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Absent Architectures: Post-War Housing in British Children’s Picture Books (1960-Present)

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In the decades following World War II, British cities—and, but to a lesser degree, rural areas—underwent radical architectural and structural transformations. Yet, architecture associated with post-war reconstruction is significantly underrepresented in children’s picture books of the period. The home, the street, and the high-street are, more often than not, depicted in a formal language associated with Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian architectural ideals. This paper explores what kind of cultural ideologies children are integrated into when it comes to the representation of post-war architecture. Specifically, the paper focuses on domestic space and asks what ideas of the ‘home’ are promoted. Drawing on Gaston Bachelard’s exploration of the relationship between domestic architecture and emotional/psychological response in *The Poetics of Space* (1957), and Jean Baudrillard’s theory of communication in the age of postmodernity, this paper maps the influence of post-war architectural design on a selection of children’s picture books published during the 1960s and 1970s. The paper concludes with an examination of two popular picture books published in 1996 and 2013, which trace the legacies of post-war architecture.

Keywords: British children’s picture books; post-war reconstruction; domestic space

**Absent Architectures**

In the decades following World War II, British cities—and, but to a lesser degree, rural areas—underwent radical architectural and structural transformations. Driven by a desire for social change and improvement, and an urgent need for housing and public institutions, new kinds of buildings, developments and spaces began to emerge, including high-rise dwellings, New Towns, and shopping centres. Yet, architecture associated with post-war reconstruction is significantly underrepresented in children’s picture books published in the decades immediately after the war.[[1]](#endnote-1) The home, the street, and the high-street are, more often than not, depicted in a formal language associated with Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian architectural ideals.

One possible explanation for this underrepresentation of post-war architecture is the negative reception it received from both the general British public and the architectural profession. As John R. Gold suggests, the housing drive was a ‘numbers game’; it was about building as many houses as cheaply and efficiently as possible, and was used as a tool to secure political support by the Labour and Conservative administrations.[[2]](#endnote-2) Consequently, these modern buildings and developments became detached from the ideals originally identified with inter-war modernism. According to Gold, ‘The new estates of “council flats” almost invariably lacked the breadth of vision that preoccupied the urban imaginings of the Modern Movement during the 1930s’.[[3]](#endnote-3) Elsewhere, Gold notes that ‘Supporters of modernism castigated the New Towns as never rising “to anything that was architecturally sufficient” and as “missing the virtue of civic design”’.[[4]](#endnote-4) Pressure from the government to build ever-increasing numbers of residential units led to skimping on social facilities and landscaping, which in turn produced underwhelming development projects. Although understandable given the context, this focus on short-term needs meant that British policy-makers were failing to accommodate ‘the potential of a future’.[[5]](#endnote-5) Unlike the architecture associated with the modernism of the inter-war period, which was generally thought of as being characterised by forward thinking, post-war reconstruction was more concerned with satisfying the needs of the immediate present. Moreover, the mass media seemed to campaign daily against modernist renewal, adding to public and professional suspicion towards post-1945 building and development.[[6]](#endnote-6)

In 1951, writer Elizabeth Bowen published ‘The Bend Back’—a short essay in which she speculates about the nostalgic turn in contemporary British writing. Bowen links post-war reconstruction with a rise in nostalgic literary narratives, suggesting that the disrelish for and uneasiness in the present is caused by ‘the aching, bald uniformity of our urban surroundings, their soulless rawness. Where is the eye to linger, where is the fancy to dwell? No associations, no memories have had time to gather around the new soaring blocks of flats, the mushroom housing-estates’.[[7]](#endnote-7) Modern architecture of the post-war period is very much associated here with an extreme imaginative dearth. Its uniformity and functionality fail to engage the literary mind. Paradoxically, with no links to the past, post-war development fails to look towards the future. Bowen suggests that these new kinds of spaces do not incorporate the subject’s familiar surroundings and routines, creating powerful feelings of alienation. With no familiar co-ordinates with which to navigate their new environment, subjects struggle to orientate and stabilise themselves. And so, there is a tendency to rely on familiar images from the past; comfort, security and meaning are sought through the creation of nostalgic images and narratives. As writer and critic Svetlana Boym suggests, ‘Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals.’[[8]](#endnote-8) Ironically, then, during periods of innovation there is sometimes little desire to think seriously about the future. The anxious desire for the security that comes with familiar architectural traditions is at odds with the unfamiliarity of new architectural developments.[[9]](#endnote-9)

The critical attitude towards modern architecture in the first decades after the war is of course only one symptom of the generally negative view, fear and rejection of modernity in British society at the time.[[10]](#endnote-10) In *The Telling Line* by Douglas Martin, illustrator Raymond Briggs is quoted with the following description of his art school education:

We were told that painting had stopped in about 1880 and that art had gone downhill from then on, culminating in the horrors of modern art. We were encouraged in the main to base ourselves on the Renaissance - Michelangelo, Piero della Francesca and people like that - a very old-fashioned, traditional training. It was actually jolly good for an illustrator.[[11]](#endnote-11)

A similar nostalgic turn can be identified in post-1945 as well as in contemporary children’s picture books. Out of a sample of 203 award-winning titles published between 1956 and 2014, detailed visual representations of post-war reconstruction are scarce.[[12]](#endnote-12) Alice Melvin’s *The High Street* (2011) exemplifies this lingering resistance to engage creatively with post-war reconstruction in the context of children’s picture books. Melvin’s *The High Street* is a contemporary reworking of an earlier children’s book of the same title. Written by architectural historian J.M. Richards and illustrated by artist Eric Ravilious, *High Street* (1938) introduces young readers to a variety of specialist shops commonly found on the high street. Architectural features such as embellished cornices, sash windows, and cast-iron decoration suggest the buildings date from the nineteenth century.

