Aesthetic Femininity and Domestic Modernity in Late Victorian Advice Literature

Shu-chuan Yan

First published 2026

ISBN: 978-1-032-85321-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-85322-2 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-51764-1 (ebk)

3

The Doll's House Beautiful

Miniature Interiors and Girls' Space

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003517641-5

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

3 The Doll's House Beautiful

Miniature Interiors and Girls' Space

A cartoon by George du Maurier, "Hobson's choice" (Figure 3.1), appeared in the February 1872 issue of *Punch*. While the title informs the reader of an idiom, meaning to make a choice between what is available or nothing at all, the cartoon conjures up the visual image of a popular childhood pastime, that is, doll's house play. A closer look at the toy home shows the prevailing style of a box back house that has a façade opening to reveal three rooms and windows with curtains tied back. The three-story doll's house is surrounded by three children, including a girl dressed in a pinafore dress and two boys attired in sailor suits. Principally, the caption provides a visual narrative of the brief exchange between Ethel and Arthur about doll's house play. Ethel's lady dolls are ready to dance in the drawing-room, but no partners are there to invite them. The gentlemen dolls, showing no interest in dancing with the lady dolls, are all in Arthur's Noah's Ark, a popular Sunday Toy. In general, the cartoon makes a point about gender-stereotyped toys for leisure time—doll's house as the plaything for girls and Noah's Ark for boys. More generally, it tells of the increased availability of mass-produced and commercially made dolls' houses for home-based child play in the late nineteenth century.

The attention to the identification of dolls' houses with girls' home education permeates conduct-based literature, such as children's books, advice manuals, and women's periodicals, for readers to interrogate female definition of home cultures. It is this attention that becomes the subject of my investigation to trace pivotal issues of girl-directed household management in relation to the visual and textual construction of the Doll's House Beautiful. In this chapter I consider how the physical space of a doll's house, with different room settings, offers an ideal location for middle-class girls to take on the role of home practitioners. I maintain that the home-based leisure pursuit of doll's house play, an agent for the nurturing of aesthetic practices, enables a girl to achieve a sense of ownership and selfhood through the reorganization and accumulation of artifacts contained within the miniature world.

Alternatively, furnishing the doll's house with miniature furniture and household accessories comes to be an expression of mimic home-making, a pleasurable activity between hand and imagination. The meaning of home interior to a girl at play is inseparable from the visual and tactile experience of ornamentation

DOI: 10.4324/9781003517641-5
This chapter has been made available under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

Figure 3.1 George du Maurier. "Hobson's Choice," *Punch*, 24 Feb. 1872, p. 80. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

and decoration. This invariably evokes girls' fantasies of house-building, encouraging their artistic endeavors to decorate and arrange their future homes. The doll's house, in this sense, serves as a useful mechanism through which to investigate a girl's early involvement in house planning and architectural design. Playing with a doll's house elicits concerns about the meaning of girlhood within the context of late Victorian culture, but it also underscores some of the most profound and intimate connections between femininity and domesticity, connections legitimizing the formation of a modern interior.

A Space of Her Own: Interiority, Miniaturization, and Doll's House Play

Girlhood is an idea that shifts over time, and doll's house play patterns offer a useful means of observing how age transitions acquire broad significance of girl-led and object-oriented learning within the domestic sphere. As well as doll play, miniature houses with collections of tiny treasures are laden with the larger social responsibilities of cultivating appropriate womanhood and motherhood, or with practices in domesticity and housewifery.[1] The doll's house, a miniature toy home made for dolls, constantly functions as a transitional object between childhood and womanhood (Brandow-Faller 14) to direct girls toward home practitioners within the enclosed world of the miniature interior. The miniature house was easy

for girls to manipulate and handle, invoking a "sense of pleasurable possession" (Flower 4) among them. Tellingly, the sensual experience of arrangements of a small-scale interior highlights the power of the miniature to illuminate the domestic ideal. The aesthetic implications of arranging and playing with scaled-down furnishings encourage girls to add beauty to the miniature interior. In other words, a girl's pleasure of playing with a doll's house is synonymous with the enjoyable and absorbing pastime that works in parallel with the "dual satisfaction of picturing oneself in the interior . . . while simultaneously mastering from the outside that interior space wherein one feels secure" (qtd. in Stock and Wheeler 196). "The miniature home, so easily opened and snapped shut," links well to the "compressed and intensified modes of interiority" (Flower 4). Dolls and dolls' houses share "a form of absolute self-containment and sense of sheltered interiority" (Flower 3). Given the girl's domain, dolls' houses neatly express the interrelations between interiority, miniaturization, and aesthetic pleasures.

Regarding children's experiences of the tiny world, Susan Stewart argues that the miniature implies "a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience" (69). "Transcendence and the interiority of history and narrative," in her thinking, "are the dominant characteristics of the most consummate of miniatures—the dollhouse" (Stewart 61). Constance Eileen King has similar observations: "The doll's house interior is the perfect household in miniature . . . a delectable mixture of the charms of Lilliput and Utopia, simultaneously an escape from real life and its mirror" (10). Viewed from this perspective, small-scale models of dolls' houses make a good beginning for girls to explore the enclosed world of miniatures. Beyond that, the process of miniaturization encourages a sense of longing/possession. By miniaturizing something, one begins to own it. This establishes the expectation that a girl is able to miniaturize herself in a doll's house through her imaginative and creative play.

The growth in children's book market as well as the proliferation of women's periodicals in the late Victorian period made it evident that advice literature engaged the intersection of parental upbringing and domestic ideals of girlhood to address the meanings generated by doll's house play. To accommodate new ideas of furnishing children's space at home, the publishing industry boasted doll's house play as one of the homebound activities braided with girls' identity formation. A dolls' house, an emblem of the miniaturizing of girlhood, was intended to foster the domestic virtues of femininity in girls but frequently entailed "adult disciplines of discrimination and order" (Baker 11). In line with the development of modern domesticity, doll's house play marked "gendered expectations about measuring maturity" (Dawson 64). It, in turn, helped to provoke the latent womanliness in a girl and prepare her for respectable home life by making an important link between social skills and rehearsal for real life. Room settings presented in miniature allowed for inspirational play. They reinforced the role of dolls' houses as "practical, instructional and attractive toys" (Pasierbska 10) to stimulate learning of domestic responsibilities and household duties. They guided girls to capture the essence of household arts more broadly. Accordingly, girls were in need of instructions on design and aesthetics as they grew toward womanhood. Arranging

a doll's house encouraged a girl's artistic interest in the decorative treatment of her first surroundings in the home interior.

Chloe Flower remarks that the rise of the doll's house coincided with "a new preoccupation with specialized and separate spaces within the home" in Victorian Britain (4). Following Flower, I emphasize that nursery rooms and dolls' houses grew up together in the emerging material culture of childhood. Dolls' houses dominated the contemporary value of nurseries when furnishing children's space in the domestic interior was increasingly becoming a central concern. The separation of adult space from child space was an important feature of the drive for rearrangement of room uses from 1870 onward. Noticing space planning of nurseries in the upper part of a house, Annmarie Adams writes that the idea of remoteness justifies major changes in attitudes toward childhood, "the late-nineteenth century practice of giving children the 'best' rooms in the house," perhaps with a desire to alleviate maternal anxiety over a nanny's care (Adams 142). The expanding markets for dolls' houses meanwhile co-existed with the growth of nurseries as the children's realm. Dolls' houses, along with amusing and instructive toys like rocking horses and Noah's Ark, were nursery favorites that pointed to an increasing preoccupation with a child-centered culture.

