ‘bound up with ideas of the home, its interior, and the social practices associated with it’. In their comprehensive review of work on home, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 48) similarly maintain that ‘the home has been an important site and subject since novels were first written and read’; they note that the novel is often seen as ‘a form of domestic fiction, both in its content and settings, and in the material conditions of writing and reading’. Reflecting upon the origins of the genre in the late eighteenth century, they argue that its development can be traced to ‘the growing separation of public and private spheres and [to] the emergence of middle-class women as both readers and writers’. Inspired by Armstrong’s (1987a) ‘political history of the novel’, a significant study that locates the writing and reading of novels within the home, they suggest that the rise of the genre is directly related to ‘the rise of “the domestic woman”’ (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 48).

From ‘a literary perspective’, Mezei and Briganti (2002: 837) also consider the ‘reciprocal invocation of home and novel’ and show how ‘it is often tacitly gendered’. Like Blunt and Dowling (2006), they claim that the development of the genre in the eighteenth century coincided ‘with the increasing domesticization, feminization, and privatization of society’ (Mezei and Briganti, 2002: 838). Noting the prevalence of female novelists and the frequent depiction of the home and domestic life and rituals

within both historical and contemporary novels (also see Romines, 1992), they argue that women authors have bestowed ‘literary value on domesticity and domestic space’ through their writing (Mezei and Briganti, 2002: 843). As they observe, ‘In writing from a domestic space of house, household, and family, women writers can create a position in the field of cultural production from which to value ordinary women’s lives, the quotidian, the minute’ (Mezei and Briganti, 2002: 843, also cited in Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 48). To borrow from Armstrong (1987b: 136), they suggest that women writers have ‘opened a magical space in the culture where ordinary work [can] find its proper gratification’, one where domestic tasks, such as cooking, cleaning and child-rearing, can receive recognition (cited in Humble, 2001: 108). However, they also contend that domestic novels and novelists often ‘show how the home ... entraps and stifles women’. Reading Vita Sackville-West’s (1986 [1931]) *All Passion Spent*, for example, they describe how the aging protagonist relates ‘the death of her dream of an artistic life’ to her marriage and home life (Mezei and Briganti, 2002: 843).

With this in mind, Briganti and Mezei (2004: 148), in a similar study, focus upon ‘the English domestic novel of the inter-war years’. With reference to dominant ideas about domesticity that reflected the notion that a woman’s place was within the home, they ‘historicize and address the literary manifestations of the meaning and idea of home culture’ within the period (Briganti and Mezei, 2004: 148). Observing an emphasis upon the home and the domestic interior within a range of novels, they suggest that female novelists negotiated contemporary understandings of domesticity and domestic space through their writing; they claim that women writers ‘simultaneously privileged and critiqued the home and homemaking’, often resisting and re-claiming ideas about the housewife and questioning ‘the demands of the family on the “domesticated female”’ (Briganti and Mezei, 2004: 154).<sup>27</sup> Humble (2001) also notes the significance of representations of home within her analysis of feminine middle-brow novels published between the 1920s and 1950s. She argues that domestic space within novels was ‘described in obsessive, coded detail’ and that ‘the feminine middlebrow construct[ed] the home as a text to be read for its ideological import’ (Humble, 2001: 108). Examining how the home was imagined and re-imagined within novels, she suggests that women readers were able to see themselves, their homes and

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<sup>27</sup> Briganti and Mezei (2004) also note that representations of the domestic interior within novels often serve as metonyms that reflect the thoughts, feelings and general psychological state of characters (see Grant, 2005, 2006).

their lives, and those of others, in a new and different light. Indeed, she claims that novels acted 'as a corrective to the terms of the dominant pro-domestic ideology' and provided women with opportunities 'to reorder and rename' the ideas and beliefs that were 'increasingly dominating their lives' (Humble, 2001: 147-148).<sup>28</sup>

### Embodied Domesticity

Geographers have long drawn attention to the gendered nature of the domestic sphere and have highlighted the significance of gender relations 'in lived experiences and imaginaries of home' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 15). Feminist geographers, in particular, argue that the home is shaped by 'processes of capitalist and patriarchal reproduction' (Rose, 2003: 5; see McDowell, 1983, 1999; Mackenzie and Rose, 1983; Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG, 1984; Rose, 1993). The idea that the home is a haven, 'a sanctuary from society into which one retreats', is problematic for feminist researchers, for they claim that domestic space is more often a workplace for women than a place of relaxation or rest (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 16; also Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Valentine, 2001). Reflecting upon Hayden's (2002) examination of the relationship between gender, the design of housing and family life, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 8) note that the maintenance of home 'requires the unpaid and unrecognized work of women' and that the home is not always 'a space in which they can claim privacy and autonomy'. Indeed, Hayden (2002: 82) observes that the home is created and sustained through a number of practices and activities for which women are largely responsible.

A brief accounting reveals the many separate tasks involved. Home cooking requires meals prepared to suit the personal likes and dislikes of family members. ... Housecleaning requires sweeping, vacuuming, washing, polishing, and tidying the living space. Laundry requires sorting, washing, drying, folding or ironing, and putting away clean clothes and linens. Health care begins at home, where home remedies and prescribed medicines are distributed. Mental health also begins at home, when home-

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<sup>28</sup> For an interesting collection that explores how women re-evaluate and negotiate ideas and meanings of home through writing, see Wiley and Barnes (1996).

makers provide emotional support so that all family members make successful connections and adjustments to the larger society. ...

Equally important are those ties to kin and community that maintain the social status and ethnic identity of the household. Maintenance of these ties often includes cultural rituals – the preparation of Thanksgiving dinners, Seders, Cinco de Mayo celebrations – with all the food, clothing, and special objects associated with each event. Recreation is another home task: arranging for children’s play, team sports, birthday parties, and family vacations.

The idea that ‘a woman’s place is in the home’ has led some to argue that the home is an alienating space that isolates women from society (Valentine, 2001; Blunt and Dowling, 2006). For example, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 15) claim that the home represents the removal of women ‘from the “real” world of politics and business’, whilst McDowell (1983), as Madigan and Munro (1999: 61) note, has suggested that suburbanisation has ‘trapped’ women within a ‘child-centred world’ located away from the space and ‘public facilities of the city’. Perhaps most famously, Friedan (1963) ‘ruptured the 1950s and 1960s imagery of the “happy housewife”’ (Valentine, 2001: 76) by declaring that the drudgery of home oppresses women and provides little opportunity for satisfaction or ‘self-fulfilment’ (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 15).<sup>29</sup> In contrast, however, Clarke’s (1997, 1999) historical-based study of Tupperware shows how women in 1950s America escaped domestic confinement and tedium through the mass consumption of lightweight plastic food containers (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Challenging the notion of the caged woman isolated from the outside world, Clarke (1997: 142) explores how women ‘enhanced their self-respect and utilized their skills in service to their neighbourhoods as valued members of the community’ by selling Tupperware through parties that they hosted within their own homes. She reveals that Tupperware not only ‘raised the status of feminine and homemaking skills’, but that it also offered women a chance of employment and a degree of economic independence (Clarke, 1997: 144). Moreover, Tupperware parties allowed women to engage with other women outside of the home and created new social and support networks made up of friends, relatives and neighbours. Though Tupperware, in many ways, sustained

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<sup>29</sup> From this perspective, it is interesting to note that Johnson and Lloyd’s (2004) book on the figure of the post-war housewife is entitled *Sentenced to Everyday Life*.

‘predominantly conservative and traditional feminine roles’ – for example, it was designed for, and in consultation with, women, and Tupperware parties were all-female affairs – Clarke (1997: 145) argues that it ‘embodied the contradictions of a growing postwar consumer culture’ and that, in so doing, ‘it provided a pragmatic, pro-active alternative to domestic subordination’.<sup>30</sup>

A number of studies have explored the relationship between the design of homes and embodied domestic practice (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; for example, see Bryden, 2004; Dohmen, 2004). As Blunt (2005a: 507) observes, Llewellyn’s (2004a, 2004b) work on ‘British domestic modernities’ is but one of many studies that focus upon ‘the gendered space of the kitchen’. Indeed, in two influential papers, Llewellyn examines the geographies of kitchens and reveals how they were planned and designed, and lived and experienced, within the interwar and wartime periods. The first considers how proponents of the Modern architectural style sought to apply new ‘principles of scientific management’ to the design of the kitchen in order to create ‘a rational, efficient workspace’ (Llewellyn, 2004a: 45).<sup>31</sup> Examining the ideas and plans of a female housing consultant and a female architect, Llewellyn (2004a: 43, 56) ‘reconsider[s] the relationship between gender and the spaces of home’ and offers a new perspective on the kitchen as ‘the woman’s place’. He shows that kitchens ‘could enclose, but also empower’, and that they ‘not only signified women’s work but also, if properly planned, women’s partial liberation’ (Llewellyn, 2004a: 49). For example, recognising that war had transformed ‘women’s experience *of* the home’ but not ‘women’s relationship *to* the home’ – that it had afforded women a greater role and increased participation in society but had not changed the expectation that they were responsible for the domestic sphere – the Modern architect, Jane Drew, designed kitchens which would, in theory, alleviate the domestic burden of post-war women and enable them to maintain new work and social commitments (Llewellyn, 2004a: 49, original emphasis). Her kitchens were intended to be domestic hubs and were to be positioned at the front rather than at the back of houses to engage with other func-

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<sup>30</sup> It must be noted that few researchers explore the relationship between masculinity and the home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; for exceptions, see Massey, 1995; Tosh, 1999; Varley and Blasco, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Modern architecture is a style of architecture that follows ‘principles of scientific management’; it is characterised by a ‘systematic approach’ to design in which function is the most important principle, followed by order, rationality and form (Llewellyn, 2004a: 44-45; for more on Modern architecture and its influence on the twentieth-century city, see Gold, 1997).

tions and spaces of the home in order to reduce women's isolation. She claimed that functional design and the logical placing of work surfaces, ovens and sinks would improve women's productivity, reduce the time taken to complete tasks and ease fatigue, an argument reflected in the belief of the housing consultant, Elizabeth Denby, that kitchens 'should be made to function in the same routinized manner as factories' (Llewellyn, 2004a: 48).

Illustrating that '[h]ome is lived as well as imagined' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 254), however, Llewellyn (2004a: 55) argues that 'the experience of the kitchen was somewhat different from the theory'. In a second and related paper, he explores 'the ways in which architectural theory and everyday life collided at Kensal House' in London during the 1930s, 'the first housing estate inspired by Modern architecture to be built in Britain' (Llewellyn 2004b: 229). Through a 'polyvocal approach' (see Llewellyn, 2003) that examines the architecture of Kensal House from a variety of perspectives, and which draws upon Mass Observation data, a 1940s report on resident satisfaction and oral-history interviews with original tenants, he reveals that kitchens were consumed, or used, in ways not intended by the architects. He claims that whilst they had imagined and designed kitchens to be efficient spaces in which to cook and prepare meals, they had 'overlooked working-class social practice' and the centrality of the kitchen within residents' everyday lives (Llewellyn, 2004b: 240). For example, the working classes had traditionally eaten meals within the kitchen, yet the kitchens at Kensal House were too small to fit a table because the architects believed that food should be consumed within the living room and away from the space in which it was prepared. As Llewellyn (2004b) shows, because residents preferred to preserve the state of their sitting rooms and were not used to eating there, some ate within the kitchen by improvising with an ironing board or by sitting at the serving hatch. Like Miller's (1988) earlier work on council-house kitchens, he illustrates how tenants 'took possession of the spaces created for them' and how architecture was 'reworked [and] adapted to fit people's needs and tastes' (Llewellyn, 2004b: 239, 242).<sup>32</sup> He argues that 'once initially "produced", architectural spaces such as Kensal House are not "consumed" [but that] they are "reproduced" by individuals living therein according to their everyday lives' (Llewellyn, 2004b: 230).

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<sup>32</sup> As Blunt (2005a: 507) observes, 'The disjunctures between design and dwelling are most apparent in relation to disability' (for example, see Imrie, 2004a, 2004b, 2006).

Geographies of Architecture

Llewellyn's (2004b) analysis of the everyday geographies and 'envisioned spaces' of Kensal House is essentially a response to Lees's (2001: 51) argument that geographies of architecture 'should be about more than just representation'. As Llewellyn (2003: 265) also notes, Lees (2001: 51) claims that 'architecture is performative in the sense that it involves ongoing social practices through which space is continually shaped and inhabited', and that architectural geography needs to pay greater attention to the lived experiences of built environments. Drawing upon non-representational theories (see Nash, 2000; Thrift, 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Lorimer, 2005, 2008), she argues that 'geographers have had relatively little to say about the practical and affective or "non-representational" import of architecture' and that studies should engage 'with the inhabitation of architectural space as much as its signification' (Lees, 2001: 51, 56). This means focusing upon what people do within architectural space, in addition to interpreting the symbolism of facades (Kraftl, 2010), and considering the 'situated and everyday practices through which built environments are used' (Lees, 2001: 56). It requires 'looking outside the traditional frame' (Wigley, 1995: xv, cited in Llewellyn, 2003: 264) and engaging 'far more fully with the many diverse actors involved with architectural inhabitation', including architects, designers and everyday users (Kraftl and Adey, 2008: 214). Much like Lefebvre's (1991, 1996) theory on the 'production of space', it recognises that 'space is not merely produced for simple consumption, but that [it] can be adapted, manipulated, appropriated and produced by a range of individuals' (Llewellyn, 2004b: 229). For example, Lees (2001: 59) maintains that the 'meaning' and significance of Vancouver Public Library lies not only within the symbolism of its architectural form, but also within 'the daily activities of its users'. Looking beyond the controversy and debate about its Colosseum-inspired design, she points toward 'the importance of the library's ongoing appropriation and use' and reveals how it became a space for elderly immigrants to reconnect with home, a washroom for a homeless woman and an indoor playground for school children (Lees, 2001: 72). She demonstrates that the meaning of buildings and spaces is not simply representational or fixed by architectural style, but that it is 'continually produced through [the] practice' and actions of those who use it (Lees, 2001: 75).

A number of geographers have also emphasised the significance of materiality in the production and experience of architectural space (Kraftl, 2010). Perhaps most notably, Jacobs (2006), as Kraftl (2010: 407, original emphasis) notes, has shown how focusing upon ‘the *materiality* of buildings can instigate new architectural geographies’. In her work on the ‘modernist residential highrise’, she argues that ‘the materiality of [a] building is a relational effect’ and that through materiality one can see how buildings are ‘diverse fields of relations’ composed of constituent technologies, practices and ideas (Jacobs, 2006: 11; Kraftl, 2010). Describing the high-rise as a ‘big thing’, she explores how its status, or mode of being, as a high-rise ‘is an achievement of a diverse network of associates and associations’, and she claims that its ‘coherent given-ness’ as a form of architecture is an outcome, or assemblage, of various processes, or building blocks (Jacobs, 2006: 11, 3). In using the term ‘thing’, she highlights that the high-rise ‘is not given but is produced’ (Rose *et al.*, 2010: 334), and she encourages geographers to consider how architecture is ‘able to lay claim to the idea of being ... a [particular kind of] building, and what work is needed for it to sustain that claim materially’ (Jacobs, 2006: 22). As Rose *et al.* (2010: 334) reflect, ‘The importance of “big things”, [therefore], is not what they are, but a conceptual emphasis on the processes of how they become and remain what they are – or indeed how those processes fail and the big thing becomes something else’. Inspired by actor-network theory, this idea, or interpretation, of architecture underlines that ‘a building is not a self-evident form’ but that it comes into being, or ‘coheres’, through various human and non-human processes (Rose *et al.*, 2010: 334; Kraftl, 2010). It argues that buildings are not ‘fixed’ or static objects but that they are complex and ever-evolving composites held together by ‘conjoined technologies (pipes, bricks, cabling), practices (construction, inhabitation, even demolition) and regulations (laws, building codes, health and safety legislation)’, each of which can be explored separately or in relation to other elements (Kraftl, 2010: 407; see Jenkins, 2002; Jacobs *et al.*, 2007, 2008; Strebel, 2011). It also suggests that the materiality of buildings is involved in and constitutive of ‘a range of human and other practices’, further reinforcing the notion that inhabitation and everyday use are significant forces shaping architectural space (Rose *et al.*, 2010: 335; see Jacobs and Merriman, 2011). Indeed, Rose *et al.* (2010: 335), quoting from Lees (2001: 71), observe that a number of studies have ‘emphasised “questions of everyday practice, embodiment and performance” in their ac-

counts of “big things”<sup>33</sup>. For example, Kraftl (2006a) has illustrated how the materiality, building and maintenance of a Steiner school’s buildings reflect and feed into the school’s curriculum, methods of teaching and understanding of childhood. Exploring ‘the material construction of childhood at the school’ and how its buildings serve as ‘concrete manifestations of the dictates of Steiner education’, he claims that its materiality epitomises its building by volunteer parents, thus reminding children of the educational benefits of hard work and communality, and that maintenance practices, also undertaken by parents, underline its status as a place of care and protection (Kraftl, 2006a: 495). He also notes the childlike and homely quality of the school’s kindergarten and, in a related study, examines how its design and interior work to ‘foster a sense of warmth, safety, and protection so important to the psychological, physiological, and educational needs of a young child’ (Kraftl and Adey, 2008: 220; also see Kraftl, 2006b).

Kraftl thus draws attention to the affective geographies of buildings and is one of a number of geographers to have explored the ways in which architecture engenders particular emotions and feelings, or affects, within inhabitants and users (Kraftl, 2010; for example, see Kraftl and Adey, 2008; Rose *et al.*, 2010; Lees and Baxter, 2011; Paterson, 2011). According to Kraftl and Adey (2008: 215), affect is ‘something that is pushing, pulling, or lifting us to feel, think, or act’. Reflecting an increased interest in affect within geography and the social sciences in general (Anderson, 2009), and inspired, in some cases, by Thrift’s (2004: 57) analysis of ‘the engineering of affect’ within cities, several recent studies have examined ‘how affectual cues ... are designed-into [built] spaces to create ethological capacities and potentialities of affectual expression’ (Adey, 2008: 441; Kraftl and Adey, 2008; Kraftl, 2010). For example, Kraftl (2006a: 494; 2006b) observes the importance of colour, materials and shapes within the production of the childlike and ‘learning-orientated atmosphere[ ]’ at his school study site (Kraftl, 2010) and shows how the feelings, or affects, generated by such features as pink walls and circular-shaped classrooms are vital to the ongoing process of making and experiencing the school.<sup>34</sup> With a focus upon the ‘gestural qualities’ encoded into the school, he reveals, with Adey, how the

<sup>33</sup> As well as high-rise flats, studies of ‘big things’ have focused upon airports, shopping centres, skyscrapers, bridges, roads and ships, amongst other ‘things’ (Rose *et al.*, 2010; for example, see McNeill, 2005; Merriman, 2007; Adey, 2008; Degen *et al.*, 2008; Gregson *et al.*, 2010; Strohmayer, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> For more on the material significance of colour, see Young (2006).

architectural design of its kindergarten encourages children to feel welcomed, a sense of magic, protected and at home (Kraftl and Adey, 2008: 216). Moreover, he illustrates the constitutive role of feelings and emotions within the founding and physical construction of the school itself: the school was established, designed and, for the most part, built by a group of parents who sought an alternative to the National Curriculum for their children's education (Kraftl, 2006a, 2006b; Kraftl and Adey, 2008). He illuminates that architectural space not only creates affects, but that it can also be an affect itself, whether of individual belief or collective desire or, as in the case of Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School, of parents' love for their children, and shared ideas and ideals about childhood (for a more comprehensive overview of architectural geographies, see Kraftl, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

Though the 'big thing' explored within this research is considerably smaller in scale compared to the buildings and structures studied within architectural geographies, it is, like these other 'things', 'produced' and not a 'given' (Rose *et al.*, 2010: 334). In much the same way that a 'thing' becomes a particular kind of building or structure, it is argued that an interior space becomes a particular kind of room, whether a kitchen, a living room or a child's bedroom. This thesis similarly illustrates how children's bedrooms 'cohere', or come into being (Jacobs, 2006: 22; Rose *et al.*, 2010: 334), and reveals the various materialities, 'component' practices and processes through which bedrooms have been made for more than a century (Kraftl, 2010: 407). Whilst others advocate ethnographic methods to examine how built spaces are produced, and insist upon an engagement with the individuals, or actors, involved (for instance, Lees, 2001; Llewellyn, 2003, 2004b; Kraftl, 2006a, 2006b; Kraftl and Adey, 2008), this thesis draws attention to the value and usefulness of texts for studies of domestic spaces. A focus upon texts, in this instance, allows for a consideration of the production of normativity, and of the defining and understanding of what constitutes a child's bedroom, for example, in terms of the material objects and things that it 'should' ideally contain and the activities that it 'should' ideally support. The thesis not only examines the material culture of the bedroom in this respect, but also focuses upon the significance of materiality itself – for instance, the materiality and textures of walls,

floors and other surfaces – and the constitutive role of intangible, or immaterial, aspects of space, including colour and environmental conditions, lines of enquiry which are, for the most part, absent within broader geographies of home. In addition, it attends to the importance of architecture and buildings – for example, in terms of room size, aspect and positioning with respect to other rooms – and to the role of parents in constituting bedrooms. Furthermore, and borrowing from Kraftl (2006a: 488), the research illustrates that bedrooms are constitutive of and contribute to ‘the construction ... and evocation of [ideas and ideals about] childhood’ and confirms the import of children within geographies of home and domesticity more generally. Emphasising the significance of the domestic sphere within children’s geographies, it also highlights the commonalities and potential synergies between the two strands of research and demonstrates how each may benefit from an engagement, or interaction, with the other.

### 3.

## A History of the Child's Bedroom in Britain, c. 1870-Present

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This chapter presents an historiography of the bedroom. Drawing upon a reading of secondary literature and highlighting several key studies, it provides a brief historical context of the space to accompany the three analytical chapters that follow. Divided into four sections, it essentially introduces the bedroom and describes its development over approximately the last one hundred and fifty years. It presents an historical narrative and covers the periods explored within the analytical chapters. It begins by introducing the nursery, a predecessor of the bedroom found within many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century upper- and middle-class homes, and the focus of Chapter Four. It traces the nursery's pre-nineteenth-century origins, discusses its proliferation amongst the middle classes in the nineteenth century and outlines the significance of nurses and domestic labour in constituting the space. Separately, it emphasises the importance of material culture within the nursery – a key theme of Chapter Four – and describes how changing perceptions of children and childhood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries influenced the space materially. The second section of the chapter reflects upon the decline of the nursery within middle-class households in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a development that occurs between Chapters Four and Five. It describes how children were increasingly housed within bedrooms instead of communal nurseries and explores the reasons behind this transition, with particular reference to wider social and demographic changes, shifts in household relations, and developments in housing. The chapter subsequently considers how the bedroom became a universal space in the twentieth century, a space that all children were expected to have access to, irrespective of class. Observing that children's bedrooms were built into three influential government reports on recommended housing standards following the First and the Second World War, it suggests that the universalisation of the space can be traced to government housing policy and to increased conformity in the design of 'middle-' and 'working-class' housing. This discussion is particularly relevant for Chapter Five, for it cannot be certain that the magazines explored within that chapter speak exclusively to a middle-class audience. The chapter

next highlights how bedrooms today are defined by material objects – an important theme of Chapter Five and one reflected within the picture-book focus of Chapter Six – and how the material culture of the bedroom is symbolic of children's identities. It concludes by identifying a number of common themes that cut across the four sections and by describing how these are taken forward and explored further within the analytical chapters.

### **The Nursery of the Upper and Middle Classes, c. 1870-1930**

First realised where there was adequate space and stability in terms of both economics and 'permanence of tenure' (White, 1984: 12), the child's room, or 'nursery', was initially a feature of only the most affluent houses. Though some have argued that the nursery was principally an invention of the nineteenth century, its form and function first defined by domestic advice literature (for example, Flanders, 2003), the origins of the space extend far beyond that of the Victorian period. Indeed, some have traced the nursery – defined as a room intended to house young children and their nurse – as far back as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see King-Hall, 1958). Not necessarily a distinct closed-off space at this point, but more like a 'bulge', or cavity, positioned between other rooms within 'a continuously winding corridor', such 'nurseries' were almost certainly home to little dukes, lords and ladies (Gathorne-Hardy, 1972: 57). Evidence also suggests that the nursery was present within the grandest houses of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Cooper, 1999; Fletcher, 2008). For example, exploring the history of objects and artefacts of childcare over the last four hundred years, Kevill-Davies (1991) notes that house inventories of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century often describe such 'nurserie' equipment as trundle beds and mattresses. Furthermore, she argues that the nursery was a feature of houses within the eighteenth century and that it was usually located on an upper floor or in a separate wing in very large houses.<sup>1</sup>

Although the nursery was not a nineteenth-century innovation, most agree that the space 'came to its full blossoming in the Victorian Age' (King-Hall, 1958: xvi). It flourished with the growth of the middle classes and was an increasingly standard feature within their homes by the mid-nineteenth century (Gathorne-Hardy, 1972; Hamlett, 2010). To some degree, its expansion beyond the upper classes was facilitated by

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<sup>1</sup> For a fascinating insight into broader Georgian society and the Georgian home, see Vickery (2009).

its frequent depiction within home-management literature – including child-rearing manuals, the focus of Chapter Four – texts written and published in increasing numbers for an emergent social group thought ‘to be sorely in need of practical advice on domestic matters’ (Hamlett, 2010: 15). Almost always addressed to women as wives and mothers, such publications reflected and contributed to a new appreciation for the home; an effect of early-nineteenth-century industrialisation, the domestic sphere was increasingly associated with the family and the care of the young and was seen as a place for women and children separate from the male-dominated and public world of work (Hepworth, 1999; Gagen, 2004a). Furthermore, the texts tapped into, and perhaps fuelled, the idea that the suburbs were the best place in which to live and to raise children, for the ideal home, in which the nursery was presented and described, was often a suburban detached or semi-detached house, or villa. As others have observed, the contrast between the home and the workplace was a particular motivating force behind the emerging suburbs in the nineteenth century (Burnett, 1986; Hepworth, 1999; Davidoff and Hall, 2002; Flanders, 2003). The home was considered a refuge, ‘a place apart from the sordid aspects of commercial life’ (Flanders, 2003: xxi), and the suburbs were believed to protect women and children from the dirt, disease and moral dangers of the city (Burnett, 1986; Madigan and Munro, 1999).<sup>2</sup>

The nursery was home to the youngest members of a household and generally housed a child from infancy until approximately the age of seven (Squire, 1885; Hamlett, 2010). Like its eighteenth-century predecessor, the nursery within the nineteenth century was ‘a world apart’; usually located on an upper floor, it was similarly ‘out of sight and sound of the rest of the house’ (Mackay, 1976: 11). Much like the home itself, the nursery served as a kind of sanctuary from the outside world; children spent the majority of their time there, for excessive social contact was thought to spoil them, lead to ill discipline and have a negative impact upon their childlike nature and temperament (Ashby, 1898; Panton, 1893; Hamlett, 2010).<sup>3</sup> Following the mantra that children were to be seen and not heard, the nursery was to be close enough to the liv-

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the process of suburban development in Britain from the mid-nineteenth century to the outbreak of the Second World War, see Thompson (1982).

<sup>3</sup> Exploring shifts in child-rearing over several centuries in the United States, Calvert (2003: 76) similarly argues that preserving children’s innocence was a key concern for nineteenth-century American parents and that the nursery was ‘a safe haven’ in which to confine children. As she observes elsewhere, ‘The loss of innocence was nothing less than the loss of childhood, the loss of a state of grace and promise’ (Calvert, 1992a: 136).

ing quarters of parents to ensure for a healthy parent-child relationship but was also to be sufficiently remote for any noise and unrest to be contained within. Positioned in such a way that its location would not discourage parents from climbing the stairs, it was to promote parental contact but was not to disrupt or interfere with rooms of adult activity (Panton, 1893; Kevill-Davies, 1991). Moreover, children were to be able to play within 'without fear of correction' (Murphy, 1885: 87). According to Muthesius (1979 [1904-1905]), a German architect concerned with nineteenth-century English domestic architecture, 'The nursery [was] a place where the children [could] enjoy a full measure of peace without their lives being disturbed by the activities of the grown-ups' (cited in White, 1984: 14).<sup>4</sup> Dependent upon available household space and individual means, many nurseries were split into separate day and night nurseries, one for playing and the other for sleeping, a set-up which allowed for the ritual airing of bedding and night clothes during the day and for unwell children to be isolated from their brothers and sisters (Kevill-Davies, 1991). The largest houses often had a nursery suite, which generally also included a schoolroom, a bathroom, a scullery, and individual rooms for nurses and staff (Mackay, 1976; White, 1984).

The segregation of children within the nursery was made possible, in many cases, by the employment of a nurse, or nanny (White, 1984; Hamlett, 2010). Though only the wealthiest could afford full-time or resident nursery staff (Hardyment, 2007), having some form of domestic assistance was an important and visible sign of middle-class status and not merely the preserve of the upper classes (Mackay, 1976; Long, 1993; Flanders, 2003).<sup>5</sup> As reflected within many of the child-rearing manuals explored within Chapter Four, the recruitment of a nurse was a significant undertaking and required much parental consideration. Mothers, in particular, were to ensure that nurses were suitable, and they were frequently warned to accept the consequences should a 'hired attendant' prove to be negligent (Gathorne-Hardy, 1972: 61). For example, within her classic study on the history of child-rearing advice, Hardyment (2007) argues that a child's early years were considered to be the most important for

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<sup>4</sup> An effect of the social and spatial organisation of domesticity – for example, the division of the home into public and private zones (Flanders, 2003) – and related to rules governing the type of conduct permitted within and between rooms (Hepworth, 1999), the nursery's high-up setting also reflected the idea that certain areas of houses were to have specific purposes (White, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> An indication of the increasing demand for nurses from both the upper and middle classes, Gathorne-Hardy (1972) notes that the number of advertisements placed within *The Times* newspaper by families seeking a nurse rose from an average of one a day in 1822 to 12.4 by 1882.

character development and that some were concerned about the potentially negative impact of household staff in this respect. Exploring nineteenth-century middle-class domesticity, Davidoff and Hall (2002: 394) similarly claim that mothers often sought out 'upper servants' for the nursery in order 'to protect their children from the superstition and vulgarity of lower-class culture'.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, as they and others have observed, the far-off location of the nursery sometimes facilitated and concealed the cruel and ill-treatment of children by nurses (also see Gathorne-Hardy, 1972; Hamlett, 2010). Reports of abuse within the nursery and inadequate nursing more generally likely contributed to the establishment and growth of nursery-training colleges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, institutions founded to train and instruct 'gentlewomen by birth and ... girls of good education and refinement' in how to be a good nurse (Gathorne-Hardy, 1972: 178).

### The Nursery and Material Culture

According to Cunningham (1995), perceptions of children and attitudes toward childhood shifted dramatically within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Examining changes in the concept of Western childhood and in children's lives from the sixteenth century, he argues that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century children were increasingly seen as innocent and pure beings who were close to nature,<sup>7</sup> whereas in previous centuries they were thought to be innately corrupt and awash with original sin.<sup>8</sup> Though others disagree about the exact timing of this change – for instance, Gathorne-Hardy (1972: 174) claims that the understanding of children as 'little adults with evil faults' was particularly potent before 1850 and that it endured into the early twentieth century, whilst Hardyment (2007) suggests that such an attitude had largely disappeared by the 1820s – it contributed to the general reverence of childhood within the nineteenth century and had a direct impact upon the nursery in terms of its material culture

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<sup>6</sup> According to Davidoff and Hall (2002), servants from rural areas were particularly distrusted owing to their superstitions, irrational beliefs and perceived crudeness. However, in his comprehensive study on the history of the British nanny, Gathorne-Hardy (1972: 72) argues that nurses were almost always of working-class origin and that a 'coarser grain was allowed'.

<sup>7</sup> As shall be seen within Chapter Four, associating childhood with nature influenced methods of child-rearing and attitudes toward parenthood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

<sup>8</sup> Cunningham (1995: 61) attributes this transformation to 'the long-term secularization of attitudes to childhood and children', and to the diffusion throughout society of ideas presented by such writers and poets as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and William Wordsworth (see Garlitz, 1966).

and decoration. For example, Kevill-Davies (1991: 125) insists that nurseries within the eighteenth century were austere and 'inadequate spaces' and reasons that their lack of childish decoration and bespoke furniture reflected the belief that childhood was a 'necessary evil' to be 'outgrown with all possible speed', as well as the idea that 'no concessions were to be made to it'. However, observing that the shift in attitudes led to the more altruistic and sympathetic treatment of children within society as a whole, Gathorne-Hardy (1972: 176) notes that nurseries 'became nicer' in the nineteenth century. Indeed, from a space designed to hasten childhood, the nursery developed into one which emphasised and celebrated its significance as 'a separate stage in life' (Cunningham, 1995: 61). To borrow from Forty (1986: 68), it came to reflect, both materially and aesthetically, the 'general tendency' of nineteenth-century society 'to treat childhood as a privileged state and to stress its differences from adulthood'.

A concern with the design and aesthetics of the nursery is illustrated within the child-rearing manuals explored within Chapter Four. As shall be seen, manuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century routinely encouraged readers to ensure that nurseries were bright and cheerful places, for surroundings were increasingly believed to influence children's temperament and taste, as well as offer the potential to shape intellectual and moral development (Forty, 1986; Hamlett, 2010). As others have also observed, the cold and characterless environment of before was transformed through the use of pastel shades upon walls and through the introduction of new commercial nursery products, including specially designed wallpapers, nursery-rhyme friezes, pictures, rugs and curtains, many of which were embellished with colours and motifs to appeal directly to children or decorated with designs and mottos to leave some kind of lasting impression (White, 1984; Kevill-Davies, 1991; Hardyment, 2007; Hamlett, 2010). Moreover, nurseries were to be furnished with items purchased specifically with children in mind rather than with unwanted objects derived from elsewhere within the home (Forty, 1986). Studies that have analysed late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century commercial furniture catalogues, for example, reveal that dedicated nursery furniture, designed to cater to children's needs, was produced in ever-larger numbers and that smaller versions of tables and chairs were increasingly popular (Forty, 1986; Hamlett, 2010).

### **From the Nursery to the Bedroom, c. 1890-1930**

Exploring the significance of material culture within middle-class homes between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, Hamlett (2010: 128) argues that the nursery was very much 'a transient space'. Drawing upon a number of autobiographies in which various individuals reflect upon their childhood experiences, she claims that children were generally removed from nurseries and given bedrooms of their own between the ages of five and seven. According to Hamlett (2010: 130), a child's 'promotion' from the nursery, and the associated 'granting of greater spatial and material autonomies', was an important event that represented his or her growing up, and one which often affected the relationship between siblings. For example, she observes that children frequently had to share a room with a sibling of the same sex – with a younger brother moving into a bedroom occupied by an older brother, or a younger sister joining an older sister – and suggests that this arrangement strengthened bonds between brothers and sisters.<sup>9</sup> However, in the early years of the twentieth century, it was becoming increasingly common for a child to occupy a single room throughout childhood and to skip the nursery phase altogether. Indeed, the nursery gradually declined and fell out of fashion within middle-class homes, and the bedroom emerged as the preferred space in which to house children from infancy to adolescence, a development reflected within Chapter Five.

The disappearance of the nursery can be traced to an expansion and associated change in the make-up and wealth of the middle classes in the early twentieth century, particularly following the First World War. As Burnett (1986: 250) notes in his study on the 'social history of housing' in Britain, the middle strata of society between the two world wars had developed into 'a new class' which was no longer defined by 'the rigid confines of the nineteenth-century social structure'. Driven by increasing numbers of non-manual workers, it had grown to encompass a broader range of individuals but was generally poorer than it had been in the previous century (Burnett, 1986; Hamlett, 2010). Indeed, it appears that many found it increasingly difficult to maintain the standards of living that their nineteenth-century ancestors had enjoyed (Hamlett, 2010). For example, according to Burnett (1986), high taxation and the economic depression of the 1930s caused many of the 'older', or traditional, members of the

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<sup>9</sup> Hamlett (2010), however, fails to acknowledge the potential for sibling conflict and tension embodied within this set-up.

middle classes to revise their expenditure and to tighten their belts; he claims that some had to cut back on their large houses, household staff and their children's private education, the latter of which could be achieved by having a smaller family. Moreover, for those on relatively low incomes who aspired to join or who were new to the middle classes, the ambition to purchase, rather than rent, a house and 'to luxuriate in the sense of security and achievement which property-owning brought' (Burnett, 1986: 251) meant that children had essentially become a consumer choice.<sup>10</sup>

In part a result of 'deliberate family limitation' (Burnett, 1986: 264), the birth rate in the 1920s was about half of what it was in the 1870s (Hardyment, 2007). Furthermore, and as Burnett (1986) observes, it almost halved from 28 per one thousand of the population between 1901 and 1905 to 15 per one thousand between 1931 and 1935, with the average number of children per family declining from 3.5 to 2.2. With fewer children within the typical household, therefore, and as the belief that mothers ought to raise their own children intensified (Hardyment, 2007; see Chapter Four), the demand for nurses and nannies subsequently dropped. Burnett (1986) also notes that the number of general household staff in employment fell by about a quarter following the First World War; he argues that this was mainly due to a rise in shop and factory work and to the increased draw of clerical and office-based positions, job opportunities which further contributed to the growth of the middle classes in both number and diversity. Besides, domestic staff had now come to expect higher wages, as well as improved working conditions and concessions, and had become unaffordable to all but the wealthiest (Burnett, 1986; Hardyment, 2007).