In Melvin’s reworking of this classic text, the period in which it is set is ambiguous. The characters are dressed in fashions evocative of the 1960s and 1970s, and the inclusion of stereo headphones means that the text cannot be set before 1958, the year in which they were invented. However, the shopping experience conveyed by the visual representation of the high-street’s architecture dates the text to before 1945. During the post-war period ‘many councils decided that their town centres were badly congested and needed replacing by something truly modern’ and so high street shops and surrounding areas were swept away and replaced by shopping precincts.[[13]](#endnote-13) Despite this, Melvin’s vision of the high street is much the same as Richards’ and Ravilious’. It is comprised of buildings resembling nineteenth-century architecture: red bricks, sash windows, cast-iron decoration, and embellished cornices. Moreover, each shop is detached, with different decorative and architectural features that emphasise its distinctive character. In so doing, Melvin evokes a particular kind of shopping experience quite different from that created by the emergence of shopping precincts, in whichshops are grouped together usually under one roof, or indeed from the typical contemporary British high street dominated by retail chains and anchor stores.

Yet, post-war housing in Britain was not, as Gold suggests, just about numbers. In ‘Roehampton Housing’ (2008), John Partridge reflects on his early career working for the London County Council Housing Division of the Architect’s Department during the 1950s. Partridge recalls the ‘buzz of expectation in the air and sense of mission that fired the work and gave it a new dimension’.[[14]](#endnote-14) Partridge paints the LCC Housing Division as a dynamic and visionary sector. Writing in particular about his involvement with the Alton Estate in Roehampton, Partridge remembers ‘showing many visitors around the scheme, which had become widely publicised. At the peak time there were two or three thousand visitors a year from many different countries. The Alton estates were also very popular with tenants and aspiring tenants on the waiting list’.[[15]](#endnote-15) Although it provoked negative reactions from some, 1950s post-war housing was also met with great enthusiasm and excitement from both members of the profession and the general public. Why then, is it underrepresented in children’s picture books of the period? Another possible explanation for its absence is the age of the authors/illustrators. Many of the authors/illustrators publishing in the 1950s and 1960s were born in the 1930s or earlier, including Raymond Briggs, Anthony Maitland and Philippa Pearce—whose work is closely examined in this paper. As Andrew Higgott notes in *Mediating Modernism* (2007) ‘only a tiny number of buildings built in Britain even in the late 1930s were in any sense modernist; public buildings, banks, houses were almost always built in an historicist language.’[[16]](#endnote-16) This means that children’s books authors/illustrators publishing work during the 1950s/60s would have grown up in an environment with little modernist architecture and so their memories of childhood would likely be tied up with more traditional buildings. Briggs’ biographical graphic novel *Ethel and Ernest* (1998), which narrates the lives of his parents from when they first met in 1928 until their deaths in 1971, provides some visual evidence of the kind of architecture Briggs would have encountered day-to-day during his childhood. According to the illustrations in *Ethel and Ernest*, Briggs, who wasborn in Wimbledon in 1934, grew up in a typical nineteenth-century red-brick terrace house with sash windows, a pitched roof, and a chimney pot. This kind of domestic architecture informs a number of Brigg’s most popular children’s books, including *Father Christmas* (1973), *The Snowman* (1978) and *The Man* (1992).

In his essay ‘Decoding the Images: Illustration and Picture Books’, literary critic Perry Nodelman draws attention to the significance of picture books and the role they play in indoctrinating children in specific cultural ideologies:

The intended audience of picture books is by definition inexperienced—in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others. Consequently, picture books are a significant means by which we integrate young children into the ideology of our culture.[[17]](#endnote-17)

With this in mind, this paper asks what kind of cultural ideologies children are integrated into when it comes to the representation of post-war architecture? In particular, what ideas of the ‘home’ are promoted and what kinds of buildings are being implicitly critiqued through their absence? Focusing on visual representations of domestic space and drawing on Gaston Bachelard’s exploration of the relationship between domestic architecture and emotional/psychological response in *The Poetics of Space* (1957), and Jean Baudrillard’s theory of communication in the age of postmodernity, this paper will map the influence of post-war architectural design on children’s picture books published during the 1960s and 1970s, asking to what extent they might reinforce or challenge popular negative opinions surrounding post-war buildings. By way of a conclusion we also examine two popular picture books published in 1996 and 2013 respectively, exploring the ways in which legacies of post-war architecture are represented. The focus of this paper is primarily restricted to the kind of housing that became a prominent part of British townscapes from the second half of the 1950s. The sample we examine here is limited to fiction books, and is selective to enable a detailed and theoretical engagement with the texts.[[18]](#endnote-18) It should also be noted that despite the obviously important role that publishers and librarians play in the commissioning and dissemination of children’s books, we have, for the purposes of this paper, restricted our analysis to the books and authors themselves.

**Dream Houses and Vertical Spaces**

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard suggests that oneiric houses—the house as a literary construct, a quasi-imagined house—are often characterised by a vertical force derived from the relation between cellar, stairway and attic: ‘If I were an architect of an oneiric house’, writes Bachelard ‘I should hesitate between a three-story house and one with four’.[[19]](#endnote-19) Each floor evokes a distinctive psychological mood. The cellar, which the subject reaches always by ‘*go*[ing] *down*’ becomes ‘buried madness, walled-in tragedy’; it is associated with fear, crime, death, trauma. Whereas the attic, on the other hand, with its sloped roof and bare rafters ‘tells its *raison d’être* right away: it gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun he fears’.[[20]](#endnote-20) The attic is a place of safety that provides essential shelter from external elements. However, Bachelard warns his readers that one floor more and ‘our dreams become blurred. In the oneiric house, topoanalysis only knows how to count to three or four’.[[21]](#endnote-21) Too many floors, and the home somehow loses definition; particular spaces within the house—the stairs, rooms, corners—lose their ability to conjure distinct psychological moods.