Here we may recall what Mrs. Jane Ellen Panton, an authority on artful home decoration, has observed: the nurseries, located at the very top rooms, "are so far off that the mother scarcely ever climbs up to them" (*Kitchen* 161). The reason behind this is that male architects and builders neglect "the commonest principles of their art as regarded from a purely feminine point of view" ("Night Nursery" 23). By addressing the reader as "all ye aesthetic folk," Mrs. Panton comes up with her own "beautiful theories" (*Kitchen* 167, 163) about decorating and furnishing day and night nurseries. Expanding on the theme of nursey, she addressed her reader thus: "Let beauty and simplicity, honesty and frankness, be your guide in your nurseries" (Panton, *Kitchen* 180). The alliance between children's space and aesthetic principles in the light of concerns for well-being is clearly revealed. Mrs. Panton supplies similar advice for the design of nurseries in *Homes of Taste*. She makes the point that "[a] house of taste—the house of the future—begins to be formed in the nursery" (11). In *Nooks and Corners*, Mrs. Panton devotes a chapter to the discussion of her forward-looking idea of retaining a room in the house for the nursery. For the mistress of a house, "to give to her children an ideal chamber" means to ensure "beauty and suitable arrangements for their comfort" (99). Mrs. Panton explicates the value of adorning children's space with everyday things, for example, a fixed doll's house, the most fascinating toy "in these artistic days of ours" (12). What is also noteworthy is her decorating manual *A Gentlewoman's Home*, a recasting of articles previously published in *The Gentlewoman*, a lady's newspaper, in which she calls for the necessity of day and night nurseries for children who, in effect, "want plenty of space, plenty of air and sunshine, and plenty of room to grow mentally and physically" (257). Targeting the tasteful reader, she offers a plan of decorating and furnishing the day and night nurseries to set the foundation for making children safe and happy. One of the visual accompaniments to her idea (Figure 3.2) presents details about the use of decorative items for a more

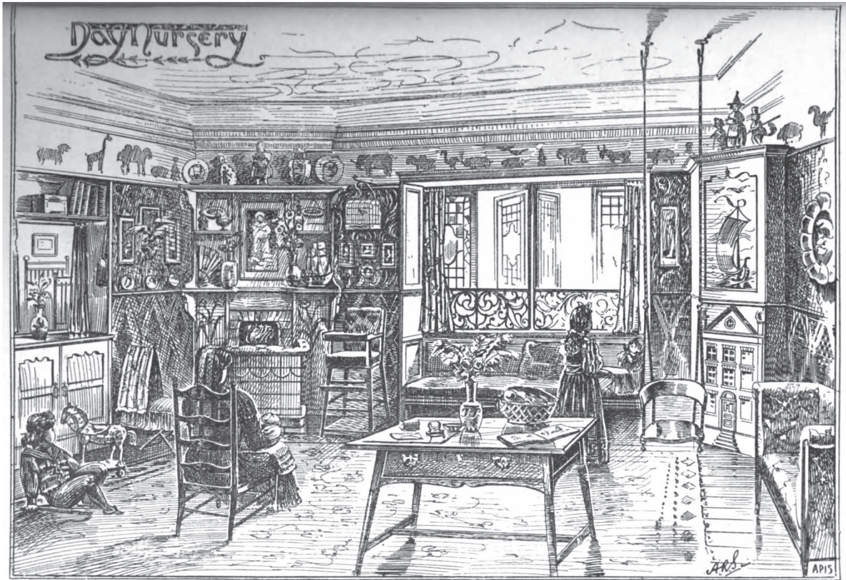

Figure 3.2 The day nursery. Mrs. Jane Ellen Panton. *A Gentlewoman's Home*, 1896, p. 251. Image Courtesy of HathiTrust.

homely domestic ideal: the floor covering, dido, animal wallpapers, wide and low window seat, pictures, low buffet containing drawers, tables, sofa, chairs, and most importantly, the fixed dolls' house that is

> low enough for the children to play with, without . . . dragging it down on their devoted heads, for to the properly constituted female child a dolls' house means paradise, and is the nucleus, as it were, of its whole future life. (256)

Mrs. Panton's advice foregrounds the connection between a well-furnished, well-equipped day nursery and a doll's house to highlight a significant ornamental feature of domestic caretaking.

As already noted, the closing decades of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a new girls' culture and new and modern practices of aestheticized lifestyle. *Our Little Dots*, a children's magazine published by the Religious Tract Society, included a short piece titled "Gracie's Doll's House" (Figure 3.3), which sketched a small-scale bedroom furnishing characterized by twin beds, a stove, chairs, and a table at the top of the doll's house. *Little Wide-Awake*, an illustrated magazine for children under the editorship of Mrs. Sale Barker, likewise seized on adults' need to prescribe appropriate aesthetic ideals of femininity to girls. *Our Dollies* (c. 1880), a picture book that portrays a doll's house as a miniature representation of an affluent home, exemplifies an extravagant plaything for girls. Girl readers can

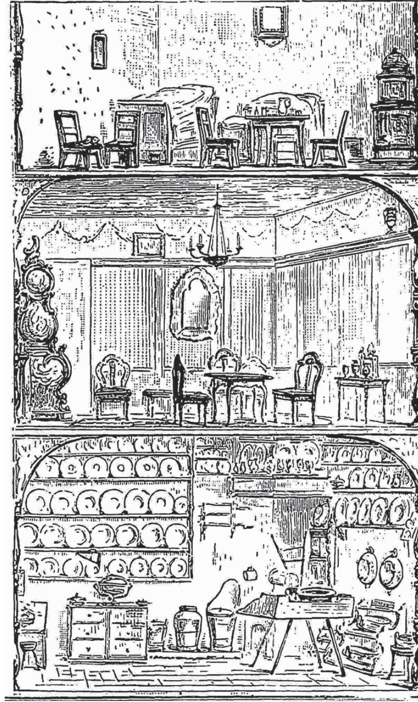

Figure 3.3 "Gracie's Doll's House," *Our Little Dots*, n.d., p. 3. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

look into the interior of the rooms through colorful sketches (Figure 3.4) of the spatial division of a miniature house. The doll's house has six rooms: a nursery and a bedroom on the second floor, a drawing-room and a bedroom on the first floor, and a kitchen and a dining-room (blocked out by the girl) on the ground floor. Rooms are all equipped with small-scale furniture and accessories for the girl in a pinafore dress to play with. A staircase runs through the center of the house. Furthermore, the doll's house provides a medium for the girl to get to know the organization of household space for specific social functions. The whole household consists of parents, children, and servants—dolls that are carefully dressed. The dolls that the girl is playing with, so to speak, enhance her perception of familial relationships for re-enacting the daily activities of sleeping, cooking, eating, and socializing, as revealed in the six equally spacious rooms. The sketch gives a further idea of the size of an opulent-looking doll's house, the very embodiment of cozy charm that promises a girl's privacy to enjoy the ownership of the homely comforts of dwelling. Evidently, the domestic setting of the doll's house is intended as an instructional aid to facilitate girl readers' early engagement with household duties and domestic skills. It, too, is a miniature replica of a model home, a stimulus for fostering a girl's domestic femininity as well as for practicing everyday routines

Figure 3.4 Doll's House Play. *Our Dollies*, c1880. Image Courtesy of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

and lifestyles. The organized and systematic design of the small-scale house leans into a natural, simple aesthetic, making it ideal for dreaming of a retreat from the public world to a private space replete with fun and imagination.

The same situation can be said of "The Doll's House," an 1890 story revolving around little Dorothy's doll's house, a gift given by her father on her seventh birthday.[2] An illustration shows Dorothy's doll's house standing on a table in the day nursery where the wall is adorned with John Everett Millais's 1879 painting, *Cherry Ripe*, in which the doll-like image of a mob-capped little girl in a fancy white dress stresses the popular representation of girlhood. Dorothy's doll's house is of English manufacture and has an English name, "Bluebell Cottage"—"a most beautiful mansion" with "a bow window on the ground floor and a balcony above. There was a bright blue door with a brass knocker, and white steps going up to it" ("Doll's House" 330). There is no illustration of the interior of the tiny house, but it is typical of the living-cooking-eating arrangement.

While reading "The Doll's House," the juvenile reader is invited to go from room to room by glancing into the ideally prescribed place of the doll's house, including "a pretty hall, with tesselated pavement, and three rooms on the ground

floor," "a lovely drawing room, furnished in the palest blue, with gilt framed looking-glass and pale blue paper on the walls, a gilt piano, and blue and white carpet," and "a dining room with oak dining table and sideboard, chairs to match, covered in dark green leather, and many pictures on the wall" ("Doll's House" 330). The staircase is tastefully carpeted with crimson cloth stabilized by real brass rods, while the landing features a tiny vase of flowers placed on a little table. Two charming bedrooms are in private location—one bedroom "fitted up in palest pink, the other in terra cotta, and filled with every comfort that the most fastidious doll could desire." Room arrangements on the whole are invested with some level of style and creativity in design. Over the kitchen, there is also provided servant's room, a most comfortable apartment, but plainer in decoration. Everything that can be wanted fits up the kitchen: brass pots and pans, a handsome dinner service, and a bright-and-black kitchener, for example, and "the whole place wears such an air of cleanliness and comfort as no kitchen ever before" ("Doll's House" 331). Surely, playing with a doll's house initiates Dorothy into housekeeping and cooking through the miniaturized interior setting.