Housing for the middle classes in the early twentieth century was therefore to meet a set of requirements that differed significantly from those of the last century. Indeed, the consequent building of smaller houses for smaller families with few or no domestic servants meant that there was effectively no room for the nursery. For example, most often located in new suburban developments situated outside city centres and other urbanised areas, the most common type of house built speculatively in the interwar period was the three- or four-bedroomed semi-detached (Burnett, 1986; Holmans, 1987; also see Jackson, 1973). In addition, Burnett (1986: 267) claims that the flight of servants and 'freer and more open relationships between the sexes, and

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<sup>10</sup> The expansion and changing composition of the middle classes is reflected within the broad audience of the magazines explored within Chapter Five. Their reduced financial power is also illustrated by the large number of articles that focus upon the usefulness and benefits of second-hand and home-made objects within children's bedrooms.

between adults and children', resulted in households that were less formal in nature, leading to the abandonment of the separate accommodation for men, women and children which had previously defined domestic space. Observing that children were no longer 'unrecognized appendages' entrusted to nurses and nannies within far-off annexes, he argues that they were increasingly at the heart of family life and now tolerated to a much greater extent within sitting rooms, dining rooms and other rooms previously reserved for the exclusive use of adults (Burnett, 1986: 277). That the term 'nursery' was progressively phased out as the universal title for a child's room reflects this development. White (1984: 199), for example, reasons that referring to a child's bedroom as 'John's Room' or 'Jane's Room' was 'more personal' and offered 'a more embracing warmth than "The Nursery"'. Associated with alienation and 'more rigid forms of upbringing', the word 'nursery', he argues, was a more distancing term and suggestive of being 'there', whilst 'John's Room' provided 'a sense of enfolding and a feeling of "here"' (White, 1984: 199).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, given that rooms intended to house babies and very young children came to be known as 'nurseries', some children were still seen as inherently different and remained relatively marginalised.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Universalisation of the Bedroom, c. 1918-1961**

It is important to note that children's bedrooms were also an increasingly standard feature of 'working-class' houses in the twentieth century. Though architectural evidence indicates that bedrooms for children existed within working-class households in the nineteenth century, large variations in the forms of housing occupied by the working classes in terms of habitable space suggest that they were far from ubiquitous (see Daunton, 1983; Burnett, 1986). However, as Burnett (1986: 319) observes, the twentieth century was witness to the increased standardisation of house design and to the growing similarity of 'middle-' and 'working-class' housing 'in terms of space and amenity standards'. Indeed, as the century progressed, the bedroom grew to become a universal space and one which all children were expected to have access to. In many

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<sup>11</sup> Reflecting a growing dislike of the term 'nursery' – as well as the importance of children's play (see Chapter Four) – at the turn of the twentieth century, some late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century child-rearing manuals renamed the nursery 'the playroom', and a select few referred to it as 'the family room' (Hardyment, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> It is possible to argue that the term – which continues to denote a young child's bedroom, and which is also used to refer to the communal crèche – has contributed to what Holt (2009) has argued is the image of babies and very young children in society as 'objects of care' rather than as individuals.

ways, this development is underscored by the frequent depiction of bedrooms within twentieth-century picture books, the focus of Chapter Six. It is also reflected within the representations of bedrooms explored within Chapter Five, for the magazines from which they derive likely appealed to both middle- and working-class readers.<sup>13</sup>

A key factor that contributed to the convergence of house design and to the universalisation of children's bedrooms was government housing policy. Following both the First and the Second World War, for example, the government sought to improve working-class housing conditions by building local-authority houses. Likely influenced by middle-class styles of living (see Burnett, 1986), it published a series of recommendations on building and design standards at the end of the former and toward the end of the latter conflict. Two of the most influential reports were the Tudor Walters Report and the Dudley Report, published in 1918 and 1944 respectively; both argued for the raising of current standards and linked improvements in housing and living conditions to the eradication of poverty and to the building of a stronger post-war Britain (Burnett, 1986; Holmans, 1987). Though the interpretation and implementation of the recommendations varied (see Burnett, 1986), it is significant to note that children's bedrooms were a key consideration of both reports. For instance, highlighting the virtues of semi-detached houses and short blocks of terraces, the Tudor Walters Report argued that the average five-person family required three bedrooms; it also defined minimum room sizes and stated that second bedrooms should be at least 100 square feet and that third bedrooms should be no smaller than 65 square feet (Burnett, 1986; Holmans, 1987). The Dudley Report similarly suggested that houses should have a minimum of three bedrooms; however, it reasoned that children's bedrooms should be larger and recommended that the size of the second and third bedrooms increase to between 110 and 120 square feet and to between 70 and 80 square feet respectively (Burnett, 1986).

Updating standards to reflect new needs and expectations, the Dudley Report's endorsing of bigger bedrooms attested to its overall argument that domestic space had become too cramped for everyday living and was no longer suitable for modern family life (Burnett, 1986). However, it also suggests that the report recognised that bedrooms were more than simply spaces in which to sleep. Indeed, as Burnett (1986) ob-

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<sup>13</sup> Though the magazines examined within Chapter Five were largely addressed to middle-class readers, the relatively high frequency of articles on children's bedrooms concerned with such subjects as thrift, home-made objects and small spaces suggest that they resonated with working-class audiences as well.

serves, this was officially acknowledged within the subsequent Parker Morris Report, a significant housing review published in 1961 which made recommendations to both the public and private sectors, its dual focus further pointing to the narrowing of housing standards. Declaring that more household space was needed for private activities and that adolescents and older children required a degree of privacy from their families, it argued for 'the use of bedrooms as bed-sitting-rooms for study or hobbies' (Burnett, 1986: 306). The multifunctional nature of children's bedrooms and the use of space-saving and adaptive strategies to make the most of small rooms are important themes within the interwar and post-war magazines explored within Chapter Five.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Bedroom Today**

The idea that children ought to have a space of their own within the home is well established today, even if individual circumstances cannot always provide for separate rooms (Madigan and Munro, 1999). The concept of child individuality, the practicalities of domestic space and the recognition of children's need for privacy have all contributed to children's bedrooms' becoming an increasingly essential and vital feature of the family home. The importance attached to a child having a bedroom underlines children's status both inside and outside the home and was perhaps a key factor in the rapid development of children's consumer culture in the twentieth century (see Seiter, 1993; Cook, 2004). Indeed, Cieraad (2007) notes the distinctive material culture of contemporary bedrooms in her study on gender differences in room decoration, whilst Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002: 113), exploring photographs and magazine images of bedrooms, argue that they are 'often perfect havens of "hyper-consumerism" and popular-culture fantasy'. The material specificity of bedrooms is an important theme of Chapter Five, whilst Chapter Six, with its focus upon picture books, analyses texts that are specifically produced for children and which form part of the bedroom's material culture as objects on bookshelves and as stories read in situ.

An important site for the expression of individual identity, the bedroom allows children to make their own mark on space and reinforces a sense of self. According to

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the Tudor Walters Report, the Dudley Report and the Parker Morris Report, as well as the history of housing and housing policy in Britain more generally, see Short (1982), Burnett (1986), Holmans (1987), Crow (1989), and Mullins and Murie (2006). For a fascinating insight into the perceived housing needs of children as set out by the American government in the 1930s, see White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (1931).

Cieraad (2007), for example, bedrooms contain a multitude of artefacts that chronicle and display children's lives, personalities and interests; besides consumer items, these include trophies, prizes and awards, objects made at school and informal collections of random things, such as shells and stones. Moreover, and as highlighted in Chapter Five, bedrooms tend to reflect the sex of occupants and underscore their identities as boys and girls. As Cieraad (2007) observes, gender-specific codes, or markers, have long materialised and gained social approval, and particular colours, styles of decoration and objects are regularly associated with boys, and others, with girls (also see Calvert, 1992b; Leavitt, 2002). In addition, the material environment of the bedroom typically points to the age of the inhabitant and evolves, or grows, with the child. With a particular focus upon teenage and adolescent bedrooms, several studies have argued that the bedroom is an important platform for the display of new and emerging identities and that it often reflects a state of 'in-betweenness', or transition (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002; Cieraad, 2007). For example, exploring 'adolescent room culture', Steele and Brown (1995) describe rooms in which childhood toys and artefacts are scattered amongst music CDs, magazines and posters of boy bands and male models, pictures of fast cars, sports stars and scantily clad women, and other objects representative of teenage fantasy, desire and aspiration. Although this thesis specifically focuses upon the bedrooms of younger children, the material development of the bedroom as children grow and mature is explored within Chapter Five.

In theory, bedrooms offer children a degree of privacy and autonomy within the home. In reality, however, and as Chapter Five underlines, children's bedrooms are almost always subject to a variety of rules and regulations; these may concern the decoration, design and layout of the space, levels of cleanliness and tidiness, the activities or games that can take place within, and the people or friends who can frequent the space. Such adult administration of the bedroom illustrates that the home is still very much the domain of the parent, despite improvements in children's domestic status. Indeed, although children are no longer held in far-off nurseries away from the rest of the household, bedrooms continue to allow for their segregation away from the main living space. As Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) observe, for example, even though bedrooms today are awash with toys and other playthings, the order of 'go to your room' is frequently used as a punishment for misbehaviour.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, as a

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<sup>15</sup> This can be particularly painful for younger children, as seen within Chapter Six.

measure of the increased status of children both inside and outside the home and of their current position at the centre of family life, it is significant to note that as households have become smaller over the last century, spatial gains within the home have generally been passed on to children in support of their overall well-being (Madigan and Munro, 1999). This not only includes the provision of bedrooms for children and increases in their size, but also encompasses the spread of toys, games and other child-related items and activities outside of bedrooms, and their invasion of living rooms and other 'regulated living areas' (Madigan and Munro, 1999: 67). As Madigan and Munro (1999: 66) point out, this reflects the 'growing importance of the home as a centre of leisure activity', which is itself related to concerns about children's safety outside the home and parental restrictions on unsupervised outdoor play (see Valentine, 1997b, 1997c, 1999b; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997; den Besten, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

The bedroom, in its current form, is essentially a development of the last one hundred and twenty years or so. Indeed, the rooms that children occupy within the home today are very different compared to those that previous generations inhabited. However, despite the evolution of the bedroom and changes in its form over time, it is possible to identify a number of interrelated themes and ideas that have influenced and shaped the space throughout. For example, it is evident that the bedroom is very much a social construction: whether a nursery or a 'modern' bedroom, the space is informed by, and reflects, a range of social and cultural ideas, including common perceptions and understandings of childhood and parenthood. Moreover, it is materially constituted: more than simply an empty space, it is a collection, or mass, of various objects and artefacts, things that not only facilitate certain activities and denote that rooms belong to children, but which also attest to ideas about children and the state of childhood. Furthermore, it is an imagined space, an idea, or concept, shaped by ideas and expectations about, amongst other things, what a child's bedroom should look like, what it should contain, what takes place within, as well as who occupies it. These mutually constitutive themes and ideas run throughout this thesis and are explored in greater detail within the analytical chapters that follow. For example, Chapter Four reveals how nurseries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as defined by child-

rearing manuals, were shaped by concerns about children's physical health and mental development and how the rooms that parents were expected to provide for their children reflected both relatively new and long-established ideas about the importance of such things as ventilation, hygiene and aesthetics. In contrast, Chapter Five examines the key relationship between bedrooms and material objects; exploring interwar and post-war magazine representations of the space, it considers how the bedroom was defined and shaped by material things and how materiality underlined children's identities. Chapter Six focuses upon the imaginative geographies of the bedroom and shows how picture-book stories in which bedrooms feature often reflect ideas and concepts about the space that both child and adult readers may recognise, including notions of bedtime, monsters under beds, and the bedroom as a space of punishment and fantasy.

## 4.

# Cultivation and Nurture: The Nursery and Child-Rearing Manuals, c. 1870-1930

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Nurseries ought to be speshly bright,  
So's dull days don't matter as much as they might;  
With plenty of room for your toys to spread,  
And fire for toasting your tea-time bread.

(Brahms, 1935: 17)

[N]ations are gathered out of nurseries, and they who hold the leading-strings of children may even exercise a greater power than those who wield the reins of government.

(Smiles, 1885: 32)

Within the discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, home was very much associated with the rearing of children. Far from 'merely a place [in which] to eat and sleep' (Read, 1917: 10) or a physical structure composed of brick and mortar, home lay at the heart of a range of social, cultural and historical emotions and ideas (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006). A consequence of the 'discursive reallocation of women and family to the private sphere and men and work to the public' (Gagen, 2004a: 407), the home, or 'modern domestic ideal', came to be seen as a 'space of childhood' (James *et al.*, 1998: 53, cited in Gagen, 2004a: 407), an institution or concept to be geared around kin and the care of the young, and so 'organised for purposes of reproduction' (Gilman, 1904: 15). Bound to the notion of the family, a house, by definition, could not be a home without the presence of children within. Required 'to cement, to consummate, and consolidate domestic happiness' (Chavasse, 1869: 61), the child represented 'the strongest bond of affection between [a wife] and her husband', and households were considered to be incomplete, or lacking, without that 'most valuable treasure', or 'precious gift of God' (Chavasse, 1871: 3; Squire, 1885; Ballin, 1902). The home and the child were interconnected, each 'the

cause of [the other's] being' (Gilman, 1904: 235). The 'first necessities and most constant joys' of life were encapsulated within the home (Gilman, 1904: 16), for it was here where the needs and 'wants of early life [were to be] met' (Squire, 1885: 843) and where parents were to dedicate themselves to the task of raising the next generation (Chavasse, 1869). 'Home [was] the great training school of life for parents as well as for children' (Read, 1917: 10), a place where 'lessons [were first] learned by the parents, and thus gradually taught by them to the children' (Panton, 1896: 76). Home was the locus from where the child of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was to enter the world, and, in order to enter it prepared, it was imperative for parents to ensure that their offspring were afforded and brought up within appropriate surroundings. A child's early environment was thought to influence his or her health, character and identity and was believed to lie at the foundation of future success or failure (Hardyment, 1983, 2007; Bryden and Floyd, 1999b). Central to the creation of the individual, the child's home, or, more specifically, the child's place within the home, was therefore to serve as a kind of nest or womb-like propagator (Gilman, 1904), 'an anchoring point' in which to fix the child's life and a 'grounding', or context, for his or her identity and daily activities (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 11).

This chapter focuses upon the child's place within the home and explores the 'ideal' bedroom space of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as defined by contemporary child-rearing manuals and general home-management literature. It concentrates specifically upon the nursery – a room found within many British upper- and middle-class homes of the period which was designed to house all the children of a household – and examines the advice offered to parents with regard to its suitable creation. The chapter's core period of interest is 1870 to 1930, a time frame characterised by the publication of many new manuals and by a series of medical, scientific and political developments that collectively came to influence popular conceptions of children and methods of child-rearing practice (Hardyment, 1983, 2007; Cunningham, 1995). Touching upon the notion of responsible parenthood, the idea that there was a right and a wrong way to raise a child, child-rearing manuals are approached as discursive structures that sought to guide readers into specific 'subjectivities' and 'competences' by dictating the kind of space that parents were expected to provide for their children (Kline, 2006: 201). Divided into two analytical sections, the chapter argues that the 'ideal' nursery was a highly regulated environment designed to support and enhance children's physical health and mental development. With reference to the

scientific wisdom of the day and popular beliefs regarding the effects of a child's immediate surroundings, an historical and geographical narrative traces the significance attached to environmental conditions, the relationship between aesthetics and hygiene, and the instructional and intellectual objectives of room decoration and material objects. The chapter is based upon a close reading of approximately one hundred child-rearing manuals; though most of these were written and published between 1870 and 1930, the research has taken into account that texts are read, stay on bookshelves and remain influential for many years and so also draws upon publications that were published before 1870. Moreover, it examines different editions, or versions, of selected works to identify how child-rearing advice, opinions and practices changed over time. Although others have similarly studied child-rearing literature within a variety of periods, most focus specifically upon the development and evolution of parental guidance and practice and make little more than a passing reference to the nursery or bedroom (for example, see Beekman, 1977; Hardyment, 1983, 2007). Several historical studies, mainly from within American contexts, have also explored the domestic material culture of childhood but are more often concerned with the history, use and significance of particular objects – most notably, toys, furniture and clothing – and, for the most part, overlook children's spaces (see Calvert, 1992a, 1992b; Cross, 1997). With its focus upon the nursery, however, this chapter highlights the centrality of the space within child-rearing literature and draws attention to the importance of reflecting upon children's domestic spaces more generally.

The chapter begins by introducing child-rearing manuals in more detail and by contextualising the notions of childhood and parenthood, or, more specifically, motherhood, which informed these publications at various points. Drawing upon a broader chronology set by Hardyment's (1983, 2007) seminal treatise on the history of child-rearing, it provides an overview of the dominant attitudes and viewpoints that characterised the content and themes of manuals within its period of interest, but, aware that ideas remain resolute and can often shape subsequent beliefs, it also outlines the theories that influenced child-rearing from the early to mid-nineteenth century. The chapter then introduces the nursery, explains its purpose and situates the space within the everyday running of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century household. The first analytical section considers how the nursery was to promote children's bodily health and physical welfare. Set within a context of contemporary medicine, science and child-rearing lore, this substantial section examines the nursery as an environment

in which ventilation, fresh air, temperature, light and positional aspect were all considered to be important factors in the pursuit of health and the prevention of disease. Narrating an historical shift from miasma to the germ theory of disease, it next moves to consider the relationship between aesthetics and cleanliness, and, with reference to the newly perceived dangers of dust, dirt and the microbe, it explores the nursery as a series of floor and wall surfaces. The second section of the chapter reviews how the nursery was to contribute to the mental and intellectual development of children. Acknowledging relatively new theories of the mind and heredity, as well as beliefs in the effects of a child's surroundings, it describes how wall surfaces formed nursery landscapes, or sceneries, and analyses the supposed educational attributes of colours, wallpaper, friezes and pictures before examining the significance attached to toys and children's play activities.

### **Child-Rearing Manuals: An Historical Context**

In all societies, social reproduction depends on childrearing traditions which ensure that knowledge, values and social practices are transmitted between generations. Although the means are diverse, each culture must prepare its young by communicating the beliefs, roles and precepts that enable the young to become self-regulating and productive members of the community. And every community must also ensure that adults accommodate to the task of caring for their young by developing discursive strategies for childrearing that cultivate normative 'subjectivities' and 'competences', including the knowledge, identities and skills that enable the young to participate as full members of their community.

(Kline, 2006: 201)

Before the advent and availability of print, parental 'subjectivities' and 'competences' were cultivated orally, and parents gained child-rearing knowledge and guidance from midwives, friends, family members and their own parents (Heywood, 2001). From the eighteenth century, however, parents started to come 'under an increasing barrage of advice from doctors and others eager to pontificate on child-rearing' (Heywood, 2001: 72). Indeed, medical progress and the philosophy of the Enlightenment 'led a significant number of people to write books on the subject' (Hardyment, 1983: xiii), with many dismissing parental lore and inter-generational wisdom (Heywood, 2001). According to Hardyment (1983: 11), the roots of child-rearing manuals are to be

found specifically within the foundling-hospital movement, ‘the first large-scale practical attempt to do something about the appalling infant mortality rate of the mid-eighteenth century’ (see McClure, 1981; Pugh, 2007).<sup>1</sup> As she observes, foundling hospitals not only provided abandoned or orphaned babies and children with shelter and care, but they also offered doctors an ‘opportunity for mass observation’ and allowed them ‘to experiment with food, clothes, and daily management’ (Hardyment, 1983: 11). Their observations, initially recorded within ‘terse little booklets’ intended for nurses, ‘were quickly recognized [to be] of general interest’ and soon formed the material basis for publications aimed at the general public (Hardyment, 1983: 10, 11).<sup>2</sup> Written for ‘intelligent Parents as well as the medical World’ (Underwood, 1789, cited in Hardyment, 1983: xiii), these revolutionary texts essentially ‘simplified medical knowledge for the benefit of lay minds’ and would develop to become the enlarged scriptures of the future (Hardyment, 2007: 11).

#### Omnipotent Motherhood, c. 1800-1870

Middle-class mothers were afforded a kind of ‘semi-divine position’ within society for much of the nineteenth century (Hardyment, 1983: 33). With industrialisation removing husbands and men from the private sphere, the home became the woman’s realm and a place where wives were to nurture and care for their children. Guided by the twin principles of science and religion, women were not only responsible for the good health and well-being of their young, but were also to devote themselves to the task of refining their children’s characters and personalities, an undertaking that held the significant potential of ‘righting the wrongs of society’ (Hardyment, 1983: 33), and of influencing ‘for good or evil the destinies of a nation’ (Beecher, 1872, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 33). As Hardyment (1983) notes, the new scientific insights of physiology into the complex workings of the human body and of phrenology into the development of the mind, together with more traditional religious beliefs, provided mothers with the power to affect a child’s physical and mental development. Indeed, the ideas and associated theories of physiology and phrenology inspired the advice of many child-rearing manuals during the early to mid-nineteenth century (Hardyment,

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Coram established the first foundling hospital in London in 1741 (Hardyment, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> For example, William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*, first published in 1769, was based upon the author’s observations and experiences at Ackworth Foundling Hospital (Hardyment, 1983).

2007). Whilst physiology showed mothers how to tend to their children's physicality and ensure for their healthy growth, phrenology argued that character was 'related to faculties of the brain' and dependent upon the 'degrees to which these faculties were developed' (Hardyment, 1983: 34, 35). For example, Andrew Combe (1840), in his *Treatise on the Physiological and Moral Management of Infancy*, claimed that 'kindness and affection' would be instilled within children if parents behaved in a similar manner toward them and others in their vicinity (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 35). Alongside scientific reasoning, mothers were also informed of the importance of exposing their children to religion. An early introduction to the Christian faith was believed to have a profound impact upon the disposition of children and their future success in life and was often credited as having 'produced the world's heroes' (Hardyment, 1983: 35). Mothers were therefore highly respected, and their social standing would increase throughout the century as they started to put pen to paper themselves to share their own child-rearing experiences and methods with others (Hardyment, 1983).<sup>3</sup>

#### Waning Motherly Interest, c. 1870-1890

There never was a time when children were made of so much individual importance in the family, yet were so little in direct relation to the mother – never a time when maternity did so little and social organization so much.

(Linton, 1881, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 98)

Hardyment (1983) argues that the short period from approximately 1870 to 1890 was witness to a striking apathy of interest in children and marked by a lack of enthusiasm for child-rearing. She maintains that child-rearing authors and mothers alike had little conviction for their craft and that this reflected an increasing indifference toward children and the task of motherhood. According to Hardyment, the publication of, and reaction to, Charles Darwin's (1859) *On the Origin of Species* was a contributing factor in this respect. As she observes, Darwin's radical treatise dealt a 'body-blow to the old ideas of Christian nurture ... [and] sparked off a long-drawn-out debate on the implications of the theory of evolution for man' (Hardyment, 1983: 91-92). For ex-

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<sup>3</sup> Though the public world of work reduced the child-rearing authority of fathers relative to mothers, it must be noted that they retained a significant involvement in their children's upbringing (Hardyment, 1983). As Hardyment (1983) notes, some resigned from their jobs or worked from home to partake more in the raising of their children; for example, William Cobbett's (1829) *Advice to Young Men* recounted the author's own experiences of fatherhood.

ample, early readers of Darwin considered children to be little more than symbols of barbarity and savagery and concluded that they were merely ‘unholy young apes’ (Hardyment, 1983: 92). Pessimistic because the ‘[a]ges of civilization [had apparently] not succeeded in eradicating some of the most characteristic and unpleasant impulses of the brute’ – including biting, crying and shouting – there seemed to be little reason for mothers to interfere with their children during their earliest years (Ashby, 1912, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 92).

With the perception that there was little possibility of influencing childhood or the character of children for the better, the middle classes increasingly farmed out the seemingly ‘thankless’ and ‘tedious’ task of civilising children to nurses and nannies (Hardyment, 1983: 92). As Gathorne-Hardy (1972: 19) notes, many mothers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century abandoned ‘all loving and disciplining and company of their children, sometimes almost from birth, to the absolute care of other women’. Such practice contrasted strikingly with that of previous decades when only the wealthiest within society had employed nursery nurses on a full-time basis (Hardyment, 1983). Indeed, for much of the nineteenth century, mothers had been ‘the accepted moral guides and physical guardians of their children – nurses [had been] auxiliaries, not stand-ins’ (Hardyment, 1983: 62). A close intimacy, or bond, between mother and child had been recommended and desired, for the character-building significance of a child’s early years had heightened anxieties about ‘the dangers of maternal neglect’ and the influence of largely uneducated lower-class servants (Hardyment, 1983: 63; Gathorne-Hardy, 1972; Davidoff and Hall, 2002). Invoking such concerns, several writers challenged the current nurse-based system of care. For instance, Fanny Montgomery (1883), writing within *Early Influences*, argued that mothers should be ‘ever on the watch to detect every bent that [was] given to the thoughts or temper of [their] little one’ but that the ‘present mode of society ... exclude[d] [them] from the constant attention and personal superintendence over all that passe[d] in [the] nursery’ (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 97-98). Nevertheless, given that the employment of domestic help was an important status symbol (Mackay, 1976; Hardyment, 1983; Long, 1993), such practice may have suited many middle-class women eager to improve upon their social standings.

According to Hardyment (1983: 89), the weakening interest in children and maternity, together with the increased demand for nurses, also coincided with an outbreak of late-nineteenth-century ‘feminist enthusiasm’. As she observes, the new idea

of 'women's rights' was reflected within, and promoted by, much contemporary literature which encouraged women and mothers to think about themselves as much as their children (Hardyment, 1983: 91). For example, Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1882) reminded women that they should 'not drown in [their] child' and that, 'even for the most prolific and devoted mother, there [were] duties other than maternal' (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 91). Furthermore, Hardyment (1983, 2007: 89) argues that new girls' schools educated 'women to have less constricted lives and to become people in their own right' and claims that tennis courts, ice-skating rinks and other such conveniences furnished female desire for a public and social life away from the household. As Eliza Lynn Linton (1883) summarised, 'Society [had] put maternity out of fashion, and the nursery ... [had become] a place of punishment, not pleasure, to the modern mother' (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 89). Not all agreed, however, for some expressed concern that current society and fashions were harming women's domestic abilities. For instance, the authors of *Spon's Household Manual* (1887: iii) warned that 'there is much reason to fear that the essentially domestic part of the training of our daughters is being more and more neglected'.

#### An Anxious Revival, c. 1890-1930

From her reading of child-rearing manuals, Hardyment (1983) concludes that positive new interpretations of heredity at the turn of the twentieth century reignited popular interest in children and contributed to a renewed enthusiasm for motherhood. She claims that scientific studies facilitated a 'greater tolerance towards children' by outlining the fresh theory that nurture and upbringing could negate childish 'tendencies', or weaknesses, that derived from nature (Hardyment, 1983: 102; also see Riley, 1983; Rose, 1990). Evolution had essentially become a manageable process, for unwelcome traits and undesirable behaviour were now able to be eradicated or fixed through 'the imposition of habits – routine reactions to life which would ensure eternal success' (Hardyment, 1983: 103). Infused with a new-found optimism and the spirit of improvement, a raft of newly written manuals set out the rediscovered potential for parental interference, the 'means by which parents were to succeed in evolving [their children's] souls' and 'the factors that affected race improvement and race decay' (Hardyment, 1983: 103, 112). This latter point became more and more pertinent, as growing tension and geopolitical uncertainty in Europe meant that the health and

well-being of children, 'the soldiers of the future', was increasingly an issue of national importance (Hardyment, 1983: 111; Cunningham, 1995; Hendrick, 1997a).

In many ways, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century motherhood was characterised by anxiety and unease (Hardyment, 1983). Child-rearing had become a science in which mothers needed to be educated and 'trained to understand the wonderful mechanism of a [child's] body and mind' (Hewer, 1921: 1), for instinct, reason and affection, a combination that had served earlier generations so well, were no longer considered sufficient for 'the responsible management of children' (Chavasse, 1871: 2; Hardyment, 1983). For example, Baroness Marenholtz-Bulow (1893), within *The Child and Child-Nature*, argued that 'the maternal impulse ... [was] blind, and the following of it [would not] result in happiness for reasonable beings' (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 93). Intimating that there was a right and a wrong way to bring up children, authors tended to present the typical mother as inadequate, ignorant and devoid of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Within *Our Baby*, for instance, Mrs Hewer (1891: iii) claimed that mothers were 'put to shame by the brute creation'.

The mere animal seems instinctively to know how to care for, and provide for, its young from the first moment of its arrival, till the time that it is enabled to look after itself.

The intelligent and highly cultivated female of the human race, seems, however, to be deficient in instinct on this matter. ... There may be plenty of love and affection, but no knowledge.

Ellen Key (1914), as Hardyment (1983: 116) observes, even suggested in *Renaissance of Motherhood* that young women should be conscripted into a female equivalent of military service in order to be properly trained and prepared for motherhood. Sophia Jex-Blake (1884) maintained in *The Care of Infants* that without adequate 'training or preparation', mothers would experience the 'most painful loss' (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 118), whilst Pye Henry Chavasse (1871: 2), in *Advice to a Mother*, similarly declared that they would find themselves adrift 'in a sea of trouble and uncertainty'. Charlotte Gulick (1917: vii, viii) also recounted a personal tragedy in her introduction to Mary Read's *The Mothercraft Manual* 'as an illustration of how ill-prepared even

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps a sign of continued enthusiasm for life outside the home or influenced by the use of household servants and the status associated with their employment, Flanders (2003) notes that women from both the upper and middle classes often exaggerated and took pride in their lack of knowledge about children and child-rearing.

earnest women [were] for motherhood'. Very likely compounding the anxiety of young mothers, she reported that 'I have had six children, four of whom are living. Had I had the knowledge I now have, or know how to get, it seems that the little seven-months-old boy could have been saved.'<sup>5</sup>

For many writers, the freedoms and fashions enjoyed by many women at the turn of the twentieth century were responsible for the deficits that they perceived in the child-rearing and domestic expertise of mothers. Ellen Key (1914), for example, considered a woman's desire for independence to be a 'dangerous disease' and 'sick yearning' with 'socially pernicious, racially wasteful and soul-withering consequences'. A firm believer that 'the foremost essential quality of ... womanhood [was] motherliness', she contended that women's working or socialising outside of the home impacted negatively upon their child-rearing abilities and resulted in 'a lessening of values and enormous overstrain' (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 115-116). To 'serve' one's children was thus held as 'the most satisfying [and] soul-filling of all human activities' (G. Stanley Hall, quoted in Read, 1917: 1) and was seen as a profession in its own right (Hardyment, 1983). For instance, within *Mothers and Babies*, Muriel Wrinch (1924: xiii) argued that once motherhood was 'acknowledged to be on the same plane as other professions ... a stronger race [would] be produced, and much of the discontent amongst women [would] disappear'.

Mothers were now therefore increasingly urged to take the lead in raising their children. Nevertheless, as Hardyment (1983: 118) notes, nurses had become 'a social institution, a way of life for the middle and upper classes, and could not easily be dispensed with'. Indeed, many women continued to desire a career and a social life, and a woman's marital obligations as a wife to her husband meant that she was often absent from the nursery (Hardyment, 1983, 2007). Reflecting 'the inadequate mother thesis', however, the typical nurse was no longer regarded as a suitable 'caretaker' for a child and, like the mother, was now to be trained and educated to be equipped with the relevant 'scientific knowledge' (Hardyment, 1983: 118-120). For example, Mrs Hewer (1891: iii) claimed that 'many so-called nurses ... [had] inherited, or invented, certain ideas on the bringing up of a [child], to which they [would] cling with all the

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<sup>5</sup> In 1910, Charlotte Gulick and her husband, Luther, helped to establish the Camp Fire Girls initiative in the United States, a programme inspired by the American Boy Scout movement which aimed to enhance women's domestic and maternal skills through camping and other outdoor activities (Paris, 2008).

tenacity of obstinate ignorance'.<sup>6</sup> For some, the 'ideal' was therefore not to employ a nurse; for instance, Mrs Hilary Pepler (1906), speaking directly to mothers within *His Majesty*, reasoned that '[y]ou love the child more than anyone else in the world can love him [*sic*], you will do your best for him in a way a nurse could not' (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 121). In any case, 'the traditional nanny system' was in decline in the early years of the twentieth century, for a falling birth rate and economic changes gradually reduced the demand for nurses and inflated the cost of hiring domestic staff, and an increase in shop, factory and office-based work drew recruits away from the field (Hardyment, 1983: 121; Burnett, 1986).

### **Introducing the Nursery**

The setting aside of separate rooms for children within the home was far from a recent phenomenon at the turn of the twentieth century. Though the nursery was increasingly common within upper-class homes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and 'came to its full blossoming in the Victorian Age' with the growth of the middle classes, evidence suggests that rooms for the exclusive use of children developed within the homes of the wealthy from as early as the fourteenth or fifteenth century (King-Hall, 1958: xvi; Gathorne-Hardy, 1972; Mackay, 1976; White, 1984; Kevill-Davies, 1991). It is also possible to trace the origins of the term 'nursery' – defined as a 'place or room for infants and young children and their nurse' – to this era (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, n.d.). Believed to derive from the Middle English word *noricerie* (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2011) – itself thought to have emerged from the Old French expressions *norture* or *norreture* (which translate as 'food' or 'nourishment') and from the Latin *nutrire* (meaning to 'nourish' or 'suckle') (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, n.d.) – the term 'nursery', and the classification of children's rooms as such, betrays a cultivating and nurturing purpose that remained constant despite the evolution of the nursery and domestic life over the centuries (see King-Hall, 1958).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the nursery of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was at the centre of a type of environmental engineering, a

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<sup>6</sup> Numerous training colleges were established in the 1890s and 1900s to prepare potential nurses and to provide them with a 'professional status' (Hardyment, 1983, 2007: 116; Gathorne-Hardy, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> The horticultural meaning of 'nursery', as 'a place where young plants and trees are grown for sale or for planting elsewhere' (Soanes and Stevenson, 2006a: 982), stems from the mid-sixteenth century and follows its child-rearing definition (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, n.d.).

belief that children could be shaped ‘into some semblance of the accepted contemporary type’ through the provision of suitable surroundings and appropriate accommodation (King-Hall, 1958: xiv). Set within the context of late-Victorian ameliorism (see Driver, 1988; Tarlow, 2007), such thinking had particular effects upon the regulation of children’s interior spaces and upon the rearing of children more generally.

### The Nursery, c. 1870-1930

For most child-rearing manuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the ideal home was to contain two nurseries, one to be occupied at night, and the other, during the daytime (Hardyment, 1983).<sup>8</sup> To be fashioned from ‘the best rooms in the house’ (Brockbank, 1912: 119), the nursery was to be home to the youngest members of a family and house a child from infancy until about the age of seven (Squire, 1885; Hamlett, 2010).<sup>9</sup> Often placed within the charge of a nurse, or nanny, children were to spend the majority of their time there. In most cases forged from upstairs rooms and situated so as to be ‘out of sight and sound of the rest of the house’ (Mackay, 1976: 11), it essentially isolated its occupants from adults’ living quarters (Flanders, 2003; Hamlett, 2010).<sup>10</sup> Sited so as to stop ‘china [from being] shaken to its very foundations, by little feet rushing and jumping overhead’ (Panton, 1893: 190), the nursery contained children’s ‘singing ... laughing, and shouting’ and kept it from reaching the ears of ‘nervous mothers and busy fathers’ (*Ward and Lock’s Home Book*, c. 1880: 434; White, 1984). The space was ‘effectually shut off from the rest of the house’, for as Murphy (1885: 87) explained:

[H]owever fond people may be of children, there are times when the noise and unrest essential to childhood become wearisome; and ... undue restraint on their amusements, especially in the point of noise, is

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<sup>8</sup> According to Flanders (2003), however, the average middle-class house had between two and five bedrooms and was often barely able to accommodate the two-room nursery ideal.

<sup>9</sup> Dependent upon individual family preference, children were usually removed from nurseries and provided with bedrooms of their own between the ages of five and seven, though siblings of the same sex often had to share a room (Hamlett, 2010). According to Hamlett (2010: 130), the ‘promotion’ from the nursery to a bedroom of one’s own was a significant milestone in a child’s life and symbolised his or her ‘passage to maturity’.

<sup>10</sup> Larger houses often reserved entire wings for the care of children (Hardyment, 1983). As well as a day nursery and a night nursery, ‘more palatial establishments’ sometimes contained a schoolroom and individual rooms for nurses (Mackay, 1976: 11).

both unnatural and unfair. The nurseries, then, should be so shut off from the rooms occupied by the adult members of the family and the visitors, that the children can play and make what noise they please without fear of correction.

Moreover, the nursery kept the home's prized possessions and delicate ornaments safe and prevented children from 'rambling over the house ... at the risk of broken heads' (Warren, 1865: 33, also cited in Hardyment, 1983: 62). Indeed, as Calvert (1992b: 79) notes, the typical upper- or middle-class home was 'an elaborate environment, a veritable thicket of damageable goods ... [which] were as dangerous to small children as children were to them'.<sup>11</sup>

The far-off position of the nursery within the home reflected the adult-oriented nature of Victorian society and the domestic subordination of children relative to their parents (Flanders, 2003). Underlining the separateness of children and adults, the segregation of children within the nursery reinforced the idea that the home was an adult space, and 'had a powerful effect on the formation of parent-child relations' (Hamlett, 2010: 112-113). Though the arrangements of individual households and the experience of everyday family life varied, the nursery was generally symbolic of distance between parents and children (Flanders, 2003; Hamlett, 2010). According to Hamlett (2010: 135), it 'allowed mothers and fathers to control when and how they saw their children'; for example, from her reading of autobiographical sources in which adults reminisce about their childhoods, she observes that some parents regularly visited the nursery but that others rarely frequented the space and had little contact with their children. For most child-rearing manuals, however, the remote location of the nursery and the associated distancing between parents and children were essential for the proper development of children. Though parents often invited children into drawing rooms and provided favourites with preferential access to personal spaces (Hamlett, 2010), general consensus followed that children were 'out of place' and 'apt to suffer' outside the nursery (Ashby, 1898: 7, 8). It was widely believed, for instance, that nursery isolation disciplined children into obedience and cultivated within them a healthy respect for their parents and adults, whilst excess attention and over-

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<sup>11</sup> Though Calvert's (1992b) comments relate specifically to American homes and nurseries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, others have similarly observed the prevalence and importance of material culture within British homes of the period (for example, Forty, 1986; Flanders, 2003; Hamlett, 2010).

indulgence was thought to produce spoilt and wilful children (Hamlett, 2010). For example, although fearful that the far-off position of nurseries deterred mothers from climbing the stairs up to them, Jane Ellen Panton (1893: 191) – ‘possessed by the idea of good nurseries’ (190) – urged her readers not to have their children ‘downstairs with [them] in and out of season’.

[Children] gradually absorb the grown-up atmosphere, and become little prigs who care nothing for a romp; and object to going into the country for the summer ... and have their own opinions, pretty freely expressed too, about their clothes and the cooking at their own or their friends’ houses. ...

... [The child] who go[es] out perpetually [with the mother] to luncheon and tea parties ... soon becomes an intolerable nuisance ... [and] will grow up the useless, affected, selfish, ball-loving girl [*sic*] who is the terror of every mother.

(Panton, 1893: 191-192)

### **Cultivating Healthy Bodies**

Experience over the centuries had shown that ‘[l]ife [could] soon [be] extinguished in infancy’ (quoted in Hardyment, 1983: 68). Conscious of this danger, child-rearing manuals of the early to mid-nineteenth century often included dedicated chapters on illness and disease. Because orthodox medicine and doctors were widely distrusted, many publications tendered advice on the diagnosis and treatment of various ailments, from jaundice and dysentery to whooping cough and pneumonia, thus reflecting and reinforcing the ‘medical responsibility’ of the mother (Hardyment, 1983: 68). Indeed, for much of the nineteenth century, she was considered by many to be the ‘child’s best doctor’ (Hardyment, 1983: 72). As the medical profession was perceived to be rather deficient with regard to the treatment of children, mothers preferred to consult physicians through the medium of print rather than directly because it allowed them to decide what was best for their children medically.<sup>12</sup> However, as Hardyment (1983) notes, the medical competence of mothers began to be eroded and was increasingly

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<sup>12</sup> Reflecting medical practice of the day, mothers were shown how to apply leeches, blistering beetles and plasters to children’s bodies and were informed of the healing power of various purgatives. Non-physician authors also promoted alternative treatments, including old herbal recipes, homeopathy and medicines based upon their own formulas (Hardyment, 1983).

questioned as medical science and expertise advanced. As she explains, ‘Although ignorance could cause death by not recognizing illnesses for what they were, it was also true that the well-meant chapters on diseases and their cures encouraged mothers to take dangerous action too often’ (Hardyment, 1983: 71). For example, prescribed remedies had the potential to do more harm than good because some contained toxic ingredients, and mothers might also use them in the wrong way, administer incorrect dosages or misdiagnose their children; as Flanders (2003) observes, serious illnesses were often mistaken for relatively minor ailments, and vice versa. As doctors and the field of medicine came to be more and more respected throughout the century, an increasing number of manuals subsequently omitted and removed such chapters. Emphasis instead shifted to the prevention of ill health and the preservation of good; health was to be managed and conditioned, for prevention was deemed to be better than cure (Hardyment, 1983; Flanders, 2003). Child-rearing manuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century therefore tended to present ‘clear and useful recommendations’ for the ‘care and management’ of children’s health. Rather than train mothers in how to recognise illness and then act upon their observations (Hardyment, 1983), the objective of many new manuals, written by both physicians and non-professionals, was now ‘to point out the causes of some of the diseases of children and their frequent prevention by homely means’ (Horne, 1881: preface).<sup>13</sup>

Given that ‘[t]he robust aspect of healthy children [was seen as] good evidence of the thorough hygienic state of the dwelling house, and of the excellence of its domestic management’ (Squire, 1885: 859), parents were effectively compelled to ensure that their children were as healthy and full of life as possible. Drawing attention to ‘the infant’s early malleability’ (Hardyment, 1983: 46), child-rearing manuals provided parents with both the knowledge and power to influence and regulate their children’s bodies through the dissemination, promotion and definition of (new) ideals, practices and norms. As ‘a mass of animated clay, composed of different tissues’, a child was either to ‘be developed into a healthy being, or [to] be destroyed gradually or suddenly by very simple means’ (Braidwood, 1874: 1). Declaring the essentials of childcare, most publications followed the doctrine that children required ‘healthy surroundings’ to flourish (Bennett and Isaacs, 1931: 25), and, akin to the growing of

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<sup>13</sup> This development partly stemmed from an increased understanding of hygiene and nutrition and took place within the wider context of medical and scientific breakthroughs in disease prevention (see Hardyment, 1983).

plants (Hardyment, 1983), optimal environmental conditions were considered critical (Chavasse, 1871; Braidwood, 1874; Bull, 1877; Cradock, 1909; Campbell, 1910; Gibbens, 1940). The nursery may have been the young child's 'kingdom', a place within the home where children could 'do pretty much as they like[d]' (Panton, 1893: 207), but it was also to be heavily regulated and monitored by parents (and nurses, if present) to safeguard the child's vitality. As the location where children were to spend the majority of their time, the nursery was essentially a space of nurture, much like a greenhouse or a propagator, and was where children were either to thrive, bloom and blossom, or droop, wilt and wither. Nurseries were therefore to be arranged to maximise health and life-giving properties and to ensure for adequate growth stimulation and disease prevention (Kugelmass, 1935).

