NARRATIVES OF TRANSFORMATION:
ORPHAN GIRLS, DOLLS AND SECRET SPACES IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

by

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Abstract

Many critics working in the field of literature for children have acknowledged the prevalence of orphan characters, dolls and doll characters and “children-only” spaces in the literature. While many have discussed their significance separately, to the best of my knowledge no one has thus far examined how they can function and operate together in literature for children. This examination of these formerly separate topics together is grounded in the question: How do dolls, secret spaces and the play associated with them function in literature for children such that the marginalized and displaced orphan girl characters therein undergo positive psychological transformation?

My study is based in literary and psychological analysis. The theoretical framework employs the play theories of D.W. Winnicott and Erik Erikson, in conjunction with Gaston Bachelard’s and Yi-Fu Tuan’s theories of space. The methodology of this study builds upon psychological analyses of the orphan girl protagonists, within the context of their secret space environments and their relationships with dolls in the novels.

This thesis analyzes four distinct novels featuring orphan girl protagonists, secret spaces and dolls, and examines the forms of psychological transformation experienced by each protagonist: Rumer Godden’s Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Sylvia Cassedy’s Lucie Babbidge’s House, Enys Tregarthen’s The Doll Who Came Alive and Sylvia Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall. In each case, this positive outcome is encouraged and facilitated by the girl’s relationship to her dolls and her place of solace, or secret space. The patterns found here can point to ways of discovering the psychological changes in other protagonists in literature for children, and how playthings and secret spaces can work to facilitate these changes.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Orphans are a tangible reflection of the fear of abandonment that all humans experience. Orphans are outcasts, separated because they have no connection to the familial structure which helps define the individual." – Melanie Kimball

"I lived a very full and crazy life through my dolls. I had full-on worlds for them, and I think it was just a way for me to do things that I wouldn’t normally have the balls to do. There was something about being able to do things with my dolls that I couldn’t do in real life.” – Doll enthusiast Gina Garan (qtd. in Sims)

“There may be a basic urge for each of us to surround ourselves with a known, and hence, safe space to which we can retreat in times of danger or difficulty.” – Roger Hart

In their own unique ways, orphans, dolls and the secret spaces of childhood have had a constant presence in literature for children. Many critics working in the field have acknowledged the prevalence of orphan characters, dolls and doll characters and “children-only” spaces in the literature. As Sarah Ellis, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer outline in their writings, orphan characters abound in children’s literature. In her 1994 work When Toys Come Alive, Lois Kuznets points out that narratives featuring doll characters have figured prominently in literature for children, especially British and North American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Gaston Bachelard and Susan Honeyman discuss at length the importance of the secret spaces of childhood, from dollhouses to hideouts. The prevalence of orphans, dolls and secret spaces in children’s literature is likely due to a poignancy, a universality and a resonance that children may find in all three. When these elements intersect in children’s literature, as they do in several notable cases, magical events of transformation can occur for the protagonists. This study is the result of my longtime fascination with orphan characters, dolls and secret spaces, and their correspondences in children’s literature.
Another aspect central to this study is children's play. In literature and in life, the act of play creates connections between and among children, their playthings and the environments within which the play takes place. As children's literature scholar Virginia Wolf writes, "[h]aving imaginary friends, giving voices and histories to toys, imbuing objects with life, creating scenes, families, towns—these are central parts of children’s play" (51). Playing is what children do. Given the "opportunity, children usually choose to play...play is indeed complex, beautiful and important for children’s development" (Scarlett xi). Although I am interested to some extent in the role of play in the development of preschool-aged children, I am most interested in the function of play in "late childhood"—in children ages six to twelve (Scarlett 86). In this period, as psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott theorizes, playing can assume a vital role in the child’s developing sense of self (54). For the orphan girls in this study’s four primary works, who are all in late childhood, play proves to be an empowering force, and a way for girl protagonists to develop a strong identity without the support of a consistent family structure. When studying the relationships between and among orphan girls, dolls and secret spaces, play is an essential connecting element.

Examined separately, each element is fascinating in itself. Orphan characters, dolls and secret spaces could each be the subject of an extended study, as the work of the scholars mentioned above can attest. Before investigating the connections, I will now introduce each element in turn, beginning with orphan girl characters. From fairy tale orphans to the title character of L.M. Montgomery’s Anne of Green Gables to Mary Lennox in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden, lonely, orphaned, lost and otherwise forgotten girl characters are a frequent preoccupation in children’s literature. For many child readers, the lives of these orphan girls represent mysterious childhood experiences far removed from their own.
Orphan characters exist on the periphery of society, and their need for love and attention is made even more poignant by their status (or lack of it) as parentless children.

For many contemporary girls and women, the word “dolls” is a loaded one. One may conjure up thoughts of a favourite childhood doll, memories of play with dolls or images of the beloved or despised (depending on whom you ask) Barbie doll. A widespread symbol of girlhood, the doll, beyond almost all other playthings, is the “most capable of arousing a child’s violent longing or loathing” (Kuznets 95). Historian Antonia Fraser has acknowledged the doll’s “deep importance in the psychological development of a child and therefore presumably of the human race throughout its history” (11). In life and in literature, relationships between girls and their dolls are complex, meaningful and intimate affairs of the heart.

Dolls and orphans seem to endure similar life experiences. Like the orphan, the doll must suffer through life as an object, susceptible to the whims of authority figures, rather than as a subject with its own identity and independence. Dolls become orphaned once the children who play with them grow up and move on, and orphans become like dolls, shuffled from one setting to the next. Allyson Booth points out in her essay “Battered Dolls” that “dolls, being unusually susceptible to harm on the one hand and unable to act or even to consent on the other, occupy a precarious territory somewhere between subject and object” (146). Orphans are typically made to occupy a similarly precarious territory by authority figures in children’s literature. In doll literature, the authority figures, the objectifiers of the dolls, are most often the children who own and play with them, while the objectifiers of orphans are most often the governesses, extended family members or other adults who have responsibility for orphans’ lives.
In many works of children’s literature, and especially in narratives involving orphans, a special place to which the child protagonist can escape is of utmost importance. Secret, “children-only” spaces such as treehouses, forts, caves, imagined fantasylands and other hideaways separate from the adult world are mental and spiritual homes for children. They are places of solace, private places where children can temporarily retreat from a world of adult rules and authority figures. Fictional orphans are most often depicted as living in orphanages or group-living situations: these children do not have easily accessible places of refuge as do many other children, but they are just as much, if not more, in need of such places. In my research surrounding the use of secret spaces by orphan girls, I have found that the space used by them is often one of interiority: these are enclosed, primarily indoor spaces, whether they are attics, dollhouses, storage rooms, cupboards or closets.

This use of interior spaces, I argue, is part of the fictional orphan girl’s quest for home and a sense of belonging. As Minda Rae Amiran writes, in the traditional orphan story, the orphan boy “runs away from his adoptive family or sets out to make his fortune,” while for the most part orphan girls long for loving homes and struggle to find them (85). In their secret spaces, the girls are attempting to create a sense of home for themselves, when they may never have known the comforts associated with a loving home. Again, the sorts of play that can take place in these secret spaces, because the children are at last unfettered and have the space to do so, can prove empowering and life-changing.

The quartet of primary works I have chosen to explore in this thesis—Sylvia Cassedy’s *Behind the Attic Wall* (1983) and Lucie Babbidge’s *House* (1989), Rumer Godden’s *Miss Happiness and Miss Flower* (1961) and Enys Tregarthen’s *The Doll Who*
Came Alive (1942)\(^1\)—all feature orphan girls, dolls, secret spaces and play, but each relationship and situation is distinct. In all of the primary works, and in many other narratives involving orphan characters, the orphan girls experience a profound transformation in their lives by the end of the story. The purpose of my research has been to investigate how these elements come together for a meaningful and distinct purpose for each of the orphan girl characters. My study adds a new dimension to the existing literature on orphan characters, dolls and secret spaces in that it examines the fascinating and intricate connections between and among these three elements in literature for children. The rationale for selecting these particular primary works is presented in Chapter Three.

In terms of theoretical and critical approaches, it is not my intention to examine the sociological and historical contexts surrounding orphans and doll play, nor to focus on the many aspects of human geography and spatial theory in constructions of space in childhood. Rather, my study is based in literary and psychological analysis. The theoretical framework of my study employs the play theories of D.W. Winnicott and Erik Erikson, in conjunction with Gaston Bachelard’s and Yi-Fu Tuan’s theories of space. My study of the primary texts builds upon psychological analyses of the orphan girl protagonists within the context of their secret space environments and their relationships with dolls. My study is grounded in the following research question: How do dolls, secret spaces and the play associated with them

\(^1\) Originally written in the late nineteenth century (exact date unknown), The Doll Who Came Alive was not published until 1942, following Tregarthen’s death. The work was heavily revised and re-released in 1972, this time with a different ending. My analysis of this story will use the 1942 version rather than the 1972 version, as the former is truer to the original spirit of British author Tregarthen’s story. In the 1942 version, Jyd and her doll escape to the world of the Small Folk, while in the 1972 version, “the live doll renounces the fairy kingdom for Cornwall and Jyd; the sailorman [who gave Jyd the doll as a gift] returns from the sea and off they go to keep house for him” (Horn Book 597). As Horn Book commented in its unattributed 1972 review of the work, the 1972 version was a “regrettably conventional and somewhat sentimental alteration of the essential Cornish spirit of the story” (597). Please refer to the footnote on page 36 for details as to where to locate these Horn Book reviews in the list of works cited.
function in literature for children such that the marginalized and displaced orphan girl characters therein undergo positive psychological transformation?

With the purpose of the study and the research question in mind, then, I investigate the psychological dynamics between orphan girls and their dolls within secret spaces of solace to uncover the function and importance of these dynamics in the narratives. These relationships help the girls achieve a more positive, powerful position in their lives—emotionally and/or physically. By creating a sense of safety and belonging in their secret spaces with the dolls, the girls are then, and only then, able to find belonging and meaning in their lives. I argue that the dolls and secret spaces fulfill a function that no human, at least solely, could provide for these fictional girls. My analysis of the primary works examines the social and psychological significance of dolls and their secret spaces in these girls’ worlds. In organizing my analysis, I argue that each primary work represents a unique type of doll/secret space narrative according to the combined influences of these two elements on the orphan girl protagonist in each work: Godden’s Miss Happiness and Miss Flower is a narrative of integration, Cassedy’s Lucie Babbidge’s House is a narrative of awakening, Tregarthen’s The Doll Who Came Alive is a narrative of transcendence, and Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall is a narrative of psychological opening. Thus, each primary work is a narrative of transformation on the part of the orphan girl protagonist, and each transformation is unique.

In examining these issues, I provide a review of the relevant literature, as I do in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, I define my research terms, outline the parameters of my analysis, illustrate the context in which the quartet of primary works can be located, examine other works with similar themes, address the question of gender and provide a rationale for
the selection of the works and a brief synopsis of each primary work. With the scope and frame for my analysis defined, in Chapters Four and Five I discuss the four primary works. Chapter Four investigates these issues as they unfold in Godden’s Miss Happiness and Miss Flower and Cassedy’s Lucie Babbidge’s House, while Chapter Five looks more closely at Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall and Tregarthen’s The Doll Who Came Alive. In Chapter Six, I summarize my analysis and propose potential applications of this study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is informed by a variety of historical, social, psychological and literary sources, theories and relevant research studies. The following literature review frames these elements in several ways. First, I expand on play theory, theories of space as outlined by Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan and the relevant psychoanalytical work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Second, I outline research relating to the meaning of dolls in children’s literature, the importance of childhood spaces in this literature and clinical studies on children and their relationships to dolls and space. Third, I look at the significance of orphans in children’s literature, and finally, I examine critical receptions of the works of Enys Tregarthen, Rumer Godden and Sylvia Cassedy.

Theoretical Frameworks: Play and Space

This section provides a survey of the works of theorists relevant to this study, including theorists who have developed the areas of play theory and spatial theory, as well as psychoanalytic theory.

Play Theory: The Psychology of Child and Doll Interaction

To work toward my own definition of play within doll-child relationships, it has been important to examine the work of play theorists such as Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, Melanie Klein, and D.W. Winnicott—both their definitions and their interpretations of play.

Opinions on the function of play in children’s lives differ from theorist to theorist. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), Freud acknowledges the importance of the “yield of pleasure” involved for the child in play (8). He also writes that “in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and in doing so they abreact
the strength of the impression and...make themselves master of the situation” (11). That is, by miniaturizing an event, the child can analyze a problematic or confusing situation in her own way; this theory is especially meaningful for doll play. Freudian theory provides the foundation for psychoanalysis and also the work of many play theorists, including D.W. Winnicott and Erik Erikson, to be discussed later in this section.

Jean Piaget’s studies, begun in the 1920s and described in Play, Dreams and Imitation (1962), focus on play as a medium for developing the child’s intellect, particularly logical thinking. Piaget concentrated his research primarily on play in infants and toddlers; thus, his findings are not quite as relevant to my study of older children as those of other theorists, particularly Winnicott and Erikson. Still, Piaget is such a dominant theorist in the realm of child development that it is useful to consider his research within the larger realm of play theory. An important theory of Piaget’s is the symbolic use of toys and other objects: the child projects her behaviour onto her toys as “imaginative symbol and adapted imitation” (146). Piaget comments on the use of play to understand life events on a smaller, more manageable level: “[in] order for a child to understand something, he must construct it himself; he must re-invent it” (qtd. in Erikson 34), an idea picked up by Erik Erikson.

Psychoanalysts and contemporaries Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott and Erik Erikson further explore the importance of play in their research. Although influenced by Freud, all three theorists move beyond Freud’s interpretation in their writings. In Melanie Klein’s theory of play, the child’s play activity is taken as symbolic of unconscious desires and thoughts, and is interpreted in the same way that dreams and free associations are in adult psychoanalysis. Her landmark 1932 book, The Psychoanalysis of Children, was the first study to view children’s play as a meaningful activity. As Klein notes, “in play the child not
only overcomes painful reality, but at the same time it also uses it to master its instinctual fears and internal dangers by projecting them into the outer world” (177). Klein also outlines “projective identification,” a play process of interest to a study of children and doll play. In Klein’s process of projective identification, as Margaret and Michael Rustin point out, a “part of the self is projected onto an external object and then identified with, [and this] enables us to begin to understand how the self can experience itself as obscured or lost in identification with others, in whole or in part” (90).

Strongly influenced by Klein’s theories of the use of the object, Winnicott’s overall theory of play activity focuses on the search for the self. In Playing and Reality (1971), Winnicott argues that “[it] is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self” (54). Through play, he argues, “the whole of man’s experiential existence [is built]” (64). Children often use items such as special blankets or toys, described by Winnicott as “transitional objects,” in order to begin to differentiate between self and other (89). As social anthropologist Brian Sutton-Smith posits (with Winnicott’s theory in mind) in Toys as Culture (1986), the transitional object is “completely in the child’s power; it is cuddled, loved and mutilated; yet it gives warmth. It has its own texture and vitality and, as the years go by, it can gradually fade in interest” (45). Although Winnicott’s theory of transitional objects generally applies to infants and toddlers, transitional objects may again take on importance when the child has difficulties with separation, as orphan girls, for example, may experience during difficult periods of moving and transition.

Erik Erikson used doll play in his clinical studies not only to assess any underlying psychological problems in a child patient, but also as a tool for the child’s self-
empowerment. In *Toys and Reasons* (1977), Erikson throws into question other play theories, commenting that "clinical and other theories have burdened child’s play with formidable tasks" beyond leisure activity: trauma, he argues, "serves the compulsion to repeat symbolically experiences not sufficiently managed in the past"; cathartic theory he views as "the release of some pent-up emotion" in the present, while in functional theories, play involves "the exercise of new faculties, and thus a preparation for the future" (41-42). Although he did not wish to discard these theories entirely, Erikson saw play as having a different, more all-encompassing function: as a constructive, problem-solving act in the lives of children, a way to use "objects endowed with special and symbolic meanings for the representation of an imagined scene in a circumscribed sphere" (43). As Kuznets observes, Erikson considered playing-with toys to be

a source of emotional gratification, as well as a means of problem solving and conceptualization. Where other psychoanalysts might see play as a way of acting out only past and present conflicts, Erikson considers it to be more constructive. For him it also becomes a means of avoiding and solving problems likely to happen in the future and therefore of gradually strengthening the child’s ability to deal with inner anxiety and outer demand—to develop ego strength. (40)

Erikson’s theory of play as a constructive act is of great importance to my thesis research, particularly in explaining how orphan characters build a sense of comfort and identity within a secret space.

Acknowledged by Erikson as the “great theorist of play,” Johan Huizinga describes the evolution of human play from a historical perspective in his 1944 work, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Erikson 43). Huizinga sees play as a cultural rather
than biological phenomenon. His work questions other theorists who, in their analyses of what play means, assume that “play must serve something which is not play” (2). While I question Huizinga’s assumption that the “fun-element...characterizes the essence of play” because it “resists all analysis, all logical interpretation” (3), I do subscribe to his views on the value of the secludedness of play. Huizinga argues that a major characteristic of play is “its secludedness, its [limitlessness]. It is ‘played out’ within certain limits of time and place” (9). The locations, or playgrounds, in which play occurs are “temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart” (10). One who is playing is “stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own” (8). And yet, Sutton-Smith feels that play is an activity based on imitating observed reality: “Play becomes a vehicle for captive alternations as if suspended between a reality which is defied and a reality which can never be overcome. It is a dialectic which both mirrors and mocks reality but never escapes it” (141). Sutton-Smith’s theory also holds true for fictional children, whose real-life worlds can enter the protagonists’ play situations, even if those situations involve enchanted lands or animated china dolls.

Marjorie Taylor’s Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them (1999) goes beyond the realm of children’s toys into the child’s world of imaginary friends. Taylor describes from a psychological standpoint the propensity of children to personify their stuffed animals and dolls, thereby creating imaginary friends from formerly inanimate objects, and identifies personified dolls and stuffed animals as imaginary companions rather than simply transitional objects that help children to work out the distinction between self and other (12). She cites several clinical studies including one conducted by British psychologists John and Elizabeth Newsom, writing in the 1970s, who classified dolls and
stuffed animals as imaginary companions in cases where “so extensive a saga had been built upon this foundation that fantasy had long since outstripped reality” (qtd. in Taylor 13). Taylor maintains that dolls and imaginary companions are thus often employed by children as a healing response to trauma: “[m]any children use pretend play to help cope with terrible life events related to war, medical conditions, abuse, poverty and loss” (Taylor 78).

In their 2005 work, Children’s Play, W. George Scarlett and his three co-authors outline several ideas about make-believe play in late childhood (here defined as ages six to twelve). While some scholars, including Piaget, have argued that “children who keep pretending in late childhood are behind in their development or behaving childishly,” Children’s Play provides an alternative view that several scholars, including Marjorie Taylor, have come to support in the past few years (Scarlett 86). One major claim by Scarlett and his colleagues is “that pretense does not disappear in late childhood; it simply takes place in different contexts, away from observers” (86). This view is key to my analysis of the function of secret space. Guided by the research of Jerome Singer, Scarlett and his co-authors assert that in the privacy of their homes, children in late childhood still engage in pretense or make-believe (86). Children at this age “also develop fantasies and alternative scenes to real life in the privacy of their minds” (87). Because my study focuses on older children, these theories about play in older children have proved useful; I build upon these ideas surrounding private play, and play as a way to escape reality temporarily before facing it.

In The Search for the Real Self (1988), psychiatrist James Masterson picks up on Winnicott’s and Erikson’s theories, defining the healing power of creativity as having the ability “to replace old, familiar patterns of living and problem-solving with new and equally or more successful ones” (44-45). Similarly, in Playfulness: Its Relationship to Imagination...
and Creativity (1977), J. Nina Lieberman sees how imagination can “help in strengthening a person’s sense of individuality and uniqueness” (149). This recognition of creativity, imagination and play as transformative forces is essential to understanding the function of dolls and secret spaces in children’s lives. More specifically, Winnicott’s interpretation of play as the search for the self and Erikson’s views of play as a constructive activity help to shape my argument that child and doll relationships encourage inner growth and help the girls to find their rightful places in the world.

Special Places: Theories of Space

As outlined in The Dictionary of Human Geography, geographers have “examined both the character intrinsic to a place as a localized, bounded and material geographical entity, and the sentiments of attachment and detachment that human beings experience, express and contest in relation to specific places” (Johnston 731). In employing space theory in this study, I am more interested in literary children’s emotional attachment to home and the poetics of space than to human geography. The work of theorists who analyze an individual’s attachment to space and the experienced richness of places of comfort and solace are of greatest relevance. Spatial theorists Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan have both written of the profound significance of home space in the lives of children and adults.