"The Doll's House" offers a unique lens through which to assess how Dorothy's imaginative play intersects with her own agency in the fantasy world of make-believe. She turns the doll's house into a dwelling place inhabited by "French dolls of suitable proportions to the rooms, and dressed with the utmost care and good taste" ("Doll's House" 331). Each inmate has its own role to play or household duty to do, indicating a microcosm of social hierarchy: the master of the house standing near the sideboard in the dining-room, tastefully dressed lady in the drawing-room, fair young lady reposing upon a sofa in the pink room, a maid, in neat cap and gown, standing by the toilet table, as well as man cook, with white cap and apron, in the kitchen, or perhaps a neat little maidservant in the servants' room. Rather than an instrument of discipline and subjugation, the doll's house, along with its inmates, is endowed with a sense of "in-betweenness" to make clear the exclusive preserve of girls to organize and manage a well-regulated domestic interior. Crucially, dolls become "transitional objects" to empower and emancipate girls through the practice of play. They are deemed as "subversive, empowering tools which enabled their users to experience agency and become autonomous individuals" (Fennetaux 49).[3] The implication is that doll's house play connotes a certain information value, inviting a girl player into her own little area of existence, or a space of her own.

Crafting and Decorating the Miniature Interior

The role of miniature interiors in shaping the idea of modern girlhood is significant. The evolving concept of doll's house play, as indicated earlier, capitalized on the growing popularity of the nursery as a private place for child development. By the end of the nineteenth century, crafting houses and furniture in miniature had begun to afford both amusements and educational values of the doll's house beautiful, an integral part of artistic practices at home. Such a miniature mania was central to a girl's aesthetic formation of a small-scale house crammed with tiny replicas

of furniture pieces and accessories within the cult of the House Beautiful. Dolls and doll's houses worked together to form the principles of house planning and architectural design. Dolls' houses showcase aspects of "architecture, household furnishings, and innumerable customs"—both practical and appealing (Jacobs 4). Thus, it is worthy of scrutinizing a girl's aesthetic awareness of miniature crafts and small-scale furnishings through the making of a doll's house. A girl's nature is made explicit through play, a testing ground for the materialization of a world on a small scale for various effects. As with portraits and printed books, dolls' houses represent a fascination with the miniature and material preoccupations of Victorian culture (Forsberg 135–63). "There is great beauty in *smallness*," as A. C. Benson asserts ("Introduction" 4). The small is beautiful, which helps to articulate the aesthetic meaning of domestic femininity in the miniature interior at large. For smallness' sake, the power of the miniature is specifically concerned with the intention to "capture adult concerns regarding a woman's place within the domestic interior and the nature of home" (Stock and Wheeler 196). In simple terms, a girl's spatial configuration of tiny houses incorporates small-scale versions of architectural details and household furnishings in compliance with her own creative instincts and aesthetic sensibility. Visual and material forms of a doll's house, including its architectural and interior features, typify the gendered upbringing akin to a girl's artistic practices within the home.

Hand-made or home-made miniature houses and small-scale furniture articles expose a concept of crafting as a foundation of feminine virtues invested with the art of domesticity. Concerning the dialectical relation between size and quality, Claude Lévi-Strauss maintains that "all miniatures seem to have an intrinsic aesthetic quality" (23). A further feature of miniatures is that they, as small-scale works of art, are "'man-made' and, what is more, made by hand" (Lévi-Strauss 24). John Mack continues this line of thought:

> Small is, indeed, very often, and by common consent, beautiful . . . the hand is, in fact, often at once the measure and the container of the miniature. Things that 'would fit in the palm of your hands' are, by definition, small. (5)

As such, we can follow the tradition of handbooks created for and used by children and adults to trace the leisurely pursuit of crafting and decorating dolls' houses as a pleasant employment for girls.

Advice books for girls are important factors in giving miniaturized domestic settings an artistic appearance credited with beauty. Picture books, for example, retain a focus on how a doll's house inspires a girl with a taste for the visual and material dynamic of interior arrangements. Informed by the Arts and Crafts Movement, picture books encouraged Victorian children to appreciate beauty more than utility and efficiency. Pictures of affluent interiors voiced a popular conception of the decorative objects favored by Victorian aesthetes as art and beauty (Korda 113). For girls, the act of manufacturing a doll's house with little fingers was an amusement equivalent to the art of entertaining. Mrs. Ewing's "House Building

and Repairs" offered a glimpse of the construction of home interiors through the miniature possessions of dolls' houses. In this verse for children, Mrs. Ewing drew an analogy between a father's construction of a new house and his daughter's building of a doll's house in architectural terms. In Mrs. Ewing's account, "Father is building a new house, but I've had one / given to me for my own; / Brick red, with a white window, and black where it / ought to be glass, and the chimney yellow, like / stone" (Ewing 46). Of particular interest is the accompanying illustration, which demonstrates how a doll's house was fashioned within the physical arena of building activities. The visual image of miniature paraphernalia for food preparation exemplifies a girl's interaction with the architectural interior of a toy home. The doll's house, in this instance, serves as a useful medium through which to investigate a girl's early engagement in house planning and architectural design. The physical space of the doll's house offers an ideal location in which a girl is enabled to engage in home-based leisure pursuits by taking on the role of an architect-designer.

It is not surprising, then, that the making of a miniature doll's house typifies a girl's first introduction to the field of domestic education, especially in relation to the evolving taste in domestic architecture and interior design within the material culture of the home. A significant part of this experience of doll's house construction is articulated in *Edith and Milly's Housekeeping* (c. 1880), a title in the Aunt Louisa London Toy Book series for children. The book features two little girls, Milly and Edith, who are initiated into a world of house-making in which each room functions as a readable story. Milly tells Edith: "Mamma said that in furnishing my Doll's House, I should learn how to furnish my own house by-and-by" (unpaginated). Milly's words here reveal a sense of a child's pleasure of building a well-furnished dwelling based on her fantasies and ideas. It is a doll's house that contains a bedroom, a drawing-room, a dining-room, a kitchen, and more, a doll's house in the nursery upstairs, as high as Milly herself. Crucial to the girls' house-building activities is the allocation and arrangement of a bedroom, a manifestation of their domestic skills of decorating. Edith associates the making of "a pretty bedroom" with the feeling of "a grown-up lady" (unpaginated), whereas Milly sees furnishing the bedroom with miniature accessories—the toilette-cover, curtains, bed-hangings, sheets, and little pillow, and so on—as a pleasurable activity between hand and imagination. In the process of making a doll's house, both Edith and Milly construe the bedroom as a private domain, which, in turn, promotes widespread acceptance of house-building as a girl's pastime.

An earlier example of making a doll's house as a source of delight and entertainment can be found in *The Girl's Own Book* (1858), a revised and expanded edition of the illustrated guide by Mrs. Lydia Maria Child that went through many editions on both sides of the Atlantic. In reiterating the notion of a home-made doll's house, Mrs. Child addresses her readers: "the doll's house will be a very pretty sight, and afford an endless fund of entertainment" (60). The toy home, named Louisa Cottage, is to be divided into six rooms—bedroom and nursery on the second floor, drawing-room and dining-room on the first floor, and kitchen and housekeeper's

room on the ground floor. These house layout ideas can be supplemented by the use of ornamental articles. As Mrs. Child suggests:

> Next to the dolls themselves, few playthings afford little girls more delight than a doll's house. In it they see the miniature representation of the house they live in, and by observing all the useful and ornamental articles that contribute to the furnishing of their full-sized home, they may learn to fit up dolly's abode in a suitable manner. We should much prefer that only the empty shell of the house, except the stoves and fenders, &c., were given to children in the first instance, that they might the better exercise their ingenuity in furnishing it.
>
> (56)

The miniaturized version of a house is expressive of the spatial configuration of the domestic interior. This applies to Landells's suggestive little book, *The Girl's Own Toy-Maker, and Book of Recreation* (1868), another salient example of instructive work on the employment of leisure hours. The making of toys was advocated as one of the arts of education. Written from a father's perspective and assisted by his daughter, *The Girl's Own Toy-Maker* was primarily intended for parents. With respect to girls' upbringing, it preaches about the functional role of hand-made toys and miniature household ornaments as juvenile companions, both amusing and informative:

> Girls need never be in want of toys; a very little practice and ingenuity will soon enable them to make their own; and in doing so they will not only find amusement, but useful information. After a short time, they will not only be enabled to entertain their juvenile companions, but will have the satisfaction of making agreeable presents to their friends, as well as contributing to the embellishment of their own homes. An endless variety of toys, and household ornaments may be made out of paper, by the use of the scissors only, and with the assistance of a penknife, and a little gum dissolved in water, or paste, they can make almost anything they may require.
>
> (Landells and Landells 1)

At the core of girlhood is the notion of crafting as an artistic expression. Attempting to motivate girls' constructive power for making paper houses of their own, the Landells illustrate their points through a variety of diagrams, using sheets of writing or drawing papers to cut out the front, back, and sides of the house, roof, chimney, gate, and railings. Additionally, furnishing a doll's house with cardboard toys, including a table with chairs, armchair, couch, wash-hand stand, bed, and bed-steps, is indispensable knowledge for crafting the miniaturized versions of furniture of the time.

