

**Psychic Space:
An Exploration of the Child Subject in Fin-de-Siècle Fiction
(1890s–1920s)**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This research examines how fin-de-siècle fictions showcase physical space impacts into psychic space which disciplines, consumes and confines the mind of child subjects. This thesis looks at *The Secret Garden* (1911) and *A Little Princess* (1905) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, “The Rocking-Horse Winner” (1926) and “Odour of Chrysanthemums” (1911) by D. H. Lawrence, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) by Henry James and “Prelude” (1918) by Katherine Mansfield to study three major themes. The themes are adult projections on children through surveillance, domestic space acting as a consuming force, and the counter-spaces that children create to save themselves. Drawing on Foucault’s panopticon and heterotopia, Freud’s “Uncanny”, Kristeva’s “abjection” and Marx’s commodity fetishism, this thesis examines questions of adult anxieties about class, gender and economic instability that are projected onto child protagonists and the spaces they inhabit. These spaces, such as gardens, attics, and nurseries, become sites where children are manipulated into being something that they are not. And ultimately the research concludes that the spaces that children occupy are always corrupted by adults and are never their own to claim.

Keywords: space; psyche; projection; confinement; fin-de-siècle fiction, child protagonist

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all those children who have been suffering silently in their lives. They might be small humans, but their emotional strength is larger than life and I am proud of them for being so amazing and remarkable as they are. Despite their pain and suffering, they continue to rise above it all, carrying hope and striving towards a brighter future. May they always find the strength to shine and become the best version of themselves and find happiness, love and peace within, which they truly deserve.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century mark a significant cultural and economic shift in British history. British imperial confidence falls apart while newer psychological sciences shift the narratives of the self. Along with that, more discourse evolves around sexuality and morality, threatening the existing frameworks. These struggles around the human psyche and evolved moral dilemmas people faced marked their ways into the fin-de-siècle fictions as well. Along with all these magnified changes into the system and society, a child's figure from stories and novels also received an extraordinary symbolic weight. They no longer represent a stage of biological development; rather, they become an arena where adults project their anxieties, economic struggles and mostly moral ups and downs, which they are struggling with.

Philippe Ariès, a historian of the family and childhood, states in his work that during medieval times, childhood was not a clearly defined idea and that children were not the centre of attention for adults (133). It was not until the twelfth century that children began to be depicted in portraits, and by the seventeenth century, these portraits were more centered on children, reflecting how families started to give them more importance (33, 47). These changes came as the religious beliefs were getting stronger in Europe, and the childhood of Jesus, or "holy childhood" notion became stronger (37). This highlights the shift in ideology surrounding childhood and children, as it was not always a biological fact to put families together. But it is also a historical notion which has been shaped by social structural frameworks surrounding morals and ideals over several centuries. This notion is further

extended by the author Jacqueline Rose, who argues that “children’s fiction rests on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple. It is an idea whose innocent generality covers up a multitude of sins” (1). For her, the child is not simply an objective reality, but a shape constructed by adults’ desires and unconscious investments. Thus, the literary portrayal of children is never just a representation, but it is actively produced by the ideas of the adults and not through the children’s perspectives.

Another literary critic and a professor of Homerton College, Louise Joy, speaks of the child readers, who are supposed to indulge young characters from children’s fiction. She states that “the child reader is a powerless victim ... that children’s literature presents idealized versions of the world” (Joy 6). She states that this idea has firmly established itself in the study of children’s literature amongst many scholars. Further, she mentions “the belief that what children’s literature texts essentially do is to idealize the worlds they represent” (3). Joy states that the child subjects in fictions are designed to teach lessons and to build subjectivity amongst the child readers. In contrast, these fictions help adults to escape into a nostalgic lane where they wish to revisit, to help them with their adult anxieties to reflect and manage it.

However, this thesis does not investigate the portrayal of children in fictions from the projected ideas of adults. Instead, the central argument of this thesis is that in fin-de-siècle fiction the production of children as a subject of stories occurred spatially, through connected experiences with physical and emotional spaces with adults’ presence. Children’s minds are not shaped by adults only or by families or even absence of one, but are also influenced by the surroundings they live in. The spaces vary from homes and estates to schools; from gardens to attics and industrial cottages. These spaces are not passive backdrops but are

active agents that shape children's development both psychologically and socially. Adult concerns about issues of class, economic uncertainty, and imperial power, reflect onto children and build the environment they reside in. Therefore, space becomes a tool for control, restriction, and challenge in several ways, where adult anxieties and desires shape the space. Thus, child subjects are never truly portrayed as themselves in stories, as the stories are written by adult authors and represent a portrayal of what they want the child subject to be like. The question of whether through everything the child gets to have their agency or not is to be explored in this thesis.