Bachelard’s theories in The Poetics of Space (1964) are immensely useful for an analysis of intimate space as a place for magic and transformation to occur. In his work, Bachelard draws on the childhood experience of space as well as the adult’s memory of childhood space. He theorizes that these memories and experiences affect our perceptions of space in our present-day lives (6). The Poetics of Space concentrates on the first-person experience and interpretation of objects and images. Bachelard believed that people crave
spaces that inspire them to daydream; he describes these as “felicitous space[s]” (xxxv). In
this context, literary space may be seen as a series of images of intimacy in the home (in
Freudian terms, the closed maternal space) in that “the house shelters daydreaming, the house
protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace…. the house is one of the
greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind”
(Bachelard 6). We can return in our memories to comforting thoughts of our childhood
homes, for “our house is the corner of our world. As has often been said, it is our first
universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word” (Bachelard 4).

Bachelard’s theory, while applicable to space, intertwines beautifully with play theory
(particularly the theories of Winnicott and Erikson), because he connects imagination and
reverie to intimate spaces. Indeed, Bachelard considers “imagination as a major power of
human nature” (xxxiv). For many, Bachelard writes, life “begins well, it begins enclosed,
protected, all warm in the bosom of the house” (7). I am interested in Bachelard’s theories
here particularly in light of my discussion of orphan girl characters, as they either have not
experienced the womb-like warmth of the childhood home, or it is a distant memory. The
protagonists in the quartet of primary works, for example, must create this “bosom of the
house” for themselves. They can piece together memories of formerly warm, happy domestic
spaces in their childhoods as Maggie and Nona do respectively in Behind the Attic Wall and
Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, or create them based on stories they have heard, as Lucie
and Jyd do in Lucie Babbidge’s House and The Doll Who Came Alive. Through their play in
secret spaces with their dolls, the girls create their own sense of home in the Bachelardian
sense.
In their 1999 article, “Gaston Bachelard and Phenomenology: Outline of a Theory of the Imagination,” authors Christian Thiboutot, A. Martinez and David Jager describe how Bachelard’s theories are based on a dialectic between an inside and an outside. On the one hand, we find dreams and images that draw inward toward a center, that explore the interior life of the hearth and the home, while on the other hand, we find [dreams] that draw us outward to a larger world. He understands dreams and images as cosmic links that intertwine and mutually clarify an inside and an outside. Thus even while he insists on the solitary nature of the life of the imagination, he never forgets the fact that this solitude remains linked to the lives of others and to a common human world. (17)

As the authors point out, the solitude afforded by interior spaces was a central view of Bachelard’s. Given my study’s focus on the interiority of children’s secret spaces as representing the comfort of home, Bachelard’s theories are particularly useful.

Bachelard, however, was not without his detractors. In Children’s Experience of Place (to be discussed later in this chapter), behavioural psychologist Roger Hart comments on the narrowness of Bachelard’s view of space and childhood. He acknowledges the popular view that poetry and literature more accurately capture childhood experience than does behavioral science, but “while this belief has left us with descriptions of children’s experiential engagement with the environment which are both beautiful and voluminous, they are at the same time narrow” (155). Hart argues that writers such as Bachelard have presented readers with a “most romantic image of children’s empathic [sic] engagement with the natural world” (155). By comparison, behavioral scientists have adopted a more clinical
view of the child’s perception of space. As Hart explains, they have “largely retreated from saying anything about children’s feelings for the everyday world of places and things, having limited themselves to the materials of experiments, tests and simulations” (155). As my thesis focuses on emotional attachment to space, the work of Hart and other behavioral scientists is of lesser relevance to my study than Bachelard’s.

Writing a decade after Bachelard, human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s work also explores the emotional resonances found in spaces. In the title of his 1974 book, Tuan coined the term “topophilia,” which refers to “the affective bond between people and place” (4). Topophilia offers a framework for the study of humans in their environments, and although he reaches into the realms of environmental issues and ecology, Tuan’s thoughts on humankind’s ties with the material environment prove useful. Tuan’s 1977 work, Space and Place, delves further into the child’s views on space. Space and Place features a chapter entitled “Space, Place, and the Child,” in which Tuan endeavours to answer the questions: “[h]ow does a young child perceive and understand his environment?” (19) and “[h]ow does a young child understand place?” (29). If, he says, “we define place broadly as a focus of value, of nurture and support, then the mother is the child’s primary place …. As the child grows he becomes attached to objects other than significant persons and, eventually, to localities” (29). Of significance to my research, Tuan also asks: “[w]hat is the character of a young child’s emotional tie to place?” (31). Tuan’s thoughts on this matter have informed my thinking on the child’s need for private and tucked-away spaces, in that “[o]lder children in their play seek out nooks and corners both in man-made environments and in nature” (32).

As Phil Hubbard and his co-authors explain in Key Thinkers on Space and Place, Tuan’s work has not always been readily accepted by the academy. Many researchers
working in the realm of human geography do view Tuan as an inspirational figure, enjoying and employing his thoughts on geographic discovery as self-discovery (Hubbard 308). For much of Tuan’s career, this has been a much-criticized view, as

human geographers at large have subscribed to notions of scientific objectivity, studying the world, and peoples, as ‘objects,’ and de-emphasizing the possibility or value of either self-reflection or the potential impact of geographic research upon the researcher. (Hubbard 309)

For precisely these reasons, Tuan’s work resonates deeply with my research. I admire his focus on the personal and the emotional rather than the clinically detached, as my examination of orphan narratives focuses on the emotions of fictional children. When combined with the work of Winnicott and Erikson, Bachelard’s and Yi-Fu Tuan’s theories of space form the ideal lens through which to examine orphan girls, their dolls, and the spaces in which their interactions occur.

Freud and Lacan: Psychoanalytical Frameworks

As Freudian theory underpins the foundation of psychoanalysis and also informs the work of Bachelard and many play theorists, for context and background it is important to outline briefly the major tenets of psychoanalysis.

Freud’s theory of the Uncanny, as outlined in his book-length essay of the same title (1925), helps to frame certain aspects of doll narratives, particularly those in which the dolls are personified. In the doll world, Kitti Carriker explains that the sensation and situation of the Uncanny present “the double, the automaton, death, and the intrusion of the unfamiliar and undomesticated (what Freud terms the unheimlich) into the territory of the familiar and the tamed (the heimlich)” (30). As Kuznets further describes, the term heimlich is also
"rooted in *heim*, that is, ‘home’" (123), which helps to illuminate the excitement of these secret worlds of animated dolls and children residing in the same home at once.

Jacques Lacan updated and interpreted Freud’s work in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1977). Here, he outlines the theory of the Other: the self’s perception of the external, rooted in the unconscious mind. As Lacan explains, “the unconscious is the discourse of the Other” (131). As Carriker points out, the Other can be defined as “whatever exists as an opposite of someone or something else, or that which is excluded by something else” (71). Carriker writes that unconscious desire is “both directed toward and received from the other” (72), which helps to explain the continual fascination with orphans in children’s and adult literature, as well as the fascination with personified dolls and toys in children’s literature. Orphans (and dolls) are, after all, “the eternal Other” (Kimball 559).

The Meaning of Dolls and Secret Spaces: Histories, Contexts and Politics

To gain a fuller understanding of dolls, the secret spaces of childhood and their meanings, I will outline previous research and analysis on dolls and spaces in the lives of children in the following ways: experiential and clinical research on children and dolls, experiential and clinical research on children and childhood spaces, the significance of dolls in children’s literature and the importance of secret spaces in children’s literature.

Experiential and Clinical Research on Children and Dolls

As long as dolls have been in existence, children have played with them. The history of the doll stretches back at least to Ancient Egypt, and the doll “is a category of object that has been produced, in one way or another, by most of the world’s cultures” (Museum 16). The following doll history sources provide helpful historical background on the world of
dolls and dollhouses in Western society: Carl Fox's *The Doll* (1972), Antonia Fraser's *A History of Toys* (1966), and Lois Kuznets' *When Toys Come Alive*. Like Antonia Fraser (quoted in my introduction), many doll historians, in addition to providing thorough aesthetic and historical commentaries on dolls, have also acknowledged the doll’s significant emotional impact on the child’s life. Fox offers a sentimental commentary in his introduction to *The Doll*: “What we strive for [in the doll] is a talisman for memories, a conjuration to evoke for you some feeling of innocence, delight, and mystery. Perhaps the greatest single attraction of the doll is its almost magical power to engulf the viewer and lift him out of himself into the doll’s world—whatever it may be” (13).

As play theories suggest, children’s emotional attachments to and interactions with their toys go far beyond leisure activity. As Fraser explains, psychologist Susan Isaacs, writing in the 1930s, maintained that “since in all their free play children are working out their fears and fantasies, the nature of their toys must be of enormous importance .... Toys help [children] to accept the limitations of the world, and to control their real behaviour—in short, to pass from a dream world into a real world” (qtd. in Fraser 11). Since the late nineteenth century, when the first in-depth doll study was published in the United States, clinical studies have attempted to understand children’s psychological, emotional and intellectual development through their dolls (Wagner-Ott 46).

Quantitative and clinical studies in the complex realm of play theory have focused primarily on children’s observed behaviors toward their dolls. As Anna Wagner-Ott notes in her doctoral thesis, *The Politics of Dolls and Action Figures* (2000), many of these studies “observed children with their dolls in a clinical setting and did not include conversations with children to learn about what children see or think about dolls” (52). Of particular interest to
my study is clinical research in which girls ages eight to twelve were studied interacting with
and describing their play with dolls and dollhouses; however, Wagner-Ott also notes that
“little research is available...on girls’ viewpoints on the impacts dolls and action figures may
have on their lives” (44). My research on this topic yielded similarly few results. I will,
however, provide a cursory look at the few studies that focus on girls in the age range
relevant to my thesis (eight to twelve), beginning with G. Stanley Hall and A. Caswell Ellis’
1897 work, A Study of Dolls.

As Carriker notes, in “almost a century, very few studies on the topic of dolls have
followed the groundwork laid by Hall and Ellis” (13). These American researchers gathered
data from numerous surveys of school children, and their remarkably comprehensive
questions asked about doll names, clothes, eating habits and hobbies. The goal of the
researchers’ inquiry was to examine the role that dolls play in the emotional and social
development of children, and the continuing significance of dolls into adulthood—that is, to
know “doll anatomy, doll psychology, the real source of the many instincts that are expressed
in doll play” (Hall 3). The responses to the surveys, as might be expected, are fascinating but
so varied that it is difficult to draw any distinct conclusions from the study. Like other
theorists and researchers after them have, Hall and Ellis note that “a large part of the charm
of doll play is the small scale of the doll world, which ... focuses and intensifies affection
and all other feelings” (4).

Produced more than one hundred years later, Wagner-Ott’s doctoral research explores
the use of dolls in the lives of ten American girls, between the ages of nine and ten, and the
motivational factors influencing their play with dolls. The space in which the play took place
was significant to Wagner-Ott. She found that most of the play took place “in their house, in

21.
the attic, in the basement, and in their bedroom” (83); this suggests that the girls took care to find quiet, more private places in which to play with their dolls. Unlike the isolated literary orphans in my study, however, eight out of the ten girls preferred to play dolls with their friends in these locations, because they felt it was better and more fun than playing alone (87). As hers is a study in art education, Wagner-Ott’s research focuses on how children “read” images and associated marketing of modern dolls (Barbies and the like); nevertheless, it is interesting to keep her research in mind in terms of how real girls in my age range of interest interact with their dolls.

Dorothy Washburn’s study, “Getting Ready: Doll Play and Real Life in American Culture, 1900-1980” (1997), looks at the culture of dolls in twentieth century American society from an anthropological and museum studies perspective. Washburn’s analysis attempts to decipher the kinds of meanings that children have assigned to dolls, and presents her study from two points of view: the voices of adult women reminiscing about their childhood dolls and the voices of young girls describing their current dolls and doll play (112). As Washburn explains, the “need to know how an individual gives an object meaning within his personal experiential world constitutes the subject matter of the anthropology of experience” (108). Through her study, Washburn found that for “doll players [children who regularly play with dolls], dolls are real people with real feelings .... They are not thrown in boxes under the bed like Barbies. Doll players talk to their dolls and believe that their dolls listen to them” (118). For literary children, too, dolls are often viewed as real people. The child and doll relationships in my study’s quartet of primary works, for example, exemplify the importance of the doll as confidante.
Maria Tallandini’s study, “Aggressive Behavior in Doll’s House Play” (2004), emphasizes the function of independent doll play as a way to express frustrations without having to interact with other children (or adults, for that matter). Tallandini’s study examines the quantity and quality of aggressive behaviours in preschoolers and school-age children (6 to 8 years) when the relationships they enact are representations of the inner world and not the result of involvement with an external reality requiring interaction with peers (516). Tallandini found that girls engage in verbal aggressiveness rather than destructiveness with their dolls, while boys tend to act out violent physical aggression toward their toys (516).

These select studies support through real-life investigations my use of play theory to examine how literary children, especially girls, use their dolls for emotional empowerment and growth.

The Significance of Dolls in Children’s Literature

Several critics have taken an interest in providing literary and social interpretations of doll narratives, most notably Lois Kuznets and Kitti Carriker. In her 1998 work Created in Our Image, Kitti Carriker focuses on the portrayal and function of doll figures and their creators in literature for adults, and comments that

{}little attention has been given to the problematic role played by the handmade doubles, the three-dimensional, tangible figures such as dolls and puppets that fictional characters and craftsmen create in their own images. Especially when created in miniature, it seems that dolls appeal to the reader’s fascination with and fear of images made in human likeness. (9)

Carriker employs Freud’s theory of the Uncanny and Lacan’s discourse about the Other in exploring the psychological implications of dolls and their relationships to their human
creators (9). In children’s literature, as Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer suggest, these “miniature human beings and living dolls and toys can all be read as metaphoric representations of children....[t]he miniature beings are much smaller than the creatures who control them” (195).

The work of Lois Kuznets is eminently useful in examining a range of issues related to doll narratives. In her major survey of doll and toy narratives, When Toys Come Alive (1994), Kuznets takes a multi-disciplinary and feminist approach to reading literature for children in which toys and dolls are personified. In her study, and within her aforementioned theoretical framework (which also owes much to Freud), Kuznets recognizes that one or more of the following motifs usually appear in doll narratives:

1. Toys, when they are shown as inanimate objects developing into live beings, embody human anxiety about what it means to be “real”—an independent subject or self rather than an object submitting to the gaze of more powerfully real and potentially rejecting live beings.

2. Toy characters embody the secrets of the night: they inhabit a secret, sexual, sensual world, one that exists in closed toy shops, under Christmas trees, and behind the doors of dollhouses....It can be a marginal, liminal, potentially carnival world.

3. When manipulated by human beings....toys embody all the temptations and responsibilities of power. As characters with whom humans identify, they also suggest the relatively powerless relationship of human beings to known or unseen forces: their dreadful vulnerability. (2)
Although some of Kuznets' interpretations do not apply directly to my analysis (in that I am not offering feminist readings of primary works), many of her insights about dolls in literature have guided me in my discussion.

Chapter Three includes a review of the roles and functions of dolls in nineteenth and twentieth century British and North American literature for children.

Experiential and Clinical Research on Children and Childhood Spaces

As my use of space theory suggests, this study is most concerned with the child’s emotional connection to space rather than, for example, the child’s visual perception of space or the child’s relationship to the natural world. As noted in Chapter One, for the most part the secret spaces that I am interested in represent interiority, both physical and psychological. Thus, I am interested in a child’s relationship to space in spaces that represent or symbolize home, either the comfort evoked by home or its contained, physical warmth. I am also primarily interested in these secret spaces as providing a time for solitude, reflection and private play.

In my research of critical literature on children and space, it has been important to focus on studies that relate to children’s attachment to space and, more specifically, the home and the private spaces within the home. Two studies from the 1970s and 1980s by Roger Hart and Robin Moore are of particular interest, as both include useful data on children in late childhood. Hart’s seminal 1979 study on children’s relationships to their environments, Children’s Experience of Place, remains the most authoritative study on this subject. Hart articulates the importance of the physical environment to the psychological development of the child. He interviewed the children of the New England town of Inavale to determine their
favourite places in and around the town. The resulting study, with its focus on outdoor environments in children’s play, is of lesser relevance to my thesis.

In his 1986 work Childhood’s Domain, urban planner Robin Moore reports his work with over 100 British children, spread evenly across the nine to twelve age range and split 50/50 by gender (268). He asked the children to draw representations of spaces that they regularly inhabited and played in, such as schoolyards, gardens and rooms. In the chapter “Habitats Around the Home,” Moore asks, “[w]hat does home mean to a child?” (82). He found that

the high rank given to homesites in the drawings indicated home to be the centre of family life and a child’s ultimate haven of security and comfort (as we would expect). When children were asked where they went to “be alone,” over fifty percent answered ‘my own room’ .... [p]rivacy is evidently a key function of the domestic indoors. (82)

The privacy afforded by interior spaces is key. While my study deals with children who have perhaps never known the feeling of a loving home, Moore’s findings point to questions about how orphan characters can construct their own sense of home within a secret space. While the work of Moore is fascinating, little other research on this topic exists. Acknowledging the substantial and fascinating research literature on children’s play in general, Moore himself notes “how little of it, with few exceptions, pays attention to the relationship between play and the places actually used by children” (Moore 11).

Despite the lack of scholarly research on the subject of children’s play in relation to their play spaces, the highly relevant work of Moore does make clear that private space is
intensely important for the vast majority of children. This view is central to my interpretation of literary children in their play spaces.

The Importance of Secret Spaces in Children’s Literature

As research on childhood spaces suggests, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual homes for children are vastly important. And perhaps due to their importance in children’s lives, such spaces have figured prominently in children’s literature. As Susan Honeyman notes in her 2001 article “Childhood Bound: In Gardens, Maps, and Pictures,” writers for children have often created no-adults-allowed fantasy worlds and “friendly spaces” for their child characters:

- Peter Pan has Neverland; Mary Lennox, her secret garden; Laura Ingalls, her “magic circle”; Fern Arable, the barnyard; Harriet Welsch, her imaginary “town”; and Dorothy Gale has the Land of Oz. Fictional children...often have a magical place to go to, to inhabit, to define, even to control .... The most common escapes are the garden or the remote island, but all these childhood spaces share one quality—they are clearly bound and inaccessible to adults. (117)

In her recent full-length work, Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction, Honeyman expands on her discussion of literary representations of children and childhood spaces in literature for both children and adults. As Karen Coats maintains in her review of the book, Honeyman astutely shows that [child-friendly spaces] are in fact imaginary spaces with the dual function of freedom and containment, like playpens full of fascinating toys. While on the one hand they exist to satisfy a nostalgic and utopian impulse for a
child-empowered space, their mapped boundaries reveal their connections to adult rationalism, protection, and confinement of presumed child pleasures. (88)

Although Honeyman argues that these “friendly spaces” of childhood are symbols of adult confinement (despite their other function as spaces of freedom), I view secret spaces as representative of a child’s power over her situation. I have previously explored this idea in my unpublished essay, “Secret Worlds: The Power of the Imagination in the Lives of Troubled Girls in Sylvia Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall and Lucie Babbidge’s House.” In this paper, I advanced the idea that Cassedy’s protagonists, through the use of a dollhouse or attic room, construct their own sacred, secret spaces in which to dream, have healthy interactions (with their doll companions), and advance their inner growth. For Cassedy’s protagonists, “the ability to construct and participate in another reality, a metaphorical ‘room of their own’ apart from the outside world that rejects them, is a transformative, restorative, essential element in their lives” (Goerzen 1). In this thesis, I expand on this argument to include not only Cassedy’s protagonists, but also other orphan characters in children’s literature in need of the solace and emotional safety that a secret space can provide. In many cases, the secret spaces also provide the appropriate space and time for children to resolve emotional problems, issues of identity and other troubles.

For many girls, an important child-only space is the dollhouse. As long as dolls have been in existence, so have homes for dolls: “[m]iniaturized domestic settings are found in Egyptian tombs dating from 2000 B.C.; dollhouses in their current Western form go back to the mid-sixteenth century” (Armstrong, 24). In many doll narratives, the dollhouse (or the space where the dolls reside) is nearly as important as the dolls themselves. “[T]he social and psychological importance of the house is that it safeguards the identities of its inhabitants by
providing a boundary within which personal considerations are paramount" (Rustin 85)—and this is equally true of dollhouses. In addition to offering a home for dolls, dollhouses can offer a sense of home and solitude for the children who play with the structure. The dollhouse can be a sort of secret space for dolls and children, a place for children to find solace from adults and other authority figures.

With Bachelard’s space theory as a context for discussion, it is important to examine the specifics of dollhouses and their significance in children’s literature and in children’s lives. Bachelard has influenced many critics, including Frances Armstrong and Susan Stewart, to see home as “felicitous space” and miniatures as “the tiny things we imagine [that] simply take us back to childhood, to familiarity with toys and the reality of toys” (Bachelard 149). In Freudian terms, the dollhouse also represents the desire to become so small as to return to the womb. The magic of the miniature is inherent not only in the doll but also in the dollhouse. In On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (1984), Susan Stewart writes that

[transcendence and the interiority of history and narrative are the dominant characteristics of the most consummate of miniatures—the dollhouse. A house within a house, the dollhouse not only presents the house’s articulation of the tension between inner and outer spheres, of exteriority and interiority—it also represents the tension between two modes of interiority. Occupying a space within an enclosed space, the dollhouse’s aptest analogy is the locket or the secret recesses of the heart: center within center, within within within. The dollhouse is a materialized secret; what we look for is the dollhouse within the dollhouse and its promise of an infinitely profound interiority. (61)
Stewart’s thoughts on the dollhouse as a profoundly intimate place, a place for play and freedom from social restrictions, are of special importance to my analysis.