Self-made toys like paper houses and paper dolls are educational and artistic. *How to Make Dolls' Furniture and Furnish a Doll's House* (1871), a 2-shilling

picture book, promotes the disciplinary format of methodical arrangement for a "neat and orderly" (10) doll's house based on Mrs. Elliott's directions. The book shows how the enactment of girlhood training in hand-made dolls' houses can be conceived as a form of education supplement to connect the art of domesticity with household furnishings. Materials required for making the kitchen, dining-room, parlor, bedroom, and servant's furniture are well-illustrated and explained in detail. For example, a bedroom contains furniture like a large French bedstead, a crib, a washstand, a bureau, a towel horse, a rocking chair, a plain chair, and a work table (45), which partially incorporates elements of interior decoration of the period. In simple terms, engagement with dolls and dolls' houses through reading children's advice books stands as the primary means of instruction to enrich the juvenile reader's understanding of the material world. From an interior design and home furnishing perspective, it may be possible to arrive at a definition of hand-made toy furniture and dolls' houses as an emblem of do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic.

The Girl's Home Book (1877), a useful and pleasant companion for female juveniles, conveys the message of crafting miniature houses and small-scale furniture as well. One of the intriguing aspects of the advice book is the hand-made toy home intended for facilitating young girls' understanding of the parallel between the work of craft and the joy of play under the care and guidance of adults. Equating dolls with works of art, the book suggests:

> We must not omit from our portion of pastimes that important personage THE DOLL. A love for the mimic baby is always a taste worth cultivating in a child. Children learn, by their care of it, something of the watchful maternal habits which will make the happiness of their family in after life; and in dressing 'Dolly' the young girl acquires a skill with her needle, and in the art of cutting out, which will be invaluable to her future years.
>
> (Valentine 100)

Clearly, making tiny furniture and decorative items is as important as taking care of dolls. The book addresses the girl further: "If you wish to have greater pleasure than merely looking at, and playing with, ready-made toys, have your doll house empty, and furnish it yourself." A girl can buy tables and chairs if she does not "have a clever brother who would use his tool-box for [her], and find pleasure in making them" (Valentine 121). A wine box or tea-chest can make a house with kitchen and dining-room on the ground floor, drawing-room on the first floor, and nursery and bedrooms above. Essential to the idea of a self-made doll's house is to keep the toy home, "very neat and nice" (Valentine 122). Thus, it is advisable that girls practice economy with weekly money for new doll's house decorations. In making this claim, the book indicates the type of information deemed necessary for girls to self-regulate weekly money (perhaps with some basic arithmetic), practice adult roles for daily routine, and gain skills needed for home décor—all aim to foster their material and economic literacy.

Interestingly, *School-Girl Life and Incident* (1880) devotes a separate chapter to an adult woman's recollection of her childhood play. The chapter centers around

Munny's childhood experience in making and furnishing a doll's house with "patient little fingers" (181). Munny describes that the doll's house was a beloved toy for many years but unfortunately ruined in a fire. She recalls how she and her sister little Jessie made a doll's house out of a huge empty packing-case. Allowing a carpenter to paint red brick on the exterior of the house, the sisters continued to hide the staring sides with long sprays of ground-ivy and cover a sloping roof with imitation slates of thick purple paper. The carpenter divided the space upstairs into a drawing-room and bedroom, whereas Munny endeavored to make a dining-room, kitchen, and entrance-hall downstairs. Making miniature furniture like tin sofas and chairs and tiny ornaments out of cardboard and paint was "an especial delight" to Munny. Despite the want of proportion in their goods and chattels, the two sisters' furnishing of a "large, ugly" (180) doll's house encompasses pieces of advice on small-scale interior design methodically. Munny brings to her mind how they worked together on flooring pattern of the hall, the hat-stand, carpets for the rooms, and completed the task of room furnishings with the assistance of two aunts. In Munny's account,

> The next to do was to work carpets for the three rooms . . . a dear good aunt design[ed] the patterns of our carpets; for the drawing-room, shaded green with a tiny white star, the bedroom, wavy nondescript lines, and the dining-room, a wonderfully good imitation of a Turkey carpet. We only treated the kitchen to a gay hearth-rug made of layers of colored flannel. The hall-mats were knitted brown wool loops, which we afterwards cut and combed out; they looked capital, but were too soft. The curtains made a great improvement in the otherwise rude apertures which did duty for windows, and the paper set off the walls. Another kind aunt painted the borders, making the loveliest panels for the drawing room. The fireplace was very much "make-believe," being merely a tin one independent of any fixture; it was such an eyesore that at last we took it away, and decreed that it should be perpetual summer.
>
> (181)

Although Munny and Jessie had great difficulty furnishing "exquisite 'interiors'" of the kitchen, they pleased themselves with "the rudest kitchen-range, and hideous, impossible wooden saucepans and kettles" (181). After the completion of the doll's house and its furniture pieces, the girls began to dress the inmates, the family who were to live in the house. There were 50 dolls altogether to assist them in delineating "a sort of life drama" for several months. The wooden dolls, such as general officers in scarlet and gold, clergymen in gowns and bands, and footmen in every conceivable livery, were beautifully dressed by their friends and acquaintances. These dolls of different social positions, indeed, motivate the two sisters to practice rituals of socialization. Munny's remembrance of her girlhood points to the historical aspect of children's preference for "playing *at* something," especially the possession of the most beautiful toys produced at the time (182). Explicitly or implicitly, it aims to make girls aware of what a home is made of.

The Child's Fancy Work and Doll Book (1882) bears similarity to *School-Girl* in containing suggestions and instructions on the making of doll's furniture and dresses for the amusement of girls. The guidebook points readers to the significance of hand-made dolls as girls' "very own selves" on a small scale. For girls, making their own dolls is a source of amusement and something "infinitely more pleasant to their little feelings than the gifts from mother or nurse of more elaborate constructions" (1). Dressing and adorning dollies is an expression of a girl's fancy and aesthetic taste. Meanwhile, home-made dolls' houses give girls "much real and lasting satisfaction" (2) to imag(in)e a comfortable pattern of living. To implement design ideas for a doll's house, the guidebook singles out the lightweight materials and tools for making a doll's house:

> There are always packing-cases about, stored away in cellar or attic, one of which could be spared for the purpose; this, then, with a few deal boards, some two-inch screws, a pair of hinges, some nails and smaller screws, a hasp for the door, glue-pot, and last, but not least, the willing brother or uncle with his box of carpenter's tools, can be quickly converted into a charming *doll's-house*. (2)

The making of miniature rooms in a doll's house promotes a girl's awareness of health and well-being at home. The bedroom is exemplary in this respect: "sleeping accommodation should not be in any way curtailed" (3). Moreover, the book guides the young reader through step-by-step instructions on making the essential pieces of miniature furniture and bric-a-brac to provide the bare bones of home decoration and entail harmony in the rooms. In addition to the text, the book features a few striking illustrations of miniature furniture (Figure 3.5) associated with the home in efforts to enhance juvenile readers' aesthetic pleasures, "the pleasure for nimble little fingers in making up and arranging curtains to suit the different interiors" (7). In view of a girl's handiwork, home art is intimately bound up with childlike playfulness in the process of crafting small-sized furniture with little fingers. Home-made furniture for a doll's house entices girls to visualize the material objects in their own homes.