This thesis investigates a collection of several short stories and novels to present the arguments of such controlled, restricted, and challenged spaces where the living space shapes the psychological terrain of the child subjects of the stories. The texts which are being analysed in this thesis are *The Secret Garden* (1911) and *A Little Princess* (1905) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, "The Rocking-Horse Winner" (1926) and "Odour of Chrysanthemums" (1911) by D. H. Lawrence, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) by Henry James and "Prelude" (1918) by Katherine Mansfield. The collection of texts provide a good mix of both novels and short stories produced at the end of 1800s and beginning of 1900s. Looking at different genres of fiction such as novels and short stories allow the thesis to have stronger ground to argue how in both genres of fiction the struggle of children is seen equally. The novels used in this thesis shows how space disciplines, heals and confines the children while the short stories capture the rupture caused by failed environments with more concentrated intensity. Therefore, they together cover a full spectrum of childhood outcomes which help strengthen arguments. As these narratives repeatedly suggest that the child does not just exist and occupy space but is constituted and formed by them. Furthermore, the formation of their

psyche does not happen smoothly, as they are constantly fighting adult projections and expectations to survive.

This space connects the ideas of innocence and sexuality, which are common themes with fin-de-siècle fictions. Tison Pugh states that children “cannot retain their innocence of sexuality while learning about normative heterosexuality, yet this inherent paradox runs throughout many classic narratives of children’s literature” (1). He argues innocence is not natural but is controlled through maintenance. Therefore, queerness comes out as “disruptions to prevailing cultural codes of sexual and gender normativity” (6). These controlled environments can be the secret gardens in *The Secret Garden*, to the haunted home in *The Turn of the Screw*. From the laborious playrooms in “The Rocking-Horse Winner” to the segregated attic spaces in *A Little Princess*. Thus, the argument is that the condition and stance of a place helps to narrate innocence and shapes the ideas of a child as a subject in fiction.

Psychoanalytic ideas help to understand the idea of innocence which is being shaped by the unconscious development of children in the formative years. D.W. Winnicott’s idea of “potential space” (the middle ground between inner and outer reality) suggests that psychic growth happens within structured and controlled dependence along with autonomy (23). It is where adults guide children towards the right direction with education and care, while giving them a choice to make certain decisions for themselves. Fin-de-siècle fictions showcase similar patterns of such supervision, where adults use rooms, gardens and houses to shape children’s perspectives or test them.

Similarly, several literary criticisms show children’s literature can sometimes play an important role in shaping readers’ minds and thoughts, as stories focus on themes such as class ranking, gendered expectations, and domestic ideologies while also showing resistance

towards these ideas. But often research focuses on these themes separately instead of connecting them all together to analyse the child subjects. For instance, recent research since the 1900s has begun to explore how children's thoughts and feelings connect with their environment. Therefore, it is unparalleled to combine both psychoanalytic and spatial ideas together to explore a vast number of texts for analysis. Moreover, spatial and political analysis of texts looks into how agency is formed in children but does not look into outside influences. Several psychoanalytic readings view children as symbols of adult unconsciousness, but completely neglect the influence of space shaped by adults. Thus, it can be said that no study brings together all the texts that this thesis looks at under a group of unified theoretical arguments. That is how the thesis contributes to the ongoing discussions by showing that spatial politics significantly affects psychological formation and social development of the child characters and their agency.

This thesis incorporates several analyses across three separate analysis chapters. The first chapter "The Imposed Blueprint: Adult Anxiety and the Pathologized Nursery", looks into how spatial control of space and mind is used by adults to project anxieties onto children. The central idea is that adults use spatial control to shape wild children into controlled and regulated children. For instance, in *The Turn of the Screw* the governess's perception of class and behavior is projected by the uncle onto both children, which turns Bly (their home) into a surveilled space. Children here are made to reflect adult desires, and their minds are shaped by adult fears and anxieties. In *A Little Princess*, the shift from a well-adorned nursery to an attic acts as a degradation of the safe space which reshapes Sara's psyche. Furthermore, in "Prelude" and in "Odour of Chrysanthemums", domestic spaces that the children live in become overwhelmed by their mothers' anxiety and start functioning as "permanent defense phenomena" (A. Freud 33).