In “The Doll’s House as Ludic Space, 1690-1920” (1996), Frances Armstrong continues the idea of felicitous spaces as she traces the textual history of dollhouses from the late seventeenth until the early twentieth century. As Armstrong explains, “although early dollhouses were valuable artifacts supplied and controlled by adults, it seems quite clear that most girls were able to regard dollhouses as their own ludic spaces, places dedicated to their own play, rather than as sites for training and compliance” (24). Armstrong insists that the miniature scale of the dollhouse “creates distance limiting the degree of identification between child and doll” (39). I read the dollhouse as a special place for child and doll, thus strengthening the connections between the two. Regardless of their sometimes differing views, at the heart of it, for Armstrong and Stewart the dollhouse represents a special place for children’s imaginative play.

The Lost Girls: Forgotten, Displaced, Lonely, Troubled and Troublesome Orphans in Children’s Literature

When children’s literature scholars write about orphans, as a large number of them do, they invariably mention the prevalence of orphan characters in the literature. In The Pleasures of Children’s Literature (1992), Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer write that adults tend to believe that the possibility of being orphaned—of having the independence one wants and yet having to do without the love one needs—is an exciting and disturbing idea for children who are not in fact orphans, and a matter of immediate interest for those who are. In depicting orphans, writers can focus on children’s desire for independence, or on their fear of loss of security. (197)
Thus, children might enjoy living vicariously through the lives of fictional orphans, and this ensures the orphan’s continuing popularity in children’s literature.

Canadian author, scholar and children’s librarian Sarah Ellis also notes the abundance of orphan characters in literature in her unpublished essay, simply entitled “Orphans”:

[orphans in books—their numbers are legion. Let’s sit back in the reviewing stand and watch them as they parade by. Goody Two-Shoes, Toby Tyler, Sara Crewe, Mary Lennox, Anne Shirley, Kim, Mowgli, Tom Sawyer, Heidi, Peter Pan, Madeleine, Pauline, Petrova and Posy Fossil, Mary Anna Wilson, Pippi Longstocking, Jane Eyre, Becky Sharp, Heathcliffe, and practically everyone in Dickens. And they are not all dressed in knickers and pinafores, either. Some appear in jeans and Reeboks. (1)]

Why does the orphan continue to be such a constant and popular figure in children’s literature? Some critics, such as Nodelman and Melanie Kimball, suggest that the orphan as a universal symbol of suffering ensures the tireless popularity of the orphan character in literature for children as well as adults. Kimball writes of the symbolic nature of orphans: “[it] is because the orphan so deeply represents the feelings and pain of us all that the character continues to exist in children’s literature. And until the day when none of us feels the pain of isolation, orphans will continue to symbolize it for us” (577). Kimball’s 1999 article, “From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children’s Literature,” locates the origins of fictional orphans within folktales, and traces their popularity in fiction for children. Her analysis of fifty folktales from different cultures reveals the universal elements in the orphan story, patterns which she argues can be found in literature for children. In her study, she focuses on the canonical text, The Secret Garden. All literary orphans are on a quest,
Kimball adds, an idea that proves useful for my study in terms of the orphan girls either consciously or subconsciously seeking “a place to belong and the right to be there” (577).

Susan Drain continues with the theme of belonging in her article “Community and the Individual in Anne of Green Gables: The Meaning of Belonging” (1992):

Finding one’s rightful place in the social fabric is part of the challenge of growing up, and as such, it is an important focus of many books for and about children. An entire tradition of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ‘orphan tales’ is explicitly concerned with the problem of identifying and occupying that rightful place. (120)

Drain cites Pollyanna (1913) and Elsie Dinsmore (1867), among others, as examples of orphan tales in which finding a sense of belonging means conforming to the norms and rules of the orphan protagonist’s new home or situation (120). And Drain notes that the most realistic orphan tales, such as L.M. Montgomery’s Anne of Green Gables, feature a mutual transformation, “in which both the stranger and the community are changed by their contact with one another. Adoption, in short, means adaptation” (120). This notion of maintaining individuality while adapting to a new environment specifically pertains to my research on orphan girls and their dolls.

As Minda Rae Amiran points out in her 1992 article “‘She Was Wildly Clad’: Orphan Girls in Earlier Children’s Literature,” orphans frequently featured as protagonists in Western children’s literature of the nineteenth century. This, she claims, is because so many children at that time were actually orphans (85). In her 1987 article “Children in Search of a Family: Orphan Novels Throughout the Century,” Claudia Mills writes that the “orphan child represents pure possibility, freedom from family ties that chafe and bind. Yet almost every
orphan novel in the end is about the search for a family” (228). Mills’ idea echoes Amiran’s and Nodelman’s thoughts on the orphan’s quest: for many literary orphan girls, the search for a family is an integral aspect of the quest.

Mills also sets out a helpful framework for reading literary orphans. She identifies “three great bursts of literary interest in orphans …. occurring in the early years of the [twentieth] century, in the 1940s, and in recent years” (228). Focusing on novels “that take as their subject an orphan child in search of a family” (238), both boy orphans and girl orphans, she remarks on the change in the image of orphanhood over time:

The effervescent, exuberant orphans of the century’s early years give way to the passive, polite orphans of the 1940s and early 1950s, culminating in the angry, bitter ‘orphans’ (often actually foster children) of more recent fiction. (228)

Mills notes the protagonists of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1903), Anne of Green Gables (1908), Daddy-Long Legs (1912) and Pollyanna (1913) as examples of the exuberant orphan character of the early twentieth century (228). These novels “reinforce a view of the child’s nature as inherently good and capable of transforming and redeeming adults who have grown too distant from their own childhoods” (231). As for the passive orphans of the World War II era, Mills offers the protagonists of Doris Gates’ Sensible Kate (1943), Helen Daringer’s Adopted Jane (1947) and Frances Murphy’s A Nickel for Alice (231) as examples of this type. These novels “tell the story of drooping, wilted flowers who learn to blossom [and thereby] reflect a shift in the image of the nature and the needs of children” (Mills 231). These characters learn to move beyond their politeness and re-learn how to play, to become more childlike again.
Of particular relevance to my study are Mills’ thoughts on the “angry, bitter” orphan characters of the late twentieth century, the “portrait of the orphan as a child badly scarred by his or her experience, suspicious, mistrustful, a ‘problem child’” (234). She cites Betsy Byar’s The Pinballs (1977) and Katherine Paterson’s The Great Gilly Hopkins (1978) as examples of the angry, often abused orphan of this time period. While Mills’ other examples focus solely on girl orphans, here she introduces novels involving boys, including Alberta Armer’s Troublemaker (1966), Louise Dickinson Rich’s Star Island Boy (1968), and Richard Parker’s Second-Hand Family (1965) (234). In each of these more recent orphan novels, the “protagonist takes some decisive step towards maturity. Often this involves a willingness to face and accept reality” (236). Mills’ theories on the types of orphans are relevant to my examination of orphan girl characters, as the primary works in my thesis focus on orphans from various time periods: the late nineteenth century (The Doll Who Came Alive), the mid-twentieth century (Miss Happiness and Miss Flower) and the later twentieth century (Lucie Babbidge’s House and Behind the Attic Wall). I employ her reading of orphan types in Chapters Four and Five.

Although they focus primarily on orphans in literature for adults, Eileen Simpson’s Orphans: Real and Imaginary and Diana Loercher Pazicky’s Cultural Orphans in America (1998) contain helpful information on textual representations of orphans and the social history of orphans. An orphan herself, as well as a literary scholar, Simpson takes an intensely personal stance in her examination. She offers up a personal account of her childhood as an orphan, as well as a history of orphanhood. Simpson does not focus only on orphans in children’s literature, such as those found in the work of Rudyard Kipling; she also examines literature for adults about orphan characters, including the work of Charles
Dickens and Mark Twain. Her readings of orphan characters offer a helpful historical and literary background for my study, particularly the portrayal of orphan characters in literature over time. After generations of silent suffering, Simpson writes, and “with the development of the novel as a genre, orphans became heroes and heroines whose feelings readers could identify with, whose orphanhood was not merely stated ... but described as if from the inside” (182).

Pazicky looks at actual and textual representations of orphans in early America and what the representations signify about American cultural values. In contrast to Simpson, Pazicky rejects the sentimentality of the stories from the American nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—stories that portray orphans as pitiful creatures, and “so unrepresentative of society’s real orphans” (149). Although my focus is not necessarily on “true” or authentic representations of orphans, but rather on character development as portrayed by the authors of a quartet of novels, Simpson’s and Pazicky’s work is relevant in providing context.

Critical Receptions of Tregarthen, Cassedy and Godden

Before embarking on a critical analysis of the primary works, I conducted a thorough search of various University of British Columbia library databases in order to gain a sense of the amount of critical attention paid to the primary works and the authors of these works. In doing so, I also wanted to gain a sense of the depth of critical attention given to the works.

Little critical attention has been paid to Enys Tregarthen (also known as Nellie Sloggett and Nellie Cornwall) or The Doll Who Came Alive. Now out of print, The Doll Who Came Alive is admittedly an old-fashioned tale both in style and plot, and many modern
readers and scholars are not familiar with it. In addition to The Doll Who Came Alive, Tregarthen wrote Daddy Long-Legs, and His White Heath Flower (1885), as well as two books that were posthumously published (as was The Doll Who Came Alive): Piskey Folk: A Book of Cornish Legends (1940) and The White Ring (1949). A thorough search in various University of British Columbia library databases has revealed only a handful of reviews of The Doll Who Came Alive, and bibliographic entries of the work in two reference texts: Ruth Nadelman Lynn’s Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography and Alethea K. Helbig and Agnes Regan Perkins’ Dictionary of British Children’s Fiction, A-M. Both the author and the work were absent from major bibliographic reference texts such as editor Victor Watson’s The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature and Martha E. Ward and her co-authors’ Authors of Books for Young People.

The unsigned, untitled review of the 1942 publication of The Doll Who Came Alive merely comments that “[c]hildren who care for dolls will be especially interested in what happens when the doll … comes alive because [Jyd] loved it so much …. they will perfectly understand why the Dinky Folk wanted her to live in their country” (422-423). The similarly unsigned, untitled review of the 1972 version of the story in Horn Book is highly critical of the anniversary edition’s editorial changes, especially the new ending: “those readers who still have access to the original story will note with dismay that the ending is changed. Now the live doll renounces the fairy kingdom for Cornwall and Jyd; the sailorman [who gave Jyd the doll] returns from the sea and off they go, to keep house for him” (597).

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2 I was unable to determine when The Doll Who Came Alive went out of print.

3 As the 1942 and 1972 Horn Book reviews are both unsigned and untitled, I have followed current MLA guidelines for works cited and alphabetized them under the title of the work reviewed: The Doll Who Came Alive.
Many of the critical writings on Sylvia Cassedy’s and Rumer Godden’s body of literature for children support my interpretation of play and interactions with dolls as a healing process for the orphan protagonists. Two short articles look at Cassedy’s portrayal of the power of the child’s imagination. In “Sylvia Cassedy: Valuing the Child’s Inner Life” (1991), Christine McDonnell writes that in both *Behind the Attic Wall* and *Lucie Babbidge’s House*, the “child’s inner world is created by her imagination to fill an emotional need, and this inner world is as real and as important as the external, concrete world she suffers through” (101). Similarly, in “Playing and Reality in Sylvia Cassedy’s Novels” (1990), Virginia Wolf employs Winnicott’s theories in examining the connections between playing and reality. Wolf asserts that Cassedy’s protagonists, “as a result of playing, find a way out of their isolation and despair” (51). In *When Toys Come Alive*, Kuznets also supports the view that Maggie’s and Lucie’s secret time spent with their dolls is a coping mechanism with a healing effect (126).

As the author of a significant body of work for both children and adults, Rumer Godden has received a generous amount of critical attention. The scholarly work on Godden’s writing for children has focused mainly on *The Doll’s House*; less critical attention has been paid to *Miss Happiness and Miss Flower*. Godden has been the subject of several author studies, including two Twayne Author Studies, Hassell A. Simpson’s *Rumer Godden* (1973) and Lynne M. Rosenthal’s *Rumer Godden Revisited* (1996), as well as another book-length study of her life and work, Anne Chisholm’s *Rumer Godden* (1998). While Simpson and Chisholm focus primarily on Godden’s adult works, with only peripheral mentions of her works for children, Rosenthal’s study goes into more depth. In Godden’s doll stories, Rosenthal writes, “children must find ways to build bridges between feelings and the
objective world, both of which can be represented by the dolls” (64). Rosenthal affords Miss Happiness and Miss Flower only a two-sentence mention, in which she writes, “the silent communication between the dolls strengthens both child and dolls” (63).

Margaret and Michael Rustin provide a thoughtful analysis of Godden’s works for children from a psychological perspective in their article, “The Life of Dolls: Rumer Godden’s Understanding of Children’s Imaginative Play” (2001). Although they do not discuss Miss Happiness and Miss Flower specifically, their analysis is useful in looking at Godden’s world of dolls in general. To the Rustins, the dolls are projections of the self, “of or in the child’s imagination. They are available and important to children as representations of aspects of their internal worlds” (85). Dolls also have the “power of wishing, which in Godden’s work proves itself a subtle yet potent force. These tenuous communications from the dolls may be perceived as either pure imagination or psychological projection on the children’s part, although the weight of the fantasy leans toward volition and consciousness on the part of the dolls” (Kuznets 111). Godden’s intricate world of dolls and doll psychology is examined further in Chapter Four.

This literature review demonstrates that, clearly, a deeper and more comprehensive examination of the small body of orphan, doll and secret space narratives is warranted. Before delving into a critical examination of the primary works in Chapters Four and Five, in Chapter Three I define my research terms, discuss my rationale for selecting the primary works, and offer an introduction to the quartet of primary works.
CHAPTER THREE: CONNECTIONS AND CONTEXTS

Either individually or collectively, orphans, secret spaces and dolls have figured prominently in countless works of literature for children. Expanding on my preliminary discussion of these three themes in the literature review, I intend in this chapter to examine other works of children’s literature featuring orphan girls, secret spaces and dolls. My examination of secret spaces, in particular, in a selection of novels for children led me to produce an evaluative framework to analyze the secret space’s meaning and function in the wider context of children’s literature. The purpose of this chapter is to define my research terms and to establish the scope of my discussion, to illustrate the context in which the quartet of primary works can be located by examining other works with similar themes, to address the question of gender, to provide a rationale for my selection of the quartet of primary works and to offer a brief introduction to each primary work.

Definition of Key Terms

With guidance from the theorists discussed in the literature review, I will define core terms used in this study: “play,” “orphan,” “doll” and “secret space.”

The defining of “play” is a tricky matter that raises several questions. What exactly is the nature of the interactions between the orphan girls and their dolls? Are these girls playing with their dolls, in the traditional definition of the word according to The Oxford English Dictionary as an “exercise or action by way of recreation; amusement, diversion, sport [or] frolic” (1012)? The girls in the quartet of primary works, for example, use the objects of play (dolls) in what would be deemed by adults as playing, but their activities go far beyond merely entertaining themselves. Guided by D. W. Winnicott’s theory of play as a means of discovering the self, and Erik Erikson’s interpretation of play as a constructive, problem-
solving activity, I have developed my own definition of play, or more specifically, doll play. I define play as the interaction between a child and her dolls in which the following activities may take place: conversations with the dolls (in instances in which the dolls are animated) and/or the manipulation and movement of dolls. Thus, my definition of doll play goes beyond mere amusement for the child, and can include conversation and human-like interaction with dolls. This definition supports my argument that dolls can help fictional children to develop a strong sense of agency and identity through these play relationships.

For the purposes of this research, I have adapted Caroline Goodfellow's definition of the doll, as described in The Ultimate Doll Book: "an inanimate object that represents a human being in miniature" (8). In my adapted definition, the doll can be inanimate or animate. In three of the four primary works (the exception being Lucie Babbidge's House), the dolls are presented and perceived by the child characters as sentient, living beings. Thus, this adapted definition represents part of the surprise of their sentience: the dolls are supposed to be inanimate, but in these fantastical settings they are animate and capable of human-like interaction with child characters. Since all of the dolls in the primary works are companion dolls, or dolls that resemble either older children or adults, I am more likely to imagine a companion doll rather than a baby doll when I use the term "doll." Companion dolls seem more appropriate for interaction with children at a peer level than do baby dolls, which are meant to be cooed at and coddled. Adapting Goodfellow's definition helps to focus my attention firmly in the realm of toys for girls. Toys that resemble animals or machines are another matter entirely.

I define "doll narrative" as any picture book or novel for children that features a doll, as per the definition above, as a major figure in the story. The dolls in doll narratives are
most often magically personified, with speech and thought of their own. They may appear with or without child protagonists, although I am much more inclined toward the former, as child-doll dynamics are of such significance to my study. Many doll narratives are fantasies in that they bring to life in literature what nearly every child wishes: for her toys to come to life and interact with her. Beyond the child-appeal of the fantastical element, however, lies an even deeper level of meaning: the interactions between dolls and girls in these special spaces are a testament to the power of the imagination and to the importance of dolls as more than playthings.

Throughout this thesis, I use the term “orphan girl” or simply “orphan.” After much wrestling with this potentially problematic term, I settled on the word “orphan” to describe those children who have lost both parents, or, in the case of losing only one parent, children who have become either physically estranged and/or emotionally distanced from the other parent as a result. Depending on the situation, the orphan girls might find themselves in the care of caregivers (and “caregivers” is sometimes a misnomer), as do Nona in Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Maggie in Behind the Attic Wall and Jyd in The Doll Who Came Alive, or in an orphanage, as does Lucie in Lucie Babbidge’s House. The term “orphan” also suggests the inner struggles of the girls in the four novels, and in the larger world of children’s literature, as they reconcile feelings of loneliness, anger, resentment, displacement and alienation within themselves.

4 In Worlds Within, Sheila Egoff makes a distinction between the “doll fantasy” and the “doll story.” In doll fantasy, the dolls are personified and can move and operate separately from humans (130-131). In the more traditional doll story, however, the dolls can only talk among themselves, but they “cannot move on their own, and much of the action in the story is the result of where the children place the dolls in relation to one another” (144). Although Egoff’s distinction is a good one, my analysis concerns relationships between girls and their dolls rather than distinguishing between fantasy and more realistic narratives. Thus, I have classified all stories that feature doll and girl interaction as “doll narratives.”
I define “secret space” as a child-only space, where adults are not welcome (if adults do discover or enter it, it is often with detrimental results). As I discussed in Chapter One, for fictional girls, secret spaces are often spaces of interiority such as attics, dollhouses, storage rooms or tucked-away areas—these spaces are symbolic of home, safety or belonging.

Although human geographers have distinct, in-depth definitions of space and place, I will not enter that territory. For my purposes, I am far more interested in the poetics of space and the values placed on private space by children. For many characters in children’s literature, and especially the orphan girl protagonists discussed herein, these secret spaces are mental, emotional, spiritual and physical rooms of the self. Thus, I accept Yi-Fu Tuan’s definition of place, “as a focus of value, of nurture and support” (Space 29), as well as Lois Kuznet’s notion of the “magic space” in which dolls exist (When 119). These terms illustrate the emotional meaning that children attach to their secret spaces. As Joyce Thomas notes in her article “Woods and Castles, Towers and Huts: Aspects of Setting in the Fairy Tale,” ultimately “setting functions as an external, tangible correspondence to things internal and intangible” (127). Children’s secret spaces, as exemplified in many instances in children’s literature, provide strong links to their psyches.

In Chapter Two, I outlined characteristics of orphan characters in literature for children, as well as relevant research. Here, I wish to provide examples of how orphan characters interact with their dolls and/or secret spaces in works of children’s literature outside the quartet of primary works. First, however, I will describe the scope of this comparative discussion.
The Scope of the Discussion

In placing the primary works in context, I focus on the time periods in which the primary works were written—the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—and the geographic locations in which they are set: Britain and North America. As the focus of my study has been girls, I employ examples of girl orphans in this discussion. Although a wealth of these narratives exists in picture book form, my study focuses on novels and longer illustrated works for children. These longer, more in-depth works, aimed primarily at children ages eight to twelve, lend themselves more readily to a psychological analysis of their protagonists. To provide context for a discussion of the primary works, in this chapter I investigate ways in which orphans have interacted with dolls and secret spaces in works of children's literature. This provides a cursory look at the effects of dolls and secret spaces in the lives of orphan characters outside the quartet of primary works.