### The Nursery Environment

The most important essentials for the nursery cost nothing at all. They should be free to everybody.

(*Glaxo Baby Book*, 1923: 10)

Manuals published at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century were unanimous that the appropriate ventilation of the nursery was of 'paramount importance'. Whether written in the 1870s, 1900s or 1930s, consensus followed that 'a constant supply of fresh air' was needed (Chavasse, 1871: 113; 1939: 125). Representing the one common element found across all publications of the period, adequate room ventilation constituted the first basic ingredient required for the procurement of health. The admittance of fresh air into the nursery was such an important consideration for parents that authors, both medical and non-medical, were almost obsessive in its promotion, for, despite the advance of medical knowledge and improvements in formal health care, disease was still a significant threat to life. In 1900, for example, tuberculosis afflicted more than a quarter of a million people and continued to infect approximately 50,000 per year in the 1930s, and, with a fatality rate of about 60 per cent, children were considered particularly vulnerable (Cherry, 2003: 406). 'The evils resulting from imperfect ventilation' (Braidwood, 1874: 56) were therefore not to be lost, even upon the most inattentive of readers. Indeed, Doctor Thomas Bull (1877) – described by Hardyment (1983: 43) as a 'physician-accoucheur' – laid the situation bare in his popular treatise *The Maternal Management*

*of Children*. Quoting Sir James Clark, Queen Victoria's personal doctor (Hardyment, 1983), he warned that 'if an infant born in perfect health, and of the healthiest parents, be kept in close rooms, in which free ventilation ... [is] neglected, a few months will suffice to induce tuberculous cachexia' (Bull, 1877: 87).

For Bull and his contemporaries, whether physicians or not, the avoidable illness and death of a child was unacceptable. Arguing that there was 'a lamentable ignorance of the nature of the human frame' (Bull, 1877, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 44), authors were unified in their drive to educate parents of the necessity of an 'open air system' to ensure that children grew up 'with the fewest diseases and the strongest lungs' (Pepler, 1905: 23). Peter Murray Braidwood (1874), a surgeon at the Wirral Hospital for Sick Children, also stressed the importance of securing good health in infancy in *The Domestic Management of Children*. Drawing upon his professional experience, and perhaps also concerned with the future of the race, he intimated that children were like young plants that required specific conditions to take root. Emphasising the domestic responsibility of parents, he stressed that early neglect risked long-term damage to children's health and well-being.

All the tissues are at this stage of existence so delicate, and possess the power of such rapid growth, that, with care, they can be cultured to almost any extent, or may be stunted or otherwise altered, so as to lose their vitality at once. ... The healthy child developes [*sic*] into the healthy man [*sic*], but a sickly infant can never become a truly healthy adult.

(Braidwood, 1874: 1-2)

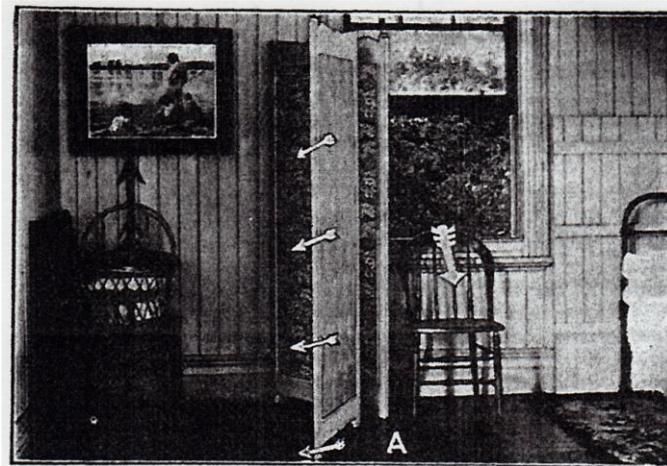
The significance of breathing 'pure and fresh air [at a time] when change and growth are most active [was] obvious' (Squire, 1885: 844). Pye Henry Chavasse (1871: 113), for example – an obstetrician and author of the very popular and well-received *Advice to a Mother* (Hardyment, 1983) – stated that 'good air [was] as necessary to ... health as wholesome food'. Writing in a question-and-answer format – which, as Hardyment (1983: 43) notes, created 'the feel of a conversation' between author and reader – Chavasse bemoaned those nurseries that were 'hermetically sealed ... so that a breath of fresh air [was] not allowed to enter'. With health forming the rationale behind his work, he argued that the consequence of poor nursery ventilation was stark: children would ultimately be 'poisoned by their own breaths' (Chavasse, 1871: 113).

Perhaps alarmed at ‘how few nurseries have fresh, pure air’ (Chavasse, 1871: 113), many authors felt it necessary to explain, in plain and simple language, the biological process of respiration and its dependence and impact upon the atmosphere. One such writer was Mrs Hewer (1891: 58), who observed, within *Our Baby*, that ‘taking out the oxygen and replacing it with carbonic acid gas [causes] the air in the room [to] become more and more impure until it is positively dangerous to life’. Addressed to ‘mothers and nurses who know that there must be a right way of bringing up a child, and who are anxious to know what that right way is’, she warned that ‘[m]any babies have lost their frail little lives from lack of this knowledge on the part of their parents’ (Hewer, 1891, iii-iv, 58-59). Thirty years later, having come to ‘realize that Baby-Minding is an important office, to be entrusted only to women trained to understand the wonderful mechanism of a baby’s body’, Hewer (1921: 1) would repeat and develop this advice within another publication, *The Baby of To-Day*. Reflecting a later awareness and obsession with germs, she alerted parents not only to the dangers of a ‘vitiating’ atmosphere (Mason, 1905: 33), but also to the germ-laden air ‘contaminated by the breath of people’ (Hewer, 1921: 11).

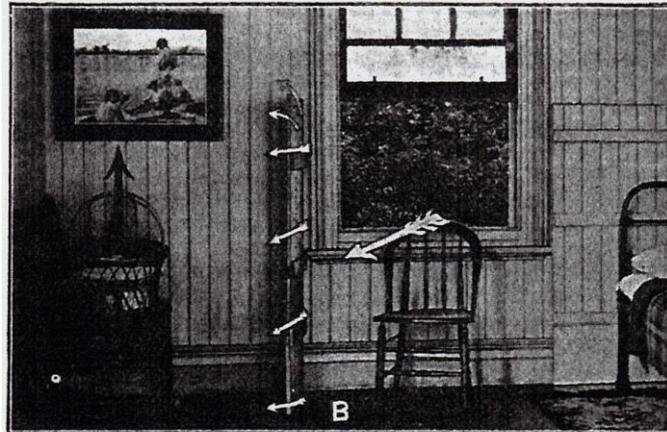
Louisa Mary Barwell, a leading authority on childcare whose work was based upon her practical experience, had earlier highlighted the perils of ‘impure air’ in the 1840s. For her, the physical condition of the body and an individual’s state of mind were related: a healthy mind essentially inhabited a healthy body (Hardyment, 1983). A product of scientific and religious thinking combined, this idea reflected the mid-nineteenth-century belief that the body, mind and soul were interconnected and that ‘[i]f anything in the body is wrong, it affects our thoughts and feelings’ (Alcott, 1836, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 46-47). Indeed, Barwell (1840: 44-45) claimed that the ‘organs of respiration’ were not only ‘deranged’ by a polluted atmosphere but that character was also ‘injured’, thus impacting upon a child’s morals and behaviour. As she explained, ‘[I]mpure air has a bad effect upon the tempers of young children: they grow languid, uneasy, and fractious ... [and] there is incessant crying, quarrelling, and scolding’ (Barwell, 1840: 45). For those who had yet to be persuaded of ‘the vast evils consequent upon breathing impure air’, Bull (1877: 87) suggested that a ‘visit [to] the dwellings of the poor ... and the appearance of the inmates [would] amply suffice to convince the most sceptical’; fellow doctor Braidwood (1874: 56) similarly remarked upon the negative ‘looks and development of children of the poorer classes’. Inverting such observations, however, and speaking directly to her readers, Charlotte

Mason (1905: 31) maintained that '[t]he gutter children who feed on the pickings of the streets are better off (and healthier looking) ... than your cherished darlings, because they have more of the first essential of life – air'. For a society preoccupied with status display and outside perception, such comments would no doubt have spurned, and perhaps embarrassed, the upper and middle classes to action. Given that the 'ruddy glow in the face of a child' was seen as a sign of adequate ventilation (Squire, 1885: 859), there was to be no excuse for parental neglect in securing this free commodity and insurance of guaranteed health, especially as it was relatively simple to achieve. For example, Chavasse (1869: 53) noted that '[i]f windows were more opened than they are, there would be far less illness than there is'. Raising a smile given his profession, and perhaps also harking back to the mistrust of doctors earlier in the century, he stated that '[t]here is an old saw worth remembering: "Open the windows more, And keep doctors from the door"' (Chavasse, 1869: 53).

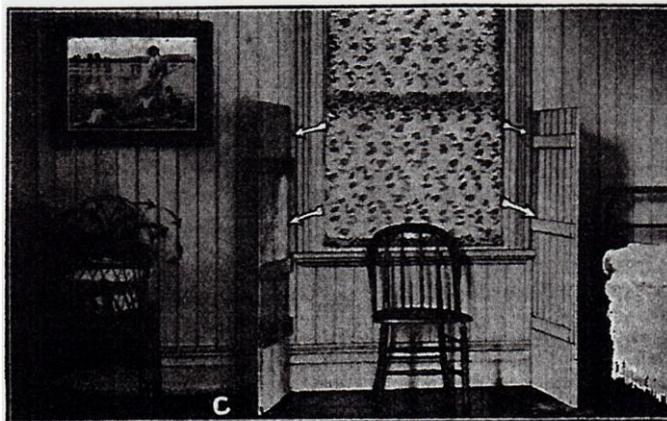
To ventilate a room adequately without creating 'injurious' draughts of cold air was difficult, though (Barwell, 1840). For much of the nineteenth century, anxiety about cold-induced illness had prohibited the opening of windows when a child was present within a room; they were only to be opened once the child had vacated the space (Hardyment, 1983). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, consensus followed that windows were to be kept open at all times – whether day or night, or summer or winter, but not when the weather was foggy or damp (*Ward and Lock's Home Book*, c. 1880; Gordon, 1909; Brereton, 1927; Gibbens, 1940) – with the child protected by draught excluders, screens or temporary partitions (Morten, 1910; F. King, 1919, 1940; Barnett, 1922; M. King, 1934; Kennedy, 1935). Frustrated with those who would 'choose to starve and poison [themselves and others] in the midst of plenty', New Zealand doctor Frederick Truby King (1919: 68) – well known for his advocating of breastfeeding (Hardyment, 1983) – provided readers with clear and simple pictorial instructions that displayed an ideal and flawed arrangement of a child's sleeping quarters with respect to ventilation (Figure 4.1). Note the large white arrow that delineates the admittance of fresh night air into the room and the light currents of air drifting around the screen (which shields the child from the main draught) toward the cot replacing the child's exhalations as indicated by the rising black arrow. Observe also the impact of a blind across the window and the inadequate inflow of air resulting in the '[b]aby's breath hanging round him [*sic*] like a pall' (King, 1919: 69); Braidwood (1874: 57) claimed that in such a scenario, children



(A) Good ventilation. Lower sash raised, no oblique wind. White arrows show cool, pure, "white" air; black arrow shows used-up, poisoned, "black" breath—not air. (Details on opposite page.)



(B) Similar to A, but showing wind blowing in obliquely through raised sash. Screen protects baby.



(C) Sash raised as above but blind down, and entry of air almost stopped. Baby's breath hanging round him like a pall.

Figure 4.1 An ideal and flawed arrangement of a child's sleeping quarters with respect to ventilation. Source: King (1919: 69).

would be 'indisposed to get out of bed' in the morning. Mabel Liddiard's (1934, 1954) *Mothercraft Manual* – 'a resume of the lectures and talks given' at the Mothercraft Training Society (1924: v) – also used photographic images to demonstrate the best location for a baby's cot (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). For Liddiard, the ideal place for a sleeping baby was in front of a window, preferably one which could open at the top and bottom. Here, the child would obtain 'all the air available' from the lower windows, whilst used air would be removed at the top; the child is 'secure from all draughts' by an 'enveloping blanket' (Figure 4.4), or 'sleeping bag', and by a screen placed next to the cot (Liddiard, 1924: 27).

Fresh air within the nursery was not only to be confined to the immediate area of a window, however; ideally, there was to be 'a current of fresh air passing through the room' (Liddiard, 1924: 33). Once outside air had entered the nursery, it was to leave the space via an open door, a window on an opposite wall, or a chimney (King, 1919, 1940), the presence of which was deemed a must for any room (Barwell, 1840, 1845; Chavasse, 1871; Horne, 1881). For example, Chavasse (1869: 52, original emphasis) argued that any architect who designed a room without a fireplace 'ought to be ashamed'. 'He [*sic*] is committing a grievous offence against health and is on point of fact nothing more than an *ignoramus*, totally unacquainted with the principles of his profession.' The nursery was also to contain the 'least possible amount of furniture' (Liddiard, 1924: 35) so as to allow for the 'free circulation of the air' (Chavasse, 1871: 128). Likewise, beds and cots were to be without any air-impeding curtains or drapes (Smiles, 1838; *Ward and Lock's Home Book*, c. 1880; Horne, 1881; Hewer, 1891, 1945; Allbut, 1897; Holt, 1907; King, 1934); a relatively simple wicker basket was considered perfect for a baby's cot or cradle, as it allowed for the '[e]scape of breath and access of fresh air unrestricted' (King, 1919: 70; also Asquith, 1923; Gibbens, 1940; Hewer, 1945) (see Figure 4.5).

Babies were to have their own cots, and, if possible, children, their own beds; if necessary, only siblings of a similar age and of the same sex were to share a bed, and no child of any age was permitted to sleep with their parents (Chavasse, 1871; Bowditch, 1890; Panton, 1893; Allbut, 1897; March, 1915; F. King, 1919, 1940; Scharlieb, 1926; Chaloner, 1929; Bennett and Isaacs, 1931; M. King, 1934). Besides concerns about children's innocence and the moral issues that such a practice invoked (Calvert, 1992a, 1992b, 2003), many authors stressed that babies and very young children were at 'considerable risk of suffocation' through their slipping under the

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*Figure 4.2* A cot in front of an open window. Note that the window is open at the top and at the bottom and the presence of a screen to protect against draughts. Source: Liddiard (1934: 33).

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*Figure 4.3* A cot in front of an open window. Source: Liddiard (1954: 34).

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*Figure 4.4* An illustration of ‘enveloping blanket’. Source: Liddiard (1924: 27).

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*Figure 4.5* An illustration of a basket cot and stand. Source: Liddiard (1924: 24).

bedclothes and parents’ overlying (Gibbens, 1940: 17; also Barwell, 1840; Bowditch, 1890; Hewer, 1891; King, 1934; Chavasse, 1939).<sup>14</sup> For example, arguing that ‘[f]rom the very first day of its life, a baby should have its own little bed, bassinette, or cradle’, Hewer (1891: 57) declared that ‘[t]his danger has been properly recognised in Germany ... [where] it is illegal for a young infant to sleep with an adult’. Moreover, in such situations, children would inhale the ‘toxic’ breath of their parents

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<sup>14</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, however, some had insisted that very young babies should sleep with their mothers or nurses from birth until they were at least two months old (Hardyment, 1983). For example, the surgeon Samuel Smiles (1838: 186) argued that such a practice was necessary because ‘the power of generating animal heat in infancy is considerably deficient’.

(Hewer, 1891, 1945; Allbut, 1897; F. King, 1919, 1940; Liddiard, 1924; M. King, 1934). For this reason, adults (whether parents or nurses) were usually advised not to sleep within the same rooms as children. However, if this was unavoidable, children were to sleep opposite adults, still in their own beds, and ‘a current of pure outside air [was to flow] ... between [them], so that the [child would] not re-breathe what its parents [had] used up and poisoned’ (King, 1919: 64-65) (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7). The nursery was also to sleep as few children as possible. Indeed, Bull (1877) and Hewer (1921) warned of the deadly consequences of ignoring such advice; Bull (1877: 91) claimed that ‘a canary bird, suspended at the top of a curtailed bedstead in which people have slept, [would] generally, owing to the impurity of the air, be found dead in the morning’, whilst Hewer (1921: 11) argued that ‘mortality [rose] steadily according to the number of people living in one room’. Children’s rooms were therefore to be arranged and of a size to procure the maximum cubic footage of air space per child. Calculated by multiplying the height, length and width of a room and then dividing by the number of occupants – usually three or a maximum of five, including the nurse – one thousand cubic feet of air per person was frequently recommended (Murphy, 1885; Morten, 1910; Hewer, 1921; Liddiard, 1924; Bennett and Isaacs, 1931).

As a rule, the room that children were to occupy at night, the night nursery, was to be separate from the space that was set aside for daytime activities, the day nursery (Braidwood, 1874; Squire, 1885; Ballin, 1902). A legacy of the previous apprehension of opening windows in children’s presence, this combination layout was initially designed to enable the air of one room to be changed whilst the other was out of use (Dendy, 1833; Barwell, 1840, 1845; Hewer, 1891). Despite subsequent developments that acknowledged the health benefits of fresh air and open windows, this two-room arrangement continued to represent the ideal nursery environment for child-rearing authorities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Indeed, standard practice had long dictated that when children awoke in the morning, they were to be removed from the night nursery – and therefore from any trace of their nocturnal exhalations – and placed into the day nursery, which would have been ‘charged’ with fresh air during the night (*Our Children, How to Rear and Train Them*, 1874; Allbut, 1897). Previously, the day nursery’s windows would have been shut at this moment and those of the night nursery, opened wide, only to be opened and closed again once the day and night nursery were unoccupied and occupied respectively. Although windows were now to remain open continuously, it was still considered inappropriate to

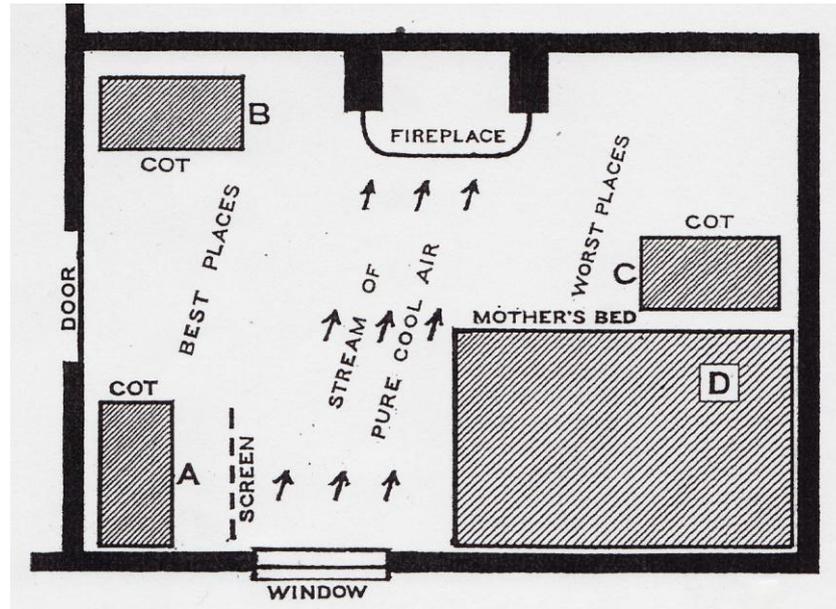


Figure 4.6 A plan of a bedroom for mother and child. 'The arrows show a broad stream of fresh air flowing across the room from the wide open window to the fire-place.' Note also the 'best' and 'worst' places to position a child in relation to the mother's bed. Source: King (1919: 65).

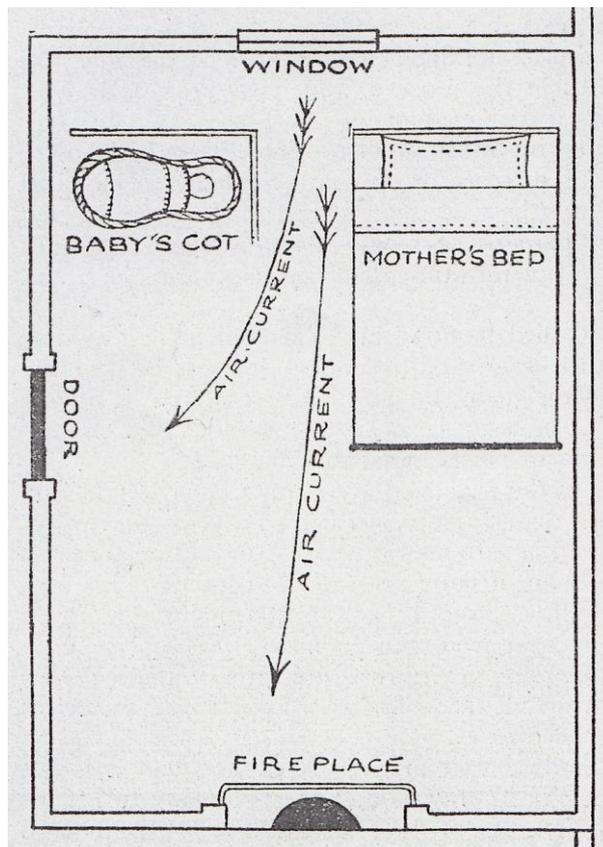


Figure 4.7 A diagram illustrating where to place a baby's cot in a mother's room. Source: *Motherhood Book* (1934: 96).

house, or ‘immure’, children in single rooms, as a change of both air and scene was desired (Squire, 1885; *Spon’s Household Manual*, 1887).

Guidance regarding the adequate airing, or ventilation, of the day nursery was near identical to that of the night nursery above. There was still to be ‘a current of fresh air passing through the room’ (Liddiard, 1924: 33), and children here were also to be protected from cold-inducing draughts. However, given the movement of children within the day nursery through play and other activities, such a task was more complex than at night when children were tucked up in bed. Because children’s daily activities were likely to take place on or close to the floor, any air that entered the room was to be directed upward and toward the ceiling; it was suggested that this could be achieved easily through a crude modification of the typical sash windows of the period (Allbut, 1897; Drummond, 1901; Stacpoole, 1910; *Glaxo Baby Book*, 1923; Scharlieb, 1926). Furthermore, any cracks or gaps in the floorboards were to be filled – a method also to keep dust and dirt out of the nursery – and curtains were to be fitted to all doors to prevent draughts (Ashby, 1898; Drummond, 1901; Ballin, 1902; Stacpoole, 1910; Asquith, 1923; *Glaxo Baby Book*, 1923; Scharlieb, 1926; Chavasse, 1939; Hewer, 1945). Nevertheless, despite the best efforts of parents and nurses, the room was still to be kept ‘comfortably warm’ (Jex-Blake, 1884: 43).

‘Though ventilation [was] a wholesome thing’ to be coveted, parents and nurses, as Chavasse (1939: 126) explained, were ‘not to fly in the opposite extreme’ and turn the nursery into an ‘ice house’. Indeed, the temperature within both the day and the night nursery was to be monitored regularly (Braidwood, 1874; Kugelmass, 1935). A thermometer was to be placed in each room, yet, given that ‘[o]verheated rooms [were believed to] render children *very* susceptible of disease’ (Braidwood, 1874: 57, original emphasis), there was little agreement amongst authors as to the ideal temperature to strive for. In general, most argued that the temperature of both rooms should not fall below 60 degrees Fahrenheit (about 15 degrees Celsius) and not exceed 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius) (Dendy, 1833; Horne, 1881; Allbut, 1897; Ashby, 1898; Holt, 1907; Gordon, 1909; Campbell, 1910; Chavasse, 1939; Gibbens, 1940). Some insisted upon somewhat cooler temperatures, however. For example, Muriel Wrinch (1924: 24) – whose *Mothers and Babies* devoted itself to ‘the development and training both of body and mind’ (xiii) – claimed that ‘[c]hildren [could] be accustomed to live in cold rooms if they [were] trained to do so from the beginnings’. According to Wrinch, the temperature of the nursery was not to rise

above 55 degrees Fahrenheit (13 degrees Celsius), even during the winter. Such an attitude was rare but rested on the belief that children would catch cold if they left a warm room for colder surroundings (*Ward and Lock's Home Book*, c. 1880). It might also have had its origins within the eighteenth-century theory of hardening, an idea, popularised by such eminent writers as Locke (1693) and Rousseau (1762), which maintained that children's vitality and survival chances would improve if they were exposed to such things as the cold and small amounts of pain; for instance, it was claimed that bathing children in cold water, dressing them lightly in wintry weather and allowing them the 'freedom to have accidents' would increase their resilience and toughen them up (Hardyment, 1983: 19; Holden, 2010). However, the majority of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers were no longer in favour of hardening. For example, a revised and updated edition of Chavasse's (1939: 126) *Advice to a Mother* stated that '[t]here is nothing so sad as to see little children standing or sitting about, all huddled-up and blue with cold'.

Despite an emphasis upon fresh air and open windows, most writers felt that it was 'foolish' (Chavasse, 1939: 72) to allow a child to occupy a room without a source of heat and argued that some kind of 'artificial aid' was required to ensure that a comfortable temperature prevailed (Jex-Blake, 1884: 43). Given that a chimney was a must for ventilation purposes, it followed that an open fire was the preferred means with which to heat a room. Though it produced dirt and 'extra work' for parents and nurses, and one was unable to switch them on or off instantly (Kennedy, 1935: 194), the traditional open fire, very much an institution within the home, was a trusted and well-established supplier of warmth and was almost always recommended over gas and electric heaters and the new technology of central heating (Gordon, 1909; Read, 1917; Wrinch, 1924; Kugelmass, 1935; for exceptions, however, see Scharlieb, 1926; Gibbens, 1940).

Gas, in particular, was viewed with derision and mistrust by many writers; there was widespread unanimity that children were to have as little exposure to gas as possible, and some declared that they were not to inhabit any room in which it was present (Bowditch, 1890; Panton, 1893, 1896). Such sentiments reflected a concern that the burning of gas consumed too much oxygen and polluted the atmosphere with 'poisonous carbonic acid' (Horne, 1881: 13; also Hewer, 1891; Gordon, 1909; Read, 1917); its strong and bitter smell also likely influenced the disdain of authors (Milan, 1999). Nevertheless, the poor quality of gas toward the end of the nineteenth century

was renowned. As Milan (1999: 90) observes, the gas in London was acknowledged as ‘the worst in Britain’ in the mid-1860s, and contemporary newspapers frequently complained about the blackening of ceilings, fumes that removed the gilding from picture frames and the poor condition of indoor plants. The result of a high sulphur content, the ‘impure’ nature of gas was widely regarded as ‘a disgrace to modern science and civilisation’ (Edis, 1881a: 277, cited in Milan, 1999: 91). It is therefore of little surprise that many writers urged for the avoidance of ‘that most pernicious gas’ (Panton, 1893: 199); for instance, Chavasse (1871: 113) considered gas to be ‘an abomination, most destructive to human life’. Gas lighting was also to have no place within the nursery as the ‘glitter’ and ‘glare’ of the burning flame was thought to be particularly harmful to children’s eyes (Panton, 1893: 199; also cited in Flanders, 2003: 31). Moreover, the burning of gas produced more heat than candles (Milan, 1999) and thus dried the atmosphere (Kennedy, 1935). As John Henry Walsh (1857: 133) noted in *A Manual of Domestic Economy*, ‘[O]rdinary gas-burners are each equal to from six to twelve candles, and that two or three of them are often burnt in a small room, it will readily be understood that a greater amount of light is employed than is required ... and great astonishment is expressed that the room is hot and oppressive’ (cited in Milan, 1999: 90). In addition, the use of gas for both heating and lighting ‘required a high level of consumer maintenance and knowledge’ compared to relatively simple open fires, candles and oil burners, which was often exacerbated by poor standards of installation (Milan, 1999: 92). According to Milan (1999), appliances were often fitted by untrained plumbers and gas regularly leaked into the ground from poorly laid pipes, causing basements to become unusable and unfit for human habitation owing to the presence of noxious fumes and the risk of explosions.<sup>15</sup>

The location of the nursery within the home was therefore a key consideration. Besides the issue of gas, basement rooms were to be avoided because they were also considered ‘too damp to be healthy’ owing to their close proximity to water supplies and drains (Ballin, 1902: 18).<sup>16</sup> Nurseries were to be situated high up at the top of the

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<sup>15</sup> The gas-polluted air of many cities in the late nineteenth century (Milan, 1999) was perhaps behind Doctor Laing Gordon’s (1909: 74) argument that ‘[t]he proper place for the rearing of all children and young people is the country’.

<sup>16</sup> The contents of waste water pipes and sewer gas were such a concern that it was recommended that all plumbed facilities in or close to the nursery were ‘disconnected from the main drain’ of the house (Ballin, 1902: 21; also Drummond, 1901). For example, Hewer (1891: 60) warned that ‘[u]ntrapped or improperly trapped pipes are a very fertile source of illness, often causing diarrhoea, sore throat, diphtheria [and] low fever’.

house (*Ward and Lock's Home Book*, c. 1880; *Spon's Household Manual*, 1887; Hewer, 1891, 1921, 1945; Panton, 1893; Wrinch, 1924; Chavasse, 1939), for it was widely accepted that 'the higher one [went], the more chance one [had] of imbibing pure air' (Panton, 1896: 77). As Jane Ellen Panton (1893: 191) noted in *From Kitchen to Garret*, 'Pass along any of our most fashionable squares and thoroughfares, and look up at the windows. Where are the necessary bars placed that denote the nurseries? Why, at the highest windows of all.' Here, not only were children able to be kept 'from the vicinity of drains of water pipes' and from 'any manufactories where steam, fires, or noxious gases [were] produced' (Dendy, 1833: 49), but they were also able to obtain another 'essential to child life', that of sunlight (Campbell, 1910: 50). Indeed, sunshine had long been recognised as 'a growth-promoting and purifying agent' (Bowditch, 1890: 98). For example, Chavasse (1871: 117) declared that '[a] child requires as much light as a plant', whilst fellow physician Bull (1877: 95) similarly testified that 'light ... materially influence[s] development and health in man' and that 'children deprived of its wholesome and gentle stimulus grow up pale, sickly and deformed'. The discovery that ultra-violet rays enhanced vitamin D levels in the 1920s ensured that such viewpoints remained resolute, and it contributed to the popularisation of the 'sunbath', a practice whereby young children were undressed and placed in direct sunlight, either by an open window or in the garden, to soak up the sun (Hewer, 1945; Hardyment, 1983) (see Figure 4.8). The day nursery was therefore to be 'the sunniest room in the house' (Owen, 1935: 371); it was to 'have a southerly or westerly aspect' (Bull, 1877: 94) 'for the sake of catching the sun's rays to the fullest extent' (*Spon's Household Manual*, 1887: 746), and nothing was to obstruct their infiltration. Mason (1905: 35), for instance, suggested that parents should remove 'trees and outbuildings' that blocked the sun's path into the nursery.

### Identifying the Cause of Illness

As Berner (1998: 323) observes, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was also witness to 'a new kind of sensitivity [with regard to] new dangers discovered by natural science'. Formulated and developed between the 1850s and 1880s (McClary, 1980), the germ theory of disease transformed contemporary attitudes toward personal hygiene and domestic cleanliness (Hoy, 1995; Horsfield, 1997). A result of the pioneering work of such eminent figures as Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch and John Tyn-

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*Figure 4.8* An illustration of a baby having a sunbath in the garden. Note that the baby's head is in the shade. Source: Hewer (1945: 79).

dall, the realisation that newly discovered microbes were behind some of the most deadly and unpleasant illnesses of the day (Tomes, 1998) formed the foundation for 'medico-scientific arguments' that a clean and sanitary home was the first and most important defence against disease and ill health (Berner, 1998: 315).

Before the discovery of microorganisms or 'disease vectors', the root cause of disease lay within 'humors and miasmas of contaminated air' (Amato, 2000: 70). As McClary (1980: 33) explains, 'The miasma theory of disease had attributed sickness to noxious gases which arose from decaying organic matter such as [that] produced by swamps and human refuse.' For example, and as Amato (2000: 70-71) also notes, Edwin Chadwick's (1965 [1842]) 'influential' *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, published shortly before subsequent scientific developments, argued that bad smells and illness were inherently related. Although many within the medical profession were initially sceptical about the new thesis, unconvinced by its claims and the scientific worthiness of its supporting evidence, the theory that germs were responsible for the spread of disease had largely replaced the 'zymotic', or miasma-based, explanation as the accepted cause of illness by the turn of the twentieth century (Tomes, 1998: 27).<sup>17</sup>

The discovery that bacteria act as 'agents of infection' led to the 'more modern understanding [that] diseases are transmitted by casual contact, food and water contamination, insect vectors, and healthy human carriers' (Tomes, 1998: 6). Such in-

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<sup>17</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the development of the germ theory and a detailed commentary of the debates and discussions that accompanied its hypothesising, see McClary (1980) and Tomes (1998).

sights spurred a range of practices and preventative initiatives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that focused upon ‘the channels of disease transmission’ (Woersdorfer, 2010: 56) and which formed the basis for new and improved sewage systems, the public provision of clean water, expanded public health services and ‘the reformation of individual and household hygiene’ (Tomes, 1998: 6). Indeed, once the germ theory had entered into public consciousness, improving sanitation and levels of hygiene, in both the public and private sphere, ‘became one of the major pillars in the fight against disease’ (Woersdorfer, 2010: 56). Because illness was now caused by ‘a concrete enemy’ (Tomes, 1998: 7), individuals ‘no longer [had to] grope after some mysterious, intangible thing’ lurking in the atmosphere (Prudden, 1890: 93-94, cited in Tomes, 1998: 7). The tracing of disease to another life form, and the realisation that it spread from person to person through human activity, essentially demonstrated the existence of a controllable entity (Tomes, 1998). Quoting a late-nineteenth-century magazine article (Edson, 1895), McClary (1980: 41) argues that individuals were to ‘prepare for a continuing “fight with these little enemies”’ and that ‘[a] constant war was waged between body and germ’. As he observes, however, the fact that germs were alive led to the anxiety that they might be ‘opportunistic and aggressive’ and ‘out to get us’ (McClary, 1980: 41); this was also likely compounded by their invisibility. For example, many popular magazines and periodicals declared that ‘[t]he hostile microbe [was] in fact everywhere’ (Capitan, 1895) and that it was ‘ever ready to step in and take possession of the body’ (Cromie, 1916: 33, both cited in McClary, 1980: 41).

Early interpreters of the germ theory believed that germs were to be found lurking within miasmatic gases (McClary, 1980). Absorbing the new theory of disease into the already-established atmospheric explanation, many in the 1880s and 1890s associated dampness and decay with germs; for example, some doctors claimed that putrid air and rotting material were breeding grounds for germs (McClary, 1980), whilst others were concerned that ‘microbes were so light that they might rise up from damp soil or sewers’ (Tomes, 1998: 95). Moreover, household washing and toilet facilities became ‘portals for dangerous bacteria-laden “sewer gas”’, contributing to ‘an obsessive concern with domestic plumbing and ventilation’ (Tomes, 1998: 8) and to the general rule that nurseries were to be located in a high-up position away from damp basements. Although bacteriology would later focus attention upon the spread of germs through saliva and other human practices, the concern with ‘house diseases’

remained at the turn of the twentieth century, for it was subsequently discovered that house dust harboured bacteria (Tomes, 1998: 8). As Tomes (1998: 9) notes, the discovery that the tubercle bacillus was present within ordinary house dust meant that ‘ridding the home of that dust became a fundamental tenet of tuberculosis prevention’.<sup>18</sup> For example, quoting a ‘Doctor Osler’, M. Adelaide Nutting (1904: 920-921), a nurse and principal of the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School for Nurses, argued that ‘tuberculosis is a home problem’ and that its ‘battlefield is not in hospitals nor in sanatoria, but in homes where it is born and bred’. Dust therefore became a ‘visible sign of invisible dangers’ (Berner, 1998: 323), and household objects, floors and wall surfaces were rendered potential havens where hazardous germs might settle. Besides the concern with ventilation and plumbing, domestic sanitation now involved questions of aesthetics and architecture and had become bound up with interior design (Cleere, 2005). Dust and dirt had no place within the home, and their presence reflected ‘a failure of control over the environment’ (Fine and Hallett, 2003: 3-4). Nowhere was this more true than in the spaces occupied by children; as Doctor Laing Gordon (1909: 210) warned, ‘[I]f it be acknowledged that dust and dirt foster disease, there can be no excuse for their existence in the nursery.’<sup>19</sup>

### Sanitary Aesthetics

I shall never forget if I live to be a hundred years old a couple of nurseries in a house I once took furnished, and which had to be completely turned out, cleaned, and repapered before I could allow anyone to enter them. ... The atmosphere was so impregnated [with dirt] ... that one night spent there gave me a sore throat and brought out the whole of the inside of my mouth in spots. ... Yet three or four little children had had no other sleeping room for four or five years, and I was not astonished to learn that the doctor ... had a very intimate acquaintance with their constitutions.

(Panton, 1896: 77-78)

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<sup>18</sup> It was only realised in the mid-1910s that dust germs pose little risk of infection (Tomes, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> The upper and middle classes already recognised the importance of personal and domestic hygiene, however, for, before the formulation and dissemination of the germ theory, cleanliness had long been a moral imperative (Fine and Hallett, 2003; Woersdorfer, 2010). As Fine and Hallett (2003: 4) observe, ‘Being clean was equivalent to being pure.’ Dirt was a sign of depravity (Fine and Hallett, 2003) and had long been considered ‘a threat to the foundation of society’ (Berner, 1998: 314). An unclean house signalled disorder and chaos, and ‘[k]eeping things clean and orderly was a matter of avoiding social and moral ruin’ (Berner, 1998: 316).