The Young Lady's Book (1876) provides another useful context for understanding girls' handiwork at home, a mixture of fun, creativity, and style. At the outset, the author underpins the significance of dolls and dolls' houses as delightful toys that afford the "little ones" the constant variety of indoor amusement and entertainment. The author maintains that "the likeness to real life . . . enables the little imaginative beings to pass an existence in those tiny rooms, and to believe in the positive identity of the 'papa' and 'mama,' and all the children." One of the baby homes owned and treasured by a little girl is a case in point. It is three stories high, equipped with a staircase leading up to the top of the house. The ground floor is given over to the kitchen and the dining-room, with the hall in between. The next floor up are the drawing-room and the children's play-room filled with tiny toys. The top floor has the mamma's bedroom with a door through to the nursery, "another capital sized room." For the development of a little girl's material literacy, the manual provides inspiration for furnishings based on room-by-room uses. It illustrates what lovely furniture pieces are required for

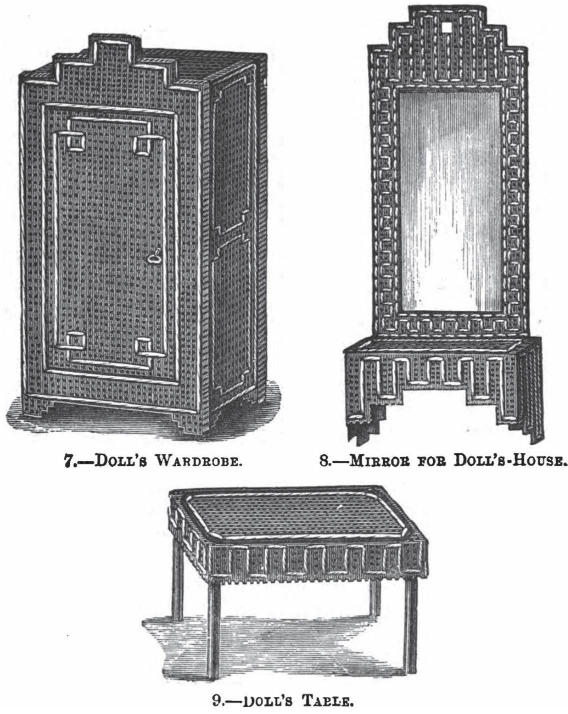

Figure 3.5 A set of doll's furniture, *The Child's Fancy Work and Doll Book*, 1882, p. 9. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Licensed as Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

> the drawing-room suite of red velvet, gold fringe, and ebony; a marble bureau and a marble-topped table, a tiny tea-table, and two extra chairs. Chimney-glasses, pictures, and ornaments were distributed plentifully about the room, and above all a piano, on which the little children practiced diligently every day.
>
> (Mackarness 325)

The dining-room's simple furniture contains three or four chairs, a sideboard, and a long dining table, while the kitchen is complete with four chairs, a table, and a plate-rack for dinnerware like plates, dishes, cups, and saucers. Given the complexity of the issue of domestic arrangements surrounding the doll's house, crafting miniature objects encourages girls to keep their hands busy so that they can get involved in the aesthetics and organization of living space. Ordinary elements of staging modern domesticity are interwoven with the act of doll's house play. The miniature interior of a doll's house offers a means for girls to acquire knowledge of wedding ceremonies, evening parties, Christmas parties, and other daily routines. Accordingly, imaginative play promotes an appreciation of maternity, an extension of domestic training of girls for the development of appropriate womanhood by

following the traditional motherly model of nurturing and care of children. In a larger sense, different room settings encourage a girl to mimic real-life scenarios for the cultivation of her familial and social duties, which makes doll's house play a compelling case for understanding the domestic realm of everyday life.

Home Notes, a domestic magazine founded by Sir Arthur Pearson in 1894, offered women tips on running a household in an organized and effective way. Featuring many of the characteristics of 1890s New Journalism, the penny magazine "was lavishly illustrated, informal in tone" and carried "short snippets of information" together with advice and gossip (Beetham, "Home Notes" 287). *Home Notes* regularly ran "The House Beautiful" column to provide advice on the art of furnishing a house and running a home, including home-made dolls' houses. This advice column, written by Irene, informed perceptions of the aesthetic interior. A short piece, "A Doll's House," appeared in 1895 to disclose a long-standing concern with girls' imaginative and creative play with delightful dolls' houses. The piece offered plans for home-made dolls' houses deemed ideal for girls to learn about the spatial layout and diminutive interior, underlying the notion of spatial compartments. Complementing the text is a sketch (Figure 3.6) in which Red Riding Hood, the well-known heroine of a traditional fairy tale, has been chosen by Irene to demonstrate how a toy home could be a treasured place for the expansion

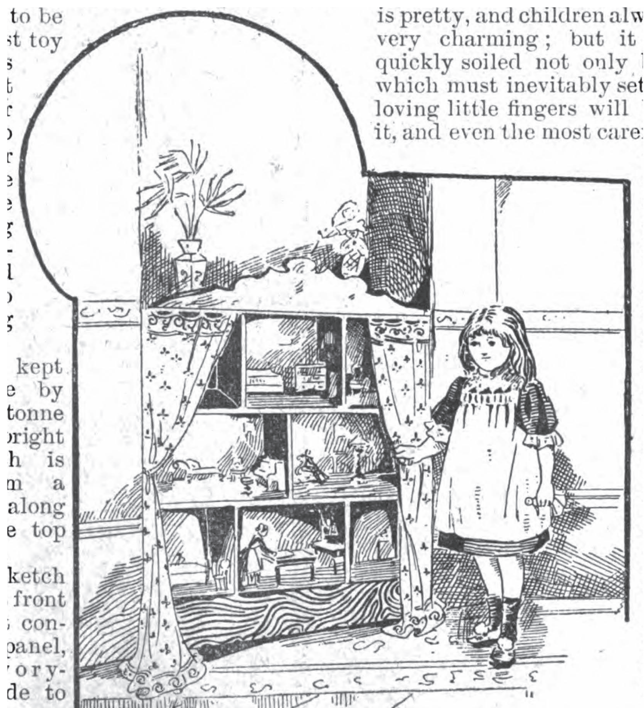

Figure 3.6 Irene. "A Doll's House," *Home Notes*, 2 Mar. 1895, p. 197. Image Courtesy of HathiTrust.

of hands-on experience of furnishing. The piece suggests that a set of shelves, the base for forming rooms of various sizes and making different levels, will help to create a charming doll's house, with rooms of various sizes, in some convenient corner of the nursery. "A house like this," as Irene asserts, "is incomparably superior to the 'desirable villa residences' to be purchased in most toy shops, and its superiority is not only in the matter of space, but also of stability" (197). Girl readers are, then, introduced to the tasks of papering the walls and ceilings and carpeting the floors. To keep dust from the tiny house, a cretonne curtain of pretty bright coloring may be suspended from a brass rod placed along the front of the top shelf.

"A Doll's House Made of Wine Cases" is another piece for "The House Beautiful" column in *Home Notes*, showing how a home-made doll's house could be an experimental zone for the playfulness of architecture and design. The piece focuses on architectural details through the description of a father's making of a doll's house for his little daughter, using simple material like two empty wine cases, extra pieces of wood, and the straw around the bottles. The columnist employs a sketch of the exterior to illuminate how "the picturesque appearance of the doll's house" is supported by the chimney, sloping roof, attic, flap, porch, doors, windows, and two or three steps leading to the front door. A visual element of "picturesque appearance" is the painting on all sides with imitation brickwork and ornamental timbering. Concerning the layout of the interior, another sketch (Figure 3.7) is used to

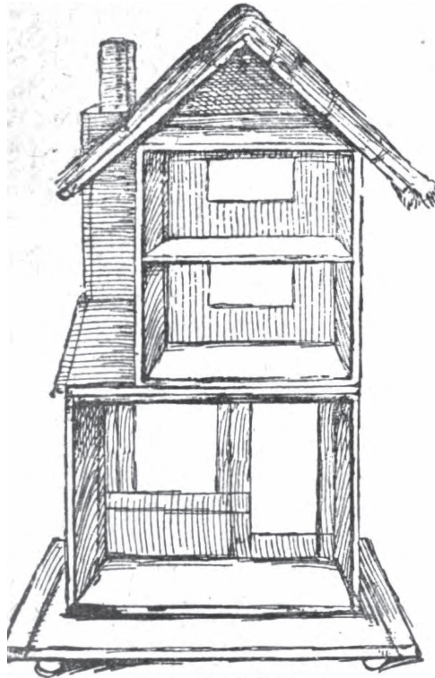

Figure 3.7 Interior of a doll's house. Irene, "A Doll's House Made of Wine Cases," *Home Notes*, 19 Oct. 1895, p. 6. Image Courtesy of HathiTrust.

demonstrate the division of the upper case into two rooms, and "the inside should be papered with some small pattern paper for the walls, and white paper for the ceiling." The piece concludes with a few words underlying the significance of a self-made doll's house to its juvenile owner as a durable toy, advising that "we have our doll's-house in the rough, and the result is a novel, picturesque, and very attractive house, beloved of all children who see it" (Irene, "A Doll's House" 5).