The Role of Secret Spaces in the Lives of Fictional Orphan Girls

Chapter Two introduced the concept of children's secret spaces. In this chapter, I expand on that idea to inform my larger discussion of children and dolls within these spaces. Secret spaces for child characters in children's literature can be represented in the following ways: physical space, as embodied in forts, treehouses, bedrooms, dollhouses, attics and other hideaways; cognitive space, as represented by diaries and daydreams; and fantasy space, as in Neverland, Wonderland and other fantastical realms. This system of classification assists in developing an evaluative framework for assessing secret spaces in the

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5 Although not a novel, the illustrated book The Doll Who Came Alive goes beyond the picture book with its more in-depth storyline and characterization of Jyd. While not as sophisticated or complex as the other primary works, Tregarthen’s story is fascinating as an earlier example of doll personification, and represents an excellent comparative text for Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall.
primary works, as well as in other works of children’s literature. In all cases, and especially in the cases of physical and cognitive space, secret spaces are often places where psychological growth and personal development are promoted within child characters.

Physical, real space is the most powerful form of secret space, as it allows the child character to escape wholly from the outside world. Physical secret spaces are the most obvious type of what Bachelard describes as a “felicitous space” (xxxv). It is in a physical secret space that transformation can truly occur for fictional children, as it does for Mary Lennox in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden (1911).

An imperious, recently orphaned girl sent to live in England, Mary, by the time she “arrives at Misselthwaite Manor, [is one whose] soul has died symbolically because of neglect, lack of love, and loneliness” (Kimball 566). She discovers a locked garden at the manor, which she dubs the “Secret Garden”: “She liked the name, and she liked still more the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in no one knew where she was. It seemed almost like being shut out of the world in some fairy place” (Burnett 106). Through this discovery of a secret garden, which fast becomes her secret space, as well as in her interactions with characters such as Dickon and Colin, Mary experiences a spiritual rebirth. Although the rebirth has much to do with her interactions with others, and with helping to empower the sickly Colin, the physical secret space allows her this time and freedom from adult rules. By the end of The Secret Garden, Mary no longer resembles the girl she was when she first arrived.6

The child’s secret space can take on another form entirely: the cognitive secret space. A cognitive secret space is any space a child can enter psychologically to “tune out” the

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6 I draw further parallels between Mary and Maggie in my analysis of Behind the Attic Wall in Chapter Five.
pressures of the outside world. This type of space can include daydreams, diaries and memories. Anne Shirley’s mirror in the orphanage in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), for example, acts as a place for Anne to pour her dreams, hopes and desires, and this helps her to maintain her bright spirit in difficult times. Like many other girl orphans, Anne, too, wishes for a home: as she says to Matthew Cuthbert when he picks her up at the train station, “‘oh, it seems so wonderful that I’m going to live with you and belong to you’” (12). The exuberant Anne craves human interaction and company, and thus her development into a fully integrated member of the Avonlea community ultimately takes place as a result of her friendships with others in her new home.

Emily Byrd Starr in L.M. Montgomery’s *Emily of New Moon* (1925) has a secret space that begins as a physical location and later becomes a sustaining memory and a cognitive secret space. Emily lives with her ailing father in a house in the hollow (her mother died when she was four), which is “‘a mile away from anywhere’” (1). When her father dies, Emily is sent to live with her mother’s pompous relatives on New Moon Farm. For the rest of the novel, Emily writes letters to her late father in a diary. These letters, combined with her memories of her father and her beloved childhood home, nourish her during her time of transition. Because Emily has this cognitive secret space to retreat to, she is better equipped to deal with difficult people and eventually make friends in her new community.

In Frances O’Roark Dowell’s *Where I’d Like to Be* (2003), a girl named Maddie, living in a contemporary group home setting, creates a scrapbook using images from magazines of homes where she longs to live one day. She and her friends also create a fort in which they can gather to talk about ideal futures for themselves. For Maddie, though, the hope for future safety and belonging comes in the form of her cognitive secret space, her
“Book of Houses” (42). Maddie puts her hopes and desires into this scrapbook, just as Anne Shirley does with the mirror. Although both physical secret space and cognitive secret space can be powerful for fictional children, physical secret space has the most power to transform the fictional children who take solace in it. Cognitive space can sustain fictional orphans while they deal with hardships, but the privacy afforded by physical space has the most positive influence.

The lure of fantasy space—magical and fantastical lands such as Oz, Wonderland, the Hundred Acre Wood, Neverland and Fairyland—is undeniable for fictional children. While it is beyond my scope to engage in a discussion about the larger world of fantasy and fantasylands, it is helpful to acknowledge fantasy space as a type of secret space. Jyd in The Doll Who Came Alive does, after all, retreat to a fantasy secret space for the rest of her life. A notable fantasy space novel that also features an orphan girl protagonist is Kit Pearson’s Awake and Dreaming (1996). Although Theo is not technically an orphan because her mother is still alive, her mother’s neglect makes Theo an emotional orphan—she does not have a loving caregiver to turn to in times of need. In Pearson’s novel, Theo magically yet briefly becomes part of a caring family. As part of the fantasy Kaldor family (the family actually exists in the novel, but initially Theo encounters a fantastical and romanticized version of the family), she finds a warm loving place to belong. When the fantasy breaks and Theo is plunged back into real life, she is uplifted by memories of life with the Kaldors, and now knows how life should really be lived. She becomes friends with the real Kaldors, and her mother promises she will try to do better. Again, the search for a loving home is a prominent theme.
Minda Rae Amiran’s theory that fictional orphan boys are on a quest for adventure while fictional orphan girls are on a quest to find a home is a guidepost in my analysis of orphan girls and their secret spaces. Viewed in light of Bachelard’s and Tuan’s ideas surrounding the emotional attachment to home, it is fascinating to explore the secret spaces of selected orphan girls. In examining the primary works, it is helpful to ask the following question: how do these spaces function in terms of the emotional and cognitive needs of the girl characters?

The Role of Dolls in the Lives of Fictional Orphan Girls

In the four primary works, of course, dolls also play an essential role in the girls’ secret spaces. Dolls have featured prominently in children’s literature in a variety of roles: as companions to children, as devices for time travel, as facilitators of magical events, as mentors to children, as playthings, as confidantes. In many doll narratives, dolls fill several of these roles at once, especially in narratives featuring animated dolls. As it is my intention to focus on the relationships between dolls and children, I will not include in my discussion the many fine doll narratives in which dolls and other toys have lives independent of children, such as Sylvia Waugh’s The Mennyms, Rachel Field’s Hitty: Her First Hundred Years, and Jane Gardam’s Through the Doll’s House Door. Just as the dolls in the selected primary works help the orphan girls to grow and develop, dolls have functioned similarly in the lives of many non-orphan fictional children. In Rumer Godden’s The Doll’s House, for example, the lives of a doll family help non-orphan sisters Emily and Charlotte to realize the meaning of special relationships. These realizations, and the related emotional growth of the protagonists, recalls Perry Nodelman’s and Mavis Reimer’s thoughts on dolls as metaphoric representations of children (195)—by working out issues and desires in miniature, both
fictional and real-life children are then better-prepared to deal with these same issues in their everyday lives.

While dolls and doll characters abound in children’s literature, in my research I soon realized that in few, very few, instances are they featured interacting with orphan girl characters. In researching other possible works of children’s literature that feature orphan girls, secret spaces and dolls, it soon became clear that there are few works for children that feature all three of these elements. While there are several novels in children’s literature featuring orphan girls and their secret spaces, in addition to the quartet of primary works chosen for this thesis, few other instances in children’s literature feature orphan girls and their dolls. Indeed, a thorough search of library catalogues and critical bibliographies turned up only one other novel in addition to the primary works: Elvira Woodruff’s The Christmas Doll (2000). Living in a British orphanage in the mid-nineteenth century, sisters Lucy and Glory Wolcott live in their memories, and try to remember life with their parents and their long-lost and much-treasured doll, Morning Glory. When they find an old doll that they are sure is Morning Glory, a series of magical events occurs in which they find themselves working for a kindly dollmaker, Miss Thimblebee. Because the doll is merely a vehicle for magic-making rather than for psychological growth in the protagonists, Woodruff’s story it is not especially pertinent to my overall analysis.

Guys and Dolls: Orphan Boys, Toys and Secret Spaces

An extended look at girls and their dolls naturally leads to questions about the other gender: what about boys, their toys, and secret spaces in children’s literature? The richness of this topic is enough to inspire another thesis, and thus it is not my intention to engage in a discussion of orphan boy characters in children’s novels. However, it will prove helpful to
investigate how girl characters differ from boy characters in their relationships to dolls/toys and secret spaces. In investigating this, I am most interested in how secret spaces and toys function in the lives of boy characters, to help illustrate my theory that dolls and secret spaces can be integral to orphan girl characters finding a place to belong. Do boys relate to their toys in different ways than girls relate to their dolls? More significantly, in narratives featuring orphan boys, how might their interactions with their toys or secret spaces exemplify Minda Rae Amiran’s aforementioned theory that while girl orphans long for loving homes and struggle to find them, boy orphans set out on independent quests to find their fortune (85)? Much as few examples of orphan girl/doll/secret space narratives exist, even fewer orphan boy/doll/secret space narratives can be located.

Two examples, one featuring an orphan boy and a secret space, the other featuring an orphan boy and a toy, demonstrate the focus on adventure and fortune-seeking over the protagonist’s psychological growth in these narratives: Sarah Ellis’ The Several Lives of Orphan Jack and Edith Nesbit’s Harding’s Luck. In making this comparison I do not intend to disparage works about orphan boys over works about orphan girls by suggesting that the novels featuring boys are of lesser value because they focus on adventure. Indeed, adventures and experiences are important vehicles for self-discovery and the development of a strong identity in all children. But I do argue that the main function of toys and secret spaces for boy characters is to facilitate adventure, rather than emotional growth.

The title character in The Several Lives of Orphan Jack lives in an institution called the Opportunities School for Orphans and Foundlings, where he is known as "Otherjack" (to differentiate him from another Jack at the orphanage). Otherjack soon embarks on a journey in search of the sea, taking only a change of clothes and his beloved dictionary. He discovers
that he is a born storyteller, and that he can trade his thoughts, ideas, opinions and impressions with the people he meets in exchange for the necessities of life, such as food. Jack’s ideas and dictionary (he becomes Jack again after he leaves the institution) may be seen as cognitive secret spaces in that they allow him to transcend his reality, but their function as secret space is entirely different from that of the girl character’s secret space: here, the space functions as a way for Jack to make important life decisions, but mainly as momentum for Jack to further his travels.

The toy owned by an orphan boy in Edith Nesbit’s Harding’s Luck (1909) performs a similar function. Young Dickie Harding has inherited an old rattle from his father that is to bring him luck, but as the story opens, there is little luck or joy in the sickly child’s life. In a magical spell involving the rattle, Dickie is transported back in time three hundred years to the reign of King James I, where he takes on the identity of Richard Arden. He saves the Arden family’s fortune and eventually has to choose between returning to present-day London or remaining in the past. Although it is a special possession that brings him some level of comfort, Dickie’s toy is an inanimate object that functions primarily as a time-travel tool.⁷

In narratives featuring non orphan boy protagonists, secret spaces and/or toys still have a similar effect in acting as vehicles for adventure. In A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh (1928), the fantasy space of the Hundred Acre Wood, and Christopher Robin’s play with the animated toys are integral to the story’s sense of adventure and play. In Rumer Godden’s Impunity Jane (1954), a tough little girl doll, seeking adventure, encourages play from her boy owner. A notable exception is Lynn Reid Banks’ The Indian in the Cupboard (1980), in

⁷ Although it is not an orphan and doll narrative, Cora Taylor’s The Doll (1987) also features a doll that acts as a device for time travel.
which a boy named Omri learns the tremendous responsibility of adulthood through caring for two tiny, magically animated plastic figurines: a Native American named Little Bear and a cowboy named Boone.

As I discuss in Chapter Six, there is much opportunity for an extended analysis of boys, their toys and their secret spaces.

Selection of the Primary Works and an Introduction to Their Analysis

My choices of primary works are informed by critical bibliographies mentioned in Chapter Two; as well, they are much-loved novels from my own childhood. Moreover, the four primary works of this study—Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Lucie Babbidge’s House, The Doll Who Came Alive and Behind the Attic Wall—are the only works I could locate which feature orphan girls, their dolls, and secret spaces. Before close analyses of these primary works in Chapters Four and Five, it is helpful here to introduce the gist of each narrative in turn. Each primary work is distinct in tone, theme, characterization of the protagonists, portrayal of the dolls, and form and function of the protagonist’s secret space.

Rumer Godden’s Miss Happiness and Miss Flower features an orphan girl named Nona Fell. The eight year-old has been sent from her birthplace in India to live with her aunt, uncle and cousins in England, a country she has never before visited. Nona’s mother died when Nona was a baby, and she has been raised by an Indian nanny at the family home “on her father’s tea garden, Coimbatore in Southern India” (4). It is not revealed whether Nona’s father is still alive, but it is clear that he is not involved in his daughter’s life. Nona has come to England as a virtual orphan. The story focuses on her relationship with two Japanese dolls, Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, who also feel displaced, and on Nona’s desire to build the dolls an authentic Japanese dollhouse to help them feel more at home. As Nona designs and
builds the dollhouse, her confidence is similarly shaped and developed. This leads to her integration into her adoptive family.

Sylvia Cassedy’s psychological fantasy Lucie Babbidge’s House is the story of an eleven year-old named Lucie Babbidge. As Lois Kuznets describes it, the first part of the novel is largely confined to exploring her consciousness; the reader may suspect but will not know until the beginning of part 2 that the warm and loving family to which Lucie retreats after her excruciating school experiences at the hands of her smarmy teacher, Miss Pimm, and her fellow classmates is one she has created with dolls in an antique dollhouse she discovered in a storage room. (126)

Lucie’s incredible imagination and intelligence, though squelched in the “real world,” are revealed in the dollhouse scenes. Through a series of dramatic events involving her pen pal in England, Lucie experiences a profound psychological awakening.

In The Doll Who Came Alive, Enys Tregarthen’s protagonist is Jyd Trewerry, a “little eight-year-old Cornish lass.” Jyd suffers from emotional and physical neglect, and lives with her often-absent stepmother, a “very unworthy woman, often neglecting Jyd and treating her cruelly” (11). As the local frockmaker Miss Orange Nankelly observes, Jyd’s dress “is all ragged and torn and slipping off [her] shoulder blades” (42). In addition to her lack of love, food and adequate clothing, Jyd has never attended school. As she later describes to her doll, school is a “place where children learn their A. B. C.’s, an spelling an’ writing ... You have to pay money to go to school, an’ my stepmother can’t afford schooling for me” (29). Jyd first knows her doll Jane as an inanimate wooden Dutch doll that eventually comes to life because of her love, a metamorphosis from inanimate to animate that
recalls Carlo Collodi’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio* and Margery Williams’ *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Together, Jyd and Jane transcend their harsh existence forever by becoming permanent residents of the “Small People’s world” (64).

Sylvia Cassedy’s *Behind the Attic Wall* is perhaps the most psychologically complex of the primary works, largely due to the depth of the protagonist, Margaret Ann Turner (Maggie). At twelve, Maggie is a veteran of American orphanages and public school classrooms, having been shuffled from place to place across the country since her parents died in a car accident. When the reader first meets her, with her “[b]ony legs, untied shoes, sandpaper knees [and] rotten temper,” Maggie is being picked up at the train station by her quirky Uncle Morris (8). She is to be taken to live with her health-obsessed great aunts Lillian and Harriet, who live in a now-deserted orphanage named Adelphi Hills. Shortly after arriving, Maggie hears mysterious voices. She at last discovers a forgotten attic room and sees the owners of the voices: two china dolls named Timothy John and Miss Christabel. Slowly, tentatively, Maggie builds a meaningful friendship with them, which eventually transforms her and allows her to be open to other meaningful relationships in her life.

Thus, while each protagonist experiences a form of psychological and social transformation, each transformation is unique according to each unique protagonist. In my research and thinking about the connections between orphan girls, dolls and secret spaces in the quartet of primary works, it sometimes seemed that more questions arose than answers. Does it matter that some of the dolls are personified and animated (as in *The Doll Who Came Alive* and *Behind the Attic Wall*), while others are inanimate and controlled by the child (as in *Lucie Babidge’s House*) and still others communicate through silent wish-making (*Miss Happiness* and *Miss Flower*)? Does it matter whether the secret spaces are physical spaces
such as attics and dollhouses, or cognitive spaces such as diaries and daydreams, or fantasy spaces such as the Small People’s country? Certainly, a psychological reading of orphan girls in relation to their dolls and spaces is a complex matter.

In determining the nature of psychological changes in each character and the function of the dolls and the secret spaces, one overarching question arose: in order to experience profound changes in herself and in her life, what does each girl need? I argue, for example, that because Maggie in Behind the Attic Wall needs to have her desire to nurture and caretake fulfilled, she needs a space and interactions that allow her to love and care for others before she can experience profound psychological growth. This question of the child’s need is essential, and will be highlighted in the close analysis of texts in the following chapters.

A closer look at the primary works presents many opportunities for comparison. The orphan protagonists have experienced varying degrees of trauma and abuse in their lives, from neglectful stepmothers to drastic displacements, to witnessing their parents’ deaths, to bullying from teachers and peers. These orphans need places of solace to heal from their wounds (or, in Jyd’s case, escape from the outside world altogether).

Within these secret spaces exist remarkable relationships between girls and dolls. Like the environments themselves, each doll-child relationship is unique. Both Maggie and Jyd talk to their dolls as they would to humans; there is a back-and-forth dialogue in these interactions. For Nona, the Japanese dolls communicate almost telepathically, by wishing for what will happen to them. For Lucie, the interaction is another matter altogether, and perhaps the most traditional doll play situation: Lucie’s dolls are not magically animated, and therefore there is no communication between Lucie and her dolls. Lucie manipulates and moves her dolls to act out the aforementioned warm and idealized familial scenes.
Miss Happiness and Miss Flower and Lucie Babbidge’s House seem a natural fit for
analysis alongside each other. Dollhouses figure prominently in both Lucie Babbidge’s
House and Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, while Behind the Attic Wall and The Doll Who
Came Alive employ other types of secret spaces. For Nona, Lucie and Maggie, the
dollhouses and the attic room represent “what Winnicott calls transitional space to a child
protagonist in need of a link between inner and outer reality” (Kuznets 119). More
significantly, the spaces also provide the “felicitous space” that Bachelard deems as required
to facilitate the child’s capacity for imaginative play.

In each of the primary works, the dolls symbolize aspects of the child’s desires, fears,
needs and hopes, whether it is Maggie and Jyd’s intense desire to play caregiver, Lucie’s
compulsion to create an ideal family situation as an emotional escape, or Nona’s need to fit
into her new environment. In discussing the protagonists’ psychological growth, various
elements of the works must be considered: characterization of the protagonists, the
protagonists’ relationships to other non-doll characters, the portrayal and function of the
dolls, and the meaning of secret spaces in the two works.

With these connections in mind, I will examine each work in the quartet I have
chosen, beginning with Miss Happiness and Miss Flower and Lucie Babbidge’s House in
Chapter Four.
"[The dollhouse] is the home, the evoked dream." – Vivien Greene

Both Rumer Godden’s Miss Happiness and Miss Flower and Sylvia Cassedy’s Lucie Babbidge’s House demonstrate the interplay between the dollhouse as secret space and dolls as catalysts for psychological growth in the protagonists. Nona Fell and Lucie Babbidge, the orphan girl protagonists in each work (respectively), could not be more different from each other. While the generally well-adjusted Nona needs help making the transition from life in India to life with a new family in England, the emotionally crippled Lucie Babbidge’s problems appear much more permanent. The dolls, too, are portrayed differently in the two works. Whereas The Doll Who Came Alive and Behind the Attic Wall, to be discussed in Chapter Five, feature personified dolls, in Godden’s work and especially in Lucie Babbidge’s House the dolls do not actively interact with the protagonists. And yet, the dolls still function as essential playthings and companions in the girls’ lives.

In Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Nona’s building of the dollhouse and her playing with two Japanese dolls acts as a temporary, transitional facilitator to help integrate her into the Fell family. Words of encouragement from the dolls, transmitted telepathically to Nona, and Nona’s construction of a dollhouse for them, help her to gain a sense of comfort, self-confidence and, ultimately, integration into her new life and family by the end of the novel. In Lucie Babbidge’s House, however, Lucie’s dolls and dollhouse have become a long-term coping tactic and means of escape from her lonely, seemingly hopeless existence in the orphanage, until events surrounding the dolls and the dollhouse conspire to bring about a psychological awakening in Lucie. Thus, I argue that while Miss Happiness and Miss
Flower represents the orphan/doll/secret space story as a narrative of integration, Lucie Babbidge’s House represents the orphan/doll/secret space story as a narrative of awakening.