For child-rearing manuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, nursery cleanliness was of ‘paramount importance’ (Jex-Blake, 1884: 47). Following the theory that house dust constituted ‘a serious source of infection’ (Tomes, 1998: 98), the battle against dust, dirt and the ‘invisible foes’ hiding within rested upon a combination of sanitary aesthetics and habits (Amato, 2000: 103). As Cleere (2005: 134) argues, the germ theory rendered ‘the impenetrable Victorian home ... an anxious fantasy rather than a predictable ideological construct’. The home was to serve as a sanctuary, or refuge, from the dangers of the outside world, yet the revelation that the threat from dust and germs originated indoors instigated a wholesale shift in the aesthetic and decorative philosophy of the domestic interior (Tomes, 1998; Cleere, 2005). The fomite theory of infection – the idea that objects could harbour dangerous germs for long periods (McClary, 1980; Tomes, 1998) – turned concern toward busy architecture and overdecoration, with plush fabrics, elaborate mouldings and delicate furniture a central focus of this new ‘pollution anxiety’ (Cleere, 2005: 135). Now considered ‘dust traps’ and breeding grounds for germs and bacteria, such decoration was rejected by design and child-rearing authorities in favour of ‘simpler interiors designed to improve the process of cleaning’ (Dethier, 1993: 256). For example, in a lecture entitled ‘On Sanitation in Decoration’, the architect Robert Edis (1881b: 324) declared that ‘simplicity and utility should take the place of excessive ornamentation’ and that ‘[e]verything in the House should be ... so arranged that [it] may be cleaned with as little labour or trouble as possible’. For Edis, ‘There [was] no reason why we should convert our homes into pest houses by a style of furnishing which renders accumulations of filth not only likely but positively inevitable’ (cited in Cleere, 2005: 139). As such, the creation of a sanitary, and therefore healthy, home depended upon the eradication of ‘architectural nooks [and] decorative crannies’ (Cleere, 2005: 139) and upon the introduction of new non-porous materials, dirt-resistant surfaces and rounded edges (Amato, 2000); in essence, all ‘unnecessary dust spaces [were to] be carefully avoided’ (Edis, 1881b: 324, cited in Cleere, 2005: 139). For the decoration and furnishing of the nursery, this was to translate into a clinical world of disinfection. With the removal of superfluous bric-a-brac and other non-essential dust-settling and germ-harboring objects, the sanitary nursery was to be formed around new routines, novel solutions and newly created consumer products; the result was a room that was easier for parents or nurses to keep clean and a space where dirt was less likely to col-

lect and fester (Amato, 2000). Indeed, the nursery was ideally to be ‘washable from floor to ceiling’ (Chaloner, 1929: 40), and ‘[n]othing that [would] not wash ... [or which could not] be easily moved to allow [for a] thorough cleaning’ was to be admitted into the space (Campbell, 1910: 52).

Given that the daily activities of children were likely to take place on or near to the floor, the hygienic quality of the nursery’s flooring was a key consideration for parents. For example, within *The Child at Home* – a delightful volume in which the author draws upon her own childhood reminiscences – Cynthia Asquith (1923: 30) argued that ‘[s]ince children literally bite the dust, the crawled-over floor must come up to hospital standards of cleanliness’. To realise such an objective, child-rearing and design authorities felt that fitted carpets in the nursery should be exchanged for more-sanitary alternatives (Chavasse, 1871, 1939; Jex-Blake, 1884; Campbell, 1910; Read, 1917; Wrinch, 1924; Kugelmass, 1935). At a time when the vacuum cleaner was still an invention in its infancy (see Amato, 2000), the carpet was particularly difficult to keep clean (Campbell, 1910). An item of style and colour, as well as a symbol of fashion and expense, the carpet had been an important feature and fixture of the home for much of the nineteenth century (Leavitt, 2002). However, as the germ theory of disease advanced, and as scientists hypothesised that dust could provide a hiding place for disease-causing agents, carpets were increasingly seen as containers of filth and ‘pockets of putrescence’ (Cleere, 2005: 140). Believed to hold on to the dirt, soot and general debris of everyday life, and ‘so easily soiled from the various accidents of infancy and child play’ (Campbell, 1910: 50), carpets within nurseries were soon labelled ‘abominations’, ‘dust and dirt receivers’, and ‘a source of constant danger to the health of the child’ (Chavasse, 1939: 130). Short of the inconvenience of taking up a carpet at regular intervals for an outside beating (Jex-Blake, 1884), removing the dust and dirt lodged within its fibres was tricky. As Tomes (1998) observes, whilst it was stated that ventilation and open windows would cleanse the air and reduce the amount of dust floating within the atmosphere, it was reported that such action would have little impact upon dust-saturated material. Indeed, dust and dirt fragments were thought to penetrate deep into carpets and filter through to the floor below (Leavitt, 2002). ‘Dry sweeping’ was also not to be recommended, for this was said to create dangerous clouds of dust and germs (Tomes, 1998) (see Figure 4.9).

The initial solution to problematic carpeting was a hard, stained wooden floor (Squire, 1885; *Spon’s Household Manual*, 1887; Panton, 1893; Campbell, 1910;

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*Figure 4.9* The deadly consequences of germs as depicted in a cartoon from *Puck* (8th August 1900). Source: Tomes (1998: front cover).

Read, 1917; Chavasse, 1939); for those ‘[t]ender-hearted mothers [who] prefer[red] the idea of a pile carpet to soften tumbles’ (Asquith, 1923: 30), rugs that could be taken outside and ‘shaken frequently’ were offered as equally comfortable substitutes (Campbell, 1910: 50). Such an arrangement created a space that could be kept clean with a minimum of effort. Leading to the inception of new cleaning routines, the wooden floor was generally to be ‘wiped every day with a damp cloth to take up all the dust’ (Panton, 1893: 195) and be washed with soapy water once a week (Chavasse, 1871, 1939; *Our Children, How to Rear and Train Them*, 1874; Drummond, 1901). However, children were to be kept out of rooms when the floor was damp, for the ‘wetting of a nursery [was believed to be] a frequent source of illness’ (Chavasse, 1871: 115, original emphasis). For example, *Ward and Lock’s Home Book* (c. 1880: 436) – a ‘domestic encyclopaedia’ and ‘companion volume’ to Mrs Beeton’s famous and popular *Book of Household Management* – warned that ‘the good done [by cleaning] is sometimes entirely marred by the harm that follows’. Such sentiments were perhaps related to issues that derived from the washing of wooden floors that were unstained. The varnishing and staining of the floor was a necessity because it ren-

dered the wood impermeable to liquid and sealed any gaps between the floorboards. In order to wash a traditional wooden floor, one could not simply wipe it with a damp cloth; the rough nature of the wood ensured that it had to be scrubbed with a brush. Moreover, natural boards absorbed the liquid, and the gaps between allowed the dirty water to soak through to the double flooring below (Berner, 1998); once there, it was said to rot and become a source for bad smells and ‘disease-causing fungi’ (Norden, 1913: 53, cited in Berner, 1998: 327). Indeed, as Berner (1998: 327) notes, Swedish doctor J.E. Bergwall (1904: 31) argued that ‘[t]he spaces between the floor boards form little swamps in miniature ... where all bacteria ... find the most excellent of hiding places, and where they much longer than elsewhere can stay alive and poisonous’. Stained floors therefore not only abolished the labour-intensive process of scrubbing and the decay of dirt water and musty smells from the nursery (Berner, 1998), but they could also be made to look immaculate with a little effort, especially if one were to invest in beeswax and turpentine polish (Panton, 1893; Morton, 1910).

In addition to varnished wood, linoleum and cork were presented as alternative floor coverings for nurseries. Revolutionary and relatively new materials born of late-nineteenth-century developments in synthetics and the production process (Simpson, 1997; Amato, 2000), both formed the floor surface of choice for many child-rearing manuals (for example, *Ward and Lock’s Home Book*, c. 1880; Hewer, 1891, 1921, 1945; Ballin, 1902; Cradock, 1909; Brockbank, 1912; Wrinch, 1924; Chaloner, 1929; Kennedy, 1935; Gibbens, 1940).<sup>20</sup> Like varnished floors, they were simple to clean, non-absorbent (Simpson, 1997; Leavitt, 2002) and could be ‘washed with carbolic soap and water once a week’ (Ballin, 1902: 19). According to Simpson (1997), linoleum was also marketed as an antibacterial material, a claim that originated from scientific studies which suggested that a germ-killing gas was produced when linseed oil (the main ingredient of linoleum) reacted with oxygen. Beyond their sanitary qualities, however, linoleum and cork were resilient and durable, easy to lay and affordable (Simpson, 1997); both were able to keep their good appearance with ease (Leavitt, 2002) and offered a comfortable alternative to hard, cold wooden floors. For children who, in the opinion of Wrinch (1924: 148), were to be ‘barefoot as much as possible’, these new surfaces were ‘warm to bare feet’ and, as *Ward and Lock’s Home Book* (c. 1880: 435) noted, ‘soft and pleasant to the tread’. Furthermore, they created a supple,

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<sup>20</sup> For a comprehensive history of linoleum, see Simpson (1997).

or spongy, floor surface that not only absorbed the knocks and tumbles of nursery life, but also ‘the shock of footsteps’ (Simpson, 1997: 286), thus preventing Pantou’s (1893: 190) ‘china [from being] shaken to its very foundations, by little feet rushing and jumping overhead’.

Key to the nursery’s attractiveness and overall look (Kevill-Davies, 1991), wall decoration was considered by many to play an important role in the cultivation of a child’s taste and mind (Hardyment, 1983). However, before deliberating upon any intellectual or character-building effects, parents were first to reflect upon the sanitary qualities of the objects that they pasted or hung on to the walls of their children’s rooms. Indeed, authors stressed that dust and dirt not only settled upon floors, but that they could also cling to vertical surfaces and wall hangings (McClary, 1980). Wallpaper, in particular, was condemned as ‘deleterious to bodily health’ (Edis, 1883: 313, cited in Cleere, 2005: 138-139). Although the use of wallpaper throughout the home was more and more frequent in the latter years of the nineteenth century (see Jennings, 1996), its germ- and ‘disease-bearing properties’ were increasingly highlighted as the germ theory developed; for example, in common with other paper products, it was revealed that bacteria could be cultured from its surface (Tomes, 1998: 105). Like the carpet, the uneven surface and texture of wallpaper was believed to catch and lodge dust, germs and other impurities (*Spon’s Household Manual*, 1887; Drummond, 1901; Ballin, 1902; Wrinch, 1924; Chavasse, 1939). Sanitary alternatives were therefore to be smooth and washable, and consensus followed that walls were either to be covered with a water-based paint and then varnished, painted with distemper – a type of paint with ‘a base of glue or size instead of oil’ (Soanes and Stevenson, 2006b: 416) – or ‘hung with a glazed paper’, all of which could be sponged or ‘washed with soap and water’ (Jex-Blake, 1884: 47; also Murray, 1844; Squire, 1885; *Spon’s Household Manual*, 1887; Hewer, 1891, 1945; Ashby, 1898; Drummond, 1901; Ballin, 1902; Cradock, 1909; Read, 1917; Asquith, 1923; Wrinch, 1924; Scharlieb, 1926; Chaloner, 1929; Chavasse, 1939; Gibbens, 1940).

Ready-mixed wall paints were first sold commercially from the late 1860s (Amato, 2000), and by the early to mid-1920s many manufacturers were emphasising the anti-germ properties of their products (Tomes, 1998). In the United States, for example, as Tomes (1998: 167) observes, the Carbola Chemical Company created a whitewash labelled a ‘disinfectant that paints’, whilst the Du Pont Company similarly produced an oil-based paint which it claimed was antibacterial. According to paint

makers, '[D]isease [had] few enemies more powerful than the paint brush' (Paint Manufacturers' Association, quoted in Tomes, 1998: 167). Nevertheless, given that many paints of the period contained lead (Kevill-Davies, 1991), such a statement was quite inaccurate, and child-rearing manuals often advised against the use of leaded paint within the nursery (Drummond, 1901). Glazed wallpaper did not suffer from such an issue, however, and was further recommended over normal wallpaper because it was free from unsafe colour pigments and dyes (Ballin, 1902). As an additional argument against the hanging of standard wallpaper, Chavasse (1871: 115, original emphasis) described how 'four children in one family [had] just lost their lives from sucking green paper-hangings' (also cited in Kevill-Davies, 1991: 131); he warned, 'Do not have your nursery walls covered with *green* paper-hangings ... [as they] contain large quantities of arsenic ... which, I need scarcely to say, is a virulent poison, and which flies about the room in the form of powder.'

Whether painted or adorned with varnished paper, the walls of the nursery were generally to be of a light and soft colour, and ceilings were to be whitewashed (Panton, 1893; Chavasse, 1939). With the admittance of light through clean windows (Chavasse, 1871), such a scheme either rendered rooms visibly clean or highlighted 'pitilessly dust and other materials in themselves inimical to good health' (Nutting, 1904: 918).<sup>21</sup> Though walls were to be decorated with 'pictures and anything that [was] pretty and instructive', objects were to be 'so placed that they [were] readily moveable and easily dusted' (Chavasse, 1871: 130), and they were 'not [to] be too good to be destroyed' if and when the nursery needed to be disinfected (Drummond, 1901: 26). 'Nothing of a heavy nature ... [was therefore to] be hung upon the walls' (Bowditch, 1890: 99),<sup>22</sup> but it was also believed that smaller items were 'apt to escape [a proper] dusting' (Scharlieb, 1926: 35). For ease of cleaning, all nursery objects were to be smooth, washable and have no dust-collecting crevices, and, for similar reasons, curtains and upholstery were to be emitted, for, like carpets, textiles and fabrics were thought to trap and retain large quantities of dust (Holt, 1907, Campbell, 1910; Bennett and Isaacs, 1931; Kugelmass, 1935). For the most part, nursery furniture was to be of a plain and simple design, un-upholstered and wooden, light enough

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<sup>21</sup> According to Jane Ellen Panton (1893), nursery ceilings were to be whitewashed each spring or, at the very least, every two years.

<sup>22</sup> As Mrs Bowditch (1890: 99) highlighted, '[T]here is always the chance of such things falling on little heads and doing irremediable damage.'

‘to be pulled out frequently for [cleaning] purposes’ (Barnett, 1922: 90; *cf.* Asquith, 1923: 28), and limited and ‘scanty’ in number (Chavasse, 1939: 71), thus following the mantra that ‘[n]othing unnecessary should be put in the nursery’ (Wrinch, 1924: 149). Indeed, Asquith (1923: 28) bemoaned households who used ‘the nursery as a sort of lumber room to the whole establishment’.

Photographs not to be tolerated anywhere else, but the destruction of which sentiment forbids, are hung in close formation on its walls. Trophies of sport – bazaar bargains – the worst wedding presents – everything too ugly for the drawing room but in too good condition for the rummage sale, ‘can go into the nursery.’<sup>23</sup>

As the object is to have the maximum of open space and the minimum of dust-harboured objects, the nursery should be the very last of all rooms to shelter anything not purposely intended for its improvement.

### **Cultivating the Mind**

Besides the concern with children’s physical health and bodily welfare, child-rearing manuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century focused upon the mental and intellectual development of children. With an emphasis upon the formation of character, appropriate behaviour, temperament and moral outlook, manuals very much reflected contemporary scientific interest in the development of children’s minds. A reaction to Darwin’s (1859) *On the Origin of Species*, scientific studies in the late nineteenth century increasingly sought to understand how children’s minds worked, for it was hypothesised that they might ‘cast light upon the nature of human evolution’ and ‘reveal the extent to which human emotions and expressions were inborn or learned’ (Rose, 1990: 141). Though the response to Darwin’s revolutionary thesis was initially negative, with many concluding that children were little more than savage apes (Hardyment, 1983), it was suggested that focusing upon ‘the beginnings of a human mind, the first dim stages in the development of man’s god-like reason’, might

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<sup>23</sup> For some, however, the preoccupation with cleanliness and hygiene had destroyed the cosy and relaxed atmosphere of the nursery. For example, Marion Harland (1886: 15) argued that ‘[t]he march of sanitary aesthetics has swept away the stock nursery-picture of the young mother plying her needle by the evening lamp, her foot on the rocker, a lullaby on her lips’ (also cited in Hardyment, 1983: 96).

show how the race had become civilised and more human than animal (Sully, 1895, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 101). As more and more studies (both scientific and amateur) observed children (see Riley, 1983) and noted how their speech, emotions and movement developed (Rose, 1990; for example, see Darwin, 1877; Taine, 1877; Harrison, 1891; Shinn, 1893; Sully, 1895; Hogan, 1898), it was realised that children essentially evolved out of barbarity and that nurture and upbringing were key factors in this process (Hardyment, 1983). Earlier and more negative notions of heredity, in which ‘Nature [was considered] implacably stronger than Nurture’ (see Galton, 1876), were subsequently rejected in favour of the understanding that ‘[i]n instinctive acts were gradually replaced by habits acquired anew’ (Hardyment, 1983: 102). From this perspective, parents were now ‘evolutionists’ (Campbell, 1910, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 103) and responsible for steering their children toward humanity, whilst the young were malleable, pliable and ‘like clay in the hand of the potter’ (Drummond, 1901, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 102). According to William B. Drummond (1901), a child was ‘to be moulded day by day, by the habits, the tastes, the passions, [and] the ideals of those among whom he [*sic*] lives’ (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 102). Speaking to parents, and mothers in particular, Helen Campbell (1910) argued that ‘[t]he clay is moist and soft, now make haste and form the pitcher, for the wheels turn fast’ (cited in Hardyment, 1983: 103).

### Sowing the Seeds

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

(Proverbs 22:6, cited in Hardyment, 1983: 148-149)<sup>24</sup>

The process of training up, educating or civilising a child was to principally take place within the nursery. Child-rearing manuals routinely encouraged parents to ‘look upon the nursery as a lesson-ground where good seed can be sown’ (Panton, 1893: 207). Considered a space of nurture, the room was said to have a significant influence upon a child’s mental, moral and intellectual development. Children’s surroundings were particularly important, for it was widely held that ‘[t]he first lessons [were] ... taught through the eyes’ (Panton, 1896: 61) and that ‘[i]mpressions made in the early years of life [were] the most lasting’ (Cradock, 1909: 52). Urging parents to recognise this

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<sup>24</sup> As Hardyment (1983) observes, this proverb was often used to introduce child-rearing manuals.

trait and to take heed, authors called for nurseries to be carefully planned, thought through and organised, for aesthetics, decoration and general objects furnished not only the room, but also the child's mind. The formation of taste was a key concern; as Cradock (1909: 10-11) stressed, '[I]f we want [children] to love and admire beautiful things, we must see that their taste is not spoilt in their most impressionable years by letting their eyes become familiar with things that are ugly or vulgar.' Beauty and simplicity thus formed the keystone of the nursery environment (Panton, 1893; Kennedy, 1935) and were believed to lie at the foundation of the development of character and the individual. According to Fanny Montgomery (1883: 169), 'The peculiarities of a man's [*sic*] character [were] generally the lights and shadows cast upon his mind by the influences and impressions of his early home.' The early reception of such ideals was critical, for they were also said to impact upon a child's future career path and general life success. One was therefore not to underestimate the importance of a child's early surroundings for the effects that they might have upon his or her mind and life prospects.

Most men can trace their choice of a profession, or their acquirement of the one particular art to which their life has been devoted, or in which their energies have been engrossed, to some apparently trivial accident in the character of the home where they passed their childhood, or the bias given to them by the objects around them there.

(Montgomery, 1883: 169-170)<sup>25</sup>

### Aesthetic Influences

Women were primarily responsible for the decoration of the home in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Jennings, 1996). As a wife, a woman was to oversee the embellishment of household space and, as a mother, was to ensure that her children's nursery was suitably attired. Given that 'the interior design of the home refined the inhabitants when done well and vulgarized them when done poorly' (McClagherty, 1983: 6), the decoration of the nursery, in particular, invoked a moral imperative. Because even the most 'subtle and unimagined influences' were believed

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<sup>25</sup> Montgomery (1883: 180-181) also claimed that 'the remedy [to the] great and fearful evils [of socialism and communism lay within] the narrow circle of childhood's home'.

to have shaped ‘the men who mould the state’, the aesthetics of the nursery were far from ‘trivial’ and called for a mother’s serious consideration and attention (Spofford, 1878: 232, cited in McClaugherty, 1983: 6; Montgomery, 1883; Smiles, 1885).

The colour of the nursery’s walls required considerable thought. Emphasising the importance of colour, the advice of child-rearing manuals reflected the ‘color preferences and prejudices’ of authors, as well as theories regarding the emotional effects of colour (May, 1993: 19).<sup>26</sup> Following the idea that colour impacted upon an individual’s psychological state (Jennings, 1996), and the belief that ‘walls set the atmosphere of a room’ (McClaugherty, 1983: 10), nurseries were to be daubed in bright, cheerful and uplifting tones, for these were thought to inspire happiness and delight within children (Chavasse, 1871; Squire, 1885; Panton, 1896; Kennedy, 1935). According to Candace Wheeler (1893: 7-8), an influential American designer of interiors and textiles (Peck, 2004), colour was either ‘the beneficent angel or the malicious devil’. As she explained, ‘Properly understood and successfully entreated, it is the most powerful mental influence of the home; but if totally disregarded or ignorantly dealt with, it is able to introduce an element of unrest ... [and] stir up anger and malice’ (cited in Jennings, 1996: 256). The interior decorator Elsie de Wolfe (1914: 71) similarly observed that ‘[n]owadays, we must consider the effect of color on our nerves, our eyes, our moods, everything’.

Harmony of colour and attractive schemes were therefore ultimately desired for the nursery (Read, 1917; Kennedy, 1935). For Mrs Pepler (1905), for example, nature provided the model paint box. Describing an early evening scene ‘sitting on a breakwater at Seaford’, she outlined the ‘beautiful colours on the silent land and never silent sea ... that [a] little one [was to grow] up with’ and the natural shades which would ensure that a child’s ‘mind [was] more open to heaven’.

[T]he chalk cliff, with its occasional yellow colouring where earth has washed down over it, catches the wonderful lightings from the setting sun behind me, the base is washed by a blue reflecting sea, the green grass shows in places on its crest [and] in the distance the darkening east fades into night through a soft shade of purple mist.

(Pepler, 1905: 19)

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<sup>26</sup> For an account of the effects of decoration upon emotions, see Charlotte Gilman’s (1892) fictional novel *The Yellow Wall Paper*.

The colours of nature, it seemed, were ‘made to accord with [the] eye as the air does with [the] lungs’ (Smith, 1887: 172, cited in McClaugherty, 1983: 14). Across a wide range of child-rearing manuals, walls were to be painted or papered in soft, neutral and natural tones of ‘sea green or pale pink’ (Scharlieb, 1926: 32), ‘dove grey’, light blue or primrose (*Motherhood Book*, 1934: 93; also Wrinch, 1924; Bennett and Isaacs, 1931; Kennedy, 1935; Chavasse, 1939). However, a nursery’s colour scheme was dependent upon the situation, or aspect, of the room and its primary usage. For instance, greens, greys and blues were considered ‘conducive to rest’ and suitable for the night nursery, whilst pinks or yellows were ideal for ‘dully situated’, or darker, rooms (*Motherhood Book*, 1934: 93). Reinforcing the idea that the nursery was to be ‘the sunniest room in the house’ (Owen, 1935: 371), Asquith (1923: 32) claimed that ‘[t]he right shade of yellow ... [produced] the effect of bottled sunshine’. Moreover, dark and ‘violent’ colours were to be avoided (*Motherhood Book*, 1934: 93); for example, Mary Read (1917: 268) argued that red was ‘too stimulating’ and that violet was ‘oppressive’. Furthermore, white walls were held to be bare, dull and cold (May, 1993), and easily soiled (Kennedy, 1935), and the ‘glaring effect’ of white was believed to have ‘a deleterious effect on children’s eyes’ (*Motherhood Book*, 1934: 93; also Hewer, 1945).

Though many authors advised that walls be painted for reasons of cleanliness, for those who endorsed (sanitary) wallpaper, the pattern was also a key consideration. In the night nursery and sleeping rooms, for example, ‘strongly defined forms’ and motifs were particularly discouraged and were thought to effect nightmares (*Spon’s Household Manual*, 1887: 102). As Chavasse (1939: 129) argued, ‘Do not have outrageous patterns or drawings of gaudy wild flowers or large animals ... [in the] night nursery, where a flickering night-light or fire might so transform the figures that they cause terror to a feverish or nervous child.’ In both the day and the night nursery, walls were ideally to fade into the background, and wallpaper patterns were to be ‘scarcely perceptible’ (Panton, 1893: 195; Wrinch, 1924). Like in other rooms of the house, ‘The pattern was to be discernible only upon close inspection and blend into a shimmer from a distance’ (McClaugherty, 1983: 10). Indeed, this quality was reflected within the many nursery-based wallpapers of the period. Often decorated with characters and illustrations inspired from children’s story books, fairy tales and nursery rhymes, and sometimes educational or instructional in nature, wallpapers were

typically made up of several core images which were absorbed, or lost, within a mass of secondary shapes and patterns (White, 1984). As White (1984) and Kevill-Davies (1991) observe, the respective designs of Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway – both renowned illustrators of children’s books – are perhaps some of the best-known and most celebrated nursery wallpapers of the period (see Figures 4.10; 4.11; 4.12).<sup>27</sup>

Wallpaper friezes and nursery pictures were to support intellectual and moral development and ‘aid in training a child’s artistic taste’ (Campbell, 1910: 51). As objects of ‘silent teaching’, images were to be ‘carefully selected for the lesson or pleasant story’ that they told and be positioned in order that children could see them (Panton, 1893: 208).<sup>28</sup> Panton (1896: 65), for example, argued that ‘pictures are [as a rule] hung much too high, and a child scarcely can see that which should be looked upon in the light of absolute necessities’. Because ‘first impressions [were considered to be] the most vivid and the most lasting’ (Chavasse, 1871: 116), all wall images were to be placed at waist height above a dado rail in order to ‘come within easy range of the child’s vision’ (Squire, 1885: 866).<sup>29</sup>

Nursery friezes lent themselves to the concept of ‘sequence’ (White, 1984: 70) and ‘to the unfolding of narrative’ (Kevill-Davies, 1991: 133). Indeed, as White (1984: 72) notes, ‘The art of the frieze was the art of being able to make the viewer follow the unfolding of the message.’ Often drawn by artists and illustrators of children’s books, friezes were alive with action; garnished with colourful scenes and amusing images of children, animals, toys and fairy-tale figures, they were usually set within ‘a form sufficiently concise to let a complete narrative be presented within a relatively short format’ (White, 1984: 70; Kevill-Davies, 1991) (see Figures 4.13 and 4.14). The illustrators Will Owen, Mabel Lucie Attwell, Cecil Aldin and John Hassall were perhaps some of the most notable and acclaimed frieze artists of the day (White, 1984; Kevill-Davies, 1991). For Campbell (1910: 51), for example, the respective designs of Aldin and Hassall represented ‘[s]ome of the best large coloured pictures

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<sup>27</sup> Some child-rearing authors were far from impressed with the design of nursery wallpaper, however. For example, Jane Ellen Panton (1893: 127) felt it necessary to ‘beg [her] readers to eschew once and for all the fearsome “Nursery Rhyme” papers’. For her, they were ‘simply atrocious both in colour and design’.

<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Asquith (1923) argued that walls should also hold clocks and barometers to teach children about the time and the weather.

<sup>29</sup> Helen Campbell (1910: 52) further suggested that a gramophone in the nursery would ‘aid in training [a child’s] musical sense’.

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*Figure 4.10* Walter Crane's (1879) *The Sleeping Beauty*.  
Source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74077/the-sleeping-beauty-wallpaper-crane-walter/>. Accessed 10th September 2013.

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*Figure 4.11* Walter Crane's (1886) *The House that Jack Built*.  
Source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O224406/the-house-that-jack-built-wallpaper-crane-walter/>. Accessed 10th September 2013.

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*Figure 4.12* Kate Greenaway's (1893) *The Months*.  
Source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O75732/the-months-wallpaper-walker-david/>. Accessed 10th September 2013.

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*Figure 4.13* Will Owen's (1912) *The Sea Shore* nursery frieze. Source: White (1984: 64).

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*Figure 4.14* Mabel Lucie Attwell's (1913) 'Scenes from nursery tales' nursery frieze.  
Source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O211397/wallpaper-attwell-mabel-lucie/>. Accessed 10th September 2013.

for children' (also Gardner, 1914). Included amongst her recommendations was Hassall's 'Morning', 'Noon' and 'Night', a set of three vertical illustrations that combined to depict a young girl's day from waking up to saying her prayers before bedtime (White, 1984) (see Figure 4.15). Picturing a child rising without the need for encouragement, her perfect table manners and her love of God, this trio was likely suggested for the good example that it imparted.

Framed nursery pictures were similarly to be selected 'for the sentiments they expressed' (White, 1984: 75). Speaking to upper- and middle-class mothers, Panton (1896: 65) proclaimed that '[f]or ten pounds, half the sum an ordinary fashionable woman spends on a dress without the smallest compunction, we can buy a dozen autotypes framed, which are a joy to contemplate, and will last a lifetime'. Images were 'to teach devotion to God and country' (Scharlieb, 1926: 35) and, like Hassall's 'Morning', 'Noon' and 'Night', set a visual precedent for appropriate and desired behaviour (White, 1984). For example, White (1984: 75-76) notes that '[p]ictures of beautiful children being very good, or showing kindness to animals or the aged, were commonplace' within the nursery; he argues that '[t]hey were a crystallisation of the hopes of parents that some of the magic of the picture would imprint itself on their child'. Reproductions of classic paintings were often preferred by manual authors because 'horrid daubs and bad engravings ... [were] enough to ruin the taste of a child' (Chavasse, 1871: 116; also Gardner, 1914) (for example, see Figure 4.16). As Panton

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*Figure 4.15* John Hassall's (c. 1903) 'Morning', 'Noon' and 'Night'.  
Source: [http://lissfineart.com/display.php?KT\\_artists=John+Hassall](http://lissfineart.com/display.php?KT_artists=John+Hassall).  
Accessed 22nd July 2009.

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*Figure 4.16* Sir Joshua Reynolds's (c. 1776) *The Infant Samuel*.  
Helen Campbell (1910: 51) suggested that 'Joshua Reynolds's child studies might with advantage be copied and used as coloured prints for the nursery'.  
Source: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/reynolds-the-infant-samuel-n00162>. Accessed 10th September 2013.

(1893: 210) highlighted, '[B]y making your child observe and by showing it pleasant things, you will give it a richer store of wealth than anything else could do.' Correspondingly, parents were 'not [to] choose pictures of sad or depressing incidents'; as Gardner (1914: 21) explained, 'Morbid subjects [were likely to] attract children oddly and do their nerves much harm' (also cited in Hardymont, 1983: 142; Kevill-Davies, 1991: 133). Whatever the subject depicted, however, some advised parents to provide children with 'pictures of a more transitory interest' (Owen, 1935: 371). Because frames were to be easily removed from walls for purposes of cleaning, it was realised that the images within could also be frequently and effortlessly altered (Read, 1917; Wrinch, 1924). For example, Grace Owen (1935: 371) – writing within Gwen St. Aubyn's encyclopaedic *Family Book* – declared that '[t]he children will delight in the surprise of a change in pictures on the wall and their observation and appreciation will be quickened'.<sup>30</sup>

According to White (1984), nursery prints were first designed with children's interests in mind toward the end of the nineteenth century. He argues that illustrations of human-like animals, fairies, goblins and fantasy more generally 'gained acceptance only gradually, long after they had become acceptable in children's books' (White, 1984: 78-80) (for example, see Figures 4.17 and 4.18). Reflecting a more democratic and inclusive viewpoint of decorating the nursery in the 1920s, Leonore Maude Chaloner (1929: 41) maintained that it was 'a mistake to set too stern a face against such childish interests, and infinitely better to provide a proper outlet for them'. Writing within *Modern Babies and Nurseries*, which was dedicated to 'offering suggestions for the solution of the everyday nursery problems with which most mothers and nurses are confronted' (author's note), she encouraged parents to allow children to paste their own decorative material on to the dado – 'the lower part of the wall' below the dado rail (Soanes and Stevenson, 2006c: 359) – thereby 'enabling small folk to achieve nursery decorations after their own heart' (Chaloner, 1929: 41; also Kennedy,

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<sup>30</sup> Parents were also to consider the outside view from a nursery's windows, which were to be 'fixed low in the wall so children [could] readily look out' (Scharlieb, 1926: 33; also Bull, 1877; Squire, 1885; *Spon's Household Manual*, 1887; Panton, 1896; Cradock, 1909). For example, Thomas Bull (1877: 94) argued that 'a dull and confined prospect [was] a source of gloom to the naturally cheerful and active mind of a child' and that parents were to ensure that children 'look[ed] out upon that which would gladden and refresh it'. According to Jane Ellen Panton (1896: 68), 'That child has most undoubtedly the happiest early life who can see the sea from its nursery windows, or else has a fine and magnificent range of hills and river to contemplate; but yet, too, the life of a London child has much that is most delightful and fascinating about it, more especially if it be taught from its very earliest moments to interest itself in all that is going on around it'.

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*Figure 4.17* Louis Wain's (c. 1890) *The Cat's Half Holiday*.  
Source: <http://www.ukfineart.com/limitededitionprints.php?ItemID=140>.  
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*Figure 4.18* Margaret W. Tarrant's (1922) *Do You Believe in Fairies?*  
Source: <http://www.medicico.uk/shop/items/do-you-believe-in-fairies>.  
Accessed 21st August 2011.

1935). Others similarly advised that a section of the dado be covered in blackboard material, ‘a source of great joy and entertainment’ upon which children could sketch their own designs in coloured chalk and wash them off when a change was desired (Kennedy, 1935: 190; also Wrinch, 1924; Bennett and Isaacs, 1931; Hewer, 1945).

### Learning through Play

The presence of a blackboard within the nursery was not only to satisfy and fulfil the interests of children with regard to decoration, however; designed to further a child’s creativity and imagination, the blackboard was also an object of play and amusement. For child-rearing authors, play was ‘a serious business’ (Hardyment, 1983: 142). Believed to be the most important ‘occupation’ of childhood, play had long been considered significant for the early education of children. As Cross (1997: 122) similarly observes from within an American context, play constituted ‘the child’s work’ rather than ‘a chance for the young to relax and indulge themselves’. Described as an ‘apprenticeship for the work of life’ (Drummond, 1901; cited in Morten, 1911: 193; Hardyment, 1983: 142), play was widely seen as a natural and instinctive act that ‘prepared children for the mental, physical, and social skills they would need later in life’ (Cross, 1997: 124). As the location where play was to principally take place, the (day) nursery was essentially the child’s work, or training, room. For example, Honor Morten (1911: 193, 194) claimed that ‘[a] little child “at play” [was] at his [*sic*] lessons’ and that play represented ‘the forerunner of and training for the life of the citizen’. Forming ‘the germinal leaves of all later life’ (Froebel, 1895 [1825]: 55, cited in Cross, 1997: 126), play was understood to foster creativity (Hardyment, 1983) and to ‘permit[ ] the development of individuality ... [and] the growth of intelligence’ (Drummond, 1901, cited in Morten, 1911: 193). Morten (1911: 192) even suggested that ‘a nation’s ultimate destiny’ lay within ‘the homes and amusements of the younger generation’. As she explained, ‘The higher we go in the world’s civilization, the more we find the huge part organized games and amusements play in the child life of the nation’ (Morten, 1911: 194).

The importance of play was therefore not to be lost upon parents, for they were responsible for providing children with suitable toys which would ‘direct play to learning, rather than mere fun’ (Cross, 1997: 122). Required to manage, or supervise, their children’s play, parents were to ‘learn to discriminate between toys that [would]

help [a] child to play intelligently and freely' and those that would not (Wrinch, 1924: 203). Sometimes labelled 'the playroom' (Hardyment, 1983), a nursery devoid of playthings was considered to be incomplete, or unfurnished (*Motherhood Book*, 1934), and, much like the decoration or aesthetics of the room, toys were to encourage children's development and stimulate their minds and imaginations. Classed as the 'constant, most intimate companions and most used implements' of childhood (Read, 1917: 285), toys were to meet a strict and rigid criterion to gain access to the nursery. For example, Read (1917: 289) declared that toys were to be '[d]urable in composition and workmanship'; '[s]timulating to the imagination, analysis, invention, initiative, activity [and] workmanship'; '[a]dapted to experimentation, investigation or constructive purposes'; and '[a]dapted to [a] child's ... motor ability, his [*sic*] interests [and] mental development'.<sup>31</sup> They were also to be '[s]anitary [and] washable', have no 'inaccessible corners to harbor dust and germs', and be '[a]rtistic in form [and] color' (Read, 1917: 290), though parents were to avoid those that were 'coloured with poisonous paints' (Jex-Blake, 1884: 44; also Chavasse, 1871; Bull, 1877; Harland, 1886; *Spon's Household Manual*, 1887; Holt, 1907; Owen, 1935). For instance, American paediatrician Luther Emmet Holt (1907: 168) warned that '[t]he instinct [of a young child] to put everything into the mouth is so strong that nothing should be given that cannot be safely treated in this way'. He advised that readers also reject 'toys with sharp points or corners ... those with loose parts that might be detached or broken off and swallowed; [and] small objects which might be swallowed or pushed into the nose or ear'.

Because play was a means to explore the world through 'active touch' and often involved pulling materials apart, banging objects together and jabbing fingers inside of things (Isaacs, 1929: 160; Edge, 1944), only well-made toys would suffice within the nursery (Watson, 1928). Indeed, the prominent behavioural psychologist John Watson (1928: 121) complained about the poor quality and flimsy nature of many toys in the late 1920s; he argued that if parents were to 'buy only substantial toys, manufacturers [would] soon learn to build them better'. Muriel Wrinch (1924: 216) also believed that toy quality affected a child's 'ideals of workmanship'; she claimed that 'if [parents gave children] poorly made toys ... [their] work in later life

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<sup>31</sup> Toys were also to promote children's 'physical growth' (Isaacs, 1929: 278) and offer 'scope for the exercising of the various parts of the body' (Cradock, 1909: 46). For example, Mrs Cradock (1909: 45-46) argued that '[b]alls, skipping ropes, and battledore and shuttlecock [were] all excellent toys'. Nevertheless, whether they were to be played with indoors is another matter.

[would be] ugly and careless'. Nevertheless, '[c]hildren [were to] be taught to respect and take care of their toys' (Edge, 1944: 39) and to repair them if necessary (*Motherhood Book*, 1934). Though toys were not expected to remain pristine, such values would teach children a future regard for property as well as for others (Barwell, 1840) and reduce a child's sense of individualism. According to Wrinch (1924: 216), children were to display loyalty and remain faithful to their toys and were 'not [to] be encouraged to throw away one ... to make way for a new ... arrival'. It thus followed that children were not to be provided with too many toys; a surplus of objects spoilt the child and was considered 'as destructive of good habit development ... as too few' (Thom, 1927: 331). For example, Douglas Thom (1927: 331, 332) reasoned that '[a]n excitable, unstable, destructive child [was] usually to be discovered in a household where large numbers of toys [were] indiscriminately piled', and recommended that '[t]here should be a limited number of toys in carefully planned variety'. The encyclopaedic *Motherhood Book* (1934: 667) – 'compiled by a distinguished group of experts and specialists in health, maternity, infant and child welfare' (title page) – similarly argued that children were 'confused by too large a choice' of playthings and that they would 'go restlessly from one to another and end by becoming bored with all'.