In the second chapter “The Consuming House and the Child as Sacrificial Engine”, the theme of animated walls is explored, where the home starts acting as a ghost that starts to demand peace from children. This chapter argues that spaces that children occupy with adults start to consume. For instance, in “The Rocking-Horse Winner”, the house whispers when the maternal figure is missing from Paul’s life, compelling him to listen to its demands. Anna Freud states, “whenever the demands of instinct become more urgent, the ego is impelled to redouble its defensive activities” (150). Paul’s riding horse becomes his defense mechanism, which ultimately consumes him. Furthermore, in “Odour of Chrysanthemums,” the cottage where the family lives becomes a sealed vessel of economic struggle, which becomes clear when Walter Bates’ corpse enters the parlor. It transforms the space into an abject chamber, which connects to Julia Kristeva’s theory of “abjection” As she notes that the corpse “is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life” (4).

Finally, the last chapter, “Counter-Spaces: The Child’s Heterotopia and the Limits of Reclamation”, investigates the idea of reconstructing the idea of space. Here, the central argument is that children can transform spaces as Mary does when she visits the garden in *The Secret Garden*. Her reclamation of the garden as a space of rejuvenation shows how a space can be healed with the touch of care and conversely can heal children with their choices. Furthermore, in *A Little Princess*, Sara’s reimagination of the attic that she is stuck in provides comfort to her as a space where she can play around creatively. The attic therefore is a refuge, even when the outside world wanted to use it to entrap her. This chapter also shows how heterotopia does not always work in a child’s favour in the story *The Turn of the Screw* where Miles’ agency of having secrets instead of liberating him ultimately killed him.

This thesis is written using a qualitative research method. Here, fictions are examined through spatial and psychoanalytic theories to criticise how the stories surrounding children

are showcasing their psyche which is being formed by the space that they live in. This research is structured around three major themes: surveillance of adults, consuming psyche and space, and counter spaces which are created by children for their own safety. Each of these themes corresponds with theoretical lenses through which each chapter will analyse the primary texts. This thesis gathered materials from certain research websites such as *Google Scholar*, *ResearchGate*, *Project Muse* and *JSTOR* for academic articles and *Anna's Archive* and *WeLib* for collecting certain books' PDFs. A few hard copy books are also gathered from libraries in person for discussion.

In conclusion, the research statement of this thesis is that fin-de-siècle fiction hinges on a major concern, which is that children are not just mere beings to be cared for, but are vessels whose mental space can be controlled, explored, and influenced by adults. In that context, space is a primary weapon used against them when their psyche is concerned. This thesis examines how the outside world influences and creates confusing patterns for children, how later these patterns are internalized by their minds and how it affects them in terms of forming identity. As Waller states, "childhood books have a special place in reading histories, providing touchstones for future reading and giving shape to a sense of self over time" (189). But instead of looking into children as just bystanding characters, the thesis explores child characters of fiction as those who help people to form the idea and understanding of relevant child-related struggles. By exploring these texts, this thesis explores emotional structures of child subjects to show that spaces where children live are not always neutral but are active catalysts in shaping how they feel, act and behave. The child's psyche builds itself through the spaces that it experiences, and this process can be referred to as psychic space. A space where children are built or broken by adults, or a space where they are free or jailed by those who are supposed to protect them.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In the late 19th century, ideas about childhood changed significantly. The presence and welfare of Children became more regulated through institutions which allowed for psychological studies and examinations of childhood, etc. Scholars observe that fiction about children reflects adult anxieties regarding social class, sexuality, and moral decline; often set against their household environments. Furthermore, the spaces they occupy, both domestic and institutional, reflected these concepts and shaped their subjectivity, which explained how the spaces are never neutral but contested arenas.

Taylor Whittington analyses the story *The Turn of the Screw* where she states how the panoptic surveillance of the children passed by the governess transforms Bly into a disciplinary space rather than a safe home (2-3). Similar arguments are made by Shoshana Felman, who mentions that the governess is trying to reposition herself as an interpreter, where the narrative revolves around seeing and being seen amongst her and the children (98,104). Taylor Whittington also highlights how the concept of class is imposed by the governess through behaviour at home and in public spaces. The previous governess of Flora and Miles was taking care of them when they were much younger and their parents were alive, which is why she may not have tried to instil class expectations on them, enabling her to build a strong relationship with the children (3). In contrast, the new governess adheres to rigid social structures she is familiar with as she is instructed to (6).

Furthermore, Felman also mentions that the perception of the governess towards both children may have reflected the projections of her own desires on them (107). This further connects the governess's alleged corruption of the children to the surrounding conditions, affecting the children psychologically. This concept can be further explained as childhood

bound by spatial restrictions and strict access to knowledge can create a controlled space which regulates development, which is seen in *The Secret Garden* (Iversen and Jaquette 262-270). It presents a broader critical shift towards understanding how a space can act as an active participant in forming a child's subjectivity and development.