"A Good Doll's House," a piece for the "Mothers in Council" column in *Home Notes*, likewise gives handy advice on building, furnishing, and decorating a doll's house. As the author, Ada S. Ballin, editor of *Baby, the Mother's Magazine*, points out,

> A good doll's house can be manufactured from an old packing case, painted outside, and papered inside. The lid of a cardboard box will make divisions to separate the rooms, and the front can be made from the lid of the packing case if not broken, or from another box. Nurse can cut out the windows, and these can be decorated with pieces of lace and ribbon for blinds, while a carpet can be made by weaving paper mats after the kindergarten fashion, and pasting them on the floor. Furniture is easy to make for each room. Make the beds from match-boxes, the box forming the bedstead, the part that slips off forming the top and back. Six small match-boxes will form a chest of drawers. and [sic] three standing upright will make a wardrobe. One will form a dressing table, and another a washstand. Penny boxes of ware can be had at a toy shop. Drawing and dining-room furniture can be made with cork, beads, and pins. A round pickle cork will make a nice little table; four long pins, with as many beads as the pins will hold, will form the legs; small slices of cork will form the seats of the chairs; pins can be used for legs, and if wool is wound in and out, backwards and forwards across two pins stuck into the cork, it makes a nice back. Little rugs and quilts may be made by the children.
>
> (81)

Similar to an explanatory tutorial, this step-by-step DIY guide is a prime example of adding miniatures to a doll's house with the use of building and decorating materials that a girl might find in her home.

In this respect, we may consider DIY doll's house furniture a middle-class girl's first introduction to the realm of domestic decoration. In furnishing a doll's house, a girl learns how to furnish her own house as well. A significant part of this experience of household furnishing is articulated in "My Doll's Drawing-Room, and How I Furnished It (1894)," in which the author recollects how she decorated the drawing-room in a doll's house elaborately with hand-made miniature furniture and ornaments when she was young. The unknown author, a do-it-yourself enthusiast, begins by paying homage to her father, an architect, from whom she inherits the same trait, that is, "the delight in house-building and arranging" ("My Doll's Drawing-Room" 451). She remembers that in her childhood, she was always making cupboard houses and furniture when toys were luxuries and not widely available. She also narrates her first-hand experience of making a doll's

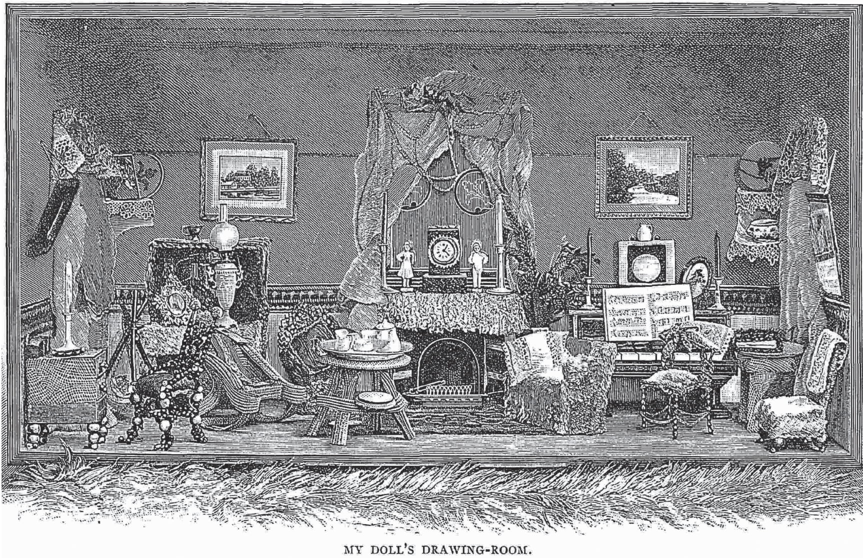

Figure 3.8 "My Doll's Drawing-Room, and How I Furnished It," *Girl's Own Paper*, 21 Apr. 1894, p. 452. From the British Library Collection: P.P.5993.w.

house from a strong deal box for her daughter at a small expense, namely a trendy drawing-room on a small scale. Based on her own experience, the author advises that the drawing-room is the first thing to consider when decorating a miniature house. By incorporating elements, such as the color scheme of the walls, ceiling, dado, and floor, she succeeded in establishing a space that was both refined and visually appealing. As shown in Figure 3.8, "a tasteful, slow-combustion" fireplace occupies the center position of the room, which "looks more artistic" by covering the mantel-board with "yellow silk with a full frill of yellow lace to match the window *lambrequins*" ("My Doll's Drawing-Room" 452) and equipping the little grate with a miniature set of fire-irons. Curtains made of yellow chiffon, a chimney-piece made from a cardboard box, and a mirror all add greatly to the appearance of the fireplace. Hand-made furniture of the room, such as a large cabinet, a table in imitation of a wicker, a five o'clock tea table, a writing cabinet, a sofa, a lady's easy chair, an American wicker chair, a rocking chair, and a small piano, plays a key part in beautifying the room. The mini drawing-room is also furnished with a writing table, a pretty little lamp, and candlesticks for the mantelpiece. A flower stand and a flower vase are absolute essentials because "[n]o doll of artistic taste could possibly make herself happy in a room without flowers." Ornaments set upon the brackets and table, a couple of photographs for the wall, and a pair of china figures on the mantelshelf all help to enhance the visual appeal of the drawing-room. Manufacturing the smaller articles—a clock, brackets, little antimacassars, books, and music, for example—"gave the little apartment a look

of being 'the real thing.'" Moreover, the arrangement of a silver-like tea-set on a little tray placed on the table adds interest to the space. "The 'cozy' for the tea-pot" ("My Doll's Drawing-Room" 453) is well prepared for the mimic occupants of the house, including the mistress of the domain, the supposed visitor, and the maid, to act out the life drama of a miniature world. Simply put, the author's interest in the fitting out of a doll's house mirrors an art form that embraces elegance, beauty, and creativity for a stylish miniature world.

Realism and Modern Domesticity in Miniature

The notion of "the likeness to real life," as aforesaid in *The Young Lady's Book*, encapsulates the fervor to resemble real houses through finely crafted miniatures. And yet, the meaning of a doll's house cannot be understood without looking at its historical development in Europe for a mimic realistic production of the full-sized world. The first dolls' houses were known as baby houses in the sixteenth century in the sense that the early miniature buildings were "baby" or small versions of real and big houses. The first real evidence that we have for the existence of baby houses is the Munich Baby House, a four-story palace built and furnished by skilled craftsmen for Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria in 1557–8. Rather than a plaything for the duke's daughter girls, the Munich Baby House was an object of play much obsessed with the male preserve and with the status symbol of wealth. Among the earliest records of surviving baby houses, the Nuremberg House, built in 1631 for Anna Köferlin, was used primarily as an educational aid to girls and young servants (Fennetaux 54). The Nuremberg House, a replica of the town house of the day, was a three-story house comprising a drawing-room, bedroom, dining-room, kitchen, garden, and hall. Despite its small size, the Nuremberg House was lavishly furnished with miniatures of household items for educational purposes. Later, the seventeenth century saw the spreading popularity of Dutch baby houses as cabinet houses in that the tiny households, divided into compartments, were contained in cabinets. The magnificent cabinet houses, made from a robust wood and usually on a stand, were grand and ornate pieces of furniture for well-to-do families at the time. They were indispensable to wealthy Amsterdam merchants' houses and functioned as elaborate showcases of lavish interiors inside the owner's home. Alternatively, they, as miniature copies of valuable objects, were essential to a young lady's marriage dowry.[4] Although the baby houses of the 1600s and 1700s tended to be seen as adults' possessions, they partially created a supportive learning environment for training girls' domestic skills (Pasierbska 9). In other words, they were more like ideal didactic tools than toys for young females in early modern Europe.

Playing with baby houses found its way into the homes in England in the golden age for miniatures. The first written evidence of English baby house is the one (dated 1695) given to Ann Sharp, Goddaughter to the future Queen Anne of England. Another earliest example is the Tate baby house, a small-scale model made around 1760 (Armstrong 24; Greene 87). Baby houses became a fashion among the upper class of English society during the eighteenth century, a time of period which enjoyed the heyday of country houses as well. Baby houses shared similar features with country houses in light of wealth, privilege, and good taste (Lisle). As

such, the design and furnishings of baby houses was adult-oriented, which aimed to reflect the architecture and domestic life of the period.