According to Watson (1928: 120), '[n]eatness and order [was to] be instilled early' within children; tidiness was to be encouraged through the provision of proper storage facilities for toys, and children were to learn how 'to clear them all up carefully, handle them gently, and stack them away in order' (also Panton, 1893; Holt, 1907; Wrinch, 1924; Broom, 1944). As Holt (1907: 169) explained, 'Children should select their toys and play with one thing at a time, which they should be taught to put away in its place before another is given.'<sup>32</sup> He insisted that 'toys [were to] be kept in an orderly way', that they were 'never [to be] piled in a miscellaneous heap in [a] corner' and that children were 'never [to] be allowed to have a dozen things strewn about the [nursery] at one time'. Nursery dwellers were therefore to be supplied with their own personal toy cupboards, boxes or shelves (Panton, 1893; Holt, 1907; Chaloner, 1929; *Motherhood Book*, 1934; Kennedy, 1935; Chavasse, 1939; Edge, 1944). Reminiscing about her own nursery cupboard, Jane Ellen Panton (1893: 197) asked, 'Who

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<sup>32</sup> According to Susan Isaacs (1929: 229), however, toys were not to be 'put away just for the convenience of elders'. She argued that the day nursery allowed children to 'carry on the things they [had] made, developing them from day to day, for weeks at a time'. She also claimed that there was 'nothing more tantalising for children than to have to interrupt or spoil a modelled railway or farm, or other floor game ... just because it [was] dinner-time or bedtime'.

amongst us cannot remember [its] intense bliss ... [and] the delicious joy of having one place all our own, where we could hoard unchecked those thousand and one trifles that no drawing room could be expected to give house room to ... ?'

Expensive and elaborate playthings were to have no place within nursery toy cupboards and were widely considered inappropriate for children (Hardyment, 1983). As Hardyment (1983) also observes, mechanical, clockwork and button-pushing toys were particularly derided; they were thought to offer children little imaginative scope 'because their function [was] limited to one repetitive action' (Powdermaker and Grimes, 1944: 116, also Holt, 1907; Cradock, 1909; Read, 1917; Thom, 1927; Edge, 1944). For example, Holt (1907: 169) claimed that 'complicated mechanical toys ... [gave] only a momentary pleasure'; he argued that 'as soon as the wonder at their operation [had] worn off, they [would lose] interest for [children], except that which [they would get] in breaking them to see how [they] worked'. As Read (1917: 291) highlighted, '[T]oys so constructed as to show principles of motion and elementary physical laws, without involving their own destruction, are an educational need yet to be supplied.' Moreover, because they sometimes required adult guidance or 'mother ... to call father in to operate [them]', they were believed to teach children to be overly reliant upon their parents and others (Watson, 1928: 119-120). Such toys were thus rejected as a 'folly and waste of money' (Cradock, 1909: 45), and there was universal agreement that children were to be provided with simple playthings that fostered creative and self-directing play (Read, 1917; Wrinch, 1924; Thom, 1927; *Motherhood Book*, 1934; Kugelmass, 1935; Edge, 1944; Powdermaker and Grimes, 1944).<sup>33</sup>

Nursery cupboards, shelves and toy boxes were to hold a variety of classic, or traditional, playthings. To train boys and girls for their future adult roles and duties, many toys were designed to promote and cultivate particular masculine and feminine skills or traits (Calvert, 1992a, 1992b, 2003; Cross, 1997; Hamlett, 2010). For many child-rearing manuals, the staple collection of toys for a typical boy included balls, soldiers,<sup>34</sup> model cars and trains, as well as carpentry kits, Meccano sets<sup>35</sup> and build-

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<sup>33</sup> Though some suggested that parents purchase playthings 'from a child's standpoint' (Thom, 1927: 337), children's interests were ultimately considered secondary to what toys could do for the child, much like the decoration of the nursery.

<sup>34</sup> At the height of the First World War, however, Mary Read (1917: 290) argued that boys should not play with military-inspired toys; she believed that 'they cultivate[d] the spirit of destructiveness rather than constructiveness', 'foster[ed] callousness toward the value of human life' and gave 'a wholly wrong impression of the meaning of war'.

ing blocks (Holt, 1907; Gardner, 1914; Thom, 1927; *Motherhood Book*, 1934; Powdermaker and Grimes, 1944). Such playthings were held to encourage '[c]oncentration, perseverance, carefulness, and dexterity of hand' (Cradock, 1909: 46) and were considered creative and inventive toys 'that [gave] opportunity for the child to do some work on them' (Wrinch, 1924: 215). In contrast, girls' toys consisted of miniature housekeeping sets, sewing kits, dolls and other 'playthings for imitating women's work' (Calvert, 1992a: 113; also Holt, 1907; Gardner, 1914; *Motherhood Book*, 1934; Powdermaker and Grimes, 1944). For example, Mary Gardner (1914: 276) suggested that 'a little girl be given a miniature carpet-sweeper, or dustpan and brush', whilst Mrs Cradock (1909: 45) argued that dolls were 'a source of much happiness' and akin to 'real people to the little girls who nurse[d] and care[d] for them'. As Hamlett (2010: 126) similarly observes, they 'were also thought to awaken the desire for motherhood in young girls'. Indeed, as little mothers in training, girls were to familiarise themselves with 'the mysteries of handling, of fondling and soothing a baby' (Chavasse, 1869: 88; also cited in Hardyment, 1983: 65) and were to dress their dolls with clothes that they had made themselves, therefore enabling them to 'exercise ingenuity in cutting garments, and neatness in sewing' (Child, 1832: 56).<sup>36</sup> Moreover, nursery cupboards and shelves were to contain buttons, cotton reels, pegs, stones and fir cones, as well as scraps of paper, string, silk and other such 'delicious rubbish', in order that both boys and girls could make their own toys and satisfy their creative instincts (Panton, 1893: 197; also Gardner, 1914; Wrinch, 1924; Watson, 1928; Powdermaker and Grimes, 1944). Indeed, the tearing of paper, the cutting of string and other activities associated with the making of playthings were said to appease a child's 'destructive impulses' by turning his or her 'energies into constructive channels' (Wrinch, 1924: 225; Thom, 1927).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Created by Frank Hornby in the early twentieth century, Meccano was first called Mechanics Made Easy before it was renamed in 1907 (Mackay, 1976).

<sup>36</sup> Training for motherhood extended beyond dolls, however, for Flanders (2003) notes that older girls often assisted mothers and nurses within the nursery by making and repairing clothes, sorting linen and generally looking after younger brothers and sisters.

<sup>37</sup> Within the sample of child-rearing manuals explored here, teddy bears and stuffed animals were rarely recommended before the 1920s. As Cross (1997: 136-137) explains, 'Make-believe toys were acceptable only if they helped children assume adult roles and acquire adult skills. The point was to outgrow fantasy, not to celebrate it.'

## **Conclusion**

For the authors of the many child-rearing manuals and parenting advisories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the nursery was ‘the most important room’ within the home (Jex-Blake, 1884: 35) and required considerable ‘thought and consideration’ upon the part of the parent (Thom, 1927: vii). The ‘kingdom’ of the child (Panton, 1893: 207; Campbell, 1910: 52) and home to the youngest and ‘most cherished members’ of a household (Squire, 1885: 843), the nursery was considered to lie at the foundation of life (Brereton, 1927). Reflecting the importance attached to a child’s surroundings and a belief in the effect of environment (Hardyment, 1983), parents were charged with providing their most ‘precious’ possessions with adequate accommodation (Chavasse, 1871: 3), furnishing rooms from the very best rooms of houses (Squire, 1885; Gibbens, 1940) and making them fit for children. Much like a greenhouse or a propagator, nurseries were to promote children’s physical health, stimulate growth and prevent disease, as well as contribute to mental and intellectual development. Informed by relatively new theories and scientific discoveries and by the advance of medical knowledge, child-rearing manuals explained how rooms were to be properly ventilated, heated and situated, the significance of hygiene and the effects of aesthetics upon cleanliness, and how decoration and material objects were to train and encourage learning. Touching upon ‘the responsible management of children’ (Chavasse, 1871: 2), manuals sought to guide readers into specific subjectivities and ways of thinking. By outlining the kind of space that parents were expected to provide for their children, and by offering advice upon a range of other topics, manuals implied that there was ‘a right way of bringing up a child’ (Hewer, 1891: iv) and essentially dictated the course of action that parents were required to take. To be a good, competent and even loving parent effectively meant following the advice of authors to the letter and ensuring that nurseries conformed to their strict guidelines and spatial criteria. If one observed authors’ written instructions correctly, parents were said to guarantee a child’s happiness and health and to foster his or her physical, mental and intellectual development; if they were neglected or ignored, however, the child would suffer, and the consequences could be deadly. Moreover, nurseries were considered foundational not only to children’s current and future well-being, but also to the health and wealth of the nation (Smiles, 1885; Morten, 1911). For parents, the creation and maintenance of an appropriate space for children within the home was a

duty of the highest order because it was intimately bound up with the future of the race and empire. Neglecting one's parental obligations and responsibilities was therefore not only potentially harmful to children, but also potentially damaging to the state and national posterity.

## 5.

# Magazines and the Material World of the Bedroom, c. 1920-1975

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A room of one's own is a fundamental need, for the child no less than for the grown-up.

(*Good Housekeeping*, 1936: 26)

[Magazines] talk to us in ways we recognise. [They] enter into a dialogue with us. And that dialogue, with its dependable elements and form, will relate to some aspect of our lives in our society.

(Barker, 1989: 261)

*Henry's Little Room (1939):<sup>1</sup>*  
*Described by Henry's Mother, Susan Heath<sup>2</sup>*

'When I show friends over our house or take them up to my bedroom, I always go first so that I have time to close Henry's door before they reach it. "That is just Henry's little room," I say, nodding airily towards the closed door.

'For Henry's room is not presentable: when he has been busy – and he nearly always *has* been busy – railway lines, bricks, engines and modelling clay lavishly bestrew the floor; snips of paper, wood shavings, crushed chalks and spilt nails appear as if by magic, whenever my [seven-year-old] son becomes active. The bed shows signs of recent bouncings and somersaults, though these are discouraged. There is likely to be a jam jar with a newt or tadpoles in it, an old bird's nest, or a collection of sticks – a treasure trove from a recent walk – on the window sill or mantle shelf; while Henry's

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<sup>1</sup> 'Henry's Mother', 'Henry's Workshop: Somewhere to Play and Busy Himself with His Own Ploys, Somewhere to Keep His Treasures – That Is Henry's Own Little Room', *Mother*, October 1939, 33.

<sup>2</sup> This article featured as part of a regular magazine column that followed the life and upbringing of a little boy called Henry. His mother, the author, is only credited as Susan Heath from February 1953. Before this, she is referred to simply as Henry's mother.

own carefree artistic efforts are fastened securely, if crookedly, on the bedroom walls.

‘Contrast is said to be the salt of life and it is certainly stimulating. Recently I was shown another child’s bedroom: a room gay and neat, charmingly furnished and exquisitely kept. This child’s mother did not hurry me past the door.

“This is Margaret’s own little room. We have just promoted her from the night nursery,” she said, throwing open the door. “I think it’s been a great success.”

‘I thought so too. White muslin curtains, polka dotted in pink, swayed gently across the open window. On either side hung deep-rose chintz curtains sprinkled all over with a design of tiny white snowdrops. The carpet was a deep-mushroom shade, the furniture silvery-lined oak. I saw the little bed with its rose silk quilt, the low dressing table, the ample cupboards and chest of drawers, the fitted washstand, low enough for seven-year-old Margaret to reach.

‘A doll’s cot standing by the bed gave a touch of reality to the whole room. I found myself thinking guiltily now of Henry’s room. By the time I arrived [home] I was burning with determination: Henry, too, should have a bedroom – not exquisite or luxurious as Margaret’s had been – but pretty, neat, and gay. Between us we *would* keep it tidy, and I would see what could be done to improve its looks.

‘The curtains were already pretty, but I might manage a new counterpane, perhaps, and a rug for the floor. I would keep a vase of flowers there. It, too, should be a charming room, and Henry should grow up accustomed to prettiness and order.

‘With all this in mind I went straight to my son’s room. I threw open the door and stood surveying the familiar scene. The room was empty, but a shaft of late sunlight caught the glass of paint water on the table in the window.

‘There lay the painting Henry had been doing when I left home – soldiers in a castle by the sea, the sky full of aeroplanes. I could hear him saying:

"I'm makin' it all pretty and lovely, Mum, all 'citing and pretty," as he daubed happily away with the brightest colours in his box.

'I smiled involuntarily and then I noticed that Henry had been ahead of me with the flowers, for a jam jar packed tightly with dandelions stood on the window sill next to his jar of tiddlers and the bowl of coloured pebbles from our last seaside visit, arranged under water, because as my son explains: "'em looks much more prettier when 'ems wet." Henry, indeed, has his own ideas of what is pretty and pleasant, and it even seemed to me that they were sound.

'I looked thoughtfully at the rest of his room; at the trapeze and swing hanging from the centre of the ceiling and now drawn up and out of use. That had been his father's idea. "Monkeys at the zoo have them. It's a good idea," he had explained quite seriously. Henry agrees.

'I saw a little divan bed next with its dreadfully crumpled cotton coverlet; I saw, too, in my mind's eye, Henry lying there flat on his tummy, engrossed in a picture book, discovering new worlds, or with pencil poised and tongue just peeping from the corner of his mouth, tasting the heady joys of intellectual achievement, as he spells his name or tackles a sum.

'Then I looked at the bare carpet-less floor: linoleum is the ideal floor for brick castles, railway lines, farms, and clockwork cars. My glance travelled back to the table under the window with its legs sawn off to make it low enough for Henry and covered with linoleum like the floor. This is Henry's work-bench. Here he can chop, hammer and saw to his heart's content; cut out, paste and draw. If gum or paint water is spilt it does not harm. No one will disturb the half-made crane or the dreadful treasures he brings.

'At last the contents of my son's room slid into focus. I saw it for what it was: not so much a bedroom, as a studio for the small artist, the engineer's and inventor's workshop, the athlete's gymnasium: here my little professor must perforce sleep, it is true, but here also he can "work" in peace.

'The products of Henry's activities are absurd, for he is a very ordinary little boy. I do not save his drawings: his brick castles are knocked down and packed away each night. But that he should be creative, that he should

concentrate, work and learn, that he should busy himself at his thousand and one little ploys – that is not absurd, but the very stuff of which life is made, the means by which his nature can develop.

‘In our small modern house I can give up to Henry only one little bedroom. This must be made to serve all his needs: fresh air and quiet, and a good bed at night; in the day time, space to play to his heart’s content, to work and so to learn.

‘The rose-pink bedroom is charming still, but its attraction has faded. I find myself hoping that in all that beautifully equipped household, there is some corner where Margaret can make a mess.’

Opening the door to an otherwise-closed-and-private interior world, the sketching of Henry’s bedroom by his mother was featured within a regular magazine column that charted all aspects of his life and childhood from infancy to adolescence. Premised upon shared social experiences and expectations, the conversational dialogue reveals a scene of actuality and inhabitation; the narrative betrays a living bedroom peppered with seven-year-old Henry’s personal belongings, a space filled with his presence, a place set up to support his ‘absurd’ activities, and the balance of governance between him and his parents within. Describing a room populated by only one boy rather than a group of siblings, the story epitomises the model of the child’s bedroom that had begun to emerge within many middle-class households during the early years of the twentieth century. A decline in the size of the average family and more-compact housing meant that the communal nursery was gradually becoming surplus to requirements (see Chapter Three).<sup>3</sup> Despite the revelation that similarly aged Margaret had just graduated from the night nursery into her ‘own little room’, it was becoming more and more common for children to occupy a single room throughout childhood, an adaptable space that would ‘grow with the child’ from infancy and which could be ‘decorated to reflect [his or her] age and gender’ (Calvert, 2003: 78). ‘Nursery’ became the term for a very young child’s room (Calvert, 1992b), with the ‘bedroom’, or ‘playroom’, growing out of the same space once the child had reached about six or

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<sup>3</sup> As Langhamer (2005: 351) notes, ‘The first half of the century witnessed a decline in the birth-rate of such rapidity that the two-child family was firmly established as a norm by the end of the interwar years.’

seven years old<sup>4</sup> and becoming a bed-sitting room at age eleven or twelve. Promoting this latest model, interwar (1918-1939) and post-war (1945- ) women's and home-oriented magazines defined and cultivated new ideas and concepts as to what constituted appropriate material surroundings for children. Reaching out to the aspirations of the growing middle classes and to a wide readership, magazines provided examples of suggested room types and exhibited (or described, as in the story of Henry's bedroom) real-life versions, all of which were finely tuned presentations mindful of children's age and gender, and often answers to common issues of limited space, materials and finances. Although the scenes displayed and depicted were not always realistic representations of bedrooms – show homes prevailing, as Henry's mother notes with regard to her tour of Margaret's exquisitely tidy and mess-free bedroom – it was within the interwar and post-war periods when the concept and the specifics of the modern child's bedroom primarily developed, and the periodical played an important role. Providing an insight into the bedrooms of the era, whether suggestive or actual, magazine articles, columns and advice pages presented, recorded and documented a scenography of space, narratives of sets adapted, shaped, organised and choreographed for the theatrical happening of growing up and for the staging of sleep, play and work, revealing live spaces of art, creation, innovation, production and material dynamism.

This chapter explores the material culture of the bedroom between the early 1920s and the mid-1970s and focuses upon the significance of objects and things in the presentation and description of children's rooms by magazines. It argues that material culture was a key constituent of the bedroom that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century – a room that continues to prevail today – and that magazines and periodicals popularised and contributed to the development of the space through articles and special features on everyday bedroom life, design and materiality. Drawing upon wider literature within material culture and geographies of home (for example, see Miller, 2001a, 2002b; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006), the chapter examines the importance of material artefacts in constituting the child's bedroom and in structuring the activities that took place within the space. It argues that material objects set the scene, provided an 'appropriate background for living' (Miller, 1987: 102), and determined and reflected children's and parents' behaviour

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<sup>4</sup> As N.L. Gall (1935: 30) observed in *Good Housekeeping*, 'After a certain age the word "nursery" is often considered babyish by its inhabitants, and may even lead to rebellion at its use'.

and identities. Examining the ways in which magazines promoted and depicted children's bedrooms, it explores how rooms were materially structured, how material objects were used and arranged to create recognisable and clearly defined spaces for children, and how the materialising, or crafting, of the bedroom was a complex process of mediation.

Framed thematically rather than historically, this chapter is divided into two analytical sections. The first focuses upon the material assemblage and fabric of children's bedrooms and deliberates upon the constructive power of furnishings and fittings, whilst the second moves beyond an explicit concern with design and the material shaping of space and toward a closer examination of the broader social relations expressed within. Both parts relate interesting – almost-ethnographical – vignettes, narratives and descriptions of 'actual' rooms, objects and individuals taken from a number of respected periodicals. The magazines sampled, for example, not only presented or described ideas for rooms using studio sets or hand-drawn illustrations, but also engaged with an actuality by relating the various experiences of readers and writers and by venturing into their homes and into the bedrooms of their children. Like the story of Henry's bedroom that opened the chapter, it is this material that the vignettes specifically highlight. Inspired by Llewellyn's (2003: 264; 2004b: 229) call for a 'polyvocal approach' to the historical geography of architecture, the vignettes facilitate an engagement with a range of individuals and material objects involved in the production, design and inhabitation of bedrooms and illustrate that the space was lived and experienced, as well as imagined. Designed to open the bedroom door and to reconstruct rooms of the past, all are adapted from the magazine material and are used to exemplify key points and arguments.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning with the origins of the bedroom and a brief outline of the material connections between the nurseries of younger children and the rooms of older children, the first (and more substantial) section of this chapter assesses the material structure of children's bedrooms. It considers how bedrooms were staged to support children's play, sleep and work and argues that rooms were formed around a recognisable and consistent material frame which was designed to grow and evolve with children as they became older and as their needs and interests changed and developed. Illustrating 'the complexities, compromises and conflicts involved in creating a home'

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<sup>5</sup> Please note that for ease of reference, these vignettes are referenced using footnotes rather than the Harvard system. All magazine material cited in this chapter is referenced in this way.

(Daniels, 2001: 205, cited in Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 78), the process of shaping, crafting and materialising the bedroom is then explored with reference to the difficulties associated with cost and space restrictions. Positioned within a wider context of interwar and post-war austerity, resourcefulness and do-it-yourself recreation, as well as parental love and devotion, the chapter examines the significance of home-made objects within the bedroom and reveals how the making and restoring of furniture and other items was the result of both inherent need and creativity. It shows how the practice of fashioning an appropriate space for children frequently required a degree of ingenuity and how small spaces were made habitable through intelligent design and novel space-saving solutions. It argues that parents and children not only accommodated, or appropriated, space to make it suitable for their own particular needs, but that they were also obliged to accommodate to the space themselves and that this was reflected within the design of objects and the material arrangement of rooms (see Miller, 2002b, 2010a). The second section of this chapter turns briefly to the gendering and theming of children's bedrooms and explores the discursive and sexualised differences exhibited between rooms intended for boys and those for girls. Examining the material fabric of boys' and girls' bedrooms, it argues that materiality was a key component in socialising children into their 'proper' gender roles. It illustrates how material objects reflected and encouraged particular aspects of personality expected of boys and girls and considers how rooms were organised to ensure for 'optimal growth and proper adjustment' (Calvert, 1992b: 90; Cross, 1997). The chapter concludes by reflecting upon how the bedroom was characterised by negotiation and compromise, and how creating a room was a complex and mediated process. First, however, the chapter provides a contextual introduction to the magazines and publications from which its arguments are derived.

### **Reading Magazines**

A type of text marked by a 'variety of tone and constituent parts' (Beetham, 1996: 1), the magazine is 'a distinctive cultural form' that first entered into popular circulation in approximately the early nineteenth century (Jackson *et al.*, 2001: 24).<sup>6</sup> An important text that speaks to a variety of different audiences, the magazine operates within a

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<sup>6</sup> The origins of magazines, however, can be traced to the late seventeenth century (Jackson *et al.*, 2001).

‘cultural economy of collective meanings’ and contributes to the development and maintenance of both individual and shared identities (Beetham, 1996: 2). This thesis has taken into account how the magazine works as a distinctive textual form in its analysis of bedroom depictions and descriptions. A “storehouse” or “repository” of material by various hands’ (Jackson *et al.*, 2001: 24-25), the magazine is understood to enter into a conversation with readers based upon shared social experiences and expectations (Barker, 1989). Interactive vehicles that facilitate discussion and debate, magazines are explored as a kind of forum space (McLoughlin, 2000), stages where authors presented ideas for bedrooms but where readers and ordinary consumers were also able to question, suggest and introduce their own concepts through written articles, real-life features and letters addressed to editors or columnists. As Beetham (1996: 13) notes, for example, periodicals depend upon their audiences ‘to provide a good deal of copy’, and readers are often ‘invited to become writers’. The magazine is therefore regarded as a flexible and empowering kind of medium whose subject matter was open to negotiation. This is also reflected within its format, which allows readers to ‘construct their own text’ and meanings; for instance, individuals are able ‘to flip through, read in any order, omit some sections altogether and read others carefully’, or they can simply choose to ignore the text and focus upon pictures and images (Beetham, 1996: 12, 13). Textual and visual representations of bedrooms are thus considered to be suggestions for readers to look at, comment upon or draw inspiration from rather than spatial models to be strictly replicated. Moreover, because magazines rely upon regular readers for their survival and tend to reflect their beliefs and consumer choices (Beetham, 1996), they are understood to be accurate depictions of actual bedrooms.

### **The Material Frame of the Bedroom**

Messy, cluttered and untidy, Henry’s bedroom, as described above, stands in stark contrast to that inhabited by Margaret. Exquisite, neat and refined, and recently renovated to accommodate her passage from the night nursery, Margaret’s newly decorated room – charmingly furnished with delicate and light touches of muslin and silk and proudly displayed and paraded by Margaret’s mother – induced within Henry’s mother, the spectator, feelings of contrition, shame and guilt. Indeed, Mrs Heath regretted that her son’s room, in comparison, was not presentable; she recalled how,

unlike her counterpart, she would always ensure that Henry's bedroom door was shut when showing friends around her own home. Designed to conceal the random railway lines, building bricks and 'spilt nails' that littered the floor, and the crumpled bedclothes and haphazard display of personal treasures, the regular exclusion of Henry's bedroom from Mrs Heath's house tours can be likened to an 'emergency procedure', a strategy intended to maintain respectability and dignity (Chapman, 1999: 71). Recalling Goffman's (1969) theory that 'people set the scene for social encounters with the express intention of letting other people see them in their best light' (Chapman, 1999: 71), Mrs. Heath blocked Henry's room from the view of guests in order to give a desired impression. Such action highlights that homes, and even children's bedrooms, are far from private spaces and that they are shaped and 'mediated by expectations from family, neighbours and friends about acceptable forms of decoration, furnishing, service and order' (Chapman, 1999: 71). As Henry's mother comes to realise, Margaret's bedroom, or the version that she witnessed as a guest, was also a 'front', a space specifically constructed by Margaret's mother for the purposes of public display which was free from the debris and mess of everyday life and similar to the show rooms exhibited within magazines and the popular media. However, despite the apparent differences between Margaret's show-home-like room and Henry's more complex and cluttered lived-in space, both embodied and were fashioned from a common material skeleton, or frame. Though Henry's bedroom appeared to be more disordered than Margaret's, which itself seemed to be more illusory and fantastical than real, both rooms retained traces of an organised material framework. An appropriate yet inconspicuous background for normative behaviour (Miller, 1987), the frame – a combination of furniture and objects characteristic to all bedrooms – was a systematic material arrangement that ordered and divided space, creating rooms and sustaining the varied activities of children and the daily routines undertaken within. A structural cue, or prompt, that 'constitute[d] the context of action' (Miller, 2005: 4; 2010b: 49) and which identified children's bedrooms as belonging to children, the frame was to develop with children throughout childhood, and constituent objects were to be designed and arranged to best meet a child's needs at all stages of growth. Miller's (1987: 85-108) theory on 'the humility of objects' has been particularly influential in the development of this idea. Miller (1987) argues that material objects help to define what constitutes as normal behaviour in certain situations by 'setting the scene'; he concludes that 'objects are important not because they are evi-

dent and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not “see” them’ (Miller, 2005: 5).<sup>7</sup>

### Staging Growth: Material Connections

Once upon a time there was a nursery. It had everything a baby could want and everything his mother could want to look after him. It was not very large like in the stories long ago, when there was nanny, and strawberry jam for tea. It was just the right size – about 12 ft by 8 ft – like most people’s second bedroom today. When the baby came, the time flew by, and soon he grew up into a boy. He outgrew his rattle, he outgrew his romper suits – but he didn’t outgrow his nursery. Instead, in some mysterious way, it developed and changed to suit his needs.<sup>8</sup>

Materially organised to house a child throughout childhood, the bedroom of the early to mid-twentieth century was intended to ensure for, and contribute to, a child’s growth and development. To be appropriately staged for such an assignment and shaped according to the perceived needs of children, the bedroom was to develop with a child from birth to adolescence and evolve as he or she became older and as taste, character and personality matured (Calvert, 1992b). Unlike the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century nursery, the modern bedroom was generally to accommodate and serve the needs of only a single child rather than a household of children, though smaller houses often meant that siblings of the same sex had to share. More compact than its predecessor, the bedroom was to be planned and carefully schemed not only to maximise available space, but also to produce an interchangeable frame that could accompany a child throughout childhood. With adaptability at the root of design – which was also induced by the financial cost to parents of furnishing a room, and itself associated with the rapid growth of children – a material connection was often visible between the rooms of younger children and those of older children. Indeed, the basic material structure of the bedroom was sown within the contemporary nursery, a room designed to house infants and toddlers, with the bedroom emerging from the same space once a child had reached about six or seven years old.

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<sup>7</sup> Miller (1987) was inspired by ideas presented within Goffman’s (1975) *Frame Analysis* and Gombrich’s (1979) *The Sense of Order*.

<sup>8</sup> S. Green, ‘The Story of the Nursery That Grew Up’, *Good Housekeeping*, January 1967, 49.

Though depictions of an ideal room – a show room created within a studio that featured within *Good Housekeeping* as a demonstration of how a room ought to look – Figures 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate the material bond between a nursery and a bedroom for a young boy.<sup>9</sup> A pictorial story of growth and evolution that imagines the simple transition of a nursery into a bedroom, the images hint at two different stages of development for the space, portraying its past and present but also pointing toward its future. Reflecting a continuing process of material adjustment, much of the structure of the two rooms is identical. The bedroom, designed for a boy aged approximately ten years old, draws upon the earlier nursery, a clinical and practical space in which to feed, bathe and put a baby to bed. Adapted to suit the boy's changing needs, the room has evolved to reflect the boy's gender, age and developing interests but is still an intermediate space, for it will need to react and be adapted later as these latter two continue to advance and change. Chosen 'with the future in mind', much of the furniture within the original nursery has been transferred into the bedroom, with the intended use and purpose of the objects merely reconsidered and reorganised, and their designs suitably amended.<sup>10</sup> Though a bed (frequently an adult-sized version for a child to grow into) has replaced the obligatory cot, the bathing and changing area (previously located beneath the window) is now a display for the boy's personal treasures. A whitewood chest (for storing clothes and other personal items) also provides a work area for the boy's new hobby, the making and painting of model kits, which he completes under the supervision of his favourite racing driver, Graham Hill, a photograph of whom adorns the wall above. Formerly stocked with baby linen and a small number of baby toys, the bottom shelf of an open storage unit has been transformed into a desk; '[w]ith Christmas thank-you letters in mind and the thought of homework in the years to come ... [its] height can be altered as the [boy] grows taller' (Figure 5.3). Complementing a 'more masculine' colour scheme,<sup>11</sup> the nursing chair (reupholstered in a black-and-white gingham-patterned material) is now a reading seat, whilst the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 50.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

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*Figure 5.1* A model nursery for a baby created within a studio. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (January 1967: 48).

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*Figure 5.2* The nursery transformed into a bedroom for a young boy. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (January 1967: 50).

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*Figure 5.3* A height-adjustable desk. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (January 1967: 51).

removal of the nursing trolley has opened up the floor to create a play space filled with castles, farms and wooden windmills.<sup>12</sup>

Divided into four distinct segments, each designed to support and further a specific activity, this model portrait depicts a co-ordinated and finely tuned bedroom landscape. A scenography of space, the room illustrates how the careful organisation of furniture and objects was key to the performance of children's everyday lives.<sup>13</sup> Pointing toward the practice and use of space, the bedroom hints at the various plots and scenarios that all rooms were to cater for. Supportive ecosystems designed to produce performances relevant to a child's age and gender, all rooms were to provide sufficient space for play and noisy games, a quiet workspace for hobbies and creative activities, space for school homework, and an adequately sized bed for sleep and night-time dreams; they were also to offer ample storage and display possibilities for a child's ever-increasing personal belongings. Bedrooms were therefore visually very

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<sup>12</sup> This story highlights not only the important role of objects in creating appropriate interior spaces, but also the idea that they and the rooms that they inhabit have connected biographies, or life histories (see Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986; Hoskins, 1998, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> A term associated with theatrical and performance studies, and 'defined as the manipulation and orchestration of the performance environment' (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 4), scenography provides an interesting and novel contribution to the reading of bedrooms and to the understanding of how they worked to encourage children's development. For an introduction to the theory and practice of scenography, see Howard (2002), Oddey and White (2006), and McKinney and Butterworth (2009).

similar, with component objects scientifically arranged around the outer perimeter of rooms to unlock all available space. Formed from beds pushed horizontally against walls to create central and hollow cavities, from tables placed beneath windows to obtain natural light and from drawer chests, cupboard units and children's personal possessions, this material frame was widely replicated, thus ensuring for a formulaic, constant and rather-regular look to children's rooms.

### Materialising the Frame: Craft and Creativity

Dear Home Editor,

My parents have bought a lovely new carpet for the bedroom that I share with my sister. Now everything else looks dreadful. ... How can we make our room look fabulous?<sup>14</sup>

A representation of the general template to which readers were to aspire and from which to draw inspiration, the idealised image of the perfect bedroom above was but one example of the many displayed within women's and home-oriented periodicals of the period. A hypothetical construct undertaken within a studio far removed from the complications of reality, the room – a simple nursery development and illustration of how to prepare a space for a ten-year-old boy – touches upon the material process of bedroom formation, the social relations expressed within, and the ongoing and complex dynamics that influenced the look of children's bedrooms. An imaginary space intended to show parents the practical benefits of planning a child's bedroom in advance, the room – formed from the calibration and customisation of mass-produced and previously purchased nursery-based furniture, home-adjusted items infused with a sense of care, consideration, pride and self-achievement – alludes to the financial cost of creating an appropriate space for a child yet conceals other issues, such as those of limited space and the time and physical effort often required. Though the practice of creating a room, and meeting the needs, wants and desires of individual children, was not always as straightforward as portrayed, and certainly involved more than a simple reworking of a nursery's appendages, the story presented is loosely indicative of real life, for children's bedrooms frequently contained items that were designed, made and modified at home. As described within the many 'true-to-life' magazine descriptions

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<sup>14</sup> Thirteen-year-old Bridie, quoted in J. Sykes, 'A New Look for £6!', *Woman and Home*, January 1966, 33.

of bedroom formation, and confirmed by the personal recitings and experiences of various individuals (for instance, Henry's mother), rooms were often made up of shop-bought, home-made and recycled objects. For example, amongst the disorder of Henry's bedroom was a divan bed likely to have been bought by his parents, a trapeze which had been made and hung by his father, and a table, the legs of which were sawn down to form a workbench of an appropriate height.

The making of furniture and other household objects at home was initially a reaction to the austerity, rationing, and material and labour shortages of the interwar, Second World War and post-war periods (Attfield, 1996; Atkinson, 2006). An activity of 'appropriation and bricolage' (Jackson, 2006: 58), the self-manufacture of bedroom hardware was very much related to the concerns of the time. A craft that required a degree of 'skill, knowledge, judgement and passion' (Campbell, 2005: 23), doing it oneself was 'an expected and respected social attitude' and was associated with resourcefulness (Atkinson, 2006: 4). Besides, and as intimated above, furnishing a child's bedroom was often beyond the financial reach of many. Individuals therefore made furniture and decorative objects for children from a diverse range of available materials, including recycled cuts of wood and parts seized from unused or unwanted items. Existing objects were also reshaped or reworked, and their uses were redefined, and tired, tatty and damaged items were salvaged, fixed and restored.

'Nursery Furniture from Next-to-Nothing': Making Over 'Pieces of Junk'  
(1945)<sup>15</sup>

Featured within *Mother*, a young couple, expecting their first child, outlined how they had acquired most of their nursery furniture from junk shops and second-hand retailers, converting and 'making over' abandoned and neglected items and reclaiming them through processes of cleaning, painting, varnishing and simple repair work. Undertaken with a minimum of cost not long after the end of hostilities in Europe, the project of material salvage, renewal, transformation and personalisation that they described – one that enabled obsolete and run-down items 'to enter new cycles of consumption' (Gregson and Crewe, 2003: 7) – proved to be more convenient than having to wait 'for expensive new furniture to arrive in the local stores'. 'Haunting'

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<sup>15</sup> 'Nursery Furniture from Next-to-Nothing', *Mother*, June 1945, 44-46.

local businesses in search of items ‘with possibilities’, the first piece that they found was a nursing chair bought for five shillings, an object ‘chipped, varnished badly and [so] filthy dirty’ that ‘no one, including the shopkeeper, could imagine why [they had] bought it’. A ‘divestment ritual’ of vigorous cleaning and scrubbing followed (Crewe, 2000: 281; Gregson and Crewe, 2003: 7): the frame was decontaminated with ‘scouring powder and disinfectant’, before the woodwork was sandpapered to remove all traces of varnish and to produce ‘an even surface for painting’; a pot of pale-blue glossy paint was combined with a pot of green, and the blend was used to colour all the furniture within the room. With much of the cane on the seat and chair-back missing, blind cord was purchased, threaded through the empty holes in the framework and knotted into place as a replacement. To form a comfortable and upholstered seating surface, two cushions were made from ‘unrationed hessian, lined with felt’; one was tacked to the seat, whilst the other was tacked to the back. The couple also acquired a chest of drawers for two pounds and ten shillings. In a poor condition like the chair, ‘dirty and a horrid, dark yellow-brown colour’, it was first treated for wood-worm and then cleaned, washed, painted and varnished, and its three drawers were decorated with stencilled nursery-tale animals. A baby’s bath, ‘dirty and rusty’, and a second chair, ‘an old upright’ kitchen version, were also put through similar processes of treatment, as was a ‘dilapidated fruit basket’, which was found in the attic and transformed into a container for all the baby’s things.<sup>16</sup>

The post-war period was characterised by an ‘epidemic of home improvement’ (Atkinson, 2006: 4) in which men and women exercised the skills and expertise that they had gained during the war in pursuit of ‘their dreams of domestic living’ (Goldstein, 1998: 31, cited in Atkinson, 2006: 4). With the outbreak of peace, however, furniture and new consumer household products were often very expensive and unaffordable. For example, reporting from the 1951 Festival of Britain – ‘a celebration of

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<sup>16</sup> This story reinforces the idea that objects have ‘consumption histories and geographies’ and ‘a use-value and an exchange-value long after their initial purchasers see a need for them’ (Crewe, 2000: 280). For more on second-hand consumption, see Gregson and Crewe (2003).

Britain's victory in the Second World War and a proclamation of its national recovery' (Conekin, 2003: 4) – Jean Coleman, home editor of *Mother*, noted that 'the prices of furniture and equipment on show is very high ... [and] may well leave you with a feeling of frustration'.<sup>17</sup> Inspired by the promotion of do-it-yourself on the radio, the television and in popular and specialist magazines (Atkinson, 2006; Jackson, 2006), many therefore chose to make their own furniture from scratch. As concern shifted from 'utility and economy' toward 'style and aesthetics' in the 1960s, magazines began to catalogue design ideas and present detailed plans and drawings for 'home-build projects' more frequently, providing lists of required materials and detailed instructions for readers to follow (Jackson, 2006: 60) (Figure 5.4). By the early 1970s, as Jackson (2006: 61) observes, increased levels of home ownership meant that '[h]ome improvement was no longer tackled only out of necessity, but ... as a means of establishing status and identity'. Atkinson (2006: 6) argues that do-it-yourself 'allowed people from a range of backgrounds ... to engage with modernist design principles' and that it was a kind of democratising activity.

From the 1960s, the practice of do-it-yourself was increasingly popularised as a leisure activity and as a hobby for men in particular (Atkinson, 2006).<sup>18</sup> Key to the identity of the post-war family man, the promotion of do-it-yourself as a recreational activity for men coincided with an increase in paid holiday periods and a reduction in the working week (Jackson, 2006). Jackson (2006: 61) claims that because 'men were expected to spend more time in the home', do-it-yourself enabled them to be both masculine and domestic and to partake in the private, mainly women's, sphere of the home 'without feeling emasculated'. Indeed, through do-it-yourself and activities of home improvement, men were able to 'sustain and reinforce their role as producers by labouring within the home' (Jackson, 2006: 62). The subsequent development of the home workshop – a 'new masculine space' in which to carry out domestic tasks (Gelber, 1997: 69) – provided further scope for 'spatial and functional autonomy' (Gelber, 1997: 69; Jackson, 2006: 61), and it was here where many men, husbands and fathers conceived, designed, constructed and developed their own furnishing ideas.

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<sup>17</sup> J. Coleman, 'A Nursery Grows Up: Jean Coleman Gives You a Preview of the Children in the Home Section of the South Bank Exhibition', *Mother*, May 1951, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Although written from an American perspective, see Gelber (1997) for an historical overview of the identification of domestic do-it-yourself activity with masculinity.

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*Figure 5.4* Pictorial instructions for making a 'desk-table'. Source: *Home* (April 1959: 45).