As many of the themes in Godden’s novel illuminate those of the much darker and more complex Lucie Babbidge’s House, I will begin with a discussion of Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, published twenty-eight years before Cassedy’s work. Although Godden’s novel takes its title from the two tiny Japanese dolls given to the Fell girls as a gift, Miss Happiness and Miss Flower is Nona’s story. As outlined in Chapter Three, eight year-old Nona Fell has been sent from her lifelong home in India to live with extended family in England. With “her dark hair and eyes,” Nona feels like and is perceived as the Other among her “pink-cheeked, fair-haired cousins” (4). There are “three of them: Anne, who [is] fourteen, slim and tall; Tom, who [is] eleven; and Belinda, who [is] a rough tough little girl of seven” (4). Although Nona’s ethnic background is not specified, the narrator states, “there had been no other English boys and girls in Coimbatore” (5, emphasis mine). Thus, it seems that Nona is of British rather than Indian heritage, but with a different complexion and hair colour than her fair cousins, also of British descent. Her cousins laugh at her clothes, a “stiff red velvet dress, white socks, black strap shoes and silver bangles” and the way she speaks English, in a “sing-song voice” like her Indian nanny, or Ayah (5). Indeed, her visible cultural differences do not help Nona to easily feel part of her new family.

Initially, Nona seems to fit Claudia Mills' definition of a passive, polite orphan, refusing food and invitations to go outside with a “no, thank you” every time. All through Christmas, when she first arrives, Nona is “unhappy” (6). Depressed, withdrawn and tentative, she is afraid to leave the relative safety of the Fell home. She stands by the window, running her silver bangles from India up and down her wrist: “she had had them
since she was a baby and to feel them made her seem closer to Coimbatore” (6). To Nona, everything in England is unfamiliar and frightening. She has “never ridden a bicycle, or roller-skated, or played ping-pong, or rounders, or hide-and-seek, or even card games like Snap or Beggar-my-neighbour” (5). She does not like English food, or the cold of England, and is frightened by the busyness of the streets, “for she had never seen so many buses and cars; vans and bicycles; they went so fast it made her dizzy” (5). As Belinda comments, “‘Nona is a good name for her... All she does is say No, no, no all the time’” (4). Paralysed by her homesickness, Nona does little other than sit in a corner, read or cry.

At least at first, Nona’s daydreams of Coimbatore help her to cope with her homesickness, and in doing so act as a cognitive secret space. But her daydreams of India will not help her to integrate into the Fell household—the dolls and the dollhouse help her to do that. Nona appears to feel safe, at least physically, in the Fell house. As she might be described by Yi-Fu Tuan, Nona perhaps unconsciously recognizes the Fell house “as a focus of value, of nurture and support” (Space 29), even if this house does not feel like a home to her yet. Nona could be aware (perhaps on an unconscious level) that she is in a place where her new family is attempting to make her feel at home and take care of her needs. Nonetheless, she feels despair about her new circumstances. After a time Mrs. Fell, whom Nona calls “Mother,” expresses her concern about the child’s lack of integration into the family and withdrawal from the household activities: “‘You really must try to be happier, Nona. You’re not the only small person to come from far away’” (7). Such a comment from Mrs. Fell, although well-meaning, does little to help Nona, who responds, “‘I’m the only one here’” (7). At this point, it seems that nothing can assuage Nona’s feelings of isolation and Other-ness.
The family’s support alone is not helping Nona to feel a sense of belonging. It seems that Nona requires something else—an external force or catalyst—to help integrate her. She finds that catalyst, literally, in the mail. Shortly after Nona and Mrs. Fell’s conversation, the two Japanese dolls, Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, arrive by post from Great-Aunt Lucy Dickinson in America. They are for the “Misses Fell,” that is, Belinda and Nona, as Anne is now “too big” to play with dolls (11). As their names may suggest, Miss Flower is nervous and “always frightened,” while Miss Happiness is more jovial, relaxed, “more hopeful and more brave” (3). Through their wishing, the dolls make their needs for proper shelter and comfort known. “‘We do want a house of our own,’” they think, “‘We do wish Miss Nona could look after us’” (18). As I discuss later, the sensitive Nona senses the dolls’ deeply felt wishes for culturally-appropriate, comfortable housing.

I will pause here in my analysis to provide a glimpse into Godden’s fascinating portrayal of dolls and their wishes, which are transmitted telepathically to children. Godden offers a fantastical interpretation of the inner lives of dolls present in all of her doll narratives for children, including The Doll’s House, Impunity Jane, The Fairy Doll and Holly and Ivy. Her premise of doll communication as outlined in The Doll’s House suggests that “[dolls], of course, cannot talk [to people]. They can only make wishes that some people feel” (12). As Lynne Rosenthal suggests, Godden’s doll narratives provide “a series of mirrors in which children’s inner conflicts and changing self-images are reflected in miniature in the figures of the dolls” (59). Godden’s carefully devised world of dolls and their wishes perhaps grew out of her love of miniature objects, a fascination evident in all of her works for children. As Godden has expressed, “‘[m]y books for children .... are about small things, dolls’ house size
dolls, pocket dolls, mice” (qtd. in Rosenthal 15). All of these patterns and themes are evident in Miss Happiness and Miss Flower.

Children themselves “have only limited means with which to fulfill their desires, and ‘wishing’ is a very important mode of being for children. The dolls who can only proceed by wishing convey the essence of this childhood experience” (Rustin 87). Writing about Godden’s doll narratives, Margaret and Michael Rustin comment that dolls are available and important to children as representations of aspects of their internal worlds. The passions of the dolls and the children revolve around relationships with home….The subject matter of the stories thus enables them to be intense and moving symbolizations of the emotional preoccupations of children. (85)

For each of the protagonists in the quartet of primary works, the dolls often represent the girls’ deepest wishes and desires, whether that desire is the search for someone to take care of, as it is for Behind the Attic Wall’s Maggie, or as a representation of an ideal family life, as Lucie Babbidge desires.

Nona and the Japanese dolls are united by their mutual wishes for a place to belong, which they fear will not come true. Miss Happiness and Miss Flower fear that their needs will not be met in their new environment: “‘No one will understand us or know what we want. Oh, no one will ever understand us again!’” (3). Like the dolls, Nona knows that “wishes are very powerful things” (9-10). Nona also makes silent wishes: “I wish I could go home…I wish I could see my own father. I wish I could see Ayah” (14). Later, she makes these wishes tangible by writing them on bits of paper and tying them onto a tree outside: “[it] seemed to help her unhappiness to put the wishes on the tree and she went back to write
some more, but she had said all there was to say” (16). The act of materializing her wishes—perhaps unconsciously inspired by the wishes Nona feels from the dolls—is the first step in healing herself.

Feeling the dolls’ wishes for a home, and acting on those wishes, is the second and most important step in Nona’s journey toward integration in the Fell family. Miss Happiness and Miss Flower continue to send their wishes telepathically to Nona. Every day, Miss Flower silently pleads, “‘[b]ut where is our house?’” (24). This need for a house is poignant for Nona, and in her behaviour toward Belinda she shows that she feels the dolls’ wishes. As I discuss later in this chapter, Belinda feels intensely jealous of and resentful of Nona’s presence in the family. In her frustration, Belinda throws the dolls into her European-style dollhouse, “‘a funny kind of house,’” according to Miss Happiness (19). Nona immediately feels their sense of discomfort, perhaps because [she] too had known quite other kinds of houses, and felt so unhappy and strange in England, that she could guess what Miss Happiness and Miss Flower were feeling behind their stiff plaster faces. “I don’t think the doll’s house will do,” said Nona. (20)

As Nona recognizes this, her “discomfort in the Fell household is mirrored by the dolls’ unhappiness in Belinda’s doll’s house” (Rosenthal 63). Nona reacts protectively toward the dolls, arguing with Belinda that the dolls need to kneel rather than sit, and that they need cushions to kneel on. At that moment, the dolls make another strong wish for Japanese-style cushions, and Nona sees in her mind “a heap of bright doll’s-house cushions” (22). This empathetic visualization is one way a child can feel a doll’s wish.
In defending the dolls' needs, Nona becomes their empowered advocate. In doing so, Nona is able to positively focus the energies that she had previously dedicated to moping and crying. And, by advocating for Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Nona also becomes a powerful advocate for herself: she is able to vouch for the dolls' needs because she identifies so strongly with them. That the dolls function in Nona's life as identifiers for Nona, as two other small "people" who have come from far away, is important. The dolls' thoughts on their new life in England are a miniaturized reflection of Nona's feelings and attitudes toward her new life in England. As Miss Flower comments to Miss Happiness, the new country feels "strange and cold" (2). Likewise, in the unfamiliar frost of the English winter, Nona is described by the narrator as "always cold" (4). The dolls are perceived as the Other by the Fell children, as something undesirable and strange, as Nona is: "'What queer little dolls,'" Belinda comments (9). To this, Nona replies, "'[t]hey're not queer. They're Japanese'" (9). The dolls wish for a "little girl who is clever and kind" to feel their wishes and understand their needs, because there "always has been" (3). Nona appears to be the "right one," like Maggie in *Behind the Attic Wall*, the chosen one to align herself physically and psychologically with the dolls.

Nona and the dolls share the same sense of loneliness and confusion. Dolls are not asked if they would like to be shipped off to a new country to live with new people, and "[c]hildren are not asked, either" (Godden, *Miss* 3). As Godden's narrator observes in *The Doll's House*, [it] is an anxious, sometimes a dangerous thing to be a doll. Dolls cannot choose; they can only be chosen; they cannot "do"; they can only be done by; children who do not understand this often do wrong things, and then the dolls are hurt and
abused and lost; and when this happens the dolls cannot speak, nor do anything except be hurt and abused and lost. (13)

The word “children” could easily replace the word “dolls” in this passage, and, even more powerfully, so could the word “orphans.” Orphans like Nona, Lucie, Maggie and Jyd are vulnerable and powerless objects in the hands of caregivers, teachers and other adults on whom they depend for their care, their education, and for the provision of their material needs. Thus, the dolls’ companionship helps alleviate Nona’s feelings of loneliness and powerlessness. Nona keeps the dolls close by her side whenever possible, and, as the narrator observes, “now every day on the playroom window seat three heads could be seen: Nona’s dark one, bent, as she sat cross-legged with one of Mr. Twilfit’s books, and beside her two very small black ones” (35).

Melanie Klein’s theory of projective identification is evident in Nona’s strong identification with Miss Happiness and Miss Flower. While the other members of the family only seem to drive Nona deeper into emotional isolation, the dolls help to alleviate it. She frequently confides in the dolls, as she does when she is afraid to go to the store for wood to make the dollhouse. She expresses her fears of fast bicycles and cars to the dolls, who “[appear] not to hear” (46). Taking their silence as a sign that they would not be afraid of busy streets, Nona responds, “‘Japanese people are horribly brave’” (47), and decides to accompany Tom on his trip to the store. Thus, Nona is able to project her feelings onto the dolls and by doing so, finds not only emotional comfort but also a sense of agency. These are important actions for Nona, which help her to move out of the passive orphan role—she is empowering herself to make small changes toward integration into her new English life.
With this knowledge of the intense and valuable connection that Nona feels with Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, it is also important to examine Nona’s relationships with non-doll characters in the work and how they affect her psychological development and integration into her new family. In addition to her homesickness, Nona has another challenge to contend with: her new adoptive sister Belinda, one year younger than she. Although not an irredeemable bully like those in Cassedy’s novels, Belinda deeply resents Nona’s new presence in the family. She asks Nona: “Why did you have to come? We don’t want you. Why don’t you go home? Why don’t you have a house and a family of your own?” (14). As I have described, Belinda exhibits classic signs of the youngest child feeling anger and frustration with the introduction of a new member of the household, especially a girl so close in age. The rest of the family’s attention to Nona’s needs has detracted from the attention usually given to Belinda, and “Belinda [thinks] everyone [is] spoiling Nona” (45).

Although Belinda presents the greatest challenge to Nona in the Fell family, it is also Belinda who inadvertently encourages Nona to build a doll’s house for the Japanese dolls. After Nona admonishes her for treating the dolls so roughly, Belinda mockingly suggests that Nona “had better make them a whole Japanese house” (22). Despite the wishes of the dolls, Nona is initially unsure how to proceed with the building of the house. She attempts to shape a cardboard box to resemble a Japanese dollhouse, and then tries “to arrange an empty drawer with the wooden box for a bed and some rolled-up handkerchiefs for cushions, but it did not look like anything at all” (24-25). Luckily, two other prominent characters, Tom and Mr. Twilfit, offer support to Nona, and in doing so play an important role in Nona’s integration into her new family.
Unlike Maggie, Lucie, and Jyd, who have virtually no external emotional support to speak of, Nona is surrounded by a family (with the exception of Belinda) that wants her to feel comfortable in her new surroundings. As Rosenthal points out, that “children can help children becomes evident when Nona is empowered by Belinda’s brother, Tom, who tells her ‘You could make a doll’s house,’ and that everything necessary can be learned from books” (63). Tom encourages the building of the Japanese dollhouse, and Tom, despite his occasional grumbling, helps Nona craft the house. Mr. Twilfit, the kindly owner of the local bookshop, lends Nona books to help in the planning of the dollhouse. Tom and Mr. Twilfit seem to understand Nona’s feelings of discomfort and need for purpose in her new home. In both characters, Nona finds her first English friends (34) and, they, like the dolls, offer quiet emotional support for Nona.

Nona puts much care into planning and building the Japanese dollhouse. She pays meticulous attention to cultural and historical details, and wishes to study thoroughly all the available background information from Mr. Twilfit’s books before building to be absolutely correct in all aspects of the dollhouse. All the while, Nona pays strict attention to the cultural needs of the dolls; for example, she has the dolls bow when they meet new people, and kneel instead of sit. As Miss Flower notes to Miss Happiness, “‘She is beginning to understand’” (35). Fully engrossed in the dollhouse, Nona has no time to “stand and look out the window; she [spends] all day over Mr. Twilfit’s books or trotting up the road to see Mr. Twilfit. She [is] learning all she [can] about Japan” (35). Changes are already occurring in Nona: she now wants to leave the refuge of the house to go to the bookshop for research. She is still afraid, but “‘once you start being brave you have to go on,’ [thinks] Nona” (29). Indeed, Nona’s determination and newfound sense of purpose are strong.
In creating a place of solace for the dolls, Nona also creates a secret space for herself. Paradoxically, Nona’s secret space is intensely public: unlike Lucie, who temporarily escapes the harsh reality of her orphanage each day, Nona constructs the dollhouse in full view of everyone else in the household. Because one of the functions of the dollhouse is to act as a transitional space that helps integrate Nona into the family, the dollhouse necessitates this level of connection with the members of the family. As Godden’s narrator observes,

[a] strange thing had happened. Suddenly it was as if everyone in the house were helping to make the Japanese doll’s house. “Everyone except me,” said Belinda. “I won’t help.” Perhaps it was Nona’s reading aloud, or Mr. Twilfit’s interest, or the plan that Tom had drawn from the pictures in the books...or “because of our wishing,” said Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, but all the family seemed to be running backwards and forwards to Nona, asking Nona questions, bringing things to Nona. “Except me,” said Belinda. (43)

Although it does have this socially integrative function, the dollhouse is still Nona’s secret space, as she is far more emotionally and privately connected to its meaning than are the other members of the family. While the other Fells view the building of the dollhouse as an engaging and interesting project, for Nona it serves a more powerful function. In this way, the dollhouse is both a physical space and a cognitive space for Nona.

As a secret space, the dollhouse is a place into which Nona can purposefully focus all her wishes, dreams and hopes. As Antonia Fraser comments, “the devotee of the dolls’ house will certainly argue that the future architect has always from childhood busied himself with building with bricks, and therefore that the urge to construct a dolls’ house is every bit as universal as that to play with a doll” (51). Nona feels a great affection and companionship for
the dolls, but her urge to construct a house for them is even stronger than her urge to play with them. Her time spent in her cognitive space, thinking about the dolls and the dollhouse, gradually empowers her to voice her opinions. For example, when Tom and Nona argue about the traditionally-prescribed niche in the dollhouse, Nona says, "But I told you...It's a most important part of a Japanese room" (49). Nona's insistence prevails, and the niche is added to the dollhouse. The initially passive Nona would never have spoken her opinions so assertively, or at all.

Just as Nona is beginning to experience a growing sense of empowerment, there comes a time when she must put aside her intense focus on the dollhouse. Like the Fell children, she must go to school. Nona is bolstered by a "fresh wish" from the dolls, when they learn that while at school Nona can learn to sew: "Tiny careful stitches!...O honourable Miss Nona, please go to school. Oh, go to school!" And Nona began to think that perhaps school might not be so very dreadful" (54). Mrs. Fell suggests that Nona take Miss Happiness and Miss Flower to school in her head, further emphasizing the importance of the dolls and the dollhouse in the creation of a cognitive space for Nona.

Nona's feelings of alienation emerge again in the classroom, where she finds it difficult to integrate into her peer group. She feels rejected by her classmate Melly, and complains to Mrs. Fell, "she's too pretty and stuck-up to speak to me" (66). Nona's passion for the dolls and the dollhouse is evident in one of her exchanges with Melly. She spots Melly's pencil box, which she feels would make a "perfect little cupboard" for the dollhouse (69). She offers to swap it for her silver bangles, one of her only souvenirs from her life in India. As the narrator comments, "Nona felt an ache in her heart; she had had her bangles
since she was a baby and they reminded her of Coimbatore, but she had the dolls to think of now” (70).

While Nona’s impulsive willingness to give up an object of such sentimental value might be read as a sign of assimilation into her new English life, I interpret Nona’s behaviour here as another sign of her gradual integration and adaptation. In (temporarily) giving up her souvenir of Indian life, Nona demonstrates her intense emotional involvement with the dolls. She still has her precious memories of life in India, but the dolls have entered her mind and heart as a new focus of her attention. Nona’s act of trading her bangles also symbolizes her transition: to engage more fully with her new life, she must be willing to surrender parts of her former life. As it happens, the exchange is not permitted: when the girls’ parents find out, they naturally do not allow such an unequal exchange to take place.

The failed exchange brings Nona and Melly together, and their budding friendship proves to be a sustaining factor in Nona’s growing happiness. When Melly gives Nona a selection of beautiful fabric to create tiny Japanese cushions and quilts, Melly’s involvement in the communal building of the dollhouse is cemented. As the narrator comments,

Nona hardly knew if she was standing on her head or her heels. To go to tea with Melly; to make the quilts and cushions; to have this heap of soft and beautiful stuffs! “What is the matter with Nona?” asked Father, who happened to be looking out of the window as Nona and Belinda came back from school. “She looks as if she were dancing on the pavement.” (76)

This growing friendship with a peer outside the Fell family demonstrates that Nona is moving beyond integration into her new family, and is also beginning to integrate into her new community.
In addition to her friendship with Melly, Nona also gains increasing favour with Belinda. Although Belinda enacts her resentment toward Nona until the very end of the novel, even taking away Miss Flower just before the reveal of the completed dollhouse, she is ultimately able to see the error of her ways and accept Nona as a member of the family. After Belinda returns Miss Flower to the Japanese dollhouse, where she belongs, Nona’s happiness is complete. As the narrator describes, “Nona came running into [Belinda’s] room. She looked a new Nona now with her eyes shining and her hair flying, her cheeks pink. She jumped on Belinda’s bed and in a moment they were hugging one another. ‘I never thought we would do that!’ said Belinda” (99). With the dollhouse complete and Belinda’s resentment towards her now resolved, Nona’s integration into her new family and community is complete.

Erik Erikson’s theory of play as a constructive act is reflected in Nona’s discovery of confidence, self-worth and identity in the Fell family through the building of the dollhouse. Nona needs the dolls and the dollhouse, as they prove to be invaluable transitional objects in a difficult time. By solving in miniature a problem similar to her own—providing a comfortable, culturally-appropriate home for Miss Happiness and Miss Flower to live in—Nona diminishes her own feelings of isolation and Other-ness. In problem-solving through play, Nona has created an emotional and physical sense of home both for herself and for her dolls. Bachelard would be proud: Nona has created for herself what he calls a “bosom of the house” (Bachelard 7). In the sequel Little Plum, which takes place one year after the events in Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Nona has emerged as a fully integrated member of the Fell household.
While Nona finds a happy ending, the title character of Sylvia Cassedy's *Lucie Babbidge's House* is in a far more bleak and desperate situation. Nona's initial emotional withdrawal and depression are temporary, yet the problems of lonely, unloved Lucie appear far more permanent. Thus, while Nona needed help with a more short-term challenge—integrating into a new family—Lucie needs a complete psychological overhaul for her long-term problems of emotional isolation and withdrawal. For Lucie, the secret space of the dollhouse and her make-believe play with the dolls do not serve an integrative purpose; rather, they allow her a temporary escape from her almost unbearable reality. Bullied from all angles by her peers and teacher, Lucie *needs* this space away from other people. As Lois Kuznets explains, Lucie has "maintained this imaginary after-school life while to all outer appearances her 'real' life has come to a standstill" (126). Orphaned at the age of six, five years before the events of the novel take place, Lucie is depicted as a passive victim at school, emotionally and physically trapped in the cold, unloving environment of Norwood Hall, "a place for orphans who were neither this nor that. Nobody ever said orphans anymore" (Cassedy, Lucie 130).