A recent study by Muhammad Ilham Ali highlights that home life often reflects the problems that adults face, which ultimately gets reflected on children. He mentions that adult environments and parental financial concerns affect children, leading them to develop compulsive and behavioral disorders (35, 37). Another research on Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude" argues the same idea. As Özge Güvenç mentions, a person's feelings are intricately linked to their surroundings, as the juxtaposition of nature with domesticated space can greatly shape a person's identity (26, 31-32).

Furthermore, Sonya Fritz's work on 'girlhood geographies' sees a similar pattern, where young girls from Victorian literature are shaped by the places they lived in, for instance the home, school or the street which define their identities and values (23-26). Fritz's research focuses on younger girls and aligns it with the view that living space reveals valuable information about one's position in life.

Surveillance claims to discipline the child, while domestic space functions to hold them within. It forces the child to absorb adult anxieties and reflect on them. Soyoun Kim's analysis of *A Little Princess* reveals something similar, where Sara has to live and act in a particular manner in her own space because of institutional control, managed by Miss Minchin. Kim argues that "Sara challenges the authority of the central adult in each tale by exploiting and changing the interior space of the school" (1). Sara manages to escape the uniform surveillance because "the ambiguous location of Sara's room helps to indicate that she is hard to locate within the school hierarchy" (6).

Furthermore, the attic window connects her with her past life in India as she can see the window of Mr. Carissford across from hers, allowing her to recover her past memories (9). Moreover, seeing Ram Das (servant of Mr. Carissford) and the pet monkey further allows her to feel reconnected to India. Ultimately, Kim states “Sara does not need to develop or to discard her old self” as her “‘Sara-ness’ includes the mixture of childhood and adulthood in a single body” (11). Nonetheless, this entire situation is troublesome as she stays bound within domesticity and is unable to escape even after escaping the attic (12). Therefore, Kim explains how space mediates adult anxieties regarding who can remain a child and who needs to grow up prior to time, directly correlating these dynamics into a child’s psyche.

D.H. Lawrence’s “The Rocking-Horse Winner” shows how a home can turn into a predatory space financially. As Muhammad Ilham Ali argues in his paper that Paul internalizes his family’s economic anxieties, especially his mother’s and transforms these into his own obsessive actions which turn him to earn more money for his family (34). The author’s psychoanalytic interpretation of the house as “house of whispers” is not just about the setting, as the children could constantly hear whispers from walls arguing about how they need more money (37). This auditory hallucination is the psychological force which drove Paul towards his tragic reduction of himself.

The idea of space and the demands of it have been examined by several Marxist thinkers. Sercan Hamza Bağlama looks at “The Rocking-Horse Winner” from the perspective of “commodity fetishism” and “alienation” as moving ideological forces in Paul’s home. He argues that,

Paul, who has been classified as a worker, becomes increasingly alienated and fearful because he is alienated to the product of his work the value of which is not objectified. He is not valued and praised for his success and driven to a sort of insanity in which he is not gratified with what he is producing. As a result, Paul loses his sense of personality and dies. In a way,

his lack of self-worth, self-meaning and his frustrated need for self-actualization causes his death (Ali 26).

Ali further asserts that the home that they lived in signified “distorted and self-disruptive values” where human relationships were meaningless in comparison to material possessions or accumulation (24). Therefore, Paul’s rocking horse transforms into a commodified object in his life and home. Furthermore, the home that they live in becomes a site of alienated labor, where Paul is raised as capital by his mother, and using him to maintain social standing is normal for his family (Kain 121).

David Wasdell discusses the transition from home as refuge to home as a predator from the lens of the Winnicottian concept of “environmental failure” (6). He states that when a space fails to be a provider for security and ceases to be the “holding environment of the womb-world”, where a child is supposed to be nurtured and safe, it becomes a failing environment for children (4-5, 18). In such spaces, children learn to comply with the demands of adults by forming a “false-self” where they suppress a substantial portion of their own identity and try to abide by their parents (18). This state forces the child to be fixated in continuity of labor, which is reflected in “The Rocking-Horse Winner,” where whispers of the house drive Paul towards fulfilling his mother’s wishes (4).