*Materialising Domestic Masculinity: A Home-Made Activity Table for Two (1966)*<sup>19</sup>

John Upfold was challenged with finding adequate storage, play and study space for his sons, Tony (aged eight) and Jonathan (aged ten). The brothers' shared bedroom (at approximately 182 square feet) had long struggled to house their growing stockpile of possessions and to provide room for their games and homework. An architect by trade, and therefore merging the world of work with the domestic, John applied his training to the task, resolving the children's spatial problems by designing and constructing two simple pieces of furniture himself: a bedhead unit, which doubled as storage boxes, and a play-and-work table. Produced within the home workshop, the first weekend creation to be installed in the bedroom was the bedhead unit, conceived so as not to swallow up the boys' limited floor space with repository chests. Made from wood and faced in washable PVC material, this new assemblage was placed behind the boys' beds, replacing their headboards and fitting neatly between their wardrobes (Figure 5.5). John divided the unit into three compartments of equal size, providing each brother with his own bedhead cubby-hole for the keeping of personal belongings, comics and drawings, with shared stowage in the middle. Between the two beds, a bookshelf was added to hold the boys' bedtime reading, for which individual wall lights were fitted (Figure 5.6). The ceiling

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<sup>19</sup> 'Room for Two', *My Home and Family*, October 1966, 36-37.

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*Figure 5.5* A plan of the Upfold boys' bedroom. Source: *My Home and Family* (October 1966: 36).

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*Figure 5.6* The bedhead unit designed by John Upfold. Source: *My Home and Family* (October 1966: 37).

above was 'lined with tongued-and-grooved cedar boarding' to create 'an added sense of unity', a theme which was evident within the work-and-play table concept. Placed along the wall opposite the two beds, the table took up the full length of the boys' bedroom, forming a continuous working-and-playing surface which was able to accommodate both brothers. Designed to be lifted to form a fixture of adult height for when the boys grew taller, the table was made from 'blockboard treated with Bourne Seal and edged with white-painted softwood'; a washbasin was also added 'to lessen bathroom congestion in the mornings'. Divided into two, the table was long enough for each boy to have his own section. Each had a kneehole (within which hooks were added for school satchels to hang), a stool (also presumably made at home) and an illuminating light. Each brother had his own two-shelf open cupboard incorporated into the table for the display of Meccano, model-kit creations, and Dinky and Matchbox models, and for storing school homework books (Figure 5.7). As John explained, because he did not 'know what the boys' lasting hobbies [would] be', he left much of the wall space of the bedroom 'free for display cases, pictures and yet more shelves' to be added in the future.<sup>20</sup>

Believed to strengthen and shore up the relationship between fathers and sons, do-it-yourself activity was considered 'a healthy way of building respect amongst the male members of the family' (Jackson, 2006: 62). For example, much contemporary writing advised that boys should observe their fathers working on household projects in order to learn do-it-yourself skills and competencies themselves. Regarded as inherently masculine, carpentry and woodwork were widely promoted as ideal hobbies for boys. Indeed, some made their own bedroom furniture with little or no paternal help (see below), though whether the Upfold brothers participated in the design and construction of their bedroom fitments is unclear.

More than simply an expression of masculinity or self-identity, however – and as illustrated by the stories featuring John Upfold and the couple restoring 'junk' for a first-time nursery – the fashioning and creation of children's bedrooms by parents was

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<sup>20</sup> For similar narratives that explore the processes, or 'doing', of do-it-yourself, see Gregson (2007), Shove *et al.* (2007), and Watson and Shove (2008).

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*Figure 5.7* The Upfold brothers doing school work at their play-and-work table. Source: *My Home and Family* (October 1966: 37).

an act of devotional love.<sup>21</sup> The altruism, time and physical energy involved in conceptualising space, gathering raw materials and crafting, repairing, finding and purchasing objects reveal the dominant role that love and affection for one's children played. Embodiments of the relationship between oneself and one's child and of wanting the best for one's children, objects within the bedroom – both home-made and shop bought – were products of much thought and planning. Reflecting the 'cult of the infant' (Miller, 1997: 70), the material shaping of a child's bedroom was not about specific objects *per se*, but was rather about the obtaining or making of goods and the imagining of their possession and use. For John Upfold, for example, the significance of his home-made furniture lay within the hypothesising of its usable and functional potential, his consideration of what the items could do for his children, and how increased storage space and a table might enhance their lives. Likewise, the young couple 'making over' unwanted pieces of furniture for a new nursery were untroubled by the decayed state of the second-hand objects that they had acquired; they chose to look beyond the objects' flaws and blemishes and toward the 'possibilities' that the items could offer their unborn child. As such, the value of bedroom objects lay within their making, selection, modification and restoration, practices designed to

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<sup>21</sup> See Miller (1998) for a similar argument that relates to routine and everyday shopping practices.

meet the needs and desires of children. The materialisation of bedrooms encapsulated by both stories also points toward parental satisfaction and pleasure despite the substantial work involved. Far from a burden or chore, and a way for parents to relate their role as carers for their children to material objects, do-it-yourself self-build assignments, the seeking out and opportune finding of new or used objects, and their subsequent appropriation or renewal proved to be enjoyable experiences. For instance, the couple expecting their first child hoped that their story of material transformation would inspire others ‘to make similar efforts’, arguing that readers would ‘enjoy it no end’.<sup>22</sup>

### Agents of Design: Accommodating (to) Small Spaces

Little rooms can have an endearing charm all their own. But to make the most of them calls for much careful planning and good taste ... and often for an extra dose of ingenuity as well, so as to include everything needed for comfort, without overcrowding. Little rooms can all too easily turn into little boxes, with walls that seem to close in, and nowhere to swing the proverbial cat.<sup>23</sup>

Expressed within the ever-popular *Good Housekeeping* magazine, the sentiment above was perhaps most applicable to children’s bedrooms. Owing to the building and occupation of smaller houses during the interwar and post-war periods, children generally inhabited the smallest rooms within the home (Burnett, 1986), and much creativity and resourcefulness was often required to realise the full potential of available space. Bedrooms were frequently fashioned within the most modest of spaces, therefore meaning that the placement, selection and build of individual objects, or the framing of space, involved a great deal of reflection and deliberation. Moreover, that bedrooms were to serve the ‘needs’ of children – namely, ‘fresh air and quiet, ... a good bed at night ... [and] space to play ... to work and so to learn’<sup>24</sup> – reinforced the idea that adequate material planning was vitally important, particularly if siblings were to share a bedroom. As demonstrated by John Upfold and the narrative of the

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Nursery Furniture from Next-to-Nothing’, 45.

<sup>23</sup> P. Luling, ‘Making Much of Little Rooms’, *Good Housekeeping*, January 1948, 28.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Henry’s Workshop’, 33.

home-made play-and-work table and bedhead storage boxes that he constructed for his two sons, innovation and improvisation were key prerequisites for tight confines. Novel solutions that contributed to the attainment of habitation and to the creation of liveable and, hence, usable rooms, intelligent designs and rational scheming – including both mass-marketed and home-crafted concepts – enabled for the stretching and amplification of finite and restrictive spaces. Indeed, as illustrated by the vignettes outlined and discussed below, foresight and imagination were key to bringing spaces into useful service.

*A Space-Saving Model Railway (1958)*<sup>25</sup>

In Hong Kong we lived in a large house, and the Marklin model railway layout we built was over 14 ft. long, and took up the whole of one side of a playroom; but when we returned to England and arrived at our little house in Oxfordshire, there was just not room for it anywhere. It was not the sort of model you can take out of its box, set up on a table and then put back again at bed-time. It needed space and could not be moved at a moment's notice.

Returning to a small English house after having lived in a significantly larger one overseas, schoolboy F.H.C. Birch, writing within the popular boys' monthly magazine *Boy's Own Paper*, expressed his disappointment at being unable to fit his model railway into his new bedroom. At nine feet long and eight feet wide, the dimensions of his bedroom were generally typical of interwar and post-war children's rooms. Not prepared to accept the spatial deficiencies of the room, however, and exercising a degree of ingenuity, the young Birch was inspired to create a new layout on a wooden platform which could be raised to the ceiling when not in use.

On a miserably wet and windy day (just the sort of day for playing with trains) towards the end of the holidays, I was removing some washing from the clothes drier in the kitchen, when an

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<sup>25</sup> F.H.C. Birch, 'This Model Railway Saves Space', *Boy's Own Paper*, September 1958, 20-21.

idea 'clicked'. As I hoisted the drier back into position, it occurred to me that it might, perhaps, be possible to arrange a layout in a bedroom on the same principle, and to pull it up out of the way when the room was needed for other things. The more I thought about it, the more certain I became that this would be the answer to the problem.

After measurements were taken and a theoretical re-arrangement of his furniture was complete, Birch set to work on his 'up-and-down model railway'. With no workshop of his own, and presumably with his parents' permission, he built the basic structure for the concept within his bedroom. The base for his railway was constructed from 'hardboard mounted on a soft-wood framework' of horizontal and vertical cross-members; the track was firmly fixed to the top, and the wiring was soldered into place underneath. Designed to rest on his bed, and further supported through the use of 'two ex-Army iron trestles', the board had a large hole cut out of it to allow Birch to sit and control his trains from inside the layout (Figure 5.8), and ropes were attached to enable the set to be hoisted into the up position for when play was over. To hold the set aloft, the ropes were tied to cleats screwed into the wall panelling, and a strip of wood was nailed to the front of a built-in cupboard to prevent it from 'crashing down' on to the bed below (Figure 5.9).

At bed-time, or when the layout has to be moved for some reason, engines and rolling stock are put away and the base, complete with layout, is raised up to the ceiling. ... The trestles are then stowed in a corner, and the room is ready for normal use.

...

... The up-and-down model-railway layout works perfectly.

The short story of F.H.C. Birch's self-conceived and innovative home-made suspended train set highlights the peculiarities associated with dwelling and everyday habitation in general. Appropriating space and turning it toward certain ends, Birch's

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*Figure 5.8* F.H.C. Birch and his space-saving model railway. Source: *Boy's Own Paper* (September 1958: 21).

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*Figure 5.9* The model railway in the up position. Source: *Boy's Own Paper* (September 1958: 21).

making and installing of the model railway reflects a wider process of accommodating, or laying claim to, domestic space (see Miller, 1988, 2001a, 2002b; Gregson, 2007). Having moved into an alienating environment, one marked perhaps by traces of its former inhabitants and their past lives (see Miller, 2001c; Gregson, 2007), Birch illustrates how domestic space is made meaningful through material, emotional, social and imaginative activities; he also demonstrates how the home is made 'suitable for the relationships we have with ourselves and with other people' (Miller, 2002b: 124). Making his mark on his new bedroom with his model trains, a key constituent of his identity and personality, Birch shows how individuals make themselves at home and draws attention to the significance of material objects within the process. An example of 'expressive agency [and] an explicit assertion of the currently habiting self' (Gregson, 2007: 52), the building and putting together of the model railway helped to create and reinforce the sense that the room now belonged to him. Finding space for his trains enabled Birch to inscribe himself within the space, to transfer and recover something of his former life in Hong Kong, and to establish some normality and familiarity within an otherwise strange and unfamiliar place.

Whilst the story of Birch and his model trains encapsulates how individuals work to make dwellings accommodating, it also underlines the agency of dwellings themselves and how they affect and shape 'the limits to the possible' (Gregson, 2007: 34). Indeed, Birch illustrates that accommodating is not simply about appropriating space to suit the self, but that it also involves 'adapting [oneself and one's things] to the needs and sensibility of the house' (Miller, 2002b: 124). The agency of dwelling structures in structuring the lives of their inhabitants is often considered in relation to the longevity of homes and material culture. For example, Miller (2001c) examines how residents of period properties sometimes feel pressured to stay faithful to original decorative styles when making aesthetic choices, and Gregson (2007) explores how individuals accommodate themselves to new homes and to the things left behind by former occupants. Beyond longevity, however, Birch shows that 'estate agency' (Miller, 2001b: 9) lies not only within the age of dwelling structures and the material remnants of former inhabitants, but also within the dimensions and boundaries that fix and constitute space. Birch, for instance, had to rethink and change how he played with his trains in order to satisfy the more restricted confines of his new bedroom and had to design and build a new track layout as the room would not accommodate the one previously used in Hong Kong.

A creative design determined and mediated by the size and shape of available space, Birch's model railway reflects the complexity of fashioning and materialising a bedroom within a confined space. A compromise that epitomises the negotiation between individual agents and 'estate agents', it testifies to the effects of the 'ordering schemes' of spaces upon inhabitants and material objects (Miller, 2001b: 11). Like the making of the train set, creating a bedroom for a child within a small space was not only about the accommodation, or appropriation, of the space, but was also about accommodating to the space itself. For example, Figure 5.10 – a show room set up within a studio as part of a feature published within *Good Housekeeping* – illustrates how the crafting of a bedroom involved both the materialising of space to support a child's needs and adjusting to the limitations of space. Addressing the concern that 'there [was often] no extra room [in small houses] that [could] be set aside especially for the children's use', the room depicted demonstrated how other rooms could be divided for the purpose and how small alcoves could be adapted to form combined bedrooms, playrooms and studies.<sup>26</sup> Planned, shaped and arranged for effective use, the alcove room is forged from an existing room by means of a simple wooden partition and is made up of several space-saving and combination furniture units, items strategically placed to make the most of the available space and specifically designed with the space in mind. Actualising the potential of the room, the material frame is schemed to provide adequate space for a child's play, work and sleep activities but is influenced and shaped by the spatial fixity of the alcove. Along the left-hand wall, a small settee, forming a place for relaxation during the day, is designed to transform into a bed at night (Figure 5.11), its removable cushions reflecting the value of multi-functional furniture within tight confines. A table for painting, writing and the construction of model kits lies beneath the window and can be pulled out and moved into any position (Figures 5.12 and 5.13), and a writing desk for school homework is fitted to the right-hand wall. The desk is hinged and able to fold flush against the wall when not in use, and when in the down position, much like a writing bureau, it reveals shelves, drawers and pigeonholes for the storage of exercise books, stationary and school equipment (Figure 5.14). The room also contains a small wardrobe, built-in cupboards for storing personal possessions, pillows and bed linen, a drawer unit that doubles as a bedhead at night, and recessed shelves for the display of favourite things.

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<sup>26</sup> 'A Miniature Room for a Miniature Man', *Good Housekeeping*, November 1936, 26.

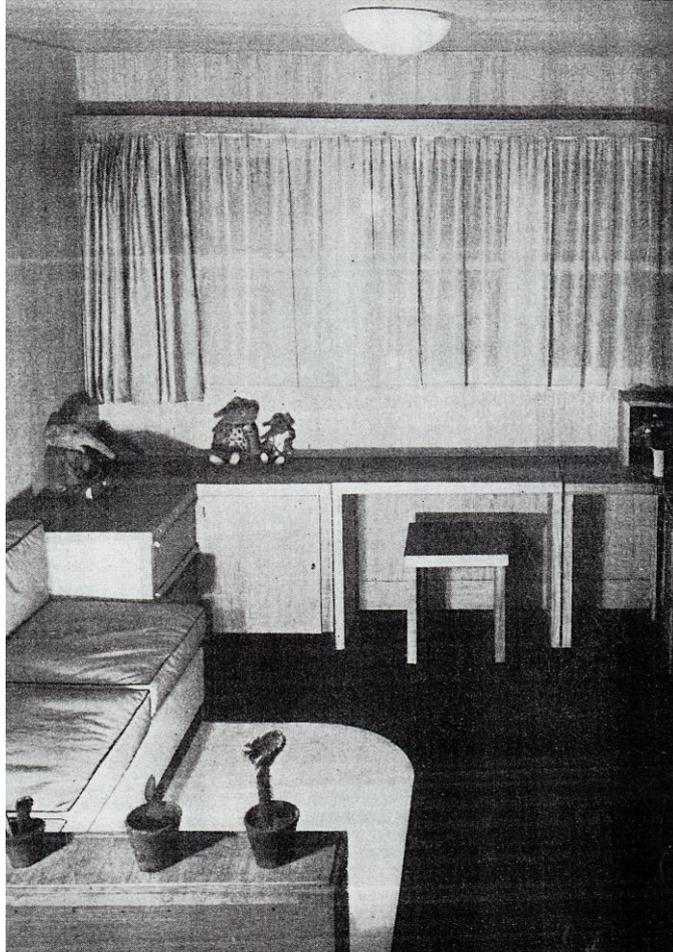


Figure 5.10 'A Miniature Room for a Miniature Man'. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (November 1936: 26).

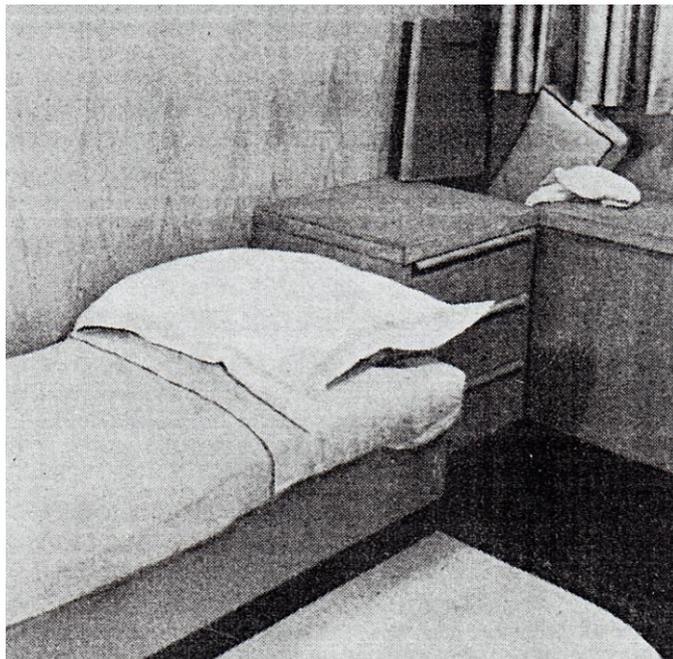


Figure 5.11 A bed by night, but a sofa by day. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (November 1936: 27).

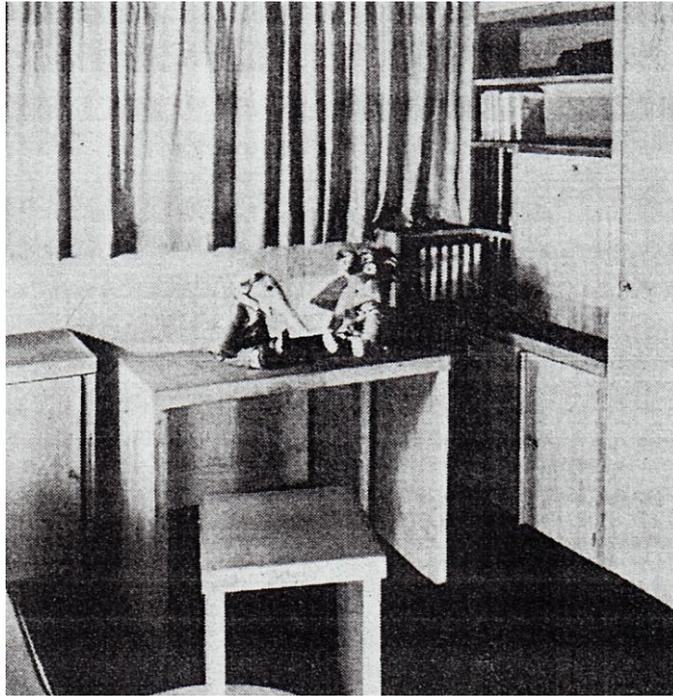


Figure 5.12 The movable table. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (November 1936: 27).



Figure 5.13 The movable table pulled out for play. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (November 1936: 26).

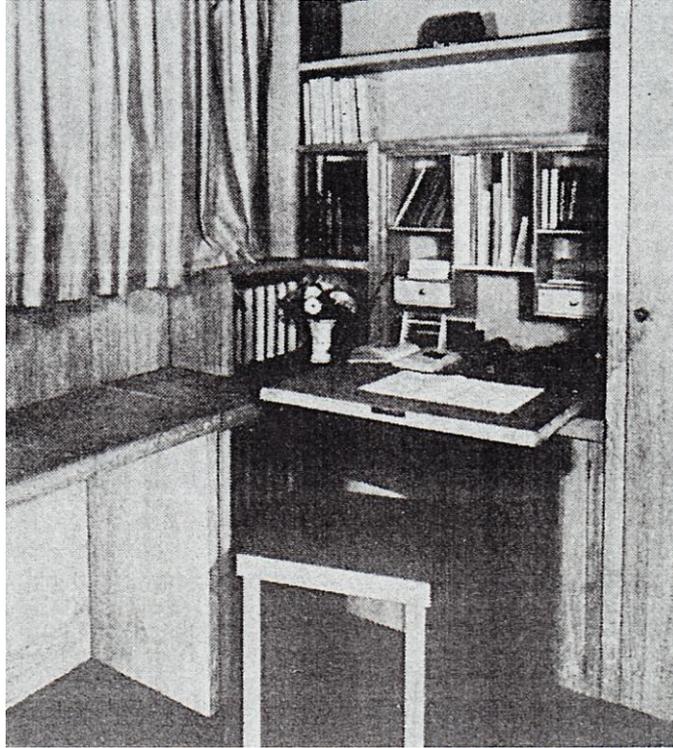


Figure 5.14 A foldaway writing desk. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (November 1936: 27).

Encapsulating, in many ways, the essence of the accommodating process, such furniture enabled diminutive and restrictive spaces to be brought into useful service. Collapsible, movable, foldaway and built-in beds, cupboard units and desks, amongst other practical and functional items, allowed children to be housed not only in small rooms or in partitions or alcoves of rooms already in use, but also in even tighter spaces, including landings (Figure 5.15) and areas under stairs (Figure 5.16). Whether shop bought or home-made, such intelligent design enabled ‘rooms’, whatever their size or shape, to realise their full use potential by opening up space for play, sleep and work. Designed to fulfil a specific purpose, all items were to support some aspect of a child’s everyday life and were intended to facilitate the inhabitation of space. Inducing a state of ‘ongoing temporality’ (Gregson, 2007: 35), the mutability and flexible nature of objects defined what action was possible and when, influenced the character of spaces and transformed the look and physical appearance of rooms. For example, furniture engineered to fold tight to walls not only freed up much-needed living space when out of use and in the up position, but also produced clean and uninterrupted lines and surfaces and, like the desk above, often concealed and shut away other objects, thus creating additional storage space. Furthermore,

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*Figure 5.15* An article describing how a couple created a bedroom for a small girl on an upstairs landing. Source: *Mother* (December 1965: 77).

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*Figure 5.16* A sketch of a bedroom created under the stairs. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (July 1962: 35).

unanchored, or mobile, objects, such as tables and chairs, were able to be repositioned in order to suit the spatial requirements demanded by different activities, whilst other items were designed to be multifunctional and to have two or more purposes. For instance, the bed – the object which lent the bedroom its name and the one with the largest spatial footprint – was frequently required to have separate day and night functions. Within the alcove room above, for example, the bed was also a sofa that hid its night-time capability during the day; it was conceived to provide a quiet and private place for daytime relaxation and reading but was to morph in the evening through the removal of seat cushions and the laying of bed linen and pillows. Moreover, fold-away beds – an innovation with a long history of opening up space for sleep (see Collins Cromley, 1990, 1992; Cieraad, 2005) – and bunk beds, for when rooms had to be shared, were common spatial solutions for children’s bedrooms.<sup>27</sup>

*Eric and Carl’s Versatile Foldaway Beds (1966)*<sup>28</sup>

Wanting to create a bedroom-cum-playroom for their two young sons, Eric (aged four) and Carl (aged two), Gerry and Phyllis Ingersoll found room for both night-time sleep and daytime play within a space that was only eight feet square through the use of foldable bunk beds. Designed by the boys’

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<sup>27</sup> For an interesting study on the history of the bed, see Carlano and Sumberg (2006).

<sup>28</sup> D. Simmons, ‘Bedroom into Playroom’, *Mother*, February 1966, 90-91.

father and made by a 'local metal shop', the beds provided a novel and original spatial solution for sharing brothers. Fixed to the wall to maximise floor space for boyish games and activities, but also to ensure that the room was easy to keep clean, the beds were able to hang in three separate positions. The bunks were multifunctional and could be placed upright at a normal angle ready for sleep, be folded flush against the wall to generate more day space, or be suspended upside down. The beds were 'made from pine and plywood, in a simple tray-like construction'; the three-way movement was achieved by attaching swing brackets to the ends of each bunk, which in turn were connected to supporting wall brackets with conduit piping. The beds were adult sized and made to grow with the boys, therefore saving their parents any future expense related to their modification. The top bunk belonged to older brother Eric. Because he was sleeping up high, '[a] movable, locking safety panel' of stained wood was fitted to the side of his bed to prevent night-time tumbles, and he loved climbing upstairs to bed with teddy and his bedtime reading via a wooden ladder which was screwed to the wall. Whilst the bottom bunk formed Carl's cosy bed at night, the boys' mother would sometimes turn it into the upside-down position during the daytime to create an additional playing surface. A space for the brothers to play on together, individually or with friends, the bunk was regularly transformed into a Meccano construction site, a road for toy cars and a riverbank on which to fish for magnetic creatures that swam between the cork tiles on the floor (see Figures 5.17 and 5.18).

An item of furniture that provided children's rooms with a unique character, the bunk bed facilitated the sharing of bedrooms – an arrangement often required within compact housing and flats – and afforded children their own personal spaces and beds for sleeping. The bunk bed was widely promoted as an ideal object for confined spaces, and its use was seemingly inspired by the sleeping berths of ships and naval vessels. Within magazines, for example, bunk beds were generally associated with sailing and the sea; articles often presented spaces schemed around the object and displayed themed rooms that reflected the look and style of ships' cabins. For boys' rooms, in particular, magazines frequently suggested that parents apply wooden

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*Figure 5.17* The beds positioned for sleep. Source: *Mother* (February 1966: 90).

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*Figure 5.18* The beds folded to support the boys' play. Source: *Mother* (February 1966: 91).

panelling or appropriately patterned wallpaper to walls and ceilings to imitate pine planking and that they dress rooms with nautical-related items to create an authentic cabin feel (see Figure 5.19). Bed manufacturers also played upon the maritime and pirate theme within advertisements; H.S. Fraser Ltd, for instance, made the Long John bunk unit, and beds were frequently advertised and imaginatively presented as seafaring vessels in which children could sail away to adventures located in the land of Nod (see Figure 5.20). Like climbing the rigging on a ship, climbing the ladder to go to bed was likened to an adventure in itself, and bunk beds were promoted as a means to smooth the often-troublesome process of putting a child to bed. For example, exhibiting the Long John bunk unit, *Good Housekeeping* declared that '[c]hildren love going "upstairs to bed" when the stairs are a ladder and the bed a bunk'.<sup>29</sup> Bunk beds were also designed to grow with children and were sometimes fashioned from twin beds which could be separated as their occupants became older and as their interests changed.

*A Ship's Cabin (1954)*<sup>30</sup>

Living in a small flat on a London square, writers Jack and Dorothy Davies were unable to provide a spacious bedroom for their two growing sons, and, with restricted floor space, the boys had to share a small box room. Though the flat was not their main home and had been purchased because of the need to be in the capital for work, Mr and Mrs Davies were determined to create a home-from-home for their sons despite the limited dimensions of the boys' bedroom. Because the room was unable to accommodate two single beds, a two-tier bunk bed was acquired, which created the feel of a ship's cabin, and was stained light blue to match the sea-blue walls. Three built-in drawers below the bed provided ample storage space and helped to keep the room tidy, uncluttered and in shipshape; each brother, presumably, had his own drawer for hoarding treasures and keeping bounties and shared another, perhaps for the safekeeping of clothes.

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<sup>29</sup> J. Sturdy (ed.), 'Chosen for Child's Play', *Good Housekeeping*, May 1958, 75.

<sup>30</sup> D. Davies, 'Our Flat in a London Square', *Good Housekeeping*, September 1954, 60-61.

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*Figure 5.19* An article describing how to fashion a boy's room in the style of a ship's cabin. Source: *My Home* (February 1940: 31).

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*Figure 5.20* Bosun Bunk advertisement. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (July 1962: 7).

Reinforcing the seafaring and cabin idea, the boys' curtains depicted ships of the Royal Navy from the fourteenth century onward (see Figure 5.21).

### **The Gendering of Rooms**

The materiality of a child's bedroom was also to reflect and point to the gender of its occupant. Initiated at the turn of the twentieth century, the idea that boys' and girls' bedrooms should be visually distinct and identifiable developed from psychological theories regarding the innate differences between the sexes (Calvert, 1992b; Leavitt, 2002). Previously housed within a gender-neutral, communal nursery, children were now expected to have a bedroom of their own or to share a space with a sibling of the same sex, and their rooms came to exhibit a range of gendered codes and symbols (Calvert, 1992b). Further testifying to the belief that the environment impacted upon individual character and taste (see Chapter Four), these markers were also to socialise children into an appropriate image of boyhood and girlhood and to furnish them with certain desired traits of masculinity and femininity (Leavitt, 2002).

According to Cieraad (2007), the distinct variation in the look of boys' and girls' bedrooms was influenced by the sexual segregation of the nineteenth-century upper-class house. Children were believed to be men and women in miniature, and their rooms came to reflect the domains of their adult counterparts: boys' rooms were akin to studies, and girls' rooms resembled marital bedrooms (Cieraad, 2007). Like these spaces, boys' rooms contained plain and simple wooden or metal furniture, and walls were decorated with dark tones of red, blue and brown, whilst girls' rooms were furnished with dainty and ornate wooden furniture and coloured with pastel shades of white, pink and pale blue.<sup>31</sup>

### **A Boy's World**

Boys' bedrooms, or 'dens', were often identified within magazines by the presence of a ship or a sailing boat. Depicted in wall friezes and pictures, present on bedspreads and curtains, or models proudly displayed upon drawer units and tables, ships played an important and inspirational role in shaping bedrooms. As seen, the Davies brothers drew upon a nautical theme when designing their bedroom and referred to their room

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<sup>31</sup> As Leavitt (2002) observes, the associating of colour with gender is a relatively recent phenomenon.

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*Figure 5.21* The Davies boys' 'cabin'. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (September 1954: 61).

as the 'cabin'. Magazines similarly played upon the idea of the ship's cabin when presenting decorative schemes and concepts for boys' bedrooms; for example, hand-drawn illustrations of rooms frequently depicted bunk beds, porthole-style window fittings, treasure chests and fake wooden planking for walls and ceilings (see Figure 5.19). Symbolic of exploration and discovery (Calvert, 1992b; Cieraad, 2007), the ship and the cabin reflected the preparatory function of children's bedrooms. Pointing toward a possible future career, both denoted that a boy's destiny lay within the public domain (Cieraad, 2007). Indeed, beyond such maritime theming, traces of the outside world saturated boys' bedrooms. Spaces were littered with toy cars, planes and trains; cricket bats, tennis rackets and other sports equipment were proudly displayed alongside competition trophies; and informal collections of sticks, stones and other jam-jar riches were often present (see Figure 5.22).

Bedrooms were also to be furnished with a boy's youthful energy and active disposition in mind (Leavitt, 2002). Dictated by the common perception that boys held destructive tendencies and that they were prone to rough and boisterous behaviour – for example, Henry's mother described her son's frequent bed 'bouncings and

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*Figure 5.22* A sketch of a boy's bedroom. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (October 1946: 28-29).

somersaults'<sup>32</sup> – all furniture was to be strong and hard-wearing (Leavitt, 2002). Constructed from robust wood or metal, and avoiding any intricate decorative detail, furnishing was simple in character and valued for its practicality; for instance, the Ingersoll brothers' folding bunk beds were relatively simple in design and were engineered not only to support the boys' sleep, but also their lively play.

The adoption of a suitable hobby, or distraction, was considered an ideal means for a boy to dispel his energy. Alluding to a sentiment of play as work, and combined with a psychology of relaxation (Cross, 1997), most bedrooms contained a workbench or some kind of activity table. An item designed to promote and encourage creativity and imagination, the table transformed boys' bedrooms into workshops. Production lines supporting a variety of craft performances, from carpentry and woodwork to drawing, painting and the assembling of popular model kits, activity tables were central to boys' everyday bedroom experiences. As seen, one dominated

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<sup>32</sup> 'Henry's Workshop', 33.

the landscape of the bedroom inhabited by the Upfold brothers, whilst a smaller version was an important component of Henry's lively room. They also allowed little men to make their own mark on space and furnished their practising of do-it-yourself activity in preparation for their future role as producers and handyman husbands. Indeed, the products of boys' table endeavours were visibly evident, from the impressive wooden structure carved by Birch for his trains to the more modest Airfix planes displayed upon the Upfolds' window pelmet and the artwork 'fastened securely, if crookedly, on [Henry's] bedroom walls'.<sup>33</sup> However, bearing in mind that a boy's future lay within the public world of work, tables were also to further intellectual study. Recreational workbenches therefore often doubled as homework, or study, desks, or a dedicated version was provided where there was sufficient bedroom space. Within many magazines, desks were equipped with typewriters and stationery and were akin to offices, and, further highlighting the importance of a boy's education, globes, microscopes and bookshelves were often depicted (Calvert, 1992b).

### A Girl's World

Decorated and furnished to complement and reflect a girl's growing femininity, girls' bedrooms were similarly to present an authentic representation of gendered life and train occupants for the future. Whilst boys' bedrooms pointed toward the outside and the public world of work, girls' bedrooms were more inward looking and testified to girls' future domestic roles as housewives and mothers. As a girl would eventually be responsible for the decoration of her marital home, her bedroom was to teach her about taste, refinement and sophistication. Girls' bedrooms were therefore subject to much decorative evaluation and were required to meet a specific visual, or aesthetic, criterion: they were to be festooned with attractive and decorative ornamentation and were to be made cosy and comfortable (Leavitt, 2002).

The typical girl's bedroom, as depicted by magazines, was a fusion of carpets, rugs and draperies and was generally characterised by textiles, ruffles, frills and other delicate touches which softened and rounded hard edges and surfaces (Calvert, 1992b; Leavitt, 2002; Cieraad, 2007) (see Figure 5.23). Though *Woman and Home* reported that 'fussy' and cluttered '[f]rills and flounces [were no longer] with it' in 1964, the character of girls' bedrooms and the type of furniture within remained rather constant

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

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*Figure 5.23* A sketch of a girl's bedroom. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (January 1947: 30).

(Calvert, 1992b).<sup>34</sup> Wooden, elaborate in style and often painted white or in light pastel shades, girls' furniture was usually of a high quality and stylish in design (Calvert, 1992b; Cieraad, 2007). Whilst the workbench was an important fixture within boys' bedrooms, the equivalent article for girls was the vanity, or dressing, table, a surface populated by large mirrors, hairbrushes, combs, cosmetics, perfume bottles and other beauty accessories. Whether a separate unit with drawers and a stool for sitting or fashioned from the top of a chest of drawers or from a spare windowsill, the dressing table reflected both the present and future significance of beauty and fashion for a girl. It enabled girls to practise and experiment with their personal appearances and to gain the relevant skills needed to make themselves beautiful, an ability which would define their future married and social lives.

Unlike the workbenches or activity tables in boys' bedrooms, dressing tables seldom doubled as homework, or study, desks, reinforcing the notion that a girl's des-

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<sup>34</sup> 'Teenager's Haven ...', *Woman and Home*, March 1964, 48.

tiny lay within the domestic sphere. Because it was believed that ‘a girl’s future would not be defined by education and career as much as by a culturally defined air of femininity’ (Calvert, 1992b: 88), separate desks and bookshelves were also frequently absent from depictions of girls’ rooms, as was any suggestion of outside pastimes or interests. Indeed, the sports equipment, informal collections of random things and other hobbyist material items which littered boys’ bedrooms were generally missing. Instead, rooms often contained objects which were to help girls rehearse and refine their domestic skills, including such things as dolls, doll’s houses, sewing kits and tea sets (Cross, 1997).

*A Miniature Kitchen (1937)*<sup>35</sup>

Wanting to instil within her eight-year-old daughter ‘a talent for cooking and domestic work’, Mrs Walton had a carpenter transform an old dresser, which was previously a nursery toy cupboard, into a miniature kitchen unit. Forming a dedicated cooking cupboard, the top of the dresser was removed and hinges were fixed to the back to create a lid which could open and close; small wooden ‘stays’, or props, were also attached to stop the lid from falling shut when the cupboard was in use. The top shelf of the dresser became a work area for the preparation and mixing of ingredients, and wipeable oil cloth in ‘a blue-and-white tiled pattern’ was tacked on to the surface as a precaution against spills and accidents. To lift the unit to an appropriate height for a young girl, Mrs Walton acquired some sturdy fruit boxes from a greengrocer and installed them underneath. Once the dresser’s transformation was complete, the mini-kitchen needed to be stocked with appropriate tools and equipment. Hoping that her daughter would become competent in cake-making and baking, Mrs Walton bought pastry boards, rolling pins and pastry cutters, cake tins, basins, pie dishes and baking moulds, and even a small electric oven. To enable mother and daughter to cook together and to share in the enjoyment of creating new dishes, at least ‘two of everything’ was acquired, and knives, forks, spoons and plates catered for family feasts and bedroom banquets with friends.

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Planning a Playroom’, *Good Housekeeping*, March 1937, 26-29, 126, 128.

Mrs Walton placed some screw-top jars and tins along the back of the working shelf and filled them with ingredients from her own kitchen, whilst pans, some weighing scales and a cookery book were stored on the bottom shelf. Described by *Good Housekeeping* as an 'ingenious idea for a girl, and one which has definite educational value', Mrs Walton's self-commissioned kitchenette was declared a great success, for the little girl learnt how to bake scones, apple tarts and sponge cakes. Though the girl was responsible for keeping the kitchenette clean and tidy, Mrs Walton did, however, lend 'a sympathetic hand when her [daughter's] efforts ... led to a big pile of washing up' (see Figure 5.24).

### **Conclusion**

In many ways, children's bedrooms during the interwar and post-war periods were the epitome of negotiation and compromise. Because bedrooms were to house children throughout childhood, they were to accommodate for both present and future needs and were in a constant state of flux and material adjustment; for example, beds were generally adult sized to allow children to grow into them, and desks were often height adjustable. Rooms were also characterised by a mentality of 'make-do and mend', and home-made objects frequently substituted for costly and sometimes-unavailable mass-marketed items. Often fashioned wherever available space could be found or sacrificed, bedrooms were typically small and confined, and their inhabitation usually involved some kind of compromise to individual desire or modification to everyday living. Furthermore, bedrooms were symbolic of the negotiation between parents and children. Although the bedroom was widely recognised as the child's domain within the home, parents generally held a controlling stake and had the final say over what was allowed to take place within and how the space was to be materially organised. For example, Henry's mother acknowledged that her son would play and make a mess within his bedroom, yet this was to occur only on her terms; alluding to the potential for conflict, Henry was to pack his toys away at bedtime and help her to keep his room tidy. Moreover, the frequent need for children to share a bedroom was perhaps a source for sibling conflict and no doubt produced a further need for negotiation and compromise.

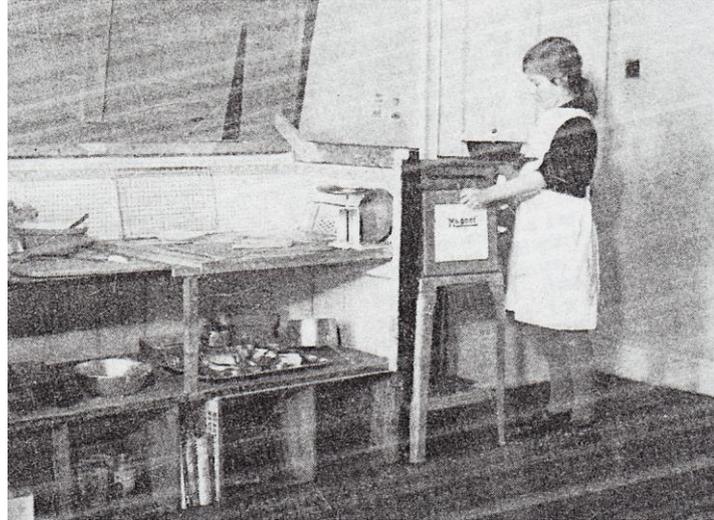


Figure 5.24 A bedroom kitchenette. Source: *Good Housekeeping* (March 1937: 29).