By way of antithesis, Bachelard comments on the kind of homes that are ‘oneirically incomplete’—structures that rarely dwell within, or stimulate the imagination. Specifically, Bachelard draws our attention to the skyscrapers of modernity, revealing the paradox that lies at the centre of these buildings: ‘*Home* has become mere horizontality. The different rooms that compose living quarters jammed into one floor all lack one of the fundamental principles for distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy’.[[22]](#endnote-22) So, the more vertical the building the more horizontal it becomes. No cellar below, no garret above, no staircase ascending/descending in between, just rooms sprawled across floors stacked one on top of the other. For Bachelard, without verticality the home, and specifically the spaces within it, becomes nondescript and loses its distinctive character.[[23]](#endnote-23)

**Chimneys**

In children’s picture books, chimney pots often play a key role in signifying the vertical dynamic which Bachelard associates with an ideal type of domesticity. From the highest point of a house (the roof), chimneys trace a line deep into the centre of the home: the fire-place. In *The English House* (1904),Herman Muthesius highlights the socio-cultural significance of the fire-place: ‘To an Englishman the idea of a room without a fire-place is quite simply unthinkable. All ideas of domestic comfort, of family happiness, of inward-looking personal life, of spiritual well-being centre around the fire-place.’[[24]](#endnote-24) Muthesius’s comment signals the extent to which the fire-place was romanticised in the nation’s imagination at the time.[[25]](#endnote-25)

Despite a national drive to reduce domestic pollution by replacing the open hearth with cleaner sources of fuel, such as electric heating, post-war children’s picture books continued to associate the chimney and the fireplace with positive domestic experiences. In *Mrs Cockle’s Cat* (1961), written by Philippa Pearce and illustrated by Antony Maitland, chimneys play a significant part in ‘domesticating’ the protagonist’s home and the surrounding urban environment. Mrs Cockle lives in London, in a small flat inside a period building. Illustrations of the building’s and flat’s interiors (a wooden staircase, print wallpaper, dado rail, an open fireplace), exteriors (sash windows and brick walls), and surroundings (chimney pots and terraced streets) suggest a building dating from the nineteenth century that has been converted into individual flats.

The narrative opens with a description of the flat: ‘Old Mrs Cockle lived at the top of a very tall house in London. Most of the people who knew her were sorry for her, because she had to climb eighty-four stairs before she reached her own front-door’.[[26]](#endnote-26) The verbal narrative is accompanied by an illustration which depicts Mrs Cockle in her home standing next to a window that looks out onto neighbouring rooftops and chimney pots. The page layout amplifies the suggested height of the building by positioning the text at the bottom half of the page and the illustration at the top. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard refers to the action of climbing stairs as the ‘heroism of stairclimbing’.[[27]](#endnote-27) In so doing, Bachelard transforms an everyday act into a feat of epic accomplishment, suggesting the ways in which the subject conquers his/her dwelling, transforming space into a home and place of belonging. From this perspective, rather than simply eliciting pity from the reader the illustration and accompanying verbal narrative also work together to amplify feelings of domesticity and belonging.

Following on from this, the reader is told that what Mrs Cockle enjoys more than anything about her top-floor flat is the view of London it provides: ‘From the roof she could look over the buildings of London, and see the factory chimneys and church spires, and, more than anything else, the chimney pots—more chimney pots than you could ever have counted—rows upon rows of chimney pots that seemed to melt away into the smoky distances of London’.[[28]](#endnote-28) The accompanying illustration depicts the view from Mrs Cockle’s rooftop. Smoking chimney pots encourage the reader to imagine all kinds of domestic activity taking place inside the homes pictured. Indeed, a few pages later there is an illustration of Mrs Cockle sitting in a rocking chair knitting by her fire with her cat at her feet (fig. 6). The warmth of the illustration is emphasised by the narrator’s reference to the darkness of evening and the ‘high wind rattling at the windows’.[[29]](#endnote-29) Here, chimney pots and fireplaces are associated positively with warmth, shelter, nourishment and safety.[[30]](#endnote-30)

In the far distance, there are faint outlines of what appear to be high-rise buildings. Unlike the houses and churches that feature in the middle distance, it is impossible to identify the purpose of these high-rise buildings; they are marginalised and overshadowed by period buildings. In this illustration, chimneys and pitched roofs take precedence over the flat roofs associated with post-war high-rise structures.[[31]](#endnote-31)

In Raymond Briggs’ much-loved story about a cantankerous Father Christmas published in 1973, verticality is suggested through images of chimneys, stairs and pitched rooftops, and also plays a significant role in communicating positive images of domestic space. In figure 1, Father Christmas is shown struggling down the chimney of a detached cottage. The verticality of the chimney is juxtaposed with the horizontality of the panels stretching across the page. The panels divide the house into distinct sections: the children’s room in the attic, the parent’s bedroom on the floor below, and the living room on the ground floor. Visually, the chimney resembles a spinal cord holding together each room in the house. In this way, the distinctive panel structure highlights the open hearth’s role as a crucial feature of the home, suggesting the ways in which various aspects of family life—including Christmas—are organised around it. The staircase on the other side of the house achieves a similar effect, tying together three separate spaces into a single architectural narrative while enabling each space to remain independent and distinct.

[Figure 1 here]

Later, while taking his break, Father Christmas sits next to a chimney pot atop a pitched roof. In the far distance stand four tower blocks. These high-rise buildings are barely noticeable. In this way, the image shares a likeness to Maitland’s updated illustration of Mrs Cockle’s view of London from her rooftop, which includes a sketchy outline of a high-rise building in the far distance. Despite visiting a range of unusual homes, including an igloo, a caravan, Buckingham Palace and a lighthouse, Father Christmas is never shown visiting the tower blocks that are depicted in this image, thus disassociating this particular kind of high-rise architecture from ideas of domesticity.

The images in *Mrs Cockle’s Cat* and *Father Christmas* can be seen to marginalise architectural design linked with post-war reconstruction. Through the deployment of features associated with traditional architectural elements—including chimneys, fireplaces and pitched roofs—these texts suggest a vertical dynamic which enhances notions of domesticity, such as warmth, shelter, and security. In this way, these texts promote nostalgic visions of domesticity, and ignore alternative visions of domestic space that emerged during the post-war period, especially high-rise public housing.