In the classroom and the "real world" of the orphanage, Lucie is painfully withdrawn and isolated. She is the pitied example of her condescending teacher, Miss Pimm:

"What did Lucie fail to do?" Miss Pimm liked to ask the class questions about Lucie. "What did Lucie forget to wear today?" she would sometimes begin, or "What did Lucie do to her face?" as though Lucie were a demonstration on a table. (7)
Lucie rarely speaks in class. Her voice, “when she [speaks]—if she [speaks] at all—[is] a soft kind of whisper, hoarse and fuzzy: what Miss Pimm [calls] a croak” (4). Lucie always sits with her head down—“I don’t know, Miss Pimm” is her usual response (3).

Treated as an invisible outcast by her peers, who refer to her as “Goosey-Loosey,” Lucie is rarely talked to but rather talked about. As one of her classmates remarks to a small group of fellow classmates, “‘She messes up everything...She messes up herself. Look at her. With her hair in those knots and all’” (6). Lucie’s peers bully her incessantly, poke her with sticks, fire all manner of insults at her and push her against walls. Lucie also finds an uncaring bully in Miss Pimm. When Pimm asks the class to make a historical frieze, with each student representing a period in time on a piece of paper, Lucie colours a piece of paper grey to represent the sky “before the stars come out” (144). This grey shade, the reader learns later, is the exact colour of the sky six years previous when Lucie’s parents died in a train crash. As Cassedy’s narrator explains, “[i]t was that gray hour between day and night when the light has left the sky but the dark and the stars have not yet come to take its place” (146). Lucie’s classmate, Jane, is asked to complete Lucie’s picture, adding an astronaut and a moon to the plain greyness. In the classroom, the misunderstood Lucie does not reveal any of the witty, conversational nature that the reader later sees in the dollhouse scenes.

At this point, the reader still believes that although “unengaged and tormented at school, Lucie is happy at home” (Wolf 54). For the first part of the novel, it appears that Lucie returns home after school each afternoon to a loving, caring family. The reader does not become aware that the house is not Lucie’s own house but a dollhouse within a forgotten storeroom until the second part of the novel. The narrator reveals this twist to the reader in one surprising sentence: “[Lucie] slipped her hand into her pocket then, and reaching through
the open wall of the house, very carefully dropped the new family member into its tiny, tiny bed” (77). At once, the psychology of it all becomes clear— Lucie, who never speaks in class, is the voice of these witty, kind, loving and lovely characters. Her happy home life is a fantasy, created by Lucie as an escape from her harsh existence.

Lucie’s life was not always so grim. For the dimly remembered first five years of her life, she led a normal childhood with loving parents. Her faint memories of the events leading up to the train crash that killed her parents are scattered throughout the novel, interspersed with the relentlessly harsh classroom scenes. In one memory of a blissful afternoon at the beach, Lucie’s father helps her write messages in the sand to mermaids. Lucie wants her father to tell the mermaids “that I’m happy, and I want to stay like this forever” (122). These memories appear like beacons of light and love in contrast to Lucie’s current reality and form a cognitive secret space that allow her, at least fleetingly, to escape her Norwood Hall torture.

In her Norwood Hall reality, another bright spot emerges in the form of letters from Lucie’s British pen pal Delia Hornsby Booth, to whom Lucie writes as part of a letter-writing scheme created by Miss Pimm. After her initial letter to Delia, Lucie reads and enjoys but does not respond to any of Delia’s letters, which Lucie receives on a regular basis. Much mystery surrounds these notes, especially when the events in Lucie’s dollhouse begin to affect the events in Delia’s real home in England. I will discuss these events later in this chapter.

With Delia and her letters in mind, I will discuss Lucie’s behaviour in her secret space, and how her true nature is gradually revealed in the dollhouse scenes. To cope in the classroom, over time Lucie has raised a defence of muteness; numbed to the insults of her
peers and teachers, she has fashioned herself into a passive (although not exactly polite) orphan to get through everyday life. She is, for example, far more intelligent than she appears in class: in the secret space she can recite all eleven verses of the poem “Come into the garden, Maud,” but in class she acts as if she forgot (97). In her secret space, she is free to be her true self.

Lucie’s construction of her alternate reality is complex and highly imaginative. The reader learns that “[e]very afternoon, when the clock said three and classes were done, [Lucie] took a sudden quick turn down a dark hidden stair and locked herself inside a room where no one went….no one even knew that it was there” (81). She found the dolls, who had “been asleep under the stairs for so long” (84), and brought them to life. Until it is invaded later in the novel, this secret space of solace belongs to Lucie and Lucie alone.

The witty, loving and often quirky family scenes at Lucie’s house are clearly inspired by The Adventures of the Pendletons, a book about “a family that lived in England long ago” (31), which Miss Pimm reads aloud to the class each day. In creating these scenes in her secret space, Lucie becomes a storyteller rather than a passive listener, constructing an ideal narrative of her life. With only the faint memories of the love of her parents to build on, Lucie is able to create a remarkably nurturing existence in the dollhouse. In addition to the scenes inspired by the Pendletons, she re-enacts events from her past with the dolls, such as an afternoon at the beach with her parents. As Lucie the doll explains to her doll mother and father, “‘Well, Mumma is going to be the mermaid queen who lives in the exact middle of the ocean, and you are going to be the mermaid king who lives there, too’” (138). Kitti Carriker likens this act to the creation of a double, a motif found in adult literature in which a dollmaker creates a doll in his own likeness, like Gepetto’s creation of Pinocchio. Through
the china doll version of herself and the dollhouse itself, the real Lucie is able to enact her unconscious and conscious desires, as Nona does with the Japanese dollhouse.

Lucie has identified a miniature likeness of herself, a “china Lucie,” who is “a great many wonderful things all at once: beautiful and kind and sensible and smart. Gifted, in fact” (115). The china Lucie is an embodiment of her own unconscious desires to be liked and loved: “‘Say you like me, Greenheart... Say you think I’m nice,’” she says to her pet bird in the dollhouse (171). In deciding on china Lucie’s bedroom, the real Lucie says in her head, “‘[t]his room will be for you.... because it’s going to be so beautiful. Beautiful like you’” (86). When in reality Lucie is never chosen to be on a sports team, the china Lucie is the star athlete of the playground. As the china Lucie says to her mother, “[t]here were relay races, and I got picked first to be on a team. I’m the fastest runner in my class, and hopper, too” (180). Thus, the flesh-and-blood Lucie can take on every positive quality she has ever wanted through the miniature version of herself.

Lucie develops personalities for her doll characters which represent various aspects of her own complex personality, from comedian to caregiver: “The real Lucie had decided from the beginning that Emmett would be the silly one. Mumma would be the beautiful one, and the kind one, too. Dada would be the funny one” (115). The dolls’ personalities can also represent figures from Lucie’s life, as in the case of Olive, who “would be like whoever Lucie’s teacher was, which meant she wouldn’t change much from year to year” (115). In her interaction and communication with the dolls, Lucie acts as a puppeteer. As the narrator explains, “The dolls never spoke to the real Lucie, not ever at all, nor she to them. They addressed only each other, inside her head” (96). When she plays with the dolls, a separate
Lucie does not exist—in her mind, according to my interpretation, the china Lucie and the real Lucie are one and the same.

The storage room and the dollhouse represent a physical secret space for Lucie. She has clearly-drawn boundaries for her secret space, and has created this alternate reality completely within its confines. Her fantasy world is limited to place: she does not remove the dolls from the dollhouse, nor is she shown playing at any similar type of game in the classroom. She has endowed the dollhouse room with tremendous emotional value in the sense that Tuan outlines: one’s definition of “place” as a location endowed with emotional value (Topophilia 6). For Lucie, her fantasy world of the dolls and the dollhouse “is not a lesser world, nor a paler place, nor a poor substitute. Rather, it is a rich world, preferable by far to the bleakness of home, schoolroom, and neighbourhood” (McDonnell 103).

Lucie’s play with the dollhouse represents a deeply felt desire to be part of a loving family. In her depiction of the secret dollhouse room, Cassedy reveals the “complex relationship between isolation, however painful, and creativity— isolation breeding creativity—which in turn helps to alleviate or fill the void of isolation” (McDonnell 106). Isolation is a necessity in Lucie’s life, as this time spent alone affords her the space to play. As D.W. Winnicott describes in Playing and Reality, the child’s “capacity to play imaginatively is linked with [her] ability to be in touch with unconscious feelings” (qtd. in Rustin 88). Unfortunately, unlike Nona, Lucie’s desire, conscious or unconscious, may never be fulfilled. In true Bachelardian fashion, Lucie uses the storage room as “felicitous space” in which to daydream and remember a time when she was surrounded by loving parents. Play and secret space are a necessity for Lucie—without them, “the backdrop of pain is so intense that, were it not for the reprieve of inner worlds, neither [character] nor readers could endure
it” (McDonnell 105). Fortunately, by the end of the novel, as I will discuss later in this chapter, Lucie’s awakening enables her to rise above this real-life “backdrop of pain.”

By empowering herself through dollhouse play, Lucie has unintentionally gained a mysterious power: the ability to affect God-like change in Delia and her family’s life, as Delia reveals in her unanswered letters to Lucie. To test her powers, Lucie enacts an uncharacteristic moment of violence on the Olive doll: “Then she did something she had never done before. Grasping Olive’s pipe cleaner arm between her fingers, she gave it a sudden, sharp twist, bending it out of shape and leaving it to dangle like a broken wing. ‘Ow!’ she shrieked in her head for Olive” (140). In Delia’s next letter, Francy, the Booth family’s housekeeper and the living double of Olive, has “caught her arm in a fridge door” (150). When Lucie bumps the dollhouse in another scene, her accidental rocking of the structure causes an earthquake in Delia’s part of the world (158).

Like Maggie’s in Behind the Attic Wall, there comes a time when Lucie’s carefully-constructed secret space is invaded and shattered by outsiders. An unidentified group of Lucie’s classmates—Cassedy brilliantly portrays their jumbled-up chatter in short, unattributed lines of dialogue—is bold enough to enter the orphanage’s storeroom to discover Lucie’s dollhouse. To them, the dollhouse is filled with old toys and junk, such as the reinforcements and thumbtacks, which Lucie collected to represent a doll-sized game of ringtoss (190). After messing about with the dolls, Lucie’s classmates take them and run out of the storeroom.

Separated from her lifeline, her idyllic universe, Lucie falls gravely ill. With her secret space ruined, she now has only her unforgiving reality to contend with: no familial love in her life, a condescending teacher, bullying classmates and a faraway pen pal in
England whose letters Lucie never answers. The teacher and the school nurse can’t understand how someone can be “so healthy one day and so ill the next” (194).
Without her coping strategy of the dolls and the dollhouse, Lucie fades into a helpless shadow of a girl and lies in the nurse’s sickroom for three weeks.

During her convalescence, Lucie receives a letter from Delia. While Lucie’s play in the dollhouse had previously meant that simple events were then mirrored in the Booth household, the impact has now reached drastic proportions. The stealing of Lucie’s dolls by her classmates has equaled, on the other side of the Atlantic, the kidnapping of the entire Booth family. In other words, Lucie’s greatest advantage, her secret space, has now become a harrowing disadvantage in another’s life. Compelled to save the Booths, Lucie locates the dolls in her classmate Rose Beth’s desk, fixes them and returns them to the dollhouse. Then, once everything has been set to rights, Lucie leaves her world of the dollhouse forever. She says “good-bye” four times, twice in her head and twice out loud (she rarely speaks aloud in her secret space), and hangs her sweater over the dollhouse in a moment of closure (233).

Lucie’s relinquishment of her dolls and her secret space demonstrates her awakening, as well as her growing empathy. The act of giving up a space that she has visited daily for two years, a space which represents happiness and a “normal” life, is a brave move for Lucie. As transitional objects, the dollhouse and dolls have played out their roles in her life. The surrender of the secret space brings memory of the real loss she evades and then recreates in playing that the dollhouse is her home. Similarly, the recovery of the dolls, simulating her wish to recover her family, allows her at least to recover herself—her power to survive and to affect the world....She has her love for [her family] and her memory of
their love forever, but their actual love for her is always subject to loss. She must take care of herself and her memories, as she does when she steals the dolls back and writes her first letter to Delia and speaks out to her teacher. (Wolf 54)

Lucie knows that her actions have negatively affected another’s life, and she cannot allow that to continue, despite the comfort the space has come to provide her with. Although she has never before responded to Delia’s letters, Lucie decides to explain “[in] a letter” (232) all of the events in the past weeks, such as why Delia’s life has been upset by so many mysterious circumstances. While she was previously so inward-looking and isolated, Lucie has begun to reach beyond herself, both physically and emotionally.

Once her psychological awakening has occurred, Lucie’s changes begin to emerge in her public life. When she returns to class following her illness she feels like an intruder, “like an accidental spill of paint, on a landscape where she no longer belong[s]” (197). In the novel’s final chapter, entitled “The Second Miracle,” Lucie begins to display her tremendous mental and emotional changes. When Miss Pimm calls on Lucie in class at the very end of the novel, Lucie responds in a way that shocks her teacher and classmates:

“Look at me when you speak.”

“Yes, Miss Pimm.”

“And pick your head up.”

For a long, long moment, Lucie didn’t answer or even move. Then, suddenly, she stood up straight and tall and, with her eyes on Miss Pimm, spoke in a voice both strong and clear. “How can I, Miss Pimm?” she said, at last saying aloud what had before been spoken only in her head. “How can I, when it never fell off in the first
place?" and Rose Beth, Daisy, and Anna, from different corners of the room, stopped what they were doing and looked up at her in surprise. (243)

As Miss Pimm has said earlier in botany class, speaking of the miracle of plant growth, bean seeds are "magic because they [can] be transformed" (4). This, as Miss Pimm further explains, is the miracle of life, and, as it turns out, the miracle of Lucie's transformation.

As Kuznets points out, on this symbolic closing note, the reader "is clearly supposed to pay attention and connect this botanical miracle with Lucie's psychic rebirth, which has come about in part through the problem solving that the dollhouse life provide[s]" (128). Her newfound ability to employ her wit and intelligence in the classroom, which she has displayed so strongly in her secret space, thereby affords her a brighter future with better coping mechanisms to rise above the grey, unforgiving world of Norwood Hall. Will she find a loving home, as do Maggie and Nona, or is Lucie doomed to Norwood Hall until adulthood? Certainly, of the other protagonists in the primary works, Lucie's situation remains the most grim. Armed with her new tools of assertiveness and empowerment, though, Lucie may find a more powerful position within the hierarchy of the orphanage: as an active participant rather than a passive sufferer.

As Rosenthal writes, "Godden seems to have a strong conviction that the universe and the child's imagination and willpower can indeed provide the wherewithal, the resources, for more than mere survival; they can provide for the integration of a strong self" (117). This is true for both Nona's and Lucie's situations. With Nona's use of the dollhouse as an integrative space, and Lucie's use of the dollhouse as a space for psychological awakening to occur, both girls have experienced the connections between the dolls and secret spaces as powerful forces in their lives. While they both begin as passive orphans, both girls have
moved into the role of assertive orphan. Although for Jyd and Maggie it is their relationships with their dolls that transform them, with their secret spaces as facilitators of these relationships, it can be argued that for Nona and Lucie the dollhouses are even more significant than the dolls in the girls’ psychological growth. With these connections in mind, I will now turn my attention to The Doll Who Came Alive and Behind the Attic Wall in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE DOLL WHO CAME ALIVE AND BEHIND THE ATTIC WALL: NARRATIVES OF TRANSCENDENCE AND OPENING

""'It is children who give us life,'" said the wax doll." – Rumer Godden, The Doll’s House

Sylvia Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall and Enys Tregarthen’s The Doll Who Came Alive are radically different novels in tone, characterization and historical context. Psychologically complex and intricately woven, Behind the Attic Wall is a masterfully written story of an orphan girl so rejected by the world around her that she has adopted coping strategies of hostility and rebellion in order to survive. The Doll Who Came Alive, written almost one hundred years prior to Cassedy’s work, is a simple tale in comparison. While very different from each other, both works feature a deeply felt desire on the part of their protagonists to be guardians—in essence, to love and care for another. Out of this desire comes a corresponding desire on the part of the protagonists to be loved in return. Both girls discover and experience their need for love differently. Jyd in The Doll Who Came Alive has a tremendous amount of love to give, so much so that she is able to bring a doll to life because of her intense and unrelenting affection for it, while Maggie in Behind the Attic Wall discovers a capacity for love through her friendship with mysteriously animated china dolls in a hidden attic room.

In both works, the presence and action of protagonists Jyd and Maggie are required to animate the dolls, so that they effectively come alive and interact with the children. Because

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8 At first glance, The Doll Who Came Alive seems to be the odd book out when compared with the other three primary works. It is a longer illustrated narrative, rather than a novel, and it was written in the late-nineteenth century (but not published until the mid-twentieth century), whereas the other works were written and published in the mid- to late-twentieth century. While the other works feature orphan girl protagonists who learn to integrate into their societies by the end of their respective novels, Tregarthen’s work features a heroine who leaves the real world entirely to live in the Small People’s country. The Doll Who Came Alive thus serves as a helpful contrast to the other works, and enriches my overall argument as a result.
they function independently, the dolls have an even more powerful role in the girls' lives. To love and to be loved is a reciprocal experience; thus, personification of the dolls is required for the girls to participate in what they feel is a fully loving relationship. I argue that the doll (or dolls) and secret spaces function in both works to create an atmosphere of mutual caring, which is what both girls so desperately need. The ultimate effects of these connections are also very different in both works: Jyd eventually transcends her harsh reality to live an enchanted life in the world of Small Folk, while Maggie experiences a psychological transformation that allows her to feel love and be adopted into a caring family. While The Doll Who Came Alive represents the orphan/doll/secret space story as a narrative of transcendence, Behind the Attic Wall represents the orphan/doll/secret space story as a narrative of psychological opening.

To inform aspects of my discussion of Behind the Attic Wall, I will begin with a close look at The Doll Who Came Alive. As I noted in Chapter Two, few critical writings exist to guide an examination of Tregarthen's work. Thus, my analysis of the work represents, to the best of my knowledge, the only extended examination of the work currently in existence. The language and style of The Doll Who Came Alive may seem dated to today's readers. Nonetheless, I believe that the book holds a unique position in the larger world of doll and orphan narratives, and must be kept alive. Although not a scholarly source, Jane Bedinger, a reader/reviewer on Amazon.com,\(^9\) agrees. She writes that The Doll Who Came Alive represents an authentic voice from an age all gone, a hard world but filled with pixies and white magic, a period that built Narnia and Middle Earth and now Harry Potter, a

\(^9\) Although out-of-print, the work is available through used booksellers on Amazon.com.
world view that neo-Puritans have never allowed to flourish in the United States, but one that children continue to love to life [sic]. A very old story, not sweet but tender and good—little girls will love it. It's been treasured by four generations of women or more and shouldn't be lost. (n. pag.)

Indeed, one of my reasons for including Tregarthen’s work in my discussion is to affirm its place in the canon of children’s literature. The Doll Who Came Alive is one of the first stories for children in which a toy is loved so much by a child that it comes to life, preceding well-known twentieth-century works such as Margery Williams’ The Velveteen Rabbit (although it is unknown whether Tregarthen’s book influenced later works with the same theme).

With its importance asserted, I will now move on to a closer look at The Doll Who Came Alive. As I describe in Chapter Three, little Jyd Trewerry lives in a serious state of neglect. Of all the orphan girls discussed in my thesis, Jyd is in the most dire situation in that neither her physical nor her emotional needs are being met. Indeed, Jyd’s reality—late nineteenth-century rural England—stands in stark contrast to Lucie and Maggie’s late twentieth-century world of Norwood Hall and Adelphi Hills Academy, and especially to Nona’s life in the Fell household. As I will discuss, Jyd’s escape to the Small People’s country at the end of the narrative seems a fitting escape from this sad existence.

Despite her hardships, Jyd is sweet and shy. She is not totally alone: at several points the narrator refers to the other village children that Jyd plays with (56), but for the most part Jyd has been emotionally abandoned. From early on, the reader sees Jyd suffering from serious neglect, but also learns of her tremendous need for love, for she is “starving for want of someone to love her and something to love” (11). Jyd at last has a proper focus for her
abounding love when she is given "a very superior Dutch doll" by a visiting sailor, a "doll with bright cheeks, black hair and blue eyes" (13). Like the Japanese dolls in Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Jyd’s doll is the Other, brought in a box from another land. She too is essentially an orphan and in need of care and a home. When the sailor asks what Jyd will do with the doll if he gives it to her, Jyd responds, "I would love her and love her until she was alivelike me" (12). The doll is hers and hers alone, and it is clear that, even before the doll is alive, Jyd is beginning to transcend her reality through her newfound focus on the doll: "What the Dutch doll was to little Jyd only Jyd herself could have said. She lived for it, as mothers live for their children. She talked to it, sang to it, and loved it all the day long. She held it close to her soft body all the night through" (14). Thus, even before the doll comes alive like a real child, its primary function is to provide a focus for Jyd’s love.