Magazines not only imagined children's rooms, but also engaged with a reality by featuring and depicting the homes of readers and writers and the bedrooms of their children. Whilst this has enabled the chapter to open doors and explore the material culture of 'actual' rooms, it also allowed contemporary readers to do a similar thing; they were able to read about people like themselves and examine children's bedrooms in detail. Gaining an insight into the lives of other people, they learnt how individuals had fashioned rooms for children, how they had furnished spaces and made furniture from scratch, and how they had overcome issues such as those associated with cost and limited space. From this perspective, it is possible to see that the materialising, or crafting, of bedrooms was even more of a mediated process. Indeed, magazines provided readers with suggestions and helpful hints rather than instructional advice, and individuals were free to follow or ignore what they read of their own accord.

## 6.

# Bedrooms, Picture Books and Dreaming, c. 1963-Present

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A bedroom scene is generative: from it springs a certain question-marked figure of the child, the designated offspring we are invited to read about, along with that child's story or fabula and the picture book itself, which, like a notepad ... opening after opening, under the covers, reveals what we readers both fear and desire to *see* and to *know*, as proposed by the title of the book.

(Moebius, 1991: 53, original emphasis)

Engrossed in his bedtime reading, Edward embarks upon a daring adventure without leaving the comfort of his bedroom (see Figure 6.1). Spurring his imagination and transforming the landscape of his room, his reading book, *Lost Pirate Treasure*, transports him to another world of high seas and drama. As Edward turns the pages and loses himself within the plot of the story, his bedroom is increasingly submerged beneath an ocean of fantasy, and all semblance of reality disappears as the water rises around him. As the world of the book spills from the page, his bed becomes a pirate ship sailing 'on stormy seas' (McPhail, 1997: 11). With waves crashing down on to the deck, Captain Edward and his trusty teddy-bear first mate bravely steer the ship and attempt to keep her on course as she rolls and tumbles. Beginning a voyage of discovery, Edward navigates through the rough seas, and, as he starts to drift off into sleep, the mighty galleon carries him ever closer to the dream world where he will unearth lost treasure and meet fearsome pirates.

An enchanting picture-book illustration taken from David McPhail's (1997) *Edward and the Pirates* – a delightful tale that describes the pleasures of reading, the 'power' of a child's imagination and a boy's night-time encounter with pirates (book-jacket flap) – Figure 6.1, described above, encapsulates the relationship that many children have with their bedrooms. An exquisite portrait of a young boy reading in bed before sleep, it draws attention to the fantasy and 'inner drama' that children may experience within the privacy of their bedrooms (Spitz, 1999: 125). It also illustrates

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*Figure 6.1* The fantastical effects of bedroom reading. Source: McPhail (1997: 11-12).

how books act as tools of reverie, as well as the ability of words and images to arouse and inspire captivating ‘clouds of make-believe’ (Spitz, 1999: 1) into which children may escape and exercise their imaginations.

This chapter explores how picture books reflect the imaginative geographies that shape and define children’s everyday bedroom experiences. With a particular focus upon post-Second World War texts, both timeless classics and relatively recent titles are examined in which bedrooms feature as important story settings or as key plot elements. It reflects upon the role of bedrooms within individual stories and considers how certain scenes, situations and plotlines potentially resonate with both child and adult readers. A unique structure of words and illustrations (Nodelman, 1988), the picture book is approached as a text and as an object which is specifically read or used within the bedroom. Although others have studied the picture-book genre, and some have analysed the same titles under examination here, the significance of the picture-book bedroom, where present, is generally overlooked, and the space is often lost within readings that explore and identify other themes and ideas (for an exception, see Moebius, 1991). In focusing upon the bedroom, however, this chapter brings the space to the forefront of analysis and fully acknowledges its importance as a story element, or device. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the texts explored within this chapter reflect the gender-specific nature of the picture-book genre in that the majority of the characters that feature are male. As others have observed, children’s fiction

is ‘predominantly male in [its] *dramatis personae*’, and some have suggested that this betrays a tendency of society to associate childhood with maleness (Jones, 1999: 124). However, as one cannot argue that the picture books here are addressed only to boys and that girls do not read them (see Spitz, 1999), the bedrooms depicted are thought to speak to both boys and girls.

This chapter is divided into three analytical sections. With reference to the ritual of bedtime reading – an affectionate and tender activity that underscores the relationship between parents and children (Spitz, 1999) – the first section examines how picture books work as bedtime stories that prepare children for sleep. An in-depth reading of Margaret Wise Brown’s (1975 [1947]) classic bedtime story *Goodnight Moon* opens up the bedroom and bedtime scene depicted and considers how a sense of connection is established with those reading or listening to the story in the real world. Reflecting upon the defining features of picture books and the calming influence of the bedtime story, it explores how the child character within represents child readers, and examines how the bedroom depicted synchronises with real-life rooms and bed-times in an attempt to alleviate children’s fears and anxieties about going to bed. The second section of the chapter reviews how the bedroom is presented as a borderland between reality and fantasy, a mediating space that leads into and out of parallel worlds (Moebius, 1991). Split into two parts, it first analyses how the bedroom is portrayed as both a source and an end point for fantastical night-time flights of fantasy. Focusing particularly upon John Burningham’s (2003) *The Magic Bed* and Randall Jarrell’s (1977) *Fly by Night*, it explores how the dream sequences within each book work to promote sleep whilst also reassuring child readers who may be afraid of possible nightmares. The second part deliberates upon the significance of daydreams that originate within the bedroom. Through a detailed reading of Maurice Sendak’s (1967) *Where the Wild Things Are*, it argues that fantasy renders the bedroom a space of possibility, and examines how the book encourages children to look upon the bedroom as a space where they can achieve their innermost desires and deal with their fears and frustrations (Lanes, 1980; Spitz, 1999). The third section of the chapter examines the presence of imaginary creatures within the bedroom itself, further illustrating that much of the space is a secret world that remains invisible to all but the inhabiting child. Syd Hoff’s (1979) *The Horse in Harry’s Room* provides the foundation for a discussion of imaginary bedroom friends, before Mercer Mayer’s (1976) *There’s a Nightmare in My Cupboard* leads the chapter back toward bedtime and a considera-

tion of the phenomena of unknown life forms lurking in dark corners and monsters hiding under beds. It reveals how the books invite children and parents to reflect upon their individual behaviour, and how children are given confidence to face their night-time anxieties (Spitz, 1999). First, however, the chapter provides a brief introduction to picture books.

### **Picture Books: A Brief Introduction**

Usually aimed at a younger audience, picture books ‘communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no texts at all’ (Nodelman, 1988: vii).<sup>1</sup> As is distinctive of the genre, pictures generally fill the page and hold and transmit most of the detail of a story, as the text, if there is any, is often brief and concise (Nodelman, 1988). The ‘essence of the picture book’, however, lies in the relationship between the words and the illustrations (Sipe, 1998: 97); both are required for a narrative to progress and develop and must work together (Nodelman, 1988). Nodelman (1988: viii) observes that ‘the words and the pictures in picture books both define and amplify each other’ and that their interaction contributes to ‘unique rhythms, unique conventions of shape and structure, [and] a unique body of narrative techniques’. Indeed, Hunt (2001: 288, original emphasis) argues that ‘[t]o read picture books ... we have to adjust our *pace* and manner of reading and to relate non-linear “reading” of the picture to linear processing of words’. For example, whilst pictures may illustrate the meaning of words and fill in on any missing detail (Nodelman, 1988; Sipe, 1998), he explains that they sometimes contradict the text and create confusion or ignore it and present an entirely different story. Moreover, and reflecting the innocence and young age of their primary readers, picture books are often noted for their educational benefits and for teaching children about the ways of the world and society (Nodelman, 2004). As Nodelman (2004: 157) notes, picture

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<sup>1</sup> To some extent, the origins of the modern picture book can be traced to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and to the distinguished work of such illustrators and storytellers as Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, Arthur Rackham, Randolph Caldecott and Beatrix Potter (Nodelman, 1988; Hunt, 2001). Although earlier texts existed, Nodelman (1988: 2) claims that the popularity of the illustrated books produced by these artists inspired many others to create their own examples and led to ‘the foundation of a whole [new] genre of storytelling’. For the most part, however, the modern picture book, in Britain at least, is a product of the post-Second World War period (Hunt, 2001). Though many picture books were published between the wars, particularly in the United States (Hunt, 2001), they were produced in even greater numbers from the 1950s, mainly because of technological improvements in colour printing and the production process (Hunt, 1994). For a broader history of the development of the picture book, see Doonan (1996) and Anstey and Bull (2004).

books illustrate ‘what the world implied by the words looks like’, and children learn about ‘the world outside the book in terms of the images within it’.

### **Time for Bed: The Bedtime Story**

Children ... need rooms of their own, places – whether real or imaginary – of peace and well-being and unconditional love, places where a secure sense of self can begin to grow.

(Marcus, 1997, cited in Galbraith, 1998: 176)

A defining feature of the picture book is ‘the drama of the turning of the page’ (Bader, 1976: 1, cited in Moebius, 1991: 53). Works of ‘verbal [and] visual art’ (Nodelman, 1988: vii), they stimulate the imagination and provoke a sense of ‘the world as spectacle’ (Moebius, 1991: 53). A text that ‘tends to play to an indoor audience, [and] one which favors darkening rooms’, the picture book is often a precursor to sleep (Moebius, 1991: 53). An important part of calming rituals and bedtime routines for generations, it underscores the tender bond between a parent and a child (Spitz, 1999). A material object that parents and children can clasp, touch and share together (Albert and Jones, 1977; Stanton, 1990), the picture book, as Spitz (1999: 2) observes, calls for ‘the practice of reading aloud to young children’. She argues that picture books ‘require the participation of warm, breathing adult human partners who have available laps, keen eyes and ears, arms adept at holding while turning pages, and perhaps a flair for the dramatic’. Imbued with intimacy and mutual affection, adult narrator and child listener ‘both enter and share a common fictional world and are united in experiencing its pains and pleasures’ (Albert and Jones, 1977: 114) (see Figure 6.2). Interactive and relational, a child may look at the pictures and the text of a book whilst listening to the spoken narrative, and the adult may answer questions and act as a kind of informational repository (Spitz, 1999). Together, words and pictures form embracing and engrossing ‘clouds of make-believe’ (Spitz, 1999: 1) that carry children ‘one step closer to a state of quiescence’ (Albert and Jones, 1977: 113). Because bedtime can be a time of conflict, stories coax children into bed and relieve the tension that is often apparent (Albert and Jones, 1977; Spitz, 1999). As Albert and Jones (1977: 115) note, the bedtime story enthralls and captivates, and it allows children ‘to let go of the reality of the setting in which the storytelling is taking place’. A soporific device in-

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*Figure 6.2* A bedtime story before bed. Source: Andreae (2008: 26).

tended to inspire and arouse the land of Nod, the picture book is at the juncture between the waking world and the dream world, and this is illustrated by the frequent depiction and use of bedroom scenes within stories (Moebius, 1991).

#### Goodnight, Sleep Tight: The Bedroom Scene

How many little children, faces freshly scrubbed, snugly [*sic*] in pile pyjamas, have gone sleepily into [this] enchanted evening? How many mothers and fathers have led them there, just as entranced as the children? Entranced by the vivid solidity of the sleepy rabbit's room, the reassuring roster of the child's everyday tools: the comb, the brush, the mittens. And by [the] playful mouse, here on the windowsill, there on the hearth.

(*New York Times*, 1988)

A eulogy to an 'inexplicably magical' world, the *New York Times* paints a picture of a place that is 'warm and safe and inviting'. A poetic tribute to the 'great green room', a bedroom created by illustrator Clement Hurd for Margaret Wise Brown's classic bedtime story *Goodnight Moon* (1975 [1947]), the editorial alludes to intimate reading encounters, to 'the psychic core of the parent-child bond' (Stanton, 1990: 66) and to the captivating nature of the particular scene depicted (see Figure 6.3). Soothing and

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*Figure 6.3* The 'Great Green Room'. Source: Brown (1975 [1947]: 9-10).

calming, the enchanting representation of bedtime presented by Hurd pictorially and by Brown textually absorbs huddled parents and children into the world of the book. A visual counterpart to reality and a narrative 'illustration of synchronous arrival' (Albert and Jones, 1977: 129), *Goodnight Moon* establishes a sense of continuity that connects the sleepy child within the story to little boys and girls tucked into bed within the real world (Spitz, 1999).

A delightful goodnight, sleep-tight tale, *Goodnight Moon* relates the bedtime ritual of an anthropomorphic child rabbit who is lying in bed. A picture poem set within the bunny's bedroom, it follows the character's repetitive practice of bidding 'goodnight' to the things within the space. An 'unconventional design' of book (Marcus, 1987), the illustrations repeatedly switch from colour panoramic landscapes of the 'great green room' to single black-and-white images of saluted objects which are lifted from the bedroom landscape or spied through the windows (Galbraith, 1998). A verse-like lullaby structured by 'auditory and pictorial patterns of flow' (Spitz, 1999: 28), the story soothes and settles, draws sleepy children into its world (Albert and Jones, 1977) and 'provides an auditory counterpart and complement for a child's heartbeat' (Spitz, 1999: 29; Robertson, 2000). A peaceful, tranquil and 'eloquent expression of at-homeness', it also captures the wonderful innocence of a young child's reality (Marcus, 1987). Within the 'great green room', nursery-rhyme fantasy of 'three little bears sitting on chairs' and '[t]he cow jumping over the moon' (Brown, 1975 [1947]: 4, 3) co-exists alongside ordinary everyday objects to form a 'vision of the very young's Here and Now world' (Marcus, 1987). A bedroom or possibly a nursery of the late 1940s, the 'great green room' is remarkable for its intricate detail,

which adds an ‘imaginative dimension’ beyond that of the text (Marcus, 1987). An inventory, or catalogue, of items which are identified and metaphorically ‘put to bed by the bunny child’, the book encourages children to spot the things that the rabbit highlights, both on the page and in their own bedrooms where the reading is taking place (Susina, 1998: 118; Nodelman, 1988). However, reflecting a kind of ‘unity on a higher level’ (Barthes, 1985, cited in Nodelman, 1988: 209), there are many features of the room to which the text is silent (Galbraith, 1998). As Nodelman (1988: 209, 210) argues, to notice pictorial elements not referenced textually is ‘a significant source of pleasure’ for children, thus emphasising the value of there being a meaningful ‘difference between the information available in words and in pictures’. For example, a little mouse moves around the room from page to page and ‘provides a game of hide and seek for the reader’ (Galbraith, 1998: 176). An instance of metafiction, or ekphrasis (Susina, 1998), the framed picture hanging on the left-hand wall depicts an illustration from another of Brown and Hurd’s picture books, *The Runaway Bunny* (1942), and there is a copy of the book on the top bookshelf (Nodelman, 1988; Galbraith, 1998; Susina, 1998). Children may also notice that the book on the bedside cabinet is an edition of *Goodnight Moon* (see Figure 6.4). A self-referential and relational object (Galbraith, 1998), this small detail serves to connect the fictional child on the page with child readers in the real world. Pointing toward a shared, or parallel, experience, it evokes an interchangeable image of rabbit and human children in identical worlds engaged in similar bedtime rituals (Galbraith, 1998).

The ‘great green room’ is cosy and inviting. A roaring open fire, fluffy kittens and an old lady rabbit ‘whispering “hush”’ (Brown, 1975 [1947]: 25) form part of a magical bedroom world at bedtime (Figure 6.3). Tucked under the bedclothes, the central character, Bunny – the rabbit child’s name as indicated by the hairbrush – has presumably just been put to bed; the closed copy of *Goodnight Moon* on the bedside table is a sign that he has been read to, maybe by the old lady, and that it is now time to settle down and to go to sleep. Indeed, Bunny begins to bid his room, the objects within it and the outside world ‘goodnight’. A ‘hypnotic bedtime litany’ (Prager, 2000: C3, cited in Robertson, 2000: 206), and one which young child readers are able to recite and repeat before bed themselves, the ‘authorial naming’ of his bedroom environment (Stanton, 1990: 71) serves as a ‘farewell to the world of day’ and marks the beginning of his onward journey into the realm of sleep (Susina, 1998: 119).

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*Figure 6.4 Goodnight Moon on the bedside table. Source: Brown (1975 [1947]: 10).*

Goodnight room / Goodnight moon / Goodnight cow jumping over the moon / Goodnight light / And the red balloon / Goodnight bears / Goodnight chairs / Goodnight kittens / And goodnight mittens / Goodnight clocks / And goodnight socks / Goodnight little house / And goodnight mouse / Goodnight comb / And goodnight brush / Goodnight nobody / Goodnight Bears / And goodnight to the old lady whispering “hush” / Goodnight stars / Goodnight air / Goodnight noises everywhere.

(Brown, 1975 [1947]: 9-30)

Invoking a sense of simultaneity with child readers also in bed, the ‘great green room’ darkens little by little and the shadows become longer as Bunny’s chant progresses (Stanton, 1990). As Stanton (1990: 72) observes, the room and Bunny’s things are ‘gradually lost in a dark that is only slightly mitigated by the nightlight inside the toy house and a lingering fire’. The darkening bedroom indicates that the child rabbit is drawing ever closer to sleep, and it combines with the watchful grandmother figure and playful kittens to create an image of a seemingly perfect bedtime spectacle. Sat in a rocking chair opposite Bunny’s bed with her knitting, the old lady rabbit forms a loving presence and maintains a bedside vigil until Bunny falls asleep; her soft yawn-inducing whispers of ‘hush’ add to the restful mood, whilst the kittens play with her wool. The final image of Bunny asleep depicts a world at peace; ‘[g]oodnight noises everywhere’ (Brown, 1975 [1947]: 30) pervade the bedroom, the kittens are curled up and sleeping on the old lady’s chair, and the intensity of the full

moon and the stars shining through the windows hint at the magic and wonder of the dream world to which Bunny has departed (see Figure 6.5).

Given that picture books are often read at bedtime, Moebius (1991: 55) argues that ‘it is not surprising that bedroom scenes ... should dominate their final pages’. He claims that the symbolic appearance of the bedroom at or near the end of a story signifies that a tale is about to finish, and that it ‘betokens the restoration of calm and the absence of confusion or anxiety’. An ‘illustration of synchronous arrival’ (Albert and Jones, 1977: 129), it brings to a close exciting adventures and wonderful journeys shared by both child protagonists and child readers. It also indicates that the intimate encounter between parent reader and child listener is about to end, that the book is about to be shut and returned to the bookshelf, that the adult will soon leave and that it is nearly time to turn out the light. The ‘independent reality’ of the picture book essentially draws adult narrators and child listeners into its chronological sequence (Albert and Jones, 1977: 114; Moebius, 1991). For example, following the story of *Goodnight Moon* and tucked into bed, perhaps with a favourite teddy bear and with heavy eyes, children are able to relate to the rabbit, who is also in bed, and understand through narrative and associated visuals that their own bedtime is coming. The final image of Bunny sound asleep and enveloped in darkness closes the story and is a perfect illustration that it is time for child readers to go to sleep as well.

Not always navigated without tears (Spitz, 1999), and ‘an exercise in the rights and the treacheries of authority’ (Albert and Jones, 1977: 114), bedtime can be a time of argument, stress and disagreement between parents and children; for example, children often claim that they are not tired and regularly challenge their parents’ insistence that it is time to go to bed. *Goodnight Moon*, however, appears to provide children with a model of acceptable behaviour at bedtime and seemingly depicts an ideal world of tranquillity and peace; for instance, the little rabbit within the story does not complain or protest, but instead seems to accept his bedtime willingly and with good grace. *Goodnight Moon* therefore highlights how picture books work to teach children about the ideologies of culture and society (Nodelman, 2004). First encountered at an early age, picture books not only provide children with experience of ‘written language before they receive any formal instruction’ (Stephens, 1989: 106), but also enhance readers’ knowledge about life, the world and their place within it (Nodelman, 2004). As Nodelman (2004: 159, 160) notes, they ‘guide readers into culturally acceptable ideas about who they are through the privileging of [a particular] point of

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*Figure 6.5* A world at peace. Source: Brown (1975 [1947]: 29-30).

view' and allow children to 'understand[ ] their own subjectivity'. He also argues that many emphasise the 'need for adult authority' and the 'inevitability of child-like irresponsibility' (Nodelman, 2004: 159).

That the child protagonist in *Goodnight Moon* is a rabbit is also significant. The book belongs to a category of children's literature in which 'the characters are not human, but everything they do, and the way they live, is quintessentially so' (Hunt, 1994: 169-170). A type of story with a long tradition, tales of humanised animals stem from the belief that children are able to relate to such characters and that they have some sort of 'innate sympathy or connection with animals' (Flynn, 2004: 420). Embedded within social and cultural constructions of childhood, and inspired in many ways from eighteenth-century Romanticism, an animistic relationship is said to exist between animals and children (Flynn, 2004). As such, whilst adults are thought to be 'divorced from nature', children are often considered to be closer to the natural world and ignorant of certain human-defining 'markers and rules' (Cosslett, 2002: 476, cited in Flynn, 2004: 420). According to Nodelman (2004: 161), the depiction of human-like animals within picture books is 'a metaphor for the state of human childhood, in which children must learn to negotiate between [their] animal-like urges ... and the demands of adults that they repress desire and behave in socially acceptable ways'. Indeed, the sweet little bunny in *Goodnight Moon* is a model of respectability and politeness and reflects the practice of associating animal instinct with human conduct (Nodelman, 1988; Flynn, 2004). For example, in many picture books, and throughout society more generally, foxes are often thought to be cunning, pigs are depicted as greedy, and rats are spiteful (Nodelman, 1988). Moreover, and as Nodelman (1988:

116) notes, furry little animals are habitual picture-book characters, for they are ‘small enough to [represent] ... small children in a world of large adults’; they universalise and allow for all children to empathise with them (Hunt, 1994). Probably not a concern at the time of writing or publication, Bunny has no discernible race but, perhaps more significantly, is also age and gender neutral; though the child’s blue-and-white stripy pyjamas are subtly masculine, the rabbit’s sex is largely undefined and is neither mentioned nor confirmed by the text (Galbraith, 1998; Robertson, 2000). Bunny thus appeals to both boys and girls of all ages; this is particularly pertinent because few picture books are formed around central female characters, and girls often have to relate to male role models (Spitz, 1999).

*Goodnight Moon* also touches upon children’s concerns about going to sleep. According to Robertson (2000: 204), ‘[T]he story challenges the child listener to enter into a relationship with the text ... [and] to engage with and work through the perils of bedtime.’ The book works to create a restful atmosphere in which children are able to overcome various sleep-related anxieties and attempts to relieve fear through the repetition and predictability of its words and images (Spitz, 1999). It aims to soothe and relax children at the very point that they are required to ‘surrender[ ] to the need for rest and peace’ (Spitz, 1999: 23) and to an unknown and unfamiliar realm located away from the intimacy of the social world and the familiarity of reality.

Explaining the infant fear of sleep, Gaddini (1996: 28) suggests that ‘[f]alling asleep, in psychological terms, means losing control of reality and plunging into a world of fantasy’. She argues that ‘[n]o anxiety can be compared in intensity and duration to the anguish experienced by an infant when he [*sic*] shuts his eyes and consequently loses control of external reality, which is objective, shared and constant, and, to some extent, predictable’ (cited in Robertson, 2000: 204). Spitz (1999: 31) similarly claims that ‘the loss of consciousness [associated with sleep] seems to threaten [children’s] newly developing sense of identity, their concept of who they are’. As Albert and Jones (1977: 116) note, ‘the permanence of the social world [and social relationships] and ... the fact that events unfold in time even when we are asleep’ are yet to be fully learnt. Alluding to the similarity of sleep and death (Spitz, 1999; Robertson, 2000), they suggest that ‘while [a child] may fear that he [or she] may miss something [that happens when he or she is asleep], the greater fear is that the world itself will stop ... [and] that there will be nothing coming next’ (Albert and Jones, 1977: 116). Bunny’s ritual of saying ‘goodnight’ to the things within his room

thus holds a particular significance. An expression that points to the taking of leave, ‘goodnight’ not only refers to imminent sleep, but may also denote a departure or a goodbye (Galbraith, 1998); for example, Galbraith (1998: 177) maintains that Bunny’s penultimate farewell to the air ‘implies the death of the bunny in the bed’.

A matter of survival (Albert and Jones, 1977), therefore, children often attempt to delay sleep by holding on to ‘a reassuring external reality’ at bedtime (Gaddini, 1996: 28, cited in Robertson, 2000: 205). In Russell Hoban’s (1963) *Bedtime for Frances*, for example, a girl badger asks her parents for a glass of milk, a piggyback and kisses before going to bed and then continually gets out of bed to tell them that there is a tiger and a giant in her bedroom, that something is moving her bedroom curtains and that she has forgotten to brush her teeth. In her analysis of the story, Spitz (1999) notes that the title page depicts a nervous-looking Frances, unsure of her parents’ reaction, peering out from behind a door after having got out of bed (Figure 6.6). Picturing one of ‘those paradigm moments in childhood’, the illustration not only encapsulates a little girl’s hopeful optimism that her parents will allow her to stay up with them, but also conveys her efforts to preserve a bond and loving structure that defines her existence (Spitz, 1999: 44). It also symbolises children’s need for affection and dependency, and an aspect of human development as summarised by attachment theory, a concept which acknowledges that ‘the interaction between child and parent vis-à-vis these needs forms the basis of each child’s ... core sense of being’ (Galbraith, 1998: 172).<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, Galbraith (1998: 175) suggests that in the absence of his parents, Bunny transfers his feelings of attachment ‘from person to environment’ in *Goodnight Moon*. She argues that as Bunny bids ‘goodnight’ to his room, he addresses the objects and imaginative entities within as if they are people. Perhaps an attempt to delay his own bedtime like Frances – an hour and ten minutes pass from the first to the last page, as indicated by the clocks on the fireplace and the bedside cabinet – Bunny’s act of naming his bedroom surroundings works, as Spitz (1999: 31) observes, to reinforce his ‘sense of intactness just at the moment when that cohesion seems to be slipping away’.

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<sup>2</sup> Most often associated with the psychologists John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, attachment theory argues that the parent-child relationship has a significant impact upon children’s feelings of safety and belonging (Galbraith, 1998). For more on attachment theory, see Holmes (1993).

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*Figure 6.6* Frances peeking round a door. Source: Hoban (1963: title page).

The bunny child's 'map of existence' also points to the idea that individuals are constituted in relation to objects (Robertson, 2000: 210). Indeed, the items that Bunny bids 'goodnight' and those on display within the 'great green room' speak to the practice and rituals of everyday life and serve as 'reassurances of the ongoing nature of the self' (Spitz, 1999: 32). For example, the brush and comb are specifically set out on the table for the next morning, the mittens and socks are drying in front of the fire ready for use tomorrow, the stuffed animals on the bookshelf await future play, and the books hint at stories still to be read, with the open copy of *The Runaway Bunny* perhaps a clue to tomorrow night's bedtime story. Despite the ever-increasing darkness, the objects within the room remain visible throughout the story, and, though they may not be as clear in the gloom, the prominence of their outline teaches children about 'object permanence' and that 'life has stability, reliability, and durability' (Spitz, 1999: 34). The consistent appearance of the objects and Bunny's repeated

naming of them are also means to ease children's fear of the dark by undermining its power to conceal and cover. As Spitz (1999: 34) explains, the book emphasises that 'just because something cannot be seen at a particular moment it has not disappeared forever' and that '[o]ne's loved ones are a permanent acquisition, even when lost to view'. Soothing at the onset of darkness, *Goodnight Moon* therefore affords children the confidence to close their eyes and to relinquish their hold on 'subjective reality' (Robertson, 2000: 204), smoothing their transition into the world of dreams.

### **The Bedroom: A Borderland between Reality and Fantasy**

So – here I am in the dark alone,  
There's nobody here to see;  
I think to myself,  
I play to myself,  
And nobody knows what I say to myself;  
Here I am in the dark alone,  
What is it going to be?  
I can think whatever I like to think,  
I can play whatever I like to play,  
I can laugh whatever I like to laugh,  
There's nobody here but me.

(Milne, 2007 [1927]: 99-100)

A poetic rendition of a child alone in bed before sleep, A.A. Milne's classic children's verse 'In the Dark' encapsulates the magic of bedtime.<sup>3</sup> Narrated by a six-year-old Christopher Robin, Milne's son, the poem captures the beginning of a twilight journey in which children may encounter incredible creatures, visit amazing lands and become heroes, amongst other things (Spitz, 1999). At the cusp of a realm in which he can do and act as he so pleases, Christopher Robin anticipates falling asleep and his arrival into a private world populated by his innermost thoughts and desires. E.H. Shepard's delightful and enchanting illustrations capture the moment at which the young boy convenes his toy animal friends Pooh and Piglet and embarks upon a pyjama quest in which he chases a dragon, converses with a rabbit and visits a forest (Figure 6.7).

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the quotation of 'In the Dark' is an extract of the extended original.

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*Figure 6.7* The beginning of a pyjama adventure. Source: Milne (2007 [1927]: 99).

Brought to life upon the resting of heads on pillows and the closing of eyes, such realms of fantasy are experienced nightly within all bedrooms. Described by Moebius (1991: 63, 57) as a site ‘of origin and of destiny’ and ‘the first place in which to dream or to act out the spectacles of sleep’, the bedroom naturally functions as a kind of mediating space located between the waking world and the dream world. As the space where reality fades behind a midnight world, and where the familiar gives way to wonder and amazement, it is, in effect, a melting point that delivers children to and from distant realms and faraway places. It is therefore of little surprise that the bedroom is often presented in picture books as the foundation for wonderful night-time spectacles and as leading in and out of fantastical dreamlike domains (Moebius, 1991).

#### Night-Time Flights of Fantasy

To open a child’s book nowadays is to discover some part of that unknown world which touches experience at so many points. The city beyond the clouds, the underground country, all the enchantments of woods and islands are open to the little traveller. From *The Water Babies* to *Peter Pan*, there has been little else in nursery tales but the stuff of dreams.

(Barry, 1922: 9, cited in Kline, 1993: 77)

A further illustration of near-synchronous picture-book action, picture books often portray the bed as a locus out of which dream sequences originate, swell and develop or as a medium that carries child protagonists to fantasy. John Burningham's (2003) *The Magic Bed*, for example, transforms this static and stationary piece of furniture into an object capable of flight, re-imagining it as a vehicle able to transport its occupants to new worlds by imitating the mythological flying carpets of fairy tales.<sup>4</sup> A kind of 'fantasy that is true to reality' in that all beds are catalysts for flights of fantasy (Doonan, 2003), the book tells the tale of a young boy named Georgie whose bed whisks him up and away out of his bedroom at night (see Figure 6.8). Furnishing a range of magical exploits, the bed deposits Georgie in a variety of settings full of drama, thrills and excitement. Soaring high above a city and through clouds of make-believe, it first takes him to a land of gnomes and fairies. On other nights, he is flown to the jungle, meets friendly tigers, finds pirates' treasure, races a group of witches on broomsticks from within his bed and swims with dolphins, an ideal explanation as to why his bed is 'sometimes wet in the mornings' (Burningham, 2003: 26). Sent each night on a wondrous and whimsical ride of sights, sounds and magical realism, Georgie is able to break free from the confines of his bedroom and fly away from the restrictions placed upon him at bedtime. To borrow a psychoanalytic observation of flying from Wolff (1982: 462), the act of flying 'into this realm ... holds for [Georgie] the idea of freedom from earthly reality', for he is effectively able to stay awake and do anything but sleep there. As Wolff (1982: 479-480) observes, flying in dreams 'implies ... [a] suspension of the laws of gravity' and therefore also a 'mastery' of the environment and a longing for a world without rules or boundaries.<sup>5</sup>

An illustration that sleep and going to bed represent a beginning rather than an ending, the depiction of children flying, floating or falling into reverie dominates bedtime stories (see Moebius, 1991; Spitz, 1999). Katz (2002: 300) suggests that such weightlessness in dreams and fiction is symbolic of individuals having attained motor control, an important aspect of physical development that contributes to a 'child's rapidly expanding sense of autonomy'. In much the same way as being able to walk, flying is said to epitomise the 'freedom of self-propelled motion' (Wolff, 1982: 478)

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<sup>4</sup> According to Nikolajeva (2003), fairy tales and fantasy stories have much in common, as the former often inspire the characters, plotlines and magical happenings of the latter.

<sup>5</sup> According to Katz (2002), early psychoanalytic theories believed that flying dreams were connected to the experience and desire of being held aloft by parents in childhood.

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*Figure 6.8* Georgie and his magic bed. Source: Burningham (2003: 13).

and, to paraphrase Katz (2002: 301), the ability to situate oneself effortlessly in space and time. Indeed, it is shown to enhance the possibility of fantastical discovery in many picture books by enabling for the exploration of new worlds.

Randall Jarrell's (1977) *Fly by Night*, for example, is an illustrated short story about a boy who is able to fly when asleep.<sup>6</sup> An 'omniscient sleep-wanderer' who floats up into the air as he begins to drift off into sleep (Getz, 1983: 128), David, the central character, glides into his parents' bedroom and looks into the dreams of his mother, father and pets, before he is carried outside into a twilight world where he is adopted by a family of owls and is read a bedtime story (see Figure 6.9).<sup>7</sup> A fantasy that describes and portrays the protagonist's hallucinatory dream (Lanes, 1980), the story perfectly encapsulates the floating away into dream worlds and the release from reality that many experience upon the closing of eyes. Visualised through the detail of Maurice Sendak's intricate black-and-white ink drawings, David's dream flight

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<sup>6</sup> Though *Fly by Night* is not technically a picture book, it is a relatively simple story designed for both inexperienced and more experienced child readers.

<sup>7</sup> For extended readings of *Fly by Night*, see Zanderer (1978), Getz (1983) and Griswold (1988).

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*Figure 6.9* David floating toward his dream world. Source: Jarrell (1977: 7).

points subtly toward the intrinsic nature of all dream activity. Depicted floating above and through an almost-ghostly rural landscape, David is significantly always pictured in a position of sleep (Getz, 1983). Signs that he never actually leaves his bed, he is portrayed either on his back, on his side or curled up tightly, and his eyes are constantly closed (Lanes, 1980; Getz, 1983). A figment of that seen within his mind, therefore, the shadow-like imagery that envelops his levitating body is essentially a mirage that shrouds the reality of his bedroom. Although his bed appears to have departed, it is in fact out of sight and an invisible presence that supports David as he moves into and through his dream world (see Figure 6.10). He effectively explores the great outdoors, travels to far-off places and encounters interesting characters without ever leaving the comfort of his bedroom.

In his analysis of *Fly by Night*, Getz (1983: 133) argues that a key part of the story is the disappointment that David feels in struggling to remember how to fly dur-

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*Figure 6.10* David floating through his dream world. Source: Jarrell (1977: 26-27).

ing the daytime and his inability to ‘translate the experience, perceptions, or point of view of his fantasy worlds into his naturalistic world’. This aspect of the narrative captures the essence of dreaming and fantasy more generally, for it underlines that dreams emerge from a part of the self that is separate from ‘the “I” of one’s routine being’ (Rycroft, 1979: 164). Reinforcing the unconscious and unwilled nature of dreams and the imagination, the tale illustrates that individuals cannot influence what they find themselves imagining, whether awake or asleep (Rycroft, 1979).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, David cannot replicate anything of his extraordinary night-time ability when awake because he simply does nothing to become airborne when in bed; almost an out-of-body experience, he performs no physical action or conscious bodily movement to achieve flight but merely ‘*feels* himself float up’ (Jarrell, 1977: 5, emphasis added). Epitomising the process of falling asleep (Zanderer, 1978), David – lying with ‘his legs [stretched] out as far as they will go’ – ‘presses his hands against the sides of his legs ... stretches his head back ... and shuts his eyes’ and effectively waits for the weightless sensation to arrive (Jarrell, 1977: 5). An illustration that dreaming is very much an involuntary act that basically just happens (Rycroft, 1979) – essentially a kind of reflex action triggered by the stimulus of sleep – David not only has little in-

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<sup>8</sup> Rycroft (1979: 39) argues that when we are awake ‘we can make ourselves do things or make ourselves think about things, but we can only let ourselves imagine and may be surprised by what we find ourselves imagining’. He also claims that when we are asleep ‘we cannot make ourselves do anything, even dream; we just do dream’.

fluence in terms of initiating lift-off, but also appears to have limited control whilst in the air. Though he uses his feet to steer himself, he is, in many ways, cast adrift and at the mercy of an outside force or flow that guides him toward unfamiliar realms that are not of his own conscious choosing. Elevated upward by an external energy source and swept away from normality by a powerful momentum, David does not navigate to the dream world himself but is instead taken there whether he likes it or not; he is floating rather than flying of his own volition.

David's shepherding into an unknown and largely alien reality draws further attention to the ways in which falling asleep may become a source of anxiety for children. For a child alone in bed and in a darkened bedroom, the uncontrolled and unwilling aspect of dreams lurking within the shadows is potentially frightening and is perhaps an additional reason as to why children often attempt to delay sleep and stay awake at bedtime. Pulled from the regularity, consistency and predictability of the waking world and toward the randomness, uncertainty and variability of imaginative fantasy – a place where one has little say over what transpires, and where nightmares can materialise – children may therefore look upon falling asleep as hazardous (Gaddini, 1996, cited in Robertson, 2000: 204).

With this in mind, the appearance of the bed and other bedroom objects within the fictional dreams of picture-book protagonists may serve to alleviate such fears by reassuring child readers or listeners that home is never far away, no matter where they may find themselves when dreaming.<sup>9</sup> Returning to *The Magic Bed*, for example, Georgie is also flown, or transported, to other worlds and, like David, seems to have little control over where he ends up. However, although it works to relocate Georgie to various far-flung places, his bed is a constant reminder of the proximity of the real world and familiarity. An escort that accompanies Georgie through the uncharted territory of his dream world, the bed forms a comforting presence that enables him to hold on to some kind of reality at all times. Designed to supply warmth and comfort and to protect its occupant from the outside, Georgie's bed reflects the core purpose of all beds by ensuring that Georgie remains safe and comes to no harm. For instance, it provides a means of escape when pirates are chasing him (see Figure 6.11), but, most importantly, it guarantees for a safe homecoming. Indeed, Georgie is always shown

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<sup>9</sup> For other picture books in which children's dreams feature and are shaped by familiar bedroom objects, see David Wiesner's (1988) *Freefall*, David McPhail's (2006) *Boy on the Brink* and Chris Riddell's (2006) *The Emperor of Absurdia*.

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*Figure 6.11* A dramatic escape from pirates. Source: Burningham (2003: 24-25).

as having returned to the waking world unscathed, thus illustrating that beds not only carry children to other realms, but that they also deliver them safely back to reality every morning.

#### Escaping Reality

Dreams and flights of fantasy within the bedroom are not only night-time experiences, however. As a child's 'most familiar and private external space' (Spitz, 1999: 125), the bedroom is also a place in which to daydream and fantasise. Described by Spitz (1999: 125) as 'an arena for the enactment of ... inner drama', it is a space where fantasy can reign over reality, and where realms of make-believe can swell and flourish. The interpenetration of reality and fantasy within the bedroom is therefore a key theme of many picture books, and the bedroom is often depicted as a portal that 'leads into and out of a dreamworld' (Moebius, 1991: 55-56). According to Moebius (1991), the bedroom frequently features in stories where the central child character is facing some kind of dilemma or difficulty, and fantasy helps the protagonist to resolve their issues. He suggests that bedroom-based fantasy creates a 'split between old and new worlds' and that it provides characters with answers or new knowledge that allows them to move from one situation to another or to take a new perspective (Moebius, 1991: 68). In his study of British Victorian adventure stories, Phillips (1997: 13) similarly notes that adventure settings are 'divided between home and away' and that 'the boundaries between them are often blurred'. He argues that whilst the two spaces are 'divided by perilous and extraordinary voyages' and 'seem to have little to do with each other', far-away fantasies are inscribed with elements of the real world and with

ideas about home, and adventures frequently serve as ‘vehicles for reflecting upon and (re)defining domestic, “civilised” places’ (Phillips, 1997: 13).