**High-Rise Dwellings**

In spite of its general underrepresentation, there are nevertheless some striking examples of post-war reconstruction to be found in the work of children’s illustrator Charles Keeping. Born in 1924 in Vauxhall Walk, close to the old Lambeth Walk Market, Keeping would have been familiar with the Dickensian aspects of the city, including ‘working horses and dockland pubs’, ‘fogs and vast brick walls’.[[32]](#endnote-32) Indeed, this imagery pervades much of his work, but some of his experiences may also explain his ambivalent views of modern architecture:

I’ve been in houses where there’s no banisters, they’ve been chopped down for firewood. Where chickens roamed around the kitchen, and people used to sleep all night with their clothes on. They were very poor indeed and living in dreadful conditions, and to get the chance to go into those houses was a great experience and help to an illustrator.[[33]](#endnote-33)

However, as well as the nineteenth-century urban aesthetic that marked his childhood in London, Keeping’s picture books are also keenly attuned to the architectural developments that took place during the post-war period, which changed the spatial and social fabric of British cities. As Douglas Martin points out, Keeping’s illustrations of ‘the wastelands caused by the Blitz and later by crass development, and the bright lights of Carnaby Street’ explore the shifting social dimensions of the city.[[34]](#endnote-34) Martin’s language choice—‘crass’—is perhaps more reflective of his own views than of Keeping’s illustrations. Despite disclosing his own distaste for post-war architecture and design—‘As I walked through Elephant and Castle, an area which was terribly bombed in the war, I noticed that although some of the old streets were surviving, much of it had been destroyed, and they’d built a great new world of glass; great tower blocks which were, to my mind, impersonal and aloof’—Keeping’s illustrations avoid didacticism and moral instruction, and explore instead both the advantages and disadvantages of post-war reconstruction.[[35]](#endnote-35) In an interview published in *The Pied Pipers: Interviews with the Influential Creators of Children’s Literature* (1974), Keeping provides further insight into his open-minded attitude towards post-war development:

I was walking through the market when I noticed these high-rise flats. I saw these kids stuck up on the balconies and thought: They could never come down; there they are, stuck up in the modern flats, in their tiny caged balconies. Then I looked at all the kids running wild about the streets. And I thought to myself, What is best? A canary or a sparrow? You drive your car out and you see sparrows splattered over the road. But even if the sparrow gets run over, is its short life happier than the canary’s, stuck in its cage, unable to move?[[36]](#endnote-36)

In *Charley, Charlotte, and the Golden Canary* (1967), Keeping creates an ambiguous narrative around high-rise dwellings. The narrative centres on two friends—Charley and Charlotte—who become separated after Charlotte’s family is rehoused in a newly-built tower block. When the high-rise structure is first introduced visually in Keeping’s narrative (fig. 2), stairs and chimneys are notably absent. The chimney pots of older buildings feature at the bottom of the page but the tower block rises high above them, emphasising its height. The birds flying in front of the building also work to draw attention to the spectacular height of the dwelling.

[Figure 2 here]

The verbal narration that continues on the following page taps into a common anxiety of the period caused by the separation of high-rise dwellings from the street: ‘Because the building was so high, and the street far away below, Charlotte’s mother no longer allowed her to go out and play.’[[37]](#endnote-37) The verticality traditionally ‘ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic’ dissolves. In order for this dynamic to work, the subject must have some sense of the opposition; he/she must be aware of, and have access to the top (the attic) to understand and ‘know’ the bottom (the cellar), and vice versa. In *Mrs Cockle’s Cat* and *Father Christmas*,stairs and chimneys function as architectural signifiers of this vertical movement; they enable the up-down motions of people (and household emissions in the case of the chimneys), and create a liminal space where internal and external worlds meet. The disintegration of the vertical dynamic is amplified through Keeping’s illustration of the tower block’s balcony railing bars. In figure 3, Charlotte is shown peering through the iron bars of her balcony where she has come to resemble the caged canary she bought from Paradise Street market with her friend Charley before she moved. Ironically, unlike the three birds on the railings, Charlotte appears trapped, and isolated from the street below. The image suggests that because her flat is too far away from the street, Charlotte’s movements are restricted to her apartment.

[Figure 3 here]

However, Keeping’s illustrations also allude to more positive experiences of living in tower blocks. On the same page as the illustration that depicts Charlotte ‘trapped’ behind her balcony is an illustration of Charlotte’s panoramic perspective of London (fig. 4).

[Figure 4 here]

High above street level Charlotte can see the city unfold beneath her, revealing the ways in which her local environs (including Paradise Street market) connect to the wider metropolis. The image of Charlotte ‘caged’ behind her balcony suggests that her new high-rise home makes her vulnerable; the city is a potentially dangerous place for a small child far away from the protective gaze of her mother. Yet, the panoramic perspective from the point of view of Charlotte standing on her balcony is empowering and calls to mind what Bachelard refers to as the ‘dream of high solitude’:

From the top of his tower, the philosopher of domination sees the universe in miniature. Everything is small because he is so high. And since he is high, he is great, the height of his station proof of his own greatness.[[38]](#endnote-38)

Height leads to a mastery of the universe, or at least in Charlotte’s case a mastery of her local neighbourhood. The threat of danger from the city suggested by Charlotte’s confinement to her flat is countered by her dominant position overlooking the city.

Charley eventually reconnects with Charlotte when his canary escapes and flies to Charlotte’s new flat. Charley spies the canary’s wings ‘glisten[ing] against one of the huge new blocks of flats’. Standing at the bottom of the high-rise building and looking up Charley notices Charlotte waving to him from her balcony.[[39]](#endnote-39) The juxtaposition of extreme perspectives (the high-angle that shows Charley looking up towards Charlotte and the low-angle that shows Charlotte looking down from her balcony) creates a line of connection between the street and Charlotte’s flat. In this way, Keeping’s illustration challenges common-place and negative perceptions about the isolation of high-rise dwellings from the street. Moreover, on the following page the illustration shows Charley ‘rush[ing] up hundreds of stairs until he arrived panting, at the top.’[[40]](#endnote-40) Both the verbal and pictorial narratives call to mind Bachelard’s ‘heroism of stairclimbing’, further suggesting an uninterrupted link between apartment and street. The interplay between street and apartment, above and below, suggests that a similar kind of vertical dynamic to that which characterises the ‘oneiric’ house is also a feature of high-rise housing.