Through her affection for the doll, Jyd finds a level of emotional comfort: she “no longer [looks] forlorn for she [has] her doll” (15). Although it is a full year before the doll’s metamorphosis from inanimate to animate takes place, an eternity for a child, Jyd’s belief is steadfast. As the narrator states, “Jyd never once doubted but that [the doll] would be alive like her own self one day” (15). When the sailor returns one year later, he observes that the doll is not yet alive. Jyd confidently responds, “[s]he will be alive soon. I am hoping she will be alive before Christmas in time to sing ‘Nowell, Nowell, Nowell’ as the Small People do down in the bals [sic]” (15).

When the doll does at last come to life, the animation is treated matter-of-factly: “[o]ne bright morning, when the sky above the court was a radiant blue and the sparrows were hopping cheerfully about in the gutter, the doll—who was lying back in Jyd’s arms—blinked its eyes and smiled. Then Jyd knew it was alive like herself” (17). In her initial
moments with the doll, Jyd is delighted to discover that Jane can “talk proper” (19), can “walk beautifully” (24) and “run up and down the room” (25). Jane, as the doll later names herself, is portrayed as a small child that Jyd must guide and mentor. As Jane says to Jyd, “I was a poor lifeless thing before I came to you, and I have everything to learn. You will teach me things, won’t you?” (22). The reader is to accept that the doll is alive, and not merely a figment of Jyd’s imagination, and Jane is seen alive by many adults in Jyd’s village.

Once Jane is alive, her function takes on even more importance: Jyd can at last have love returned to her. While Jyd is able to shower kisses on the doll, at this point she is also able to receive kisses from it. Jyd’s emotional contentment is evident when she explains to Jane why she often used to cry “bitter”:

‘Cause my stepmother didn’t love me an’ I wanted something to love, an’ cause I was hungry an’ cold, besides.’

The note of sadness in Jyd’s voice touched the doll who bent over Jyd’s hand and kissed it. ‘You won’t cry any more now, will you?’ she asked tenderly.

‘No, indeed I won’t,’ said Jyd, ‘for there’s nothing to cry for now. I’ve got a dear little dollie to love me and play with me.’ (33-34)

Before and after the doll comes to life, the relationship is established as a mother-child dynamic. Jyd experiences the doll as an extension of herself, and as hers; the doll is described throughout the work as Jyd’s “daughter” and in the possessive, as “her doll” (emphasis mine). Like a child, the doll grows easily restless and “exceedingly bored” (33), but when Jyd tells her stories of piskies, she listens with rapt attention. Some of Jyd’s comments to the doll resemble what a mother might say to her child, or statements she has overheard parents saying to their children, such as “if you’re good…” (37); Although Jyd perhaps never had a
loving parental figure in her life, she is remarkably able to act as a caring mentor to her doll. Even though D.W. Winnicott argues that “good enough” mothering is required for the best sort of play, Jyd loves and cares for her doll-child just as well, or even better than, a child who knows or remembers the love of a parent (Winnicott 54).

Since Jyd’s emotional life appears to focus on giving and receiving love, I have wondered if she would have responded as readily to a new, loving caregiver as she does to the Dutch doll. While the orphan girls in the other primary works, particularly Lucie and Maggie, are extremely suspicious of other people, Jyd appears open and trusting of the world around her. Nonetheless, having a doll as the first focus of her love is still emotionally safer for Jyd than trying to love, for example, a new caregiver (of which there are none). Jyd’s proud and loving guardianship over Jane represents an important period in her young life—she has not, in her recent memory, owned any toys or had any close friends, and Jane is both. She lovingly refers to Jane as “my own dear little dollie” (46). Without Jane, Jyd would never ultimately make her way to the “Small People’s country,” also referred to in the text as fairyland (64). Thus, Jyd’s relationship with Jane is an integral part of Jyd’s ultimate transcendent of her real-life existence.

Through her active imagination and elaborate games of make-believe play, Jyd has created a “felicitous space” similar to Lucie Babbidge’s play with the dollhouse—a cognitive secret space through play that allows her to escape her harsh reality. Jyd has learned how to make the ordinary (or less than ordinary) into something extraordinary. For example, while her real dinner is “a small red herring, already cooked, and a stale piece of bread,” Jyd’s imagination can turn these meager offerings into “pig-trotter pie” (29-30). Later, Jyd tells Jane, “‘tis tea time ... and I must get our tea. I mustn’t let you starve! I have only bread in the
cupboard and no butter, but we’ll pretend ‘tis jam tart and cream if you like—I like jam tart an’ cream” (31). And, when circumstances become really difficult, there is always “Footman’s horse,” which, as Jyd explains, “is a dear old horse on which children ride.... He goes as fast or as slow just as his riders wish. He’ll take us as far as we want to go, an’ we shall ride an’ ride until we have seen all Cornwall’” (37).

Jyd is eager to introduce Jane to the joys of play, with games such as Mop an’ Heedy, Blind Man’s Buff [sic], Here Comes Poor Nancy, and especially Pretend: “[w]e’ll play those games together an’ have fine times when my stepmother is out, which is nearly always” (19). Games of pretend are frequent in The Doll Who Came Alive, and of great importance to Jyd. Likewise, Jane becomes willingly ensconced in Jyd’s world of pretend. As Jyd describes to Jane, her “eyes sparkling,” “I like to pretend that I am somebody very grand....I like to be my Lady High Somebody’” (21). While Jyd previously played these games alone as a way of coping with her reality, she now has a welcome partner in her play:

When dinner was over, plates and hands washed and faces too, Jyd showed the doll all the fascinating games of which she had told her. The child was a fine teacher and the doll quick to learn and soon they were playing the games with great zest. Mop and Heedy was the doll’s favorite because it was so easy for her to hide herself and so difficult for Jyd to find her. (30)

Through their play, Jyd and Jane transform the home into a place of joy. As the narrator describes it, the “living room of that mean little house was a gay place that afternoon for it rang with the merry voices of Jyd Trewerry and Jane, the Dutch doll, and the hours flew by so quickly that it was five o’clock before they knew it” (30). In this way, Jyd and Jane transform an otherwise cold and unloving place—that is, Jyd’s stepmother’s house—into a
secret physical space for themselves. If she is on a quest for a loving home, Jyd is also helping to create one of her own through her love for her doll. While the secret space created in Jyd’s stepmother’s home functions effectively as a temporary haven for Jyd and her doll, the pair does not find a true secret space of permanent escape until they go to live in the Small People’s country.

A sense of magic and fantasy pervades The Doll Who Came Alive, and this reverence for and belief in magic is important to the rest of the events in the narrative. Jyd herself has a tremendous respect for the “Small People,” whom she knows of primarily through stories told to her by the old grannie-woman (33). The other characters in Jyd’s village, too, appear to have a deep-rooted understanding of and respect for magic and the Small Folk. When Jyd announces to the old grannie-woman and to Miss Orange that her doll has come to life, they accept the information without question. Only those who understand the world of magic and fantasy accept the doll; that is, everyone except for Jyd’s cruel stepmother, who threatens to throw the doll into the fire. Just as a mother would fiercely defend her child, Jyd cries, “[s]he is my child and shan’t be burnt” (48). When the “felicitous space” that Jyd and Jane have built up in the house has been ruined by the stepmother’s intrusion, it is time for Jyd and her doll to make their escape.

Jyd and Jane’s escape from the stepmother’s house is an important step in beginning to transcend their harsh existence. The pair runs “on Footman’s horse” from Jyd’s stepmother until they reach “a beautiful wood near a great down” (49). When Jane asks if “this beautiful place” is Cornwall, Jyd responds, “[w]e shall live here all our days....We’ll make a little cubby house somewhere an’ live on fried friglets and buttered candlesticks, or feed on berries like the dicky birds” (50). Clearly, Jyd’s desire for a secret space with her doll, away from
adult rule, is strong. Away from the village, Jyd and her doll find themselves in a fantastical world. When Jyd teaches Jane a singing game, “Here Come Three Knights A-Riding,” three “dinky men in silver armour” come riding through the wood on tiny horses (52-53). These “fairy knights” are a manifestation of Jyd’s imagination come to life: she has played these games for years, and she is seeing them come to life (53). While some may read this scene and the rest of the narrative as a confusion of reality and fantasy on the part of Jyd, a girl with an already elaborate inner life, I read these scenes differently. The world of The Doll Who Came Alive is one of magic, and the Small People’s country is not merely a figment of her imagination. The belief in fairy lore and fairy land is so strong in Cornwall, so truly embraced by Jyd and everyone in her village, that I read Tregarthen’s depiction of the Small People’s country as a place to which Jyd can actually escape.

To understand Tregarthen’s use of the piskies and the Small People’s country, it is helpful to describe a little of Cornish folklore. In The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries, author W.Y. Evans Wentz quotes Henry Jenner, a nineteenth-century Cornish linguist: “Yet certain it is that not only in Cornwall and other Celtic lands, but throughout most of the world, a belief in fairies exists or has existed, and so widespread a belief must have reason for it, though not necessarily a good one” (163). The piskies are fairies, for “the only true Cornish fairy is the Pisky” (Wentz 165). Quoting Cornish historian Susan E. Gay, Wentz illustrates the function and meaning of the Land of the Small Folk: “The pixies’ and fairies are little beings in the human form existing on the ‘astral plane,’ who may be in the process of evolution....The astral plane is not known to us now because our psychic ability has faded out by non-use” (171). Jyd believes unquestioningly in magic and fantasy, and, as the old
grannie-woman comments to her, "[p]erhaps you are one of the rare folk who see beauty in
everything" (Tregarthen 68).

As do Nona, Lucie and Maggie, Jyd experiences a moment of loss: in the fantastical
land, the fairy knights take Jyd’s doll away from her before she realizes it. Devastated, Jyd
can no longer feel the “beauty of the sky, sea and down for the loss of her doll filled her heart
with woe and blinded her eyes with tears” (60). She falls asleep for a long, undefined period
of time until the blackberries ripen, and encounters a “dinky woman with a queer smile
which made Jyd think of her lost doll” (61). The small witch explains to Jyd that her doll has
been taken to see the King and Queen of the Small People’s country, because “‘a doll has
never been loved into life before within the memory of the oldest person in the Small
People’s world, and so everyone in fairyland wanted to see her’” (64). Because of Jyd’s love,
Jane has become the toast of fairyland.

Jyd proves her unrelenting love for her doll by offering to kiss the ugly yet kind
witch, despite being warned of the harm that may come to her; and she is rewarded by the re-
appearance of her doll, who was bewitched to look like the tiny woman. Jyd’s fear of
abandonment is evident when Jane regales her with stories of life in fairyland: her heart feels
“like a stone within her as she knew her little doll would never want to give up such lovely
joys to live with her again” (72-73). Jane, however, would not be happy without Jyd, and the
Small People’s King and Queen want both Jyd and Jane to live in “their country” (73). With
almost no hesitation, Jyd and Jane happily escape through the doorway that leads to the
Small People’s country.

While the orphan girls in Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Lucie Babidge’s House
and Behind the Attic Wall find ways to integrate into the real world, The Doll Who Came
Alive is about transcending reality. For Jyd, the Small People’s country represents the ultimate felicitous secret space: a world of fantasy that Jyd (like many children) has always dreamed of, apart from the harsh realities of the external world. The Small People’s country represents freedom from the unfortunate truths of Jyd’s society, and I read her escape from reality as her only acceptable method of survival. Although the text does not specify the time period in which The Doll Who Came Alive takes place, it is reasonable to assume (absent evidence to the contrary) that the story takes place in the same period in which Tregarthen wrote the narrative: the late nineteenth century. As Laura Peters, author of Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire (2000) comments, British orphans in Jyd’s time were often “neglected, malnourished and, at best, poorly educated” in the hands of their so-called caregivers (14). Too often, being an orphan in Jyd’s time was a sentence to starvation, sickness and premature death. This is made especially poignant by Jyd’s tenuous situation with her stepmother, who does not want to take care of her.

Jyd’s doll and her secret space function to provide her with a focus for her love and as a means for escape, but does Jyd also experience some degree of psychological transformation, as do the other orphan girls? In her emotional makeup, Jyd changes the least of the four protagonists. While it is fascinating to unravel Maggie’s thoughts and intricacies, for example, the characterization of Jyd is far more straightforward. This is not to say that Jyd does not experience some level of emotional development as a result of her relationship with Jane. Lois Kuznets argues that Jyd is “transformed by her experience in caring for [the] Dutch doll that she loves ‘into life.’ In turn, the doll—for mutuality appears in this relationship—rescues Jyd from her unhappy familial situation” (110). Thus, while the girls in the other primary works find happy, or at least hopeful, endings through improved
circumstances in their real worlds, Jyd finds a different type of happy ending entirely by escaping her real world.

Having discussed The Doll Who Came Alive as a narrative of transcendence, I now move to my analysis of Behind the Attic Wall as a narrative of psychological opening. I will begin by examining the inner life of protagonist and bitter orphan, Margaret Ann Turner (or Maggie). The reader learns in short order that Maggie has developed coping strategies of hostility, aggression and rebellion to deal with a world that has rejected her. Like Mary Lennox in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden, Maggie is an “untouchable” (Kimball 567). Melanie Kimball describes Mary Lennox as one who “develops into a tyrant, loved by no one, isolated physically and psychically because she is so unpleasant” (567). This description aptly describes Maggie, who has also developed a force field of bad behaviour to cope with her reality as an “untouchable.” Dubbed “impossible to handle by her caregivers,” Maggie is also “fresh, nasty, mean, disobedient, willful, rebellious, thieving—all those things she had been called by people who had to look after her” (65). Perhaps because she has been treated unkindly at best and harshly at worst, Maggie has developed an image of herself as ugly and unwanted. “[U]gly,” she thinks as she gazes at her reflection, “ugly, ugly, ugly” (42).

As Ellen Fader comments in a School Library Journal review, Maggie is “at war with her world and winning, by her score; looking for the worst and finding it. With cunning she can steal, lie, vanquish adults with her stare, scornfully dispose of classmates before they can hurt her” (156). Maggie spits on her classmates from the vantage point of a fire escape, and realizes for the “first time ever that she had managed to skip entirely the brief period when everyone would try to be nice” (Cassedy, Behind 90). Her aunts bring a parade of potential
friends to visit her in the stark sitting room, and Maggie either chooses to ignore or becomes violent with them; for example, she stuffs a balled-up photo from a National Geographic into one visitor’s mouth. Maggie has learned to deal with other people by rejecting them before they reject her, and she has learned that the way to find emotional refuge is by being alone.

Maggie has built walls around herself to shut out the world; these emotional barriers manifest themselves in her solitary play. At Adelphi Hills, Maggie creates little rooms on the lawn, her own boundaries within a house that allows her no freedom and gives her no love: as the narrator observes, “she [sits] among the little rooms on the grass, and move[s] one stick back and forth like a door, so she [can] walk her fingers from one room to the next and back again: kitchen to dining room to kitchen. In and out” (115). While Jyd actively seeks out company to alleviate her loneliness, Maggie appears to crave and seek out solitude. As the narrator explains,

walking about among the halls and grounds of her old schools, she had [often] pretended that the buildings had been emptied of everyone but herself, and she had suddenly become their sole inhabitant .... no one else would be there, and she would aim basketballs at the hoop and wind about among the trees totally, totally alone, her whole life through. (71)

In her most recent school, the reader is told, Maggie had tried to build a wall of flowers, taken from all the school’s flower beds, and “when she was all finished she would stand behind it, behind the wall of flowers, and let no one in” (12). Clearly, forging healthy relationships with others, even with the sympathetic Uncle Morris, is both impossible and undesirable for Maggie. Psychologically, she is completely closed off. And yet, like Jyd’s desire to be a caretaker, Maggie’s similar desire care taker is revealed through her private
play. Despite her deep desire to care for another, Maggie does not allow herself to be so vulnerable as to project the desire onto another person. Although she hotly claims to her aunts that she does not play with “anything,” Maggie has created characters, other worlds and a vivid inner life for herself.

A revelatory glimpse into the caretaking aspect of Maggie’s personality comes in the scenes featuring the Backwoods Girls. The Girls are the main characters in Maggie’s game Caretaker, “a game she had made up long ago, and [plays] almost every day” (44). The Backwoods Girls are all “newly arrived from some unknown backwoods, and they [know] nothing, nothing at all, of the ordinary things surrounding Maggie’s life—of toothbrushes, even, or dresser drawers, and it [is] Maggie’s job to explain things to them” (44). As described in an unsigned review in Reading Teacher entitled “First in Excellence,” others have “evicted Maggie from their reality so often that she has created a reality of her own—the invisible Backwoods Girls, who are stupider than Maggie thinks herself to be” (777).

In reaction to a world that has made her feel inferior, Maggie can feel superior when she summons the Backwoods Girls. Thus, these “five imaginary girls offer Maggie the only opportunity she has to be the superior one, the authoritative voice—in speaking to the Backwoods Girls, Maggie responds with the same sort of condescending, insulting language that has been directed at her much of her life: ‘No, dummies. That’s just a piece of glass, see?’ (47)” (Goerzen 6). So, while she describes the game as “Caretaker,” Maggie demonstrates her need to care for another via insults and condescension. At this point, she knows no other way.

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10 I have previously discussed the power of secret spaces in Behind the Attic Wall and Lucie Babbidge’s House in a 2004 class paper, entitled “Secret Worlds: The Power of the Imagination in the Lives of Troubled Girls in Sylvia Cassedy’s Novels Behind the Attic Wall and Lucie Babbidge’s House.”
In a key Caretaker scene, Maggie shows the Backwoods Girls the doll given to her by Aunt Lillian. At first, Maggie had harshly rejected the doll, commenting to her aunt, "I don’t play with dolls....They’re dumb" (40). Away from the prying eyes of her aunts, however, Maggie treats the doll with a surprising gentleness, even finding a ball-point pen to act as a hastily invented baby bottle. When the Backwoods Girls beg to see the doll, Maggie responds, "No...[a]nd don’t shout. You’ll make her cry again," and for a long while she held the doll in her hands, feeding it from her pen" (48). This gesture reveals Maggie’s ability and desire to care for another, long-hidden in order to maintain her fierce exterior in the presence of peers and authority figures. Her care for the doll here also foreshadows Maggie’s transformation into a more open and caring character later in the novel.

Like many other girl orphans in literature for children, as Minda Rae Amiran has pointed out, Maggie is (although she would never admit it) searching for a loving, permanent home. As Virginia Wolf explains, "Maggie is in need of a home" (51), and is hoping to find a house like the one she "[o]nce, long ago," shared with her parents (Cassedy, Behind 13). She remembers enough of her earlier, happy domestic existence to have developed a sense of nostalgia and an emotional attachment towards her long-lost childhood home. As the narrator observes, "[e]very house in her imagination took on the arrangement of that early one....It was the house in which she placed herself when she was told that she would be looked after by two great-aunts who had agreed, when no one else had, to take her in and let her live with them" (13). Maggie daydreams of loving aunts "smiling great white smiles," showering her with kisses, cocoa and cookies (14). Instead, she "finds a building that was once Adelphi Hills Academy and two aunts who care more about health and nutrition than they do about a
girl's happiness” (Wolf 52). On an unconscious level, Maggie seems desperate to find her own space and her own place to belong.

Maggie ultimately fulfills many of her emotional needs and finds her physical secret space and a sense of home when, halfway through the novel, she encounters the dolls, Timothy John and Miss Christabel. The attic room where the dolls reside performs a dual function. First, although it is located in the attic of Adelphi Hills, the room is a temporary escape from the rest of the austere, sterile house and Maggie’s hygiene-obsessed aunts. Second, and more importantly, the attic room becomes a physical and spiritual home for Maggie, a place where she belongs and is loved. In Bachelard’s terms, the attic is the spatial opposite of the cellar: “both have stairs leading to an unknown, perhaps nonexistent, center, though each stairway speaks in a different voice to us. The attic’s ascending steps seem less ominous and more promising than do the cellar’s descending stairs that disappear into the very underground of all architecture” (Bachelard 18). In this way, Cassedy’s novel can be read as a narrative embodiment of Bachelard and Tuan’s philosophies of space and emotional attachment to home.

The poignancy of the attic room for Maggie is revealed in the way that she discovers the space. Maggie has heard mysterious voices for months through the walls of Adelphi Hills Academy, and as the reader later learns, she is the sole audience for these voices. Uncle Morris hints at the dolls’ presence behind the attic wall several times in the early chapters of the novel. And, after an early incident in which Maggie pours hot milk all over her dinner plate, Morris remarks cryptically, “I think you are the right one after all” (35). The dolls’ voices, always written out all in capital letters when heard through the walls, call to Maggie and finally say her name (144). The dolls have been waiting for her. Maggie’s initial
encounter with the dolls is not a smooth introduction, and understandably so. When she bursts through the curtain and into the little attic room, she at last sees the source of the mysterious voices: "She's here at last." The voice came—could that be—from inside her head or something, because her lips didn't move, but she was speaking, saying real words—a doll. At the same moment, her china hand, suddenly alive, began to grasp the handle of the teapot and lift it from the table" (155). Miss Christabel and Timothy John, it is revealed, were the founders of Adelphi Hills who perished in a fire in the 1800s; the scrap of newspaper that Timothy John reads daily contains a story about their deaths. The dolls' bodies are inhabited by the spirits of the founders; as such, the pair appears unaware of their existence as dolls. As Timothy John comments to Maggie, "but we have no dolls [here] as it is” (164).