In “Odour of Chrysanthemums” Lawrence renders the household as a site of “abjection”, where the child subject is consumed into a space where the breakdown between the inside and outside occurs within self and other. The Bates house, which is situated in an industrial mining area, becomes the spot in which the boundary between the dead and living along, with familiar and alien, collapses. This idea is traced by Thomas McCabe, where he identifies a familiar turning to others in Lawrence’s work (150). He argues that this otherness and familiar uncanny was first spoken of by Lawrence, and it remains central to his understanding of human relationships (149-150). When Elizabeth Bates confronts her

husband's dead body, this profound realization of herself (one) and her husband (the other) is seen (156). She could not recognize her husband at that moment and felt connected to him as a partner, as if they had fallen out of marriage a long time ago, but stayed together only as an obligation towards the family. This fall of self and the other has been theorized by Kristeva as "abjection". As Jeanmarie Higgins mentions, the Bates household became a site where "Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either" is negotiated constantly (qtd. in Higgins 11). Moreover, another author, Ayca Gökçek, draws it further and states that Elizabeth's epiphany forces her to acknowledge the distance and otherness of her relationship, she is forced to see how the relationship she had with her husband started to fade even before his demise (35). The author further states, "The only connection left between her husband and herself appears to be children" but "the children belonged to life" and her husband is dead, so is her relationship (35). This perspective shows how children are used as adhesive to keep families together whether they are happy or not. So, a child in this abject environment produces dread which could be internalized by them without having conscious recognition of boundaries between safety and threat of relations, love and neglect which wash their domestic lives.

In Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, the spatial condition is more restorative, though while still being interconnected to adult anxieties. Kathryn DiGiulio argues that "moral and personal development does not result from full immersion in nature", but rather it happens when spaces blend nature and culture together, forming one's own agency (20). DiGiulio mentions how the garden which Mary finds in the manor functions as a "liminal" space which mirrors her liminal identity (29). She further states that the garden operates as a liminal enclosure for Mary; it allows her to negotiate her agency with the manor's cultural ideas to enhance her growth as a person (22). She outgrew her crude childhood behavior of demanding services and expecting to be spoiled while living in Yorkshire Manor and learning

to be her own person without the assistance of an *ayah* (23). But the author also identifies a massive irony here. She expresses that even if Mary does “put down roots” in the garden, her sense of belonging may not be fixated to one space (29). The idea of one making choices to stay but having no sense of belonging in a space shows that even healed spaces, like gardens, can worry a person to be displaced and feeling insignificant in society, which was visible for Mary. Another author, György Tóth speaks about how *The Secret Garden* is more than a children's story. He says that the novel “pulsates with the anxiety of Victorian society and tries to resolve its tensions by offering a pointed, albeit incoherent literary critique of contemporary socio-political structures” (118). He also asserts that the “question of whether Mary Lennox and Colin Craven can be cured of their illness can by implication be extended to a literary understanding of contemporary British society” (117). He further says that the psychological troubles of children, for instance, the “choleric” temper of Mary and Colin’s hysteria, are not just individual issues but are a part of broader imperial sickness (130). He further traces these illnesses to “the power-relations of imperialism and child-adult relationships,” revealing the neglect the imperial children face and how it corrupts the domestic sphere (130). Therefore, the restored garden can not escape the anxieties of imperial decline, class instability and gendered power that contribute to children’s sickness. Alexie McPherson analyses *A Little Princess*, where she states how this novel offers a strong counter space to operate as a “middle ground” where contradictory or opposing roles for women are harmonized (iii). She argues that “[i]magination as it is shown in Burnett’s novel is a process that combines the chaotic irrationality of the “madwoman’s” insanity and the logic and agency characteristic of the “angel in the home”—it provides a middle ground where aspects of the Victorian “good” and “wicked” femininities can be reconciled.” (iii). This analysis, where she terms the word “princess”, transforms the attic which was to serve as entrapment,

into a place of creative identity. She provides counter arguments as well and states that Sara's imagination solely relies on conditions of neglect and isolation to produce it. She mentions when Sara is sent to the attic, "she reenacts the Madwoman in the Attic narrative in a way that redeems the figure of the madwoman" (44). However, soon her imagination turns to a manifestation when Mr. Carrisford becomes her foster guardian who "uses his wealth and resources to make Sara's 'pretends' come true" (61). Sara, to some extent, believes that the "magic" she believes in is herself, but the readers can sense that the transformation occurring in the text happens with financial help from Mr. Carrisford. Thus, the attic transforms into a space of illusion where it provides temporary refuge but does not obliterate away the underlying hierarchies of Victorian society.

Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude" also offers a fragmentary perspective of a child-built haven. Elin Hafström expresses that a child's sense of house is formed through attachment towards "material objects" which "further help to explain the relationship between flux and stability in relation to the characters" (3, 6). In the story, Kezia, a seven-eight-year-old child, is "most vulnerable to and subconsciously aware of the distinction between children and adults" and finds security in objects that provide a sense of belonging (10). The space they live in is intended as "most concrete place that is supposed to be secure and welcoming" but is "instead pervaded with a sense of uneasiness" (11). Hafström argues that when children are merging into the adult world, they remain stuck between the "constructive rules of society" (3). Additionally, these rules of adult society reduce their chance to take place in it. Therefore, the space of a home eventually establishes the boundaries for belonging and confines creativity into the family's uncertain social performances.

In *The Turn of the Screw*, the children's innocence is presented as a practice to save themselves against the adults which they learn through regular interactions with them. Anna

Bocchi argues “Miles and Flora perform innocence” by intentionally avoiding the topics they are not supposed to speak of (181). However, this is not really a safe move as they do it just to avoid the governess’s gaze which is constantly on them. The governess’s rooted ideas of childhood as a pure thing cannot fathom it as constructed innocence which is artificial (181). Given that she believes their behavior is caused by ghosts which are roaming around them and maintains her belief as “the idea of an original, pure essence of the child” (172). The author finally mentions how Miles’ death is “an interruption of continuity,” where the governess could no longer continue to question and torment him (183). Thus, the children’s hidden world does not always create refuge; it can also cause violent destruction.

This literature review discusses the existing literature which shows how adult anxieties can be permeated into children’s psyche. Through the ideas of spatial and psychoanalytic theories, the next few chapters will discuss how it affects the children’s environment, by transforming their safe space into a surveilled space. A space where they cannot truly be themselves and explore being a child without having to adhere to any adult expectations. Additionally, looking into how children try to save themselves creates their own space to be free from adult projections and expectations.

Chapter 3 The Imposed Blueprint: Adult Anxiety and the Pathologized Nursery

What happens to a child when the very walls which are supposed to provide protection become the cause of their destruction? This chapter argues that in fin-de-siècle stories, familiar spaces like the nursery, schools, and attics are not just backdrops, but actively contribute to the creation of the broken, disordered child. Adults, whether they are governesses, headmistresses or anxious parents, transform these supposedly familiar, comforting spaces into structures of control. They use surveillance, spatial restriction, and emotional projections to control their own unsaid anxieties around class, gender, and economic issues onto children.

However, under these anxieties and spatial violences lie a deeper worry, which is that the children are often abandoned, physically or emotionally. Parents of such children are either dead, indifferent towards them or absent from their lives. Moreover, while they are missing, the guardians, such as a governess and headmistress, take charge of them, while providing them with no positive emotions. This form of abandonment, whether physical, emotional, or institutional, forms a void in children which is filled by adult anxieties or projections. This turns children into shadow-selves of themselves further disorienting their space in the world. This chapter examines Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* and Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude" to explore how children's homes are never a neutral environment. It rather is the blueprint for adult anxieties and abandonment of parental figures to problematize the familiar spaces for children, where

the child's mind becomes a battleground against the adults who are supposed to care for them.

In the book *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault describes the “panopticon” as an effective module to control people. He mentions that “[v]isibility is a trap” which creates “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (200-201). This system converts physical space to control thoughts and actions, forcing people to investigate their own behavior. This idea is further reinforced by Gilles Deleuze with “societies of control” (3). It is where the strict boundaries give way to “modulation”, a form of social control to constantly assess behaviour where people are often tracked through changing rules and regulations (4). In early twentieth-century fiction, the nursery of a child enacts a mixture of these similar ideas. In these places, the sense of being watched increases significantly as the children have encountered abandonment in their past.

These ideas of “panopticon” and “modulation” are evident in *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James. The governess who is hired by Miles and Flora's uncle converts Bly into a panoptic machine. She takes up the role of the children's guardian (uncle) who did not wish to be bothered by them. Thus, the children are left in the estate with the governess who fills the void with surveillance of the children. She patrols around the corridors when she arrives at Bly and constantly tries to understand and read into the children's gestures without trying to get to know them first. The governess mentions that she was “under a charm” when she first comes across the children which makes her accept children's innocence as natural, which is a thought of her own surveillance which she tries to narrate (James 24). This very idea could also be seen in a statement that she made “He was incredibly beautiful ... I then and there took him to my heart for was something divine that I have never found to the same degree in any child—his indescribable little air of knowing nothing in the world but love”

(23). She also later mentions something in contrast by saying “I was under the spell, and the wonderful part is that, even at the time, I perfectly knew I was. But I gave myself up to it” (33). This shows that the scrutinising gaze of the governess is so prevalent that the children started to fake their innocence to defend themselves. As the governess expresses the gentleness of the children is “almost impersonal and certainly quite unpunishable” (33).