Perhaps the most famous example of all picture-book bedroom fantasy is that which takes place within Maurice Sendak’s (1967) *Where the Wild Things Are*. As Carpenter and Prichard (1984: 476) observe, this relatively simple, though much analysed, story ‘is generally regarded as unequalled in its exploration of a child’s fantasy world and its relation to his real life’.<sup>10</sup> The book tells the tale of a little boy, called Max, who is sent to bed early without supper for misbehaving by his mother. In his anger, he creates a fantasy world into which he escapes his bedroom punishment and where he encounters the wild things, a group of large, hairy monster-like creatures with ‘terrible roars’, ‘terrible teeth’, ‘terrible eyes’ and ‘terrible claws’ (Sendak, 1967: 17-18). He gains control over the wild things by staring menacingly into their eyes and is crowned king before leading them on a merry dance through the forest and returning home soothed and at peace.

Sendak’s masterful illustrations give the book a certain magical quality and perfectly capture the spellbinding moment at which the reality of Max’s bedroom fades behind an imaginative world of the boy’s own making (see Figures 6.12, 6.13 and 6.14). Standing at the centre of his bedroom, effectively in solitary confinement, and wearing a kind of fancy-dress or pyjama-based wolf suit, Max shuts his eyes, enters his mind and ‘virtually wills his room to change’ (Lanes, 1980: 87). Rendering his captivity into freedom and ‘his hunger into a feast of images’ (Holt McGavran, 1986: 172), trees sprout magically from the floor and grow to replace his bedposts and doorframe, his rug takes root and is transformed into a forest floor of grass, and his ceiling is gradually covered by a canopy of trees (Lanes, 1980). Consuming a table, a plant bursts from its pot and matures into a large shrub, and indoors becomes outdoors as the walls, door, bed and all remnants of the room disappear.

To consider the significance of Max’s bedroom within *Where the Wild Things Are*, it is first necessary to reflect upon the author’s view of childhood. Indeed, it is well documented that Sendak held a particular interest in the nature of childhood and that his specific observations with regard to children’s everyday lives and growing up influenced his writing and illustrations. In Lanes’s (1980: 85) biographical account of his life and work, Sendak revealed that his ‘great curiosity about childhood as a state

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<sup>10</sup> *Where the Wild Things Are* is one of the most celebrated picture books of the twentieth century and is often described as *the* defining picture book (Hunt, 2001; Stahl *et al.*, 2007).

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*Figure 6.12* Max's bedroom at the borderland between reality and fantasy. Source: Sendak (1967: 8).

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*Figure 6.13* Max's bedroom fading into nothingness. Source: Sendak (1967: 10).

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*Figure 6.14* Max escaping into his dream world. Source: Sendak (1967: 12).

of being [was] how all children manage to get through childhood from one day to the next, how they defeat boredom, fear, pain and anxiety, and find joy'. He claimed that he was able to remember 'the sounds and feelings and images – the emotional quality – of particular moments in childhood' (quoted in Lanes, 1980: 7) and suggested that his work was derived from speaking with his inner child (Lanes, 1980; Carpenter and Prichard, 1984). For example, discussing his picture-book illustrations and how many of his protagonists bear more than a passing resemblance to his likeness, he stated that he was 'trying to draw the way children feel' and that it was 'the way I *know* I felt as a child' (quoted in Lanes, 1980: 27, original emphasis). Drawing upon his inner feelings and reminiscences, he argued that childhood was characterised by a kind of defencelessness and that children's lives were shaped by a range of powerful emotions that parents and other authors had long failed to acknowledge (Waller, 1977; Lanes, 1980). He maintained that 'children live on familiar terms with disrupting emotions, that fear and anxiety are an intrinsic part of their everyday lives [and] that they continually cope with frustration as best they can' (quoted in Lanes, 1987: 107). He also claimed that in order '[t]o master these forces, children turn to fantasy: that imagined world where disturbing emotional situations are solved to their satisfaction' (Sendak,

1988: 150-151, cited in Stahl *et al.*, 2007: 765). For Sendak, therefore, it was ‘through fantasy that children achieve catharsis’ (quoted in Lanes, 1980: 107).

As a stage for the performance of his fantasy (Spitz, 1999), Max’s bedroom allows Max to overcome his anger and to escape from reality. It is used by Sendak to present a scenario with which most children can relate, for all children have been sent to their rooms as a punishment by their parents to consider their behaviour. However, as Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002: 113) note, Max’s rage-induced fantasy ‘can only happen in a space where Max is king’. In his own personal space, he thinks about how to get back at his mother, as one can imagine all children might do when in trouble with a parent or authority figure, and his fantasising takes him to another private world where he is able to live out those dreams and do what he wants. As Max’s fantasy spills from his mind, the imaginary realm expands with his resentment, and the illustrations grow to consume all the space on the page (Waller, 1977; Lanes, 1980; Holt McGavran, 1986; Townsend, 1996; Spitz, 1999). Signs that Max never actually leaves his bedroom, the trees and vegetation in his fantasy world are identical to those that first appeared in his room, and the moon that shined through his window is present throughout (Lanes, 1980). Though the wild things that Max encounters are stereotypically monstrous and have sharp teeth, claws, horns and beaks, their faces appear almost childlike (Stahl *et al.*, 2007). Perhaps an indication that he has visited them before and that this bedroom fantasy is a regular occurrence, they wave and seem to welcome Max as he reaches their world by boat (Shaddock, 1997). As Rollin (1999: 81) observes, that the wild things are ‘products of Max himself’ is established earlier in the story; in the background of the second picture, a drawing of a wild thing is stuck to the wall and is signed ‘by Max’. She suggests that the wild things are monstrous projections of Max’s mother and a means by which he is able to avenge his incarceration. Indeed, after taming the wild things and being made their superior, Max plays with them and leads them on a ‘wild rumpus’, in which they howl, swing and dance their way through the forest, before sending them to bed without supper in much the same way as his mother did to him (Spitz, 1999). Rollin (1999: 81) further hypothesises that the wild things are ‘projections of Max’s own aggression’; after having laid his monsters to rest, for example, Max is clearly shown reflecting upon his past behaviour and appears contrite, and the illustrations subsequently become smaller, thus indicating that his anger has receded (Spitz, 1999).

The final illustration within *Where the Wild Things Are* is perhaps the most significant of the whole story, for it testifies to the book's underlying message (see Figure 6.15). Back in 'the night of his very own room' (Sendak, 1967: 35) – soothed, as shown by the wolf costume, which is sliding from his head (Lanes, 1980; Spitz, 1999) – Max discovers that his mother has laid out his supper on his bedroom table and left a slice of cake for him to eat. A declaration of his mother's forgiveness (Lanes, 1980), the meal speaks to the endurance of parental devotion and emphasises that all 'children are loved regardless of their behaviour' (Murray, 1998: 200). Nevertheless, the image also points to the 'ever-present' nature of wild things (Shaddock, 1997: 158). For example, Shaddock (1997: 158) observes that Max is still wearing his wolf suit, that his bedroom is illuminated by the same moon that featured within his fantasy world and that the potted plant beneath the window 'may grow and grow again'. As such, whilst the book highlights that parents and children will always argue and disagree, it reinforces the strength of the parent-child bond. Bearing in mind that the relationship between a parent and a child forms the foundation of a child's very existence (Galbraith, 1998), the story comforts child readers by illustrating that being sent to one's room is not the end of the world and that they and their parents 'can survive the ravages of their own destructive impulses' (Spitz, 1999: 134).<sup>11</sup>

### **More than Meets the Eye: Presences and Absences**

The title page of Syd Hoff's (1979) *The Horse in Harry's Room* depicts a closed bedroom door. A physical barrier that conceals the inside of the room, and one which prevents the outside world from looking in, the door is symbolic of secrecy and privacy (see Figure 6.16). Because one is unable to see past the door, this simple illustration epitomises the closed nature of all bedrooms, the idea that there are always elements of rooms that remain unseen and invisible to all but inhabiting children. Also located at the beginning of the story, the motif encourages readers to metaphorically open the door by turning the page and to discover the secrets that Harry's room harbours. Alluding to the presence of wonder and spectacle, a magical glow radiates outward from behind the door, inviting viewers to speculate upon what lies on the

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<sup>11</sup> For alternative analyses of *Where the Wild Things Are*, see Waller (1977), DeLuca (1984), Holt McGavran (1986), Spitz (1988, 1999), Ball (1997) and Shaddock (1997).

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*Figure 6.15* Max having returned to his bedroom. Source: Sendak (1967: 36).

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*Figure 6.16* Harry's door: a barrier to the outside world. Source: Hoff (1979: title page).

other side, even if the title of book somewhat dampens the anticipation. Turning the page, simultaneously commencing the tale and entering the bedroom for the very first time, readers are able to share in the little boy's secret and to participate in something that even his parents are excluded from.

A tale about the bond of friendship, *The Horse in Harry's Room* tells the story of a young boy who has a horse in his bedroom. A tender account of affection and companionship, it describes the close relationship between Harry and his trusty steed, and the boy's pleasure at being able to ride around his room. Practising and refining his equestrian skills within his bedroom, Harry is able to steer his friend around his things and jump over his bed 'without knocking over [his] chair or [his] dresser' (Hoff, 1979: 6), a remarkable ability that stems from the fact that his horse is actually a facet of his imagination. Emerging from Harry's mind, the horse reflects the propensity of many young children to 'create imaginary companions that become a regular part of their daily routines' (Taylor *et al.*, 1993: 276; also see Taylor, 1999; Gleason *et al.*, 2000; Carlson and Taylor, 2005). A simple pencil sketch, the horse is transparent and see-through, thus indicating that it is invisible to all but Harry and that it has no 'objective basis' (Svendsen, 1934: 988, cited in Gleason *et al.*, 2000: 419) (see Figure 6.17).<sup>12</sup> A celestial orb of sparkling light also emanates from the horse – the same as that seen from behind the bedroom door – further reinforcing the idea that it is a product of Harry's imagination. Standing outside Harry's bedroom door, for example, Harry's parents hear the boy's cries of 'giddyap' and 'whoa', yet they never see the horse when they look into his room; Harry is always on his own, and they cannot interact with it (see Figure 6.18).

According to Gleason (2002: 980), '[T]he most common explanation for creating an imaginary companion is that a child is lonely or lacks playmates'. Indeed, pretend friends are thought to substitute for real companions in the absence of friendship and other kinds of social relationships (Gleason, 2002). With this in mind, Harry's horse perhaps materialises because of his master's possible loneliness and longing for company. Appearing to have no brothers or sisters to play with, and pictured alone within his bedroom, Harry may be compensating for a lack of sibling interaction. As Gleason *et al.* (2000: 419) observe, '[C]hildren with imaginary companions [are]

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<sup>12</sup> According to Svendsen (1934: 988), an imaginary companion is 'an invisible character, named and referred to in conversation with other persons or played with directly for a period of time, at least several months, having an air of reality for the child, but no apparent objective basis' (cited in Gleason *et al.*, 2000: 419).

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*Figure 6.17* Harry's imaginary bedroom horse. Source: Hoff (1979: 5).

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*Figure 6.18* Harry is only able to see the horse. Source: Hoff (1979: 13).

more likely to be firstborn and only children.’ Like other kinds of fantasy, imaginary companions are thought to help children solve the ‘frustrating or difficult aspects of [their] external reality’ (Manosevitz *et al.*, 1973: 72).<sup>13</sup> For example, Nagera (1969: 125) argues that children first encounter their imaginary friends in problem-solving fantasy worlds; he claims that ‘having found a new solution [therein], the child brings his [*sic*] imaginary companion back into his real life and tries to have it integrated with and accepted by his object world’ (cited in Meyer and Tuber, 1989: 152-153). A number of studies, for instance, have discovered that imaginary friends often become fully fledged members of children’s families and that they are sometimes provided with places at dinner tables, spaces in children’s beds or seats in cars (Taylor *et al.*, 1993; also see Manosevitz *et al.*, 1973; Gleason *et al.*, 2000).

Though there is little suggestion that Harry’s horse ever leaves the bedroom or takes part in family activities, that Harry has developed an affectionate bond with and invested emotionally in his friend is clearly evident. A key part of Harry’s normal everyday existence, the horse is a near-permanent fixture, or resident, of his bedroom; when Harry leaves his house or goes to school, for example, he is confident that his pal will wait for him and be there when he returns home.<sup>14</sup> Whilst Harry’s parents cannot directly observe or interact with the horse, they are fully aware of its existence and feel its presence through their son’s behaviour and play. Perhaps concerned that he is too old to have an imaginary friend or that he may be ‘confused about what is real and what is pretend’ (Taylor *et al.*, 1993: 276) – notice their puzzled expressions when they peer into his bedroom in Figure 6.18 – they decide to ‘show [Harry] some real horses’ in the countryside (Hoff, 1979: 14). A veiled attempt to persuade Harry to relinquish his friend, his parents inform him that ‘[h]orses should always be free to run and kick and nibble’ (Hoff, 1979: 28). Harry subsequently feels compelled to release his horse and offers it a chance to leave his bedroom; much to his relief, however, it opts to stay put. He realises that no matter what anyone else thinks or says, ‘he [will] have his horse [for] as long as he want[s] him’ (Hoff, 1979: 32).

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<sup>13</sup> For example, children often blame their imaginary friends for their bad behaviour in order to avoid punishment (Manosevitz *et al.*, 1973; Meyer and Tuber, 1989; Gleason *et al.*, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Relationships between children and imaginary companions are normally of a horizontal nature and similar to real friendships. In comparison, relationships between children and their teddy bears or dolls are generally more vertical and often resemble the parent-child relationship with children assuming a parental role (Gleason *et al.*, 2000; Gleason, 2002; Carlson and Taylor, 2005).

A lasting relationship (Gleason, 2002), the friendship between Harry and his imaginary bedroom horse will effectively continue for as long as Harry desires. Like a pet or real companion animal, the horse is a source of much joy and happiness and sustains an ‘affectional bond’ which is ‘not easily relinquished or redirected’ (Sable, 1995: 335). Also an attachment figure, it generates feelings of comfort and security within Harry; for example, it watches over him at bedtime and maintains a ‘physical’ presence that helps him to go to sleep peacefully (see Figure 6.19). Like the objects that Bunny wishes ‘goodnight’ in *Goodnight Moon*, it soothes and reassures him as his room begins to darken, substituting for the absence of his parents and human attachment. Akin to a teddy bear, stuffed animal or other soft toy clutched and cuddled by children in the moments before sleep, its proximity allows Harry to remain close to something familiar as his bedroom changes and develops a new shadowy look. A caring and attentive night light, the horse actually illuminates the room with its faint magical afterglow and prevents darkness from fully descending.

Although it cannot be certain whether Harry is afraid of the dark, it is a fear that many children possess, and it can provoke an ‘increased reliance on touch and close proximity’ at bedtime (Galbraith, 1998: 173). Indeed, darkness is often a source of much anxiety for children and can awaken worries and concerns that might otherwise remain hidden (Galbraith, 1998). Shrouded in gloom and obscured by dim light, a darkened bedroom is potentially intimidating and frightening for a young child, for ‘sounds and shadows that [he or she may] not ordinarily notice [may suddenly] loom strange and fearsome’ (Galbraith, 1998: 173). Because children are not always ‘able to differentiate “internal representations from objective reality”’ (King *et al.*, 1997: 432), they may sometimes sense a sinister presence lurking within the dark and fear that something is waiting to get them. For example, scary monsters, ghosts and fierce animals are often vividly imagined hiding under beds or inside wardrobes, cupboards and dark corners.

Mercer Mayer’s (1976) *There’s a Nightmare in My Cupboard* describes how a little boy overcomes his night-time anxiety.<sup>15</sup> A confidence-inspiring tale that seeks to restore children’s self-belief in their ability to conquer fear-inducing situations – a trait that many children seem to lack (King *et al.*, 1997) – the book, narrated from the

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<sup>15</sup> Before its publication in Britain in 1976, *There’s a Nightmare in My Cupboard* was first published in the United States in 1968 as *There’s a Nightmare in My Closet*. Mayer later wrote two similarly themed picture books: *There’s an Alligator under My Bed* (1987) and *There’s Something Spooky in My Attic* (1988).

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*Figure 6.19* Harry's horse: a caring and attentive night light. Source: Hoff (1979: 16).

boy's perspective, relates the story of how the boy is afraid of a 'nightmare' that lurks within his bedroom cupboard and how he triumphs over his fear.

Upon opening the book, young readers are first presented with a bedtime scene with which they may be familiar (see Figure 6.20). Illuminated by the faint light of his bedside lamp, the little boy is initially shown sitting up in bed and staring anxiously at the cupboard which is the source of so much anguish; deepening his nerves, the door is slightly ajar, and the darkness behind conceals whatever is hiding inside. Gripping his blanket firmly with both hands, he pulls it up tight to his face and hunkers down as patches of shadowy darkness spread around his bedroom. Perhaps adding to his tension, the curtains dance and appear almost ghost-like as the wind gusts into the room through the open window. Finally summoning the courage to leave the sanctuary of his bed – a place where he feels safe and warm – the boy gets up to close the cupboard door before going to sleep, a ritual that he repeats every night to ensure that the demon is securely shut away and kept out of his room. Fearful that the nightmare could open the door, however, he takes a cork popgun and toy cannon to bed with him for added protection and reassurance, objects that not only compensate for the lack of an attachment figure within his bedroom, but which also illustrate just how frightened he really is.

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*Figure 6.20* An anxious bedtime moment. Source: Mayer (1976: 1-2).

According to King *et al.* (1997: 441), '[N]ight-time fears are experienced by nearly all children during the normal course of development.' They observe that such anxiety is very real to children and able to 'cause considerable personal distress' but that it can often be mistaken by parents for behavioural problems. Sometimes severe enough to hamper the running of everyday life, night-time fear can provoke a variety of coping strategies within children that can lead to delayed and highly charged bed-times (King *et al.*, 1997). Frequently seen by parents as disruptive and irritating behaviour that needs to be overcome (Galbraith, 1998), children's coping strategies, besides cuddling a teddy bear or other inanimate objects, include calling out to parents, repeatedly getting out of bed, attempts to stay up or to sleep with parents or siblings, and leaving televisions, radios and lights switched on (Graziano *et al.*, 1979, cited in King *et al.*, 1997: 432; also see Mooney *et al.*, 1985; Muris *et al.*, 2001). Perhaps 'propaganda for a parental agenda' (Galbraith, 1998: 174), however, the little boy within *There's a Nightmare in My Cupboard* does not cry out for his parents or attempt to delay his bedtime. Following a Western tradition that has long held that children should sleep away from their parents and be able to soothe themselves when upset (Galbraith, 1998), the boy decides to confront his fear on his own.<sup>16</sup> Already armed with his toy popgun and cannon, he recruits an army of toy soldiers, crouches

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<sup>16</sup> Galbraith (1998: 173) notes that in pursuit of this teaching, picture books about bedtime 'commonly center on the transition from parental presence to the use of "self-soothing" fantasy objects and rituals of protection'.

down behind a pillow fortress, turns out the light and aims his weapons toward the cupboard in anticipation that the monster will reveal itself (Figure 6.21). When he hears the nightmare creep out of the cupboard, he surprises it by turning on the light, orders it to ‘go away’ (Mayer, 1976: 14) and threatens to shoot it (Figure 6.22).

Liminal in form, monsters within literature are often imagined and depicted as having bodily features that belong to a variety of different animal species (Nuzum, 2004). Drawing upon Cohen’s (1996: 6-7) interpretation of the meaning of the word ‘monster’, Nuzum (2004: 208) argues that monsters ‘are neither one thing nor the other’ and suggests that their hybrid nature contributes to their scariness. A stereotypical giant green monster, the boy’s cupboard nightmare is similarly a cross-breed of various animals and has big pointy ears, a bushy mane, stubby legs, short arms and a dragon-like tail. Significantly, however, it is also rather childlike and, as Spitz (1999) notes, quite goofy in appearance. Like the beasts that Max encounters within *Where the Wild Things Are*, the nightmare is more friendly than fierce and does not seem to pose a threat to the boy. For example, it only has two front teeth, which are noticeably blunt rather than sharp, and has no visible claws with which to scratch. Reassuring children reading the story that nightmares, both before and during sleep, are actually far from scary and that bedroom monsters and other imaginary creatures cannot hurt them, the nightmare is clearly more harmless than harmful and appears to be nervous and shaking with fear itself.<sup>17</sup> When the boy shoots at it, for instance, it bursts into tears and acts like an oversized baby or toddler (Spitz, 1999) (Figure 6.23).

A rather-humorous reflection of a frightened and panicked child, the image of the huge monster crying like a baby perhaps invites child readers to reflect upon their own behaviour when upset or distressed at bedtime. An interesting role reversal and a possible attempt to encourage children to see such situations from a parent’s point of view, the child monster seems to be afraid of sleeping within the cupboard, essentially its bedroom, and has tiptoed into the boy’s room in search of some parent-like solace. Symbolic of the irritation that parents must often feel when awoken by a fearful child at night, and signalling parental impatience at a child’s tears (Spitz, 1999), the little boy is angry and frustrated at first and offers the nightmare little comfort by telling it to ‘be quiet’ (Mayer, 1976: 19). As Spitz (1999) suggests, the little boy’s initial lack

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<sup>17</sup> In many picture books, bedtime monsters are often scared of children and are rather cowardly. For example, Paul Bright’s (2003) *Under the Bed* reinforces the idea that imaginary monsters and creatures are more frightened of children than children are of them.

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*Figure 6.21* The boy preparing to battle his nightmare. Source: Mayer (1976: 9-10).

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*Figure 6.22* The boy confronting his nightmare. Source: Mayer (1976: 14).

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*Figure 6.23* The childlike, crying nightmare. Source: Mayer (1976: 16).

of empathy for the monster child's plight encourages both child and adult readers to feel sorry and pity for the nightmare, sympathy which suggests that all children, no matter how large or small, can only overcome their fears and bedtime anxieties with a little parental understanding.

A display that serves to dispel the notion that children's desire to remain close to their parents at bedtime and their cries for assistance are 'undesirable habits to be extinguished' (Galbraith, 1998: 173), the little boy eventually softens his stance and invites the nightmare into his bed for comfort (Spitz, 1999). Effectively providing the monster with 'the parenting he is missing' himself (Galbraith, 1998: 178), he illustrates that parents reading the story should always acknowledge their children's fears, take them seriously and never dismiss or ignore them, no matter how irrational or seemingly invisible they may seem. Emphasising that it is okay for children to be afraid, though, the boy's ultimate support for the nightmare also encourages children to seek out their parents when they are scared at night and highlights that they should never have to suffer alone or in silence. For example, the book's penultimate image

of the boy and the nightmare smiling in bed together underlines the difference that a little parental support can make (see Figure 6.24).<sup>18</sup> It also speaks to the importance of children confronting their fears and to the pride and relief that they should feel in doing so; the little boy, for example, remarks, ‘I suppose there’s another nightmare in my cupboard, but my bed’s not big enough for three’ (Mayer, 1976: 26). This is reinforced within the final wordless illustration, for a second monster emerges from behind the cupboard door when the boy and nightmare are finally asleep to illustrate that ‘fears, even those that have been dealt with successfully, tend to recur’ (Spitz, 1999: 67) (see Figure 6.25). However, given that the boy and monster are depicted in bed alongside one another, the image further cements the idea that with a little bravery, comfort and mutual understanding, children and parents can always overcome such fears together.

### **Conclusion**

Though the picture books explored within this chapter follow different narratives and characters and use and present bedrooms in a variety of ways in support of their plots, all have something significant in common. In keeping with the educational potential of picture books and the innocence of their intended audience (Nodelman, 2004), each provides children with a lasting lesson and enhances knowledge. Whilst their reading creates momentary pleasure, each book bestows upon readers a kind of ‘psychological gift’ (Albert and Jones, 1977: 115). Because every child possesses a bedroom, the equivalent space on the page is a key device, or medium, for such teaching and enables the picture books examined here to establish some sort of connection with readers. By featuring and depicting the bedroom in some shape or form, the stories are able to construct plotlines and scenes and show situations and protagonists with which child readers can identify. For example, as objects which are read or used within the bedroom, they are able to synchronise themselves to and may feed back into real-life bedroom happenings. At bedtime, for instance, their reading is designed to create a calm and relaxed atmosphere that fosters the development of dream worlds, and their words and pictures are intended to facilitate children’s going to sleep. Some use

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<sup>18</sup> King *et al.* (1997) suggest that children may sometimes feel embarrassed for having to seek support from parents or siblings when afraid at night and that negative reaction to their fear can lead to feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy.

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*Figure 6.24* An image of contentment. Source: Mayer (1976: 25-26).

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*Figure 6.25* The appearance of a second nightmare. Source: Mayer (1976: 27-28).

images and representations of bedrooms to allay children's bedtime or sleep-related anxiety – such as that associated with the dark, the unknown of dreams, and monsters hiding under beds or in cupboards – whilst others depict the space to illustrate that bedtime is close and that it is nearly time to turn out the light (Moebius, 1991). Beyond bedtime, however, the bedroom is also a means to shore up children's confidence and self-esteem. Whether through the excitement and drama of bedroom-based fantasy, the tenderness of an imaginary friendship or the new-found understanding between a boy and his closet nightmare, the books here illustrate that bedrooms are places where children can be themselves, where they can do, be and act as they wish, and where they can overcome their fears and frustrations. Moreover, they encourage both child and adult readers to reflect upon their respective behaviour and attitudes, and provide parents with an insight, of sorts, into children's feelings and emotions, thus helping them to improve their parenting skills.

## 7.

# Conclusion

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This thesis has explored the representation of children's bedrooms within three genres of consumer text. It has studied the nursery of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as defined by child-rearing manuals, the material culture of interwar and post-war bedrooms as depicted within magazines, and the imaginative geographies of bedrooms within post-war children's picture books. To conclude, this final chapter first reviews the analytical studies of the thesis before identifying and discussing in greater detail interrelated themes and common ideas that cut across the three, with particular reference to material culture and understandings about childhood and parenthood. It concludes by reflecting upon the study's contribution to children's geographies and the geography of home and by considering the thesis's progression in terms of possible future research.

### **Analytical Review**

The thesis first explored the upper- and middle-class nursery of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century through advice printed within child-rearing manuals and general home-management literature. Focusing upon texts published between approximately 1870 and 1930, it examined the advice offered to parents with regard to its suitable creation. With reference to wider scientific developments and contemporary child-rearing beliefs, it revealed the importance attached to a child's immediate surroundings and argued that the nursery was to be arranged with children's physical health and mental development in mind. It described how air, temperature, light and the overall nursery environment were key concerns for manuals and how rooms were to be properly ventilated, heated and situated in order to maximise and preserve children's vitality and well-being. Demonstrating how floor and wall surfaces were at the forefront of a war against dust, dirt and germs, it also illuminated the relationship between aesthetics and cleanliness before exploring the instructional and intellectual objectives of room decoration and material objects. It showed how the nursery was a

space of learning and training, and revealed the educational significance of wall colours, wallpaper, friezes, pictures, toys and play activities.

Moving forward in time and catching sight of a shift in the type of space that children were expected to occupy within the home – from communal nurseries to bedrooms intended to house individual children or same-sex siblings – the thesis then explored the material culture of interwar and post-war bedrooms as depicted within consumer magazines published between the early 1920s and the mid-1970s. Examining how bedrooms were materially organised and structured, it argued that rooms were fashioned around a material frame which was to develop with children throughout childhood. It considered how bedrooms came to assume a recognisable and consistent material form and how objects sustained children's everyday bedroom activities. With reference to interwar and post-war issues of cost, austerity and material shortages, it explored the process of materialising, or creating, a bedroom and showed how it often required a degree of ingenuity and resourcefulness. It illustrated the significance of second-hand, restored and home-made objects within bedrooms and explored how small spaces were made habitable through the deployment of intelligent designs and novel space-saving solutions. The thesis also examined the gendered nature of children's bedrooms; it revealed how objects reflected and encouraged particular aspects of masculinity and femininity, and explored how rooms were materially organised to ensure for a child's proper growth into adulthood.

The thesis subsequently examined the relationship between the bedroom and children's picture books. With a particular focus upon post-war stories in which bedrooms feature as key settings or as important plot elements, it explored how picture books reflect the imaginative geographies that shape and define children's bedroom experiences, and how the depiction of the bedroom works to establish a connection with both child and adult readers. Examining picture books as texts which are specifically read or used within the bedroom, it considered how scenes and plotlines might resonate with readers and how fictive bedrooms and characters potentially mirror and feed back into the everyday experience of the bedroom. With reference to the ritual of bedtime reading, it explored how picture books work as bedtime stories that prepare children for sleep and how they attempt to bridge the gap between the waking world and the dream world (Moebius, 1991). It also analysed how rooms were presented as leading in and out of fantasy, deliberated upon the significance and meaning

of bedroom-inspired dreamscapes, and examined the presence of imaginary friends and creatures within bedrooms, and the morals of such stories.

### **Discussion**

Together, the three analytical studies provide a sense of how the bedroom has developed since the late nineteenth century and how rooms have been imagined, consumed and constructed over a period of approximately one hundred and fifty years. Though each study had a distinct focus in terms of textual genre and core period, and explored representations of the bedroom that drew upon different understandings, perspectives and definitions of the space, it is possible to identify a number of interconnected themes and ideas about bedrooms that criss-cross the depictions.

The representations make clear that children's bedrooms come into being and do not just exist and that material culture plays a key role within this process. This is perhaps most evident with regard to the magazine depictions examined within Chapter Five but can also be seen within the child-rearing manuals and picture books analysed within Chapters Four and Six respectively. Each study underlines that the bedroom is very much a material space and that it is constituted and defined through materiality. They not only highlight that the bedroom, like other domestic spaces, is set apart from other rooms within the home through material objects, but also that material culture is at the heart of a range of 'component' practices and processes (Kraftl, 2010: 407) that shape the look, feel and atmosphere of the space and how it is lived, experienced and imagined. Moreover, they illustrate the significance of material things in denoting the presence of an inhabiting child and in creating a distinct room for children within the home (also see Buchli and Lucas, 2000). For example, the magazines explored within Chapter Five revealed that bedrooms were formed from several common objects and that these were specially selected and purchased, or modified and made, with children in mind. They also indicate that material things facilitated children's bedroom activities, including sleep, schoolwork and play, and that some possessed a kind of fantastical, or magical, quality by being able to transform some of the most unlikely of spaces into bedrooms through their novel designs. In a similar vein, material culture featured within the nursery advice of the child-rearing manuals. For instance, concerns regarding the environment and cleanliness of the nursery were tied to the material culture of

the space and to the materiality of objects and decoration. In terms of ventilation, for example, furniture was to be positioned correctly to allow air to circulate freely within a room, and screens were to be placed appropriately to prevent draughts, whilst floors and walls were to be covered with non-porous and wipe-clean material. Furthermore, rooms were to be decorated with wallpapers, friezes and pictures that contained patterns and motifs designed specifically for children. As regards the picture books, they often depicted rooms filled with toys and other child-related artefacts. Significantly, however, they are also material objects that are read and used within the bedroom, and are key constituents of everyday bedroom life.

The bedrooms depicted within the three genres of text reflect social and cultural ideas about children and childhood and indicate that bedrooms are shaped by expectations and perceptions about those who inhabit and use them. They draw attention to how material culture underscores children's identities, and how bedrooms are materially influenced by ideas and understandings about who children are and who they will or might be within the future. For example, the magazines highlighted that bedrooms attest to children's ages, and that they are expected to grow, or evolve, with children throughout childhood. As one article emphasised, for instance, a baby's bedroom is no longer fit for purpose once a child has surpassed infancy, for the room and the things within it are required to develop as the child matures. Pointing to the need for bedrooms to be adaptable, magazines depicted rooms which were fashioned around objects which could be used throughout childhood, and they explained and showed how rooms and material things could be easily modified to meet children's changing needs and interests. Moreover, these rooms illustrated that bedrooms are informed by ideas and assumptions about what it means to be masculine and feminine, or male and female. Through their respective decoration and materiality, boys' and girls' rooms were visually distinct and identifiable, and they reflected gendered notions and beliefs about inhabitants' dispositions, interests and future roles within society. As boys and girls of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were understood to be men and women in miniature, the child-rearing manuals drew upon similar ideas in their advice on nursery playthings. For example, although the nursery was a gender-neutral space, many of the toys and activities that they recommended were designed to promote and teach children valuable masculine and feminine skills and were intended to train them in how to be and act like 'proper' men and women.

From this perspective, it is possible to understand how bedrooms, through materiality, embody and reflect the attributes and personalities that wider society expects of children. In addition, one can see how bedrooms may work to mould their occupants and how the material culture within may shape and organise children ‘into some semblance of the accepted contemporary type’ (King-Hall, 1958: xiv). For the child-rearing manuals, for example, children were essentially bodies and minds to be cultivated and nurtured, and their growth and development was thought to rest upon the correct provision of certain stimuli within the nursery. A healthy body, for instance, had its roots within the material arrangement and composition of the space, whilst decoration was said to furnish both the room and the child’s mind. As aesthetics and material surroundings were associated with the development of character and intellect, wallpaper patterns and pictures were considered a means to refine nursery dwellers, to instil within them upper- and middle-class ideas and values, and to educate and instruct them in appropriate conduct. In much the same way, the picture books within Chapter Six are designed to steer children toward specific subject positions and particular kinds of behaviour. Often read and used within the bedroom, and reflecting the educational potential of the picture-book genre, they introduce child readers to the ways of the world and enhance their knowledge about life, society and themselves (Nodelman, 2004). For example, in terms of those explored within this thesis, some are intended to be read at bedtime and are designed to discipline children into going to sleep, some encourage children to be well behaved and emphasise to readers the benefits of good behaviour, whilst others attempt to build children’s confidence and highlight the ‘need for adult authority’ (Nodelman, 2004: 159).

The representations of bedrooms observed are also inscribed with ideas about parents and parenthood. They point to the responsibility of parents to ensure that children are provided with a suitable space within the home. For example, by associating the physical health and mental development of children with their immediate environment, the child-rearing manuals defined the form that the nursery was to take and dictated how the space was to be arranged and organised without question; in doing so, however, they simultaneously specified the nature of parenthood and outlined how children ought to be raised. Predicated upon a necessity, or parental obligation, to do the very best for one’s children, the manuals invested the nursery with ideas about the right and the wrong way to bring up a child, and there was to be no deviation from

their advice. A good, competent and loving parent essentially replicated the nursery as described by the manuals in full and followed author's guidance to the letter, for a child's present and future well-being was dependent upon getting the space right and was too important to ignore or disregard. Though the depictions of bedrooms within the magazines were more akin to possibilities and suggestions for parents compared to the imperatives and strict spatial models of the child-rearing manuals, they were similarly based upon standard and accepted ideas about the form that the bedroom should take. Like the manuals, the magazines presented and reflected particular ideals, and, in many ways, they worked to standardise and regulate the space. Although parents were theoretically free to follow or ignore what they read of their own volition, the bedrooms depicted were effectively defined as the norm, and one can imagine that readers felt compelled to ensure that the rooms of their children matched and looked like the spaces on the page. For example, there was little deviation in how the rooms appeared, and they usually contained the same objects and were often stereotypically gendered; blue and pink rooms characterised by ships, carpentry sets, frills and dressing tables abounded, for instance, with the magazines declaring them as ideal spaces for boys and girls. Moreover, the magazines engaged with a reality by featuring and depicting the homes of readers and writers and the bedrooms of their children. Gaining an insight into people's lives, readers were able to compare and contrast their own children's bedrooms with those of others, and it is possible to hypothesise that this applied a kind of extra pressure to parents. For example, in presenting 'real-life' accounts of how other parents had created rooms, furnished spaces and made furniture and other objects, the magazines offered readers no excuse not to do similar things for their own children.

Illustrating that the home is very much the domain of the parent, the texts confirm that the bedroom is subject to adult administration and management and suggest that children have limited agency within their rooms. For example, it is clear from the child-rearing manuals that children had little or no say in how the nursery was decorated and organised and that their interests and desires were considered secondary to the physical and mental benefits associated with the material culture and environment of the space. It should be noted, however, that children's lack of agency within the nursery reflected late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century attitudes toward children and the idea that they should be seen and not heard. Though the later magazines,

in contrast, implied that children participated in the materialising of the bedroom and that they contributed to overall decorating decisions, they similarly described how parents were fundamentally in control of the space. Indeed, parents were understood to have the authority to ultimately decide what could take place within the bedroom, and they were seen as the arbiters who set and defined bedroom rules and boundaries for children. As the opening vignette of Chapter Five highlighted, for instance, parents govern and preside over children's bedroom activities and dictate such things as how tidy rooms should be and when and where toys should be put away. Infused with similar ideas, the picture books also underline that the bedroom is a space of adult regulation. As depicted within *Where the Wild Things Are*, for example, bedrooms often function as spaces of punishment where children are temporarily incarcerated for poor behaviour, whilst in *Goodnight Moon* and *Bedtime for Frances* the bedroom is shown in relation to bedtime, essentially an adult-defined routine in which children must turn out the light and go to sleep when instructed.

### **Final Thoughts**

In focusing upon the bedroom, this thesis has explored a space that has, for the most part, been overlooked within children's geographies and geographies of home. More generally, it has also attended to the neglect of children's domestic geographies within both areas of study and draws attention to the need for researchers to produce more-rounded accounts of domesticity that acknowledge children and their influence on the experience and understanding of home. Moreover, through its textual analysis of depicted bedroom space, it has engaged with a research methodology and with sources which are rarely considered or put to use within the two fields. However, although it underlines and reiterates its argument that texts are important material sources through which to explore everyday life, the thesis acknowledges the limitations of its approach and suggests that further research may be required to obtain a clearer picture of the bedroom. Indeed, the texts examined offer only a partial view of the space and provide little information about individual bedroom experiences. For example, the child-rearing manuals do not reveal how parents interpreted their advice and whether it was implemented or ignored, the magazines do not specify how readers reacted to depicted rooms, and the picture books do not indicate how children respond to their plots and

whether the rooms that they present impact upon how readers see or experience bedrooms. As such, the thesis suggests that future research could look beyond the text and combine both textual and non-textual methodological approaches. For instance, a possible project might expand upon the study presented within Chapter Four; stretching its period of interest up to the present day, it could explore how advice about the bedroom has changed over time and between the decades, as well as examine how current parents react to contemporary guidance. Another could focus upon the extent to which magazines today reflect and influence real-life bedrooms, whilst one could perhaps also consider the responses of children and parents to picture-book bedrooms. Although focus groups and interviews with children and parents could form the basis of such work, some sort of direct engagement with bedrooms would probably also be required. However, given their private nature, it is highly likely that gaining access to bedrooms would prove difficult, and it may be necessary to devise new and innovative research techniques to explore actual spaces in detail. The thesis therefore argues that bedrooms require a greater level of attention and recognition from both children's geographies and geographies of home. Even though its analysis of textual representations has facilitated only a limited engagement with real-life rooms, it has nevertheless drawn attention to the significance of the bedroom within children's lives and has illustrated that the space is, and has long been, an important feature, or constituent, of the home and everyday domesticity.

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