**Windows and Screens**

In *Charlotte, Charley and the Golden Canary*, the vertical dynamic associated with traditional housing is, to some extent, kept intact. By contrast, *Inter-City* (1977)—a wordless pictorial narrative about a British Rail train journey between two cities—constructs an alternative spatial paradigm for the home. Rather than a series of vertical movements (up and down the chimney, up and down the stairs, glancing up from the street and down from the balcony) this picturebook maps the ways in which the threshold between private and public worlds, the home and the street, might also be crossed horizontally. For example, simple, large square windows with no ornamentation enable an unobstructed view into a high-rise apartment from the train carriage (fig. 5). The illustration suggests the ways in which modern architectural design and travel infrastructure create new opportunities for the home to be penetrated by the outside world along a kind of horizontal axis: across the city, from window to window. This kind of horizontal network (a network of gazes) is not possible where the home is designed in a way that encourages the subject to withdraw from the external world.

[Figure 5 here]

For Bachelard, the ideal home is a haven ‘where the soul can pause, in silence, and free itself to dream’.[[41]](#endnote-41) Its stairwells, corners, attics, basements, cupboards, chests and closets create intimate spaces where the subject can dream privately away from the outside world. This image of interiority and personal reverie is popular in children’s picture books. It can be seen in *Mrs Cockle’s Cat* (fig. 6), where Mrs Cockle sits knitting drowsily by the fire with her cat at her feet. The cat is consumed by thoughts of fish (of which there is a shortage); his dreams are manifested in the hearth where the flames resemble fish. The shadows that darken the corner of the room behind Mrs Cockle’s rocking chair enhance the intimacy created by the fireplace and signal the space’s potential for reverie.

[Figure 6 here]

In *Father Christmas*, the cut-a-way perspective is frequently deployed to reveal and exaggerate the compartmentalisation of the home (fig. 7). Each room is discrete, which enhances feelings of privacy. The house’s isolation from the outside world is emphasised by the fact that its interiors are only made visible to the reader only through the artist’s imaginative depiction rather than through any design feature of the buildings.

[Figure 7 here]

The windows in Keeping’s illustration provide an alternative depiction of the home. Rather than a ‘fortress’, the home is shown as a potential site of exchange with the outside world. This is amplified through the inclusion of the television, which creates a new kind of threshold between private and public realms. In an interview, Keeping remarked that he has ‘always felt that when you go through life you often look at it through a window. You do that when you look at television, and you do it when you are driving along in your car.’[[42]](#endnote-42) Keeping’s comment is telling of the ways in which advances in technology can reconfigure the relationship between the domestic interior of the home and the rest of the world beyond. The television functions like the large, unadorned windows of Keeping’s high-rise building; it is an additional screen through which the outside world permeates the intimate space of the home. Jean Baudrillard discusses this in his essay ‘The Ecstasy of Communication’ (1988), in which he argues that the distinctive opposition between private and public space, ‘the clear difference of an exterior and an interior’, has collapsed:

Now this opposition is effaced in a sort of *obscenity* where the most intimate processes of our life become the virtual feeding ground of the media […]. Inversely, the entire universe comes to unfold arbitrarily on your domestic screen (all the useless information that comes to you from the entire world, like a microscopic pornography of the universe, useless, excessive, just like the sexual close-up in a porno film).[[43]](#endnote-43)

The rise of the reality television genre, and more recently video blogs and social media websites, mean the intimacies once reserved for the private domestic realm are now broadcast across the globe. Likewise, televisions, computers, and smartphone technologies stream the outside world into the home. This nexus of communication metaphorically transforms the dwelling from a top-down vertical structure into a sprawling horizontal network of communications. Like Bachelard, who envisioned the horizontal organization of space negatively, as ‘jammed’ and homogenous, Baudrillard also takes a less than favourable view of this horizontal spatial paradigm. The disintegration of the separation between the private, domestic realm and the public sphere is ‘obscene’ not only in the sense that technology now has the potential to broadcast the intimate processes of our everyday lives across the globe but also because it creates a chaotic environment in which a torrent of information is ‘arbitrarily’ leaked into the home, that once sacred space reserved for reverie and internal reflection.

Keeping’s illustration, however, does not convey the anxieties expressed by Bachelard and Baudrillard. There is something warm, inviting and even magical about Keeping’s image of the tower block. The bright yellow that emanates from each window suggests warmth, light and security—tokens of domesticity similar to those typically associated with chimneys and fireplaces. In this image, then, the television has replaced the fireplace as the focal point of the home. Where Mrs Cockle sat by her fire staring into the flames, the residents of this dwelling stare into the television set. Strokes of deep pink draw attention to the birds flying past the windows, suggesting that there is something exceptional about living high up in the sky. Moreover, the fact that the residents themselves sit with their backs towards the window, looking inwards rather than outwards, gives the impression that the home, despite modern technology and design, is still subjectively experienced as a kind of haven away from the outside world.

**Modern Façades**

Away from post-war high-rise housing, Keeping continues to explore the modernisation of domestic space after WWII. *Railway Passage* (1974) is set in a deprived street consisting of six Victorian workers’ cottages. After winning a football pool, all but one of the residents decide to refurbish their homes in a manner influenced by modern design principles, including a timber façade and large unadorned windows. The refurbishments also include the addition of modern, technological appliances: primarily, television aerials. The miserly couple living at number five—known to the local children as Uncle and Auntie Meanie—refuse to spend money to develop their home. By juxtaposing number five with the rest of the renovated houses on the street, Keeping draws the reader’s attention to the way in which television aerials have replaced the chimney pots. This substitution again suggests that the open hearth is gradually being replaced by the television set as the focal point of the home. Keeping’s use of psychedelic colours to depict the newly-renovated homes forms a positive association between domesticity and modern design and technology. The colours are exciting, playful, and express the individual personalities of the people who live inside. The colours might also be seen to allude to colour television, which gradually began to replace black and white television throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Keeping’s illustration suggests the potential for modern architectural renovation and technological features to infuse the home with ‘character’.