As Taylor Whittington expresses, children become subjects of the panoptic system, where silence can be read as a means to corrupt them. He states that, “they are being taught how to function in society; therefore, this entails them learning how to live in a panoptic system operating under social control” (6). As children are abandoned and orphans, they have no strong ground to contest whatever is happening to them and their innocence causes more suspicion because of how it is being read by the governess. Whether it is their silence or their body language, the governess’s perspectives of the children keep evolving to a point where she attempts to identify these attributes as corruption which would require correction.

In Burnett’s *A Little Princess*, a comparable situation unfolds but through economic discipline. Sara Crewe’s mother died when she was younger and later her father died in India, just like Miles and Flora’s parents who died in an accident in India. Sara’s father dies soon after leaving her at Miss Minchin’s seminary as he could not take care of her adequately all by himself. After his death, Sara is neglected and forced to live in the attic as she could no longer afford the previous lifestyle as a wealthy daughter of a wealthy father as no guardian could pay for her school. She fell off her social ladder overnight and is forced to become another staff member at school where she is sent to study. As Sara exclaims to Becky, a young maid who lives at the school and helped her around, “There’s no difference now. I’m not a princess anymore.” (Burnett 55). Thus, her substitute home becomes her prison world where she has to earn her living by doing chores and teaching French to young girls. As Miss

Minchin says to her that she “will have to do more than teach the little ones ... run errands and help in the kitchen as well as in the schoolroom.” (53). The school and the attic become the panoptic space where she is monitored all the time, and Miss Minchin, her former caregiver, becomes her “jailer” who always keeps an eye on her (62). But Sara holds on to a stronger core belief that she will not break apart from all the sufferings that she is dwelling with like a princess she believes she is accepting jail time. She ends up seeing everything from a unique perspective, she understands that she is not privileged anymore, but she refuses to break down under such circumstances, holding on to her agency of having grace through difficult times. This ideal by Sara irritates Miss Minchin even more over time which is understandable from her intensified behavior over time. As it is seen that Miss Minchin is scolding Sara even for laughing, “What are you laughing at, you bold, impudent child?” and further she states “Beg my pardon immediately” for thinking about something (83).

By contrast, in Mansfield’s “Prelude” the panoptic view is shown in a different but equally fascinating manner. The Burnell household is not a formal restricted institution but a home which works as a scattered disciplinary space. The mother in the story, Linda, is barely focused on the children and barely cares for them as Mansfield writes, “‘Are those the children?’ But Linda did not really care” (11). The children are generally looked after by their maternal grandmother who provides care but no parental surveillance. But the panoptic gaze here is internalized by children, mostly by Kezia who is the middle child around seven-eight-years old. She is independent and observant of her surroundings and senses the “standards” of feminine behaviour. But, instead of adhering to these standards, she rejects them by saying, “I hate playing ladies” to her sister Isabel who seems comfortable with the idea of playing family with dolls (30). Isabel is older, and possibly was better conditioned by the caregivers, which is why she agrees with the gender norms set by elders. On the other

hand, Kezia's refusal shows how a child does not always need to be told what she should think and do; sometimes they develop their own identities and belief systems too which strongly represents her own formation of agency. Moreover, the possibility of failed adult supervision on the middle child, who often gets less attention, can also explain why Kezia is not deeply conditioned to gendered ideas. Therefore, it can be said that sometimes surveillance which governs children does not always shape them fully, but children are capable of forming their own beliefs as well when given space.

While Michel Foucault speaks of mechanisms of control, Sigmund Freud explains the troubled psychic spaces with notions of the "Uncanny" (*unheimlich in German*). With the aid of Freudian Uncanny, it is possible to understand how a space which was supposed to be happy and filled with care turns into a space of fear and dread. As Freud states, "The subject of the 'uncanny' ... undoubtedly belongs to all that is frightening — to all that arouses dread and horror [...] it tends to coincide with whatever excites fear in general" (84). Freud argued that "The German word *unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of 'homely' [*heimlich*]," and "the prefix 'un' is the token of repression", which adds dread into the concept of home and comfort (85, 95). It becomes scary because "the uncanny as something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light" and the very place where the children live turns into 'an *unheimlich* house' (or) 'a haunted house'" (93). In these nineteenth-century texts, the homes and the schoolrooms which are supposed to be the safest spaces transform into spaces of fear and dread. This occurs because adults start to project their anxieties surrounding class, economic hardships and death onto the children.