Lavishly designed and furnished baby houses were deemed as miniature copies of real-world artifacts to mirror the architecture and domestic life of the era. Celebrated designers and cabinet-makers, such as Robert Adam, Thomas Sheraton, and Thomas Chippendale, not only contributed to the history of English furniture-making. They also engaged themselves in making miniature houses (Rabb 44). The creation of baby houses involved an architect's design, an estate carpenter's supervision, and sometimes a family cabinetmaker's carving of miniature furniture with great precision (Glubok 7).[5] In the age of small-scale, the British increasingly developed a liking for the miniature house, seeing it as a small building rather than a cabinet or cardboard (Pasierbska 14). When the eighteenth century came to close, the baby house evolved from furniture to a toy, thanks to the growing concern with children's play and with their own space in the home. In architectural terms, brick wall painted in bright color, low-pitched roofs and chimneys, and interior staircases all made baby houses' exteriors even more realistic (Baker 13). By the beginning of the 1800s, the art of organizing and taking care of home was beginning to be aligned with playing a doll's house (Glubok 1). A broadening interest in doll's house play coincided with the involving concept of childhood mentality and new developments in the education of children (Stock and Wheeler 196). From the mid-nineteenth century onward, dolls' houses gained prominence among middle-class families, which gave rise to the pre-eminence of Britain, Germany, and the United States in the mass-production of toys and dolls' houses (Bristol and Geddes-Brown 11, 73).

It is noteworthy that distinguished women's memories of their real-life experiences of doll's house play reveal, in part, how they took delight in games of domestic routine when they were young. Singer Miss Jean Ingelow bought her first doll with her own half-crown in a shop when she was about seven years old (Low 254). Novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon was passionately fond of dolls until she was in her teens. She recollected: "Dolls and dolls' houses were my dream of bliss, and my amusement alternated between literary composition and dolls' dressmaking" (Low 257). In a way, Braddon's reminiscence shows how doll's house play and female authorship overlap and interact to carve out a space of her own. She fashions her identity through the practices of writing and dolls' dressmaking, a marker of the transition between the public and private spheres. In her happy recollections of her doll-days, painter Lady Dorothy Stanley, wife of explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley, stated that she played with dolls till she was 14 or more. She and her sister considered making their dolls "a never-ending amusement" and saw dolls as "senseless playthings alive and human" (Low 255). "We ordered their lives, we gave them mimic joys and sorrows, and they afforded us most absorbing entertainment . . . dolls' lives and our lives were interwoven," Mrs. Stanley wrote (Low 256). Writer Mona Caird is another prominent woman who vividly recalled the interconnectedness between doll's house play and games of domestic ritual. For example, the two elder daughters in her doll's family were always discussing proposals of marriage from a neighbor "in a truly business spirit" (Low 252). Caird regarded the doll's house as a space under adult control, especially "the impressions

which the work of grown-up people was making upon [her] mind at the time." "All this was reproduced from life in unconscious satire," as she penned, "the whole history of that dolls' house and its family—with the pompous parents, the ambitious elder daughters, the innumerable young ones; with the servants, visitors, and relations" (Low 253), something that could not be cast as a private form of pleasure. Broadly put, the aforementioned celebrated women attribute to girl-identified things a mature notion of subjectivity. They also add meaning to their domestic amusements, "playful and socially and emotionally satisfying" (Gordon, *Saturated World* 1), which help to narrate stories. Their lived experience informs perceptions of girls' aesthetic practices of home-making in miniature.

The golden age of the doll's house in Britain occurred during the period between 1880 and the start of the First World War in 1914. Rather than indulging adults' fantasies, dolls' houses were designed as children's toys (Bristol and Geddes-Brown 110). In particular, advertising relating to the act of playing with a doll's house helped a little girl to achieve a sense of ownership and materiality through the reorganization and accumulation of realistic-looking artifacts contained within the miniature world. An advertisement for *Girl's Own Paper* from 1888 introduced a newly patented doll's house, Dimple Villa, along with the doll Miss Dollie Daisie Dimple, to the juvenile audience. The advertising illustration boasted the doll's house as Hinde's popular shilling toy: "A Real Doll's House with Rooms" that "[c]an be taken to pieces and packed flat for transit of storage, and can be rebuilt in a few seconds" (unpaginated). As with *Girl's Own Paper*, the *Illustrated London News* (1842–2003) used the same marketing language to advocate Dimple Villa as a lasting and instructive toy for children of all ages. The visual image of a girl playing with the two-roomed doll's house (Figure 3.9) motivates the audience to

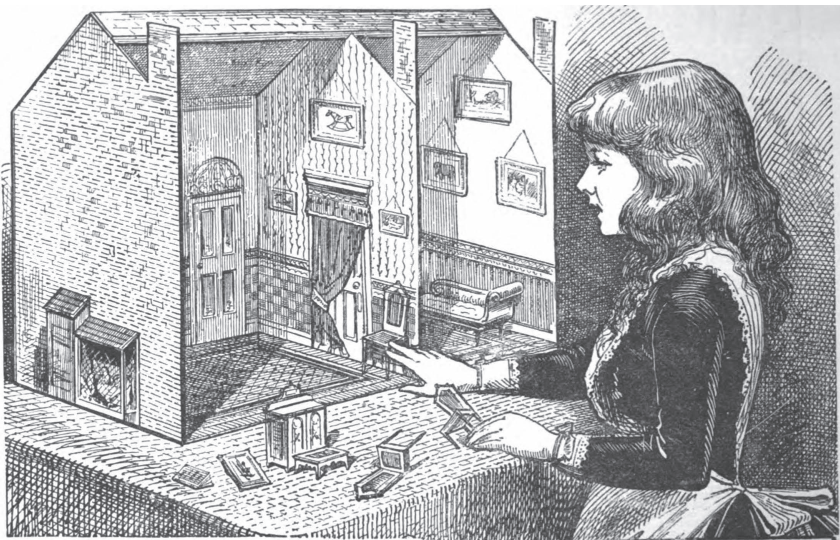

Figure 3.9 "Hinde's Popular Shilling Toys!" 17 Nov. 1888, *Illustrated London News*, p. 603. Image Courtesy of HathiTrust.

visualize how the walls of the shilling house provide a simple backdrop to understanding the modern style of interior decoration, as represented, for example, by the dados, paintings, bright wallpapers, portiere, and settee. Idealized interiors of mass-produced dolls' houses, in this case, offer a microcosmic version of modern domesticity.

Both the verbal and nonverbal texts of advertising for Dimple Villa produced in 1888 evoked girls' fantasies of architectural design and, as a result, encouraged their artistic endeavors to decorate and arrange their future houses. They publicized a doll's house as a compact and portable toy for a girl to arrange the tiny furniture and ornament with miniature objects. More vitally, they directed attention to where and how the shilling house like Dimple Villa was manufactured in the late nineteenth century. Here we may recall an 1889 article on "British Industries," which details how toys were commercially made by the English Toy Company to "bring a little pleasure and brightness" (802) to the little folk when Germany, with its well-established toy-making industry, was the toy-shop of the world. As the article makes clear, the English Toy Company established a factory in Birmingham, "where pieces of toys are cut out by machinery and given out to cottagers in the neighborhood to be put together, colored, and finished" ("British Industries" 796–97). The Company, following the German plan, aimed to produce novel, cheap, and amusing playthings for the juvenile population in England. Among others, the Company was proud of its manufacture of Miss Dollie Daisie Dimple, a doll with a traveling trunk and her "elegant detached villa, tastefully furnished and provided with all kinds of necessaries and luxuries" ("British Industries" 798). In reading the article, readers can begin to understand how the cottagers were directed to put together the various parts of toys at the factory and also how they instructed their children at home ("British Industries" 797). The youngsters in their cottage homes could earn a few shillings weekly by building up dolls' houses and putting ships together ("British Industries" 800). They were child home-workers who gave manufacturers an inexpensive alternative to factory labor in the toy-making industry.

The miniature interiors were realistic copies of tiny cottages or town houses, exhibiting "an accurate representation of the crowded, claustrophobic homes of Victorian England" (Baker 13). Mrs. Henry Mackarness's *Children of the Olden Time* (1874), for instance, drew a comparison between the dolls' Houses of earlier days and the modern ones in the toy shops. She saw the modern dolls' houses as tiny replicas of real houses, particularly the complete model of a kitchen—

> with staircases and landings, the exquisite furniture, each separate piece a complete model; kitchens completely fitted with a stove and a boiler, into which water can really be poured, and all the *batterie de cuisine*, making an enthusiastic housekeeper wish herself a doll.
>
> (Mackarness 108)

Being furnished with technological advances, the doll's house mirrors the redefinition of domestic knowledge that really exists and is knowable to children. "Realism," quoting Bristol and Geddes-Brown again, "demanded that not only should

objects look real but also that they should work" (115). A passage from the regular column "Mothers and Children" in the *Woman at Home* explains how the two-storied house with four windows and a neat front door began to be out of favor.[6] Apart from some improvement in the mechanism of talking dolls, "every new and dainty device in real house furniture is speedily imitated in the doll's world," including "tiny doll's lamps of exquisite shape, with silk or paper shades; silver candlesticks, also with shades fixed to brass rims, *menus* for the doll's table, and set of doll's lingerie, complete down to the last lace-frilled handkerchief" ("Mothers and Children" 159). Ready-made miniature objects soon found their way into contemporary dolls' houses sold by the best toy shops in London. Arguably, these miniature objects of beauty reinforce a long-standing fascination with miniaturization of realism—a late-nineteenth-century tribute to domestic modernity.