[Figure 8 here]

Recent critical interpretations of *The Poetics of Space* cast modern technology, design and building materials in a negative light. In the foreword to the 1994 edition of the text, John R. Stilgoe writes, ‘*The Poetics of Space* resonates in an era suffused by television and video games, fluorescent lighting and plastic floors, air conditioning systems and too-small closets. It is a book that makes its readers dissatisfied with much contemporary structure and landscape, for it demonstrates to its readers that space can be poetry’.[[44]](#endnote-44) If *The Poetics of Space* elicits from its readers a dissatisfaction with the structure and processes of contemporary life, then Keeping’s *Railway Passage* can be seen to work in a way that might elicit from its young readers a range of positive emotions relating to post-war design and technology, including intrigue, excitement and pleasure.

As with many of Keeping’s texts, his depiction of post-war development is not straightforward. After buying and renovating their homes, most of the characters do not live happily-ever-after. Uncle William loses his money through gambling; Aunt Ada, who loves to cook but could never afford to, now cooks in earnest and grows obese; Auntie Emma buys herself a ‘fantastic great tank’ for her pet goldfish, but is never able to find him again because the tank is too large and filled with too many other similar fish; Uncle Harry sells his cottage to a ‘rich young pop star’ and buys ‘himself a small automatic car’ leaving the Passage for ever. Harry was a one-time sailor who is now hampered by a bad leg.[[45]](#endnote-45) Before his lottery win, he spent much of his time just gazing out of the window. The narrator informs the reader that Harry has now ‘escaped at last from the window view’.[[46]](#endnote-46) The irony, of course, is that Harry has merely exchanged the window of his house for the window of his car, suggesting that his escape is superficial. Although Keeping’s illustrations depicting modern design are positive, they nevertheless come with an embedded warning about frivolity and material excess.

In the illustration that shows Harry driving away, there are two signs attached to the buildings on either side of the road. One sign reads ‘acquired for development’ and the other ‘this building for sale’.[[47]](#endnote-47) Although the narrative is an ostensibly happy one it is also potentially ominous. Change is afoot. What will happen to the residents of the area who did not win the lottery? Will they be able to afford to stay and will they want to? [[48]](#endnote-48) The mixture of bright blue (the colour of Harry’s house after it is renovated) and the dull brown (the colour of the street prior to redevelopment) might be interpreted in a way that suggests an approaching clash between the old and the new.

The equivocality of *Charley, Charlotte and* *The Golden Canary*, *Inter-City* and *Railway Passage* enables Keeping to express a range of tensions relating to post-war housing without becoming didactic. Maria Nikolajeva suggests that children’s picture books found in average bookstores ‘hardly promote visual literacy with their symmetrical word/image narratives. A young reader may enjoy the illustrations, yet these will not encourage any substantial effort in meaning-making.’[[49]](#endnote-49) Keeping eschews this conventional approach to storytelling in children’s literature by creating instead a dialogic text that expresses common anxieties about post-war architectural design while simultaneously challenging these apprehensions. Rather than reiterating negative discourses on post-war reconstruction, Keeping’s verbal-pictorial narratives provide opportunities for the child reader to construct his/her own meaning and opinions about post-1945 modernist approaches to designing and building the domestic environment.

**Estates: Post-war Housing and Millennial Picture Books**

While features of nineteenth-century architectural design are still commonly deployed by illustrators of children’s picture books to depict positive images of domesticity, since the end of the twentieth century there has been an increase in the number of picture books that include positive visual representations of post-war housing. Michael Rosen’s and Bob Graham’s *This is Our House* (1996), takes for its setting something resembling a high-rise post-war housing estate, and centres on a group of young children playing in a playground situated in the middle of the estate. What is notable about *Our House*, is the way in whichGraham’s deployment of non-naturalistic perspectives and panel structure can be seen to challenge unfavourable views of post-war housing. In *Estates: An Intimate History* (2007), Lynsey Hanley lists the negative experiences and qualities that are typically associated with post-war estates: ‘Play word association with the term “council estate”. Estates mean alcoholism, drug addiction, relentless petty stupidity, a kind of stir-craziness induced by chronic poverty and the human mind caged by the rigid bars of class and learned incuriosity.’[[50]](#endnote-50) The point Hanley is making here, is that post-war housing estates are rarely thought of in a favourable light; they are associated with a social deprivation that fosters crime and violence. It is just such an image that Graham’s illustrations can be seen to contest.

Throughout the text Graham’s use of extreme low and high-angle perspectives work to emphasise visibility. For example, on one page figures can be seen looking out of windows and down onto the children playing in the centre of the estate (fig. 9). The low angle encourages the reader to share this feeling of being overlooked. On another, four panels frame the children as they play (fig. 10). In the first panel, we look down onto the playground from high above. The framing device gives the impression that the reader is looking through one of the building’s windows, the view being almost an inverse of the low-angle perspective discussed above and which features on the following page. The relationship between these inverted images traces the line of sight that exists between the children and the adult tenants; the inversion suggests that both parties are in sight of each other. In this way, Graham’s illustrations can be seen to respond to the popular belief that parents living in high-rise dwellings were reluctant to let their children play outside because they were too far away to watch over them. The enhanced visibility suggested by Graham’s non-naturalistic perspectives evokes a strong sense of community, where children are watched not just by their parents but by other residents who happen to look out from their windows. Graham’s use of non-naturalistic perspectives recalls *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary*, in which Keeping depicted the two friends sighting each other from the balcony of the tower block and the street, thus suggesting a connection between the street and the high-rise dwelling.

[Figure 9 here]

[Figure 10 here]

The bare drawings of the buildings in *This is Our House* create an atmosphere of openness. Colourless and rendered in crisp white lines with minimal extra details, the buildings are visually striking, especially by comparison with the playground scenes, which are depicted in bright colours and include lots of details about the children (e.g. their clothes, facial expressions, toys etc.). Graham’s distinctive rendering of the buildings gives the impression that the space is bright and open, contributing to the overall positive depiction of post-war tower block estates.