The reader is to believe that the dolls are "real," and not a creation of Maggie's imagination as are Lucie's dolls. However, in their articles on Cassedy's novels, Christine McDonnell and to some extent Virginia Wolf do not necessarily support this interpretation. As Wolf points out, "Maggie's rich fantasy life throughout the novel may work against our believing that the world...really exists" (52). McDonnell argues that the novel is not a fantasy at all, and that Maggie's "inner world is created by her imagination to fill an emotional need, an inner world that is as real and as important as the external, concrete world she suffers through" (101). Although McDonnell's and Wolf's analyses are interesting to note, I wish to offer a different reading of this aspect of the novel.

Maggie believes the dolls are real, and the reader must also suspend disbelief to participate fully in Maggie's experience. As Maggie ponders, "What was so special about Miss Christabel? Miss Christabel? She was herself, that's what. She was real" (226). Maggie's experiences with the dolls "still involve her imagination in terms of how she
interacts with them, but for Maggie, Miss Christabel and Timothy John are most likely more real than her aunts, and certainly the dolls are the most compassionate, most human beings that she has encountered in her recent memory” (Goerzen 8). I support Maggie's belief that the dolls are real, which is what makes them so special to her. For Maggie to love and be loved, the dolls must be real.

As the dolls explain, Maggie is in the privileged position of having been chosen as the “right one,” the only one out of all the thousands of girls who had passed through Adelphi Hills over the past century. For perhaps the first time in her life since her parents’ death, Maggie feels unique and special. As the “right one,” Maggie is the only person permitted to visit with Miss Christabel and Timothy John. At first, however, she rejects the dolls just as she has rejected other playthings, and Timothy John comments to Miss Christabel that perhaps “she is the wrong one after all” (171). When Miss Christabel tries to assure her that she belongs there, Maggie responds, “No I don’t...I don’t belong to anything” (165).

Maggie wonders bitterly who the “right one” would have been: “[s]omeone, probably, who would have poured their pretend tea and nibbled their wooden bread and politely watered their wallpaper roses and sat in their make-believe garden saying all the right things. Someone nice” (184).

Over time, and with the increasing frequency of her visits to Miss Christabel and Timothy John, Maggie begins to transform both physically and psychologically. She begins to open herself to the possibility of feeling and demonstrating compassion toward another. The first glimmers of compassion become evident after Maggie hurls the dolls across the room, following her first encounter with them. Regretting her violent behaviour, she finds a way to repair Timothy John’s cracked forehead, Miss Christabel’s severed leg and the dog.
Juniper's broken ear. Once the repairs are complete, Maggie feels "a sudden sense of pride. As far as she could remember she had never fixed—really fixed—anything in her life" (199-200). She has "fixed them. Made them better. She [is] their caretaker, sort of" (201). In this scene Maggie stops feeling as though she is merely playing with dolls, and begins to believe the dolls' own reality. When Miss Christabel asks Maggie to see if the empty, doll-sized kettle is "hot yet," Maggie replies, "[i]t's hot....Scalding hot" (201), whereas in previous interactions she refused to play along with the apparent pretense. In her relationship with Miss Christabel and Timothy John, Maggie at last discovers her capacity for healthy rather than aggressive or isolating play. When Timothy John implores Maggie to listen for the cry of the "Gypsy baby" (a rosebud on the flowered wallpaper in the attic room), Maggie does as she is told and "half expect[s] to hear a tiny whimper" (208). This more playful, receptive Maggie is not the same grouchy child the reader met when Maggie first arrived at Adelphi Hills.

Maggie is able to feel a power over the dolls, as she does with the Backwoods Girls (whom she rarely summons after meeting the dolls). With Timothy John and Miss Christabel, however, she learns to harness this power for a positive purpose, and finds a great deal of satisfaction from acting as their caretaker. As Erikson has theorized, it often helps children to re-enact difficult-to-comprehend events or emotions on a smaller, more manageable level (34). The attic room allows Maggie to test out—tentatively—what it feels like to love another, and so she allows herself to be vulnerable in this small space. She has also discovered her true self, herself as a caretaker. This discovery is the result of her "play" with the dolls, and exemplifies the function of play described by Winnicott as a technique for self-discovery. As Maggie begs the dolls, "[l]et me live here with you. All the time. We could
have lessons and I could make your tea and water the roses. You could be my teachers and I
could be your—your caretaker or something. We could belong to each other” (210). As
McDonnell argues, when “Maggie accepts her role in the lives of these dolls, as she fixes
them and helps them, she becomes happier” (102). She is, after all, the chosen one, the “right
one.” Why? Although the narrative never answers this question, the reader can infer that the
right ones all along have been misunderstood misfits like Maggie, in need of the special
space and care that the dolls represent.

The dolls’ personalities, with their evasive and childlike speaking style which at times
sounds very similar to the wit of Uncle Morris, function to allow Maggie to care for them,
and to make her feel special. Through her interactions with the dolls, Maggie feels the
positive attention and adoration that she had initially hoped to receive from her great aunts.
For example, when she describes rose thorns as hooks “for catching the Gypsy’s scarves on,
so they won’t blow away,” Timothy John exclaims, “[t]hat’s wonderful!...Maggie taught
something to us today” (209). This response makes Maggie feel proud, and even smile “a
little” (209). She looks forward to her visits with the dolls, and one day announces to the
dolls simply that she has skipped school in order to be with them. The dolls seem to think
nothing of this, noting that they shall have to give her lessons. As the narrator describes,
focalizing through Maggie’s mind, she has found “this wonderful place in the attic that
nobody else in the whole world knew about—a wonderful place where it was warm and
happy and they...what? They liked her a whole lot. And she liked them. Loved” (226).
Although she views herself as having the serious responsibility of being the dolls’ caretaker,
the dolls are in a similar caretaking position, encouraging the development of Maggie’s self-
estee and a sense of identity apart from being a marginalized, rejected, antisocial orphan.
The beginning of Maggie’s transformation is evident, both physically and psychologically. As Miss Christabel comments to her, “[t]he roses have changed you…[t]heir glow has come off on your face. And the bread has fattened your wrists” (213). Maggie, who previously felt ugly, knows that she looks better: “[n]ice. She looked nice” (213). Later, she notes that she knows she would look pretty in her new yellow dress.

Maggie’s physical and behavioural improvements are viewed by her aunts as examples of what proper nutrition can do (her aunts are completely unaware of the goings-on in the attic room). So although Maggie feels happy in the attic room, she continues to be misunderstood in the real world, as when her creative school assignment, based on the idea of roses as Gypsies, is deemed “unacceptable” by her teacher (219).

Like Nona in *Miss Happiness and Miss Flower*, Maggie finds even more purpose in her life when she decides to throw the dolls a party, which is to be, as Maggie herself describes, “[their] own special day that nobody would know about” (220). The party, which she diligently and excitedly prepares for, is a testament to her love for the dolls. Her deep desire to love and care for others is at the core of *Behind the Attic Wall*. Before she could ever demonstrate her affection for other humans (such as her adoptive sisters), as she does after she opens herself emotionally, Maggie has to experiment in the safety of a secret space with non-threatening miniatures.

Indeed, there would have been no other way to facilitate this change in Maggie. She becomes willing to do almost anything out of her love for the dolls, including stealing a priceless Dresden doll for the attic room’s table centerpiece and hiding from her aunts. In a
letter to her editor, Marilyn Kriney, Cassedy described her thoughts regarding Maggie’s desire to be a caretaker:

[throughout [Behind the Attic Wall] I have emphasized the main character’s need not only to be cherished, but to cherish in return—to fix, to heal, to look after, to be what she calls a ‘caretaker’—and insofar as the story has a theme at all, it can be characterized as the power of such cherishing to alter the life of a troubled human being. As her need to cherish is fulfilled by the two dolls, Maggie develops from a withdrawn, emotionally crippled twelve-year-old, incapable of dealing with anyone except in the most hostile terms, into a girl who can for the first time sing a song, join in a game, cry over a death, and, finally, say ‘I love you.’ (qtd. in McDonnell 103)

Essentially, Maggie has to love the dolls before she can like or love other people. Some of her emotional changes are hinted at in the real world, such as in her interactions with her classmate Barbara, who invites Maggie over to her house. Surprised, Maggie responds, “I don’t know…Maybe” (227). As the narrator notes, “[n]o one had ever invited her to visit before. No one. Ever” (227). In her brief chats with Barbara, Maggie has unwittingly made a new friend, something she has always so vehemently resisted.

Just as Lucie Babbidge’s classmates pillage her carefully constructed secret space, Belinda removes the dolls from Nona’s dollhouse, and Jyd’s stepmother invades her place of play, there comes a time when Maggie’s secret space is similarly invaded by unwelcome outsiders. In Maggie’s case, the intruders are her great aunts—Harriet and Lillian. The invasion occurs in one of the novel’s most joyous scenes, during the party that Maggie hosts.

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11 McDonnell does not indicate the date of Cassedy’s letter.
for the dolls in the attic room. Following this invasion, the dolls stop speaking and moving, a
dramatic change that leads to a great despair in Maggie. Even though throughout the novel
Maggie maintains to her aunts, Miss Christabel, Timothy John, and her classmate Barbara
that she does not play with dolls, she now manipulates the dolls and makes them speak in
Lucie Babbidge fashion. With her secret space invaded, and the dolls essentially “dead,”
Maggie’s play takes on a new form. It becomes a play of desperation in a former secret space
that has been invaded and dis-enchanted. The reciprocal love has disappeared.

As in Lucie Babbidge’s House, the time comes for Maggie to leave the comfort of the
secret space forever. The space is, after all, transitional space in Winnicott’s sense of the
word. While for Lucie the separation from the secret space and the dolls was by choice (she
could no longer bear to affect the life of the Booth family through her actions), for Maggie it
is a forced abandonment: she is going to live with a family “‘[f]ar away someplace’” (303).
Although Maggie and Lucie’s orphaned states have resulted in emotionally regressive
behaviour, “their ages [twelve and eleven respectively] permit them to move past this space
when the time comes to abandon it” (Kuznets 125). As Wolf writes,

[this] ideal place allows Maggie and the reader to experience what she desires and
thereby to heal her, but it also emphasizes that because there is no loss or any kind
of change in this ideal world, it is only a place for a growing child to visit and
remember. The dolls are alive, but their human counterparts are dead— like
Maggie’s parents. Behind the attic wall, Maggie recovers her parents’ love for her
and hers for them, but she also experiences the limitations of this memory. It may
sustain her, but she cannot lie down in it and stay put, for to do so would be to die.

(52)
Thus, Maggie’s former secret space becomes transitional, although it will live on in her memory as a place of great, abiding love long after she has left Adelphi Hills.

As Wolf explains, the novel’s narrative structure is a testament to Maggie’s dramatic emotional transformation and to the very special meaning of the attic room for her: “Framing the memories [Maggie] shares with us, the prologues of all parts of the book and the epilogue occur in the present, where she does love and is loved, as evidence that a change in behaviour occurred while she lived at Adelphi Hills. Clearly, behind the attic wall exists for her as a special place, transforming her, her understanding and thereby reality” (52). Maggie knows she was a privileged participant in the life of the dolls, and she holds the secret of the “other room” close to her heart (147). But she would never reveal to anyone the secrets behind the wall: “[s]he wouldn’t tell anyone about that. Ever” (5). The short prologues before each of the novel’s four parts do indeed reveal the tremendous transformation that Maggie has experienced. While Maggie was previously so closed off, she has opened herself to loving others and being loved in return: in her new life with an adoptive family, she is the older sister to two little girls, whose smiles she “had learned, after almost a year, to like. To love, really” (4).

While my own reading of the novel suggests that the dolls and the secret space allowed Maggie to feel love and belonging, thereby leading to her tremendous emotional development, Kuznets reads the text differently, suggesting that such a dramatic emotional change cannot be so simple:

I am still not entirely sure that the Romantic tendency to venerate the imaginative faculty in children above all others is particularly appropriate for children who lack an outside support system. Winnicott’s discussion of transitional space
postulates the presence of a “good enough” parent present to establish trust in external reality, and Erikson makes no claims that play constructions provide more than models for problem-solving. Considering the degree of disturbance realistically portrayed in Maggie and Lucie and the absence of any reliable support for them other than the dolls, whether even the mildly ameliorative endings at which they arrive are good psychology is another question. (225)

What Kuznets does not acknowledge is the essential role that the secret space has played in the emotional development of the girls. In gaining and then later losing the dolls and the secret spaces, Maggie and Lucie experience life-changing dramatic events that are certainly enough to spark emotional transformation in the girls. Perhaps Maggie was the “right one” because the dolls could sense she was ready to love and be loved—her time had come. Thus, because she was ready to receive it, she was ready to begin her transformation.

At the close of Behind the Attic Wall, just prior to Maggie’s departure from Adelphi Hills, another doll is added to the attic room. The dolls had hinted at the arrival of a “third” joining them (211), and now a miniature Uncle Morris has joined the little family. With his innocence and humour, Uncle Morris was probably as misunderstood by society as Maggie, and, as Maggie discovers, he knows the secrets of the world behind the attic wall. This attic room, “we eventually surmise, is a kind of heaven where Maggie’s ancestors who have loved their home and children survive” (Wolf 52). Perhaps one day, “in many years’ time, a Maggie doll will join her family around the tiny tea table” (Goerzen 10). Both Maggie and the dolls’ world were understood by the magical Uncle Morris, and his presence in his new incarnation as a doll completes the experience behind the attic wall both for Maggie and the reader.
Joined by the common themes of love and play as “the source of healing and recovery” (Wolf 54), Maggie and Jyd succeed in transforming their lives and transcending their harsh realities. Through play and the building of healthy relationships (with both doll and non-doll characters), Maggie is able to change her attitude and to experience an emotional transformation, thereby opening herself up to even more love in her life and to finding the loving home she has desired for so long. Jyd transforms her harsh reality through her love for Jane, making her unhappy home a happy place when she and Jane play their games of make-believe, and eventually by finding a permanent home in fairyland. As evidenced by Jyd and Maggie, the doll and child relationships can bloom into the deepest, most meaningful relationships that the protagonists have ever experienced, and allow them to experience rich relationships with humans in the future. Just as real-life relationships can be life-changing, so are Jyd’s and Maggie’s attachments to their dolls, and although they are dolls, these relationships are no less meaningful than if they were to be with humans.

Now that I have thoroughly examined the nature of the emotional and physical transformations in the orphan girls’ lives in the four primary works, and the roles and functions of the dolls and the secret spaces in facilitating this change, I will move on to conclude my argument and open up the discussion to other questions and final issues in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This study has explored the roles and functions of dolls, doll characters and "child-only" secret spaces in the lives of orphan girl protagonists in children's literature. While many critics and theorists have analyzed these three elements separately, a review of relevant scholarship indicated the necessity to connect them in a meaningful way. I synthesized this research, which I then applied to a close examination of four novels for children: Rumer Godden’s Miss Happiness and Miss Flower, Sylvia Cassedy’s Lucie Babbidge’s House, Enys Tregarthen’s The Doll Who Came Alive and Cassedy’s Behind the Attic Wall. In examining the connections between and among these elements, my central research question was this: How do dolls, secret spaces and the play associated with them function in literature for children such that the marginalized and displaced orphan girl characters therein undergo positive psychological transformation?

The resulting study has examined the psychological transformation of the four distinctive protagonists in this quartet of primary works. In conducting this examination, I have employed the theories and research of many key scholars. The work of Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan has proved immensely useful in my discussion of home space and the child’s emotional attachment to place, while the theories of psychoanalysts D.W. Winnicott and Erik Erikson were indispensable in my analysis of the protagonists’ transformative play. Lois Kuznets lent her opinions on personified doll characters, while Minda Rae Amiran provided her central argument that fictional orphan girls are ultimately in search of a home and a place to belong. These are but a few of the critics who influenced my thinking—I am indebted to them for their opinions, theories and research.
Through my investigation of the quartet of primary novels, a corresponding quartet of forms of transformation emerged in terms of the dolls' and secret spaces' ultimate influences on the protagonists. These themes are integration, awakening, transcendence and opening. In *Miss Happiness and Miss Flower*, Rumer Godden depicts the Japanese dolls and the Japanese dollhouse as integrative forces in the initially lonely Nona's life. For Lucie in *Lucie Babbidge's House*, the dolls and dollhouse are sources for her psychological awakening. In *The Doll Who Came Alive*, the doll, Jane, and the Small People's country act as vehicles for Jyd Trewerry to transcend her unforgiving existence. For Maggie in *Behind the Attic Wall*, Miss Christabel, Timothy John and the attic room offer an environment in which Maggie can open herself up to healthier interpersonal relationships. In order to create better situations for themselves, Nona, Lucie and Maggie must temporarily escape reality via their secret spaces before they can face it, whereas Jyd transcends reality all together. In all cases, it is doll play, according to my definition of the term as the child's interaction with, conversation with and/or manipulation of dolls, which leads to the positive changes in the girls' lives.

As Lois Kuznets writes, “[o]ne seductive motif of toy narratives reflects the struggle of both children and adults to feel ‘real’—to become a conscious, powerful subject rather than an object dependent upon others” (61). For the protagonists in the primary works, this is certainly true: by the end of their stories, each girl is empowered, poised to make changes in her life rather than passively accept the actions of authority figures (and sometimes peers). In each of these narratives, the secret space provides a private place where the protagonists can feel like Kuznets' “conscious, powerful subject[s],” outside a reality where they often feel like objects. While this is often true of fictional children in general, it is especially true for fictional orphans, who frequently find themselves under the charge of stern headmistresses or
neglectful caregivers. Indeed, the secret space acts as a place for play and solace in which the protagonists find emotional healing. It is a space where the girls have control over a small part of their lives. For these orphan girls, the dollhouses, the land of Small Folk and the attic room all serve the same purpose: they provide a cognitive and/or physical home that is theirs and theirs alone.

Out of these secret spaces and the interactions within them comes an even more profound gain: a sense of home and belonging outside of the secret space. After all, as Melanie Kimball writes, many fictional orphans are constantly seeking "a place to belong and the right to be there" (577). As Minda Rae Amiran argues, it is fictional orphan girls who most often seek this sense of belonging and home, while orphan boys head off on adventures to seek their fortunes. Three of the four protagonists in the primary works find this sense of home by the end of their stories: Nona, as a fully integrated member of the Fell family; Jyd, as a permanent resident of fairyland; and Maggie, as the older sibling to two younger sisters in an adoptive family.

The occurrence of psychological transformation in orphan protagonists, as found in the quartet of primary works, is not unique in children's literature. In children's literature of the twentieth century, well-developed characters who experience some level of psychological growth by the end of their novels have become the norm. My study aims to address the questions surrounding dolls, secret spaces and the roles they play in promoting psychological growth. Why dolls? Why secret spaces? Why play? Why do these elements, specifically, contribute so significantly to the positive emotional changes the protagonists experience?

While many novels and picture books for children feature orphan girls, or dolls, or secret spaces, this quartet represents the complete set of works that could be located in
English that features all three elements. My study is unique in that it brings these three elements together in a meaningful way to illustrate the various forms of transformation experienced by the novels' protagonists. Is my research limited to this tiny group of works? No, certainly not. The effect that secret spaces and dolls have on the orphan girl protagonists is indeed limited to this particular quartet—however, my thesis does lead to further questions about the significance of special places, playthings and possessions in the lives of fictional children within the larger field of children's literature.

My study offers a preliminary frame for understanding how dolls and secret spaces can positively influence the lives of fictional children, orphans or not. While my thesis has focused specifically on orphan girls, there is a demonstrated need for a broader examination of girls' relationships to dolls and secret spaces in children's literature. Applying the notions of cognitive and physical secret space described in Chapter Three as a starting point, a much broader study could be developed, examining and classifying the secret spaces of fictional girls in North American novels of the mid-to-late twentieth century, or another time period. Furthermore, there is much opportunity to fully examine the relationships of fictional boys (orphans or not) to their secret spaces and/or toys, to reveal the sorts of themes and patterns that emerge. A similar evaluative framework to that used in a broader study for fictional girls could be developed and employed. While these studies could be carried out separately, it would also be fascinating to conduct a comparative study. Truly, when it comes to children, toys and secret spaces, the research possibilities seem considerable if not endless.

Ultimately, my discussion in this thesis focuses on two essential, sustaining aspects of life: imagination and home. As evident in the orphan girl protagonists in this vibrant quartet of primary works, the imagination is shown to sustain, to transform and to heal. For children
in general, both in fiction and in real life, the imagination is a gift that allows them to escape reality. Home is a powerful notion, loaded with meaning and nostalgia. To have both, a sense of home (whether physical, psychological, or both) and a sense of imagination and play, is to be more fully equipped to manage life’s obstacles. For fictional orphan girls this is a life-altering, life-sustaining discovery.
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