While considering the element of realism in miniature in advice literature, it is also necessary to take into account the authentic-looking dolls' houses manufactured in the late nineteenth century. An excellent example is the collection of late-nineteenth-century dolls' houses in the Young V&A Museum.[7] The miniature homes there bear resemblance to real houses characterized by domestic and architectural essentials. They represent history of architecture and furnishings in miniature. As small-scale replicas of full-scale houses, the antique dolls' houses rely on natural materials for the creation of small-size interiors and miniature objects. They are largely adult-oriented but entail the senses of lived experience to gratify the creators' childhood fantasies. One of the antique dolls' houses is Bettiscombe, a three-story doll's house probably made by an estate carpenter in about 1870 and later bought by Betty Pinney at an antique shop for £5. The doll's house has three floors. Its interior is carpeted and wallpapered, showing a preference for floral designs, a distinct feature reflecting the popular home decoration of the day. The top-floor nursery is a truthful portrayal of childrearing or parenting in late Victorian society. The children's domain is crammed with Noah's Ark, a rocking horse, and a miniature model of the house. Other tiny versions of modern furnishings like a roof garden and a handle-operated lift also allow us to trace the changing dimensions of the interior, especially that of a real, full-scale house. Betty's doll's house re-creates the interior of the house in the style of 1900–1910. More importantly, it replicates her childhood in miniature, showing how she used wood, glass, paper, textiles, and metals to make "the folding screen, grate, fireguard, cupboard and candies" (Pasierbska 73) for a portrait of a well-to-do home at the turn of the century.

Replicated in miniature, an unnamed box back terrace house manufactured in the 1890s offers another vehicle for investigating specific conceptualizations of miniaturization of realism alongside the prevalent idea of modern domesticity. Box back houses, an imitation of terraced houses, were manufactured in large numbers by unknown makers and featured plain sides, front windows, a flat roof, and a brickwork front. The one collected in the V&A Museum is a realistic copy of a wooden house (made ca. 1890–1910) consisting of three stories and divided into three rooms—a kitchen, a bedroom, and a sitting-room. It is fitted with a single

hinged door and five windows with plain sills, a style that is reminiscent of Georgian architecture. The interior of the house conforms with the late Victorian style. Its cut paper borders and scraps of wallpaper with exaggerated floral designs and colors constitute a visible form of aesthetic femininity, as implicated in the blue and white floral wallpaper pattern for the ground and second floors, and large pink roses framed wall décor for the first floor. Elements of feminine design display in the bedroom papered with large roses framed in a pink border outfitted with a plain, light bed, and a chest of drawers ornamented with a plant and brass candlesticks. The wardrobe and cupboard are probably the products of Schneegass of Waltershausen (Baker 77), a German company that made doll's house furniture from the 1840s.

It is also worth looking at Miss Miles's House, a visual representation of a grown-up woman's efforts to fulfill childhood fantasies. Although it was made by Amy Miles in the 1890s, the doll's house was modeled on the house where she grew up in Friern Barnet, North London. Like the dolls' houses discussed earlier, Miss Miles's House reveals the accuracy of a late Victorian interior cluttered with miniature accessories to enhance the beauty of real domestic life. The doll's house comprises ten rooms arranged across three stories. The ground floor has a dining-room, a kitchen, a schoolroom for children, and a pantry. The first floor has a formal and elegant drawing-room on the left and a billiard room on the right while on top there are a bedroom, a nursery, a bathroom, and a utility room. Most of the rooms have tiny fireplaces located at the center to heighten the feelings of coziness, a vivid symbol of the heart of the home.

Miss Miles's decorative notions employ a mixture of popular design styles from the 1850s onward, for example, wall décor, lighting, soft textures and colors, and comfortable furniture. The miniature rooms in the house are furnished with modern gadgets and accessories, which brings into light the new development in domestic technology in a wealthy family. Like the period rooms, they assume an antiquated appearance in a contemporary space, a balance of old and new that keeps the interior design appealing and inviting. The miniaturization of domestic modernity encompasses the use of gadgets and inventions like a bicycle in the pantry, a carpet sweeper, a knife cleaner, a plumbed-in sink and a freestanding stove in the kitchen, a wall-hung telephone in the hall, a hot water geyser in the bathroom, and electric lighting throughout the house. Electricity, telephones, geysers, and bicycles were very important inventions of the late nineteenth century. Equally revealing are the bathroom and hallway lined with the tile pattern sanitary wallpaper, the first washable wallpapers that prevailed in the late Victorian period. The masculine atmosphere of the billiard room and dining-room contrasts with the feminine feel of the elegant drawing-room, which was decorated with a dark red and brown rung on the floor, lovely silk-lined walls, and curtain tie backs. The drawing-room, embellished with gilt mock bamboo furniture and a conversation chair, is designed as a venue for ladies to take tea. As with the drawing-room, the bedroom reveals a womanly aspect of beauty found in the washstand and basin, the screen with fretwork paneling, and the little sewing machine, "a 'penny toy,' which were widely available at the time, for very little money, and often bought as small gifts for children." Also remarkable is the nursery furnished with the chest of drawers and the dressing table (both by Schneegass of Waltershausen) and decorated with curtains, pictures,

and wallpapers, especially the ducks-and-chickens frieze designed by the prolific artist and children's book illustrator Cecil Charles Windsor Aldin (Pasierbska 86). Equally important is the minute doll's house painted in red in the nursery of Miss Miles's doll's house. All these scaled-down features encapsulate exactly the incarnation of authenticity through miniaturization and add a modern, realistic feel to the imitation of childhood. The choice of design mediates experiences of doll's house-collecting as an adult interest and as a highly visible response to the miniaturized versions of domestic modernity that are imagined, staged, and displayed.

It cannot be argued that advice writers of the late Victorian period actively participated in shaping and circulating the leisurely pursuits of making or playing with dolls' houses as an expression of aesthetic taste and modern girlhood. A number of published sources provide be-all and end-all ideas and guidelines for making miniature houses at home in the interest of child play. Their instructions also form a miniature record of the home interior in the process of architectural and design history-making, ranging from cabinet houses and baby houses as pieces of furniture for display to toy houses for children to play with. Primarily, dolls' houses in advice literature are used as a key representational site for cultivating middle-class girls' aesthetic femininity within the disciplines of decorative arts. Diminutive interiors, a microcosm of the realities of domestic living, give support to girls' creativity and artistic development visually, spatially, and materially.

Notes

1 Doll play raises points of contention among contemporary scholars. For discussion of doll play as a tool to reinforce female accomplishments or to challenge conventional gender ideals, see Formanek-Brunell, *Made to Play House*, "Politics of Dollhood"; Forman-Brunel, "Interrogating"; and Brandow-Faller.

2 "The word doll has, it seems only been used since the 17th century to mean a small figure, and it derives from a diminutive of the proper name Dorothy" (Baker 6).

3 I borrow the ideas of dolls as in-between objects from Fennetaux: "dolls' in-betweenness, the fact they occupied a contested terrain between children and adults, half way between usefulness and unproductive playfulness, and that at the same time they were supposed to transition girls into accomplished womanhood" (48).

4 For more information on the historical development of baby houses, see Baker; Glubok; Bristol and Geddes-Brown; Pasierbska; Ali; Lisle; and Flower.

5 For example, the baby house at Nostell Priority in West Yorkshire, a Palladian-style architectural masterpiece, was designed by the architect James Paine. The designer and furniture maker Thomas Chippendale organized the furnishings of the main house (Glubok 16).

6 The *Woman at Home* was largely founded by William Robertson Nicoll and launched as a sixpenny monthly in September 1893. It offered informative content of life and work, including fashions, house furnishing, needlework, health and personal appearance, parents and children, and women's employment.

7 The database of the collection of late-nineteenth-century dolls' houses is available on the website of the Young Victoria & Albert Museum, which remains a suitable reference point for studying the historical development of miniature houses. The V&A website offers a base for my discussion of Betty's doll's house, the unnamed box back terrace house (made ca. 1890–1910), and Miss Miles's House.