On the final pages, Graham uses a bird’s-eye perspective to give the reader a panoramic view of the estate and part of the urban surroundings beyond. The perspective directs the reader’s gaze towards the rooftops, which are occupied by a person admiring the view and a sunbather; on one roof, clothes have been hung out to dry. The flat rooftop is a distinctive feature of inter-war modernist architecture; it was seen to add functionality to the building, as well as providing more green space in densely populated cities. In *Vers une Architecture* (1923), Le Corbusier suggests that eliminating the pitched roof and replacing it instead with terraces would revolutionise the urban plan, creating light, open spaces for recreational activities and abolishing ‘airless and sunless courtyards’.[[51]](#endnote-51) In this respect, Graham’s bird’s-eye perspective links post-war high-rise estates with the innovative ideals of inter-war modernist architecture—in particular, with new methods for creating appealing open spaces in densely populated areas.

In *What If…?* (2013), Anthony Browne can also be seen to create positive representations of post-war development. Set on what appears to be a modern housing estate, the narrative follows a mother and her young son as they walk along a street. Most of the houses they pass include modern features such as large, plain windows and a variety of façades, such as timber and concrete. Browne’s illustrations of large windows resemble both a television screen and a display cabinet akin to glasshouses at the zoo (fig. 11). In so doing, they invert Bachelard’s notion of the house as site of seclusion, suggesting instead that the home is a permeable space in which internal and external realms are frequently brought into confrontation with one another.

[Figure 11 here]

Rather than the vertical structure of Bachelard’s dream house, which enables the home’s seclusion from the outside world, the houses depicted in this picture book can be seen to conform to a horizontal system of organisation. The large windows function as screens; they ‘flatten’ the interior presenting it to the world outside, much like the television screen flattens the external world, bringing it inside the home in the form of two-dimensional images. Browne’s illustrations of the large windows suggest the potential for post-war domestic architecture to foster friendly, open communities. The narrative centres on a young boy called Joe. Joe has been invited to his friend’s home for his birthday party but can only remember the street on which he lives and not the house number. Walking along the street, Joe and his mother peer in through each living room window looking for Joe’s friend, eventually locating the correct house. In this respect, Browne’s illustrations suggest that the estate is open; we can see from the street what is taking place within the home and this dynamic creates a safe and secure environment for children.

Although after the war there was an initial delay before illustrations of post-war housing began to appear meaningfully in children’s picture books, since the end of the twentieth-century there has been an increasing visual and verbal engagement with post-war domestic architecture. Graham’s and Browne’s illustrations can be seen to build on Keeping’s illustrations, which explored new perceptions about domestic space. In particular, Graham and Browne both promote the idea that the home does not just have to be experienced as a retreat from the outside world but can also be understood as a site of confrontation with it. Unlike Baudrillard, who interprets the collapse between the private and public realms negatively, Graham and Browne’s illustrations suggest how this might create safe and friendly environments for children. To return to Nodelman’s observations on the role of children’s books in promoting specific cultural ideologies, millennial children’s picture books seem to more readily (and positively) explore the possibilities of post-war housing, providing children with meaningful images of domesticity that stretch beyond the previously idealised nineteenth-century dwelling.

**Outlook**

The question may be asked if children’s literature in other countries is different. The scope of this paper did not allow for a comprehensive enough survey of picture books from other countries. An initial brief survey of books from Germany shows a slightly different attitude to modern urban environments. A very brief look at Scandinavia revealed a similar attitude to modernism in architecture and modernity in general as that found in Britain. For example, in an interview with the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren, Jonathan Cott describes the ‘old red farmhouse’ where Lindgren was born as the ‘archetype of all the houses that appear in your children’s books’ and Lindgren bemoans and is critical of new developments.[[52]](#endnote-52) It is part of the broader aspect of this project to expand the research to other European countries as direct Western comparators, and to China, which, due to its rapid urban expansion over the past thirty or so years should provide an interesting testing ground.