In *The Turn of the Screw* the concept of the "Uncanny" can be seen repeatedly across the story which creates feelings of the Uncanny within the country estate where the children reside. Bly is described as "a big, ugly, antique, but convenient house" (James 17). But it is

not only the place which highlights ideas of the unfamiliar, but the governess herself represents the concept of the Uncanny here. She comes into Bly expecting handsome men riding horses and the rich country estate, but her perception soon changes after the encounter with Peter Quint whom she sees “high up, beyond the lawn and at the very top of the tower” (27). Her encounter with the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel (the previous governess or whom she believes the ghost is), transforms her narrative of the children from innocent to troubled soon. Both the children become “double” projections of Freud’s narrative in the view of the governess (90). They become double projections as they know the history of the estate which the governess is unaware of. The ghosts are only seen by the governess, which transforms the Uncanny projections of her anxieties. She gets scared by the ghost of Miss Jessel by the waterbody and even more unnerved when Flora, who is with her, refuses to acknowledge the ghost and keeps playing. As the governess vents to Mrs. Grose “Not a word—that’s the horror. She kept it to herself! The child of eight, that child!” (51). Flora, since then exhibited a sense of the Uncanny towards the governess, forming a source of dread as the governess believes that the child knows something, but is unwilling to share it.

Burnett presents the unfamiliar through lived spaces in *A Little Princess*. The attic where Miss Minchin places Sara becomes her refuge and nest, instead of a dungeon. Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher, describes the nest as a good, warm home, where the bird, in this context the child, is sheltered (93). Sara is introduced to her unfamiliar life after her father’s tragic death, when she faces loss both emotionally and financially. When she is sent off to the attic, she gets asked if she could bear living there by her school-mates, to which she responds, “If I pretend it’s quite different, I can ... or if I pretend it is a place in a story” (62). Her imagination forms a defense mechanism which saves her in that unfamiliar environment, from making her feel Uncanny. It helps her convert her reality into fantasy which is easy for a

child's mind to process, and converts the attic to a secured space. Thus, she never breaks apart and is never vulnerable to Miss Minchin's torments.

On the other hand, the Uncanny in "Prelude" is not really dramatic, as it does not have ghosts or scary attics. Here, everyday objects are described as the cause of discomfort such as the aloe plant, described as "thick, gray green, cruel, jagged", which apparently threatens the children with its grotesque look (23). Moreover, the domestic space which should comfort the children becomes the cause of discomfort as their mother has psychologically abandoned them. Therefore, the children have to accept it without a choice which makes the home less safe. There are also certain things that Kezia and her sisters are scared of such as long dark spaces and the brutal killing of birds, which they see. These incidents of encountering uncomfortable scenarios after arriving at their grandmother's place without parental presence, may have left them feeling foreign in their own home. Furthermore, with the absence of the primary caregiver, the mother, they often have to face discomfort by themselves, making them feel uneasy at times.

Melanie Klein's concept of "projective identification" shows how adult anxieties are absorbed by children through psychoanalytic mechanisms (8). In her work, she argues that the ego of a person splits and projects itself from unwanted internalized feelings to external figures (5-8). Then these figures, or children in this context, start to project these adult anxieties from within. Throughout her paper, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" she explains how the adults are passing off their own disowned qualities such as fear, helplessness, and anger onto the children. Moreover, they justify punishments, corrections, and detentions by treating them in a way as if these qualities were sustained by them from the beginning. Furthermore, this process is worsened with abandonment, especially when

parental figures are not able to accept their own shortcomings as caregivers and blame the children for being difficult and corrupted by their surroundings.

The idea of projecting adult anxieties on children is deepened by Selma Friberg's "ghosts in the nursery" concept. She states that "in every nursery there are ghosts. They are the visitors from the unremembered past of the parents, the uninvited guests at the christening. Under all favorable circumstances, the unfriendly and unbidden spirits are banished from the nursery and return to their subterranean dwelling place" (387). But in certain families "the intruders from the parental past may break through the magic circle in an unguarded moment ... [and] find themselves reenacting a moment or a scene from another time with another set of characters." (387). In this manner, the adults project their troubled past onto children, making children feel what they had felt at some point.

The governess in *The Turn of the Screw* tries to project certain ideas on the children. She built a concept on her own that the children were being swayed and controlled by ghosts. She therefore believes that the children are being corrupted by ghosts of their previous caregivers. Moreover