1. **Notes**

   This also applies to some degree to the more recent past. However, it is noticeable that modern architecture is more present in picture books from the last 20 to 30 years. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Numbers game’ is the ‘colloquial term for the contest between the Labour and Conservative administrations to see which could construct more residential units.’ John R. Gold, *The Practice of Modernism: Modern Architects and Urban Transformation, 1954-1972* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibid*., p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid*., p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *Ibid*., p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See Gold, *The Practice of Modernism*, p. 280. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Elizabeth Bowen, ‘The Bend Back’ in *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 54-60 (p. 59). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xiv. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Although domestic modern architecture was in its infancy in the UK in 1951, Bowen’s writing refers to what was inevitably to come as a result of urban reconstruction in the 1950s and 1960s, and its underlying principles of which had been evident and ‘in the air’ ever since the CIAM IV conference on the functional city in 1933. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See also Margaret and Michael Rustin, *Narratives of Love and Loss* (London: Karnac), 1987, and Jonathan Cott, *Pipers at the Gates of Dawn - The Wisdom of Children’s Literature* (New York: Viking Penguin), 1983, in which the deeper running suspicions of modernity expressed in children’s fiction are explored. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Douglas Martin, *The Telling Line: Essays on Fifteen Contemporary Book Illustrators* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1989), p. 230. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. The awards used to build the initial sample were: The Kate Greenaway Medal; The Kurt Maschler Award; Waterstone's Children’s Book Prize; Blue Peter Award; Booktrust Best New Illustrators Award; Hampshire Picture Book Award; Booktrust Early Years Award; British Illustrated Children’s Book of the Year; Red House Children’s Book Award; Nestlé Smarties Book Prize. To get a sense of what kinds of narratives and images were being valorised by the institution, the initial sample focused on award-winning picture books. The books discussed in this paper were selected using two key criteria: either they provide typical examples of the way in which nineteenth-century architectural design is privileged, or they include detailed engagement with post-war architectural ideas. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. John R. Gold, *The Experience of Modernism: Modern Architecture and the Future City, 1928-1953* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997), p. ix. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. John Partridge, ‘Roehampton Housing’, in Elain Harwood and Alan Powers, eds., *Housing the Twentieth Century Nation* (London: The Twentieth Century Society, 2008), pp.113-120 (p. 115). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. *Ibid*., p. 120. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Andrew Higgott, *Mediating Modernism: Architectural Cultures in Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Perry Nodelman, ‘Decoding the Images: Illustration and Picture Books’ in Peter Hunt, ed., *Understanding Children’s Literature* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 128-39 (p. 131). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. We are aware of that the illustrations in ‘how to’, nonfiction and information books might offer representations tha slightly differ from our findings, and that, particularly since the 1970s, modern urban and transport environments in particular have been featured in Puffin and Ladybird books. However, these types of books were not the research subject of this paper, which has its focus on British domestic architecture in fiction picture books. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans., Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p.25. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. *Ibid*., p. 25; p. 20; p. 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. *Ibid*., p. 25. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. *Ibid*.,P. 26; p. 27. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Bachelard of course ignores, in his analysis, developments such as Le Corbusier’s Unité buildings in Marseille, which, although not consisting of cellar or attic, contain elements of verticality within the individual dwellings. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Herman Muthesius, *The English House* (Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1987), p. 181. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Children’s picture books continue to contribute significantly to a romanticised cultural commentary on the fireplace. Books such as *Can’t You Sleep, Little Bear*? (1988), *Black Dog* (2011), *Pumpkin Soup* (1998), and *Mr Bear to the Rescue* (1996) all depict the open hearth as a site for a range of desirable domestic activities, including reading, leisure time with family members, and cooking. In this way, the fireplace is associated with warmth, security, nourishment and community, serving as a kind of focal point of the home. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Philippa Pearce and Antony Maitland, *Mrs Cockle’s Cat* (London: Constable & Co, 1961), unpaginated. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Bachelard, p. 27. Despite the fact that the verbal and visual narrative emphasise the height of Mrs Cockle’s flat, the building itself is not high enough (or modern enough) to create the kind of horizontal sprawl described by Bachelard. Architectural features such as the fire place and the chimney still lend the flat a sense of verticality, which Bachelard associates with the conventional single-dwelling home. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Pearce and Maitland, p.10. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. *Ibid*., p. 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Antony Maitland updated his illustrations for the 1987 edition of *Mrs Cockle’s Cat*. All the new illustrations are black and white line drawings. The updated version of the illustration that depicts the view from Mrs Cockle’s roof is similar to the original with the addition of a high-rise structure in the far distance. The tower block is a faint outline and, unlike the houses, factories and churches that feature in the middle distance, it is impossible to identify the purpose of this high-rise building. The extent to which Maitland can alter the content of his illustrations is largely limited by the verbal narrative. Nevertheless, the updated illustration acknowledges the changing architectural fabric of post-war London, suggesting a shift in the way in which the city was mentally perceived. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Ironically, the panoramic perspective of London that Mrs Cockle enjoys from the roof of her nineteenth-century building would be enhanced if viewed from the top floors of a high-rise building. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Martin, p. 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. *Ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. *Ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Douglas Martin, *Charles Keeping: An Illustrator’s Life* (London: Julia MacRae Books, 1993), p.96. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Justin Wintle and Emma Fisher, *The Pied Pipers: Interviews with the Influential Creators of Children’s Literature* (London: Paddington Press Ltd, 1974), p. 53. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Charles Keeping, *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), unpaginated. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Bachelard, P. 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Keeping, *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary*, unpaginated. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid.* [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (London:Penguin Books, 2014), p.xviii. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Charles Keeping, ‘My Work as a Children’s Illustrator’. *Children’s Literature Association of Canada Quarterly*, 8 (1983), pp.24-9, (p. 19). [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Ecstasy of Communication’, in Hal Foster, ed., John Johnston, trans., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, (New York: The New Press, 1992), pp. 145-54 (p. 150). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. John R. Stilgoe in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. ix. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Charles Keeping, *Railway Passage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), unpaginated. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. *Ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. *Ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. In *Adam and Paradise Island* (1989), Keeping explores the impact of development and modernisation on a group of local residents who must all readjust after their homes are demolished to make way for a new motorway and a supermarket is built to replace the street market. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Maria Nikolajeva, ‘Interpretative Codes and Implied Readers of Children’s Picture books’ in Teresa Colorer, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Cecilia Silva-Díaz, eds., *New Directions in Picturebook Research* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 27-40 (p. 39). [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Lynsey Hanley, *Estates: An Intimate History* (London: Granta Books, 2007), p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, John Goodman, trans., (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2008), p. 129.

    52 Cott, pp. 153-154.

    Figure 1: Father Christmas climbing down the chimney, *Father Christmas* (1973).

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    Figure 2: Charles Keeping’s depiction of a high-rise building in *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* (1967). All images by Charles Keeping shown are copyright to the estate of Charles Keeping. Many thanks to the estate of Charles Keeping for permission to reproduce the illustrations shown here.

    Figure 3: Charles Keeping’s depiction of a balcony on a high-rise building in *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* (1967).

    Figure 4: Charlotte’s panoramic perspective of London from her balcony in *Charley, Charlotte and the Golden Canary* (1967).

    Figure 5: A view into a high-rise apartment from a train window, in *Inter-City* (1997).

    Figure 6: Mrs Cockle and her cat dreaming by the open hearth, in *Mrs Cockle’s Cat* (1961).

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    Figure 7: A cut-away perspective showing the interior of 19th century terraced house, in *Father Christmas* (1973).

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    Figure 8: On the left, number four after renovation works, showcasing a new timber façade, large windows, a flat-roof dormer, and a television aerial in lieu of a chimney pot. On the right, number five remains unrenovated in *Railway Passage* (1974).

    Figure 9: Residents of the estate watch over the children in the playground, in *This is Our House* (1996).

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    THIS IS OUR HOUSE by Michael Rosen & illustrated by Bob Graham.

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    Figure 10: A low-angle perspective and framing device creates the impression that the children are being overlooked by residents from their apartment windows, in *This is Our House* (1996).

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    THIS IS OUR HOUSE by Michael Rosen & illustrated by Bob Graham.

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    Figure 11: Large windows resemble both a television screen and a menagerie, in *What If…?* (2013).

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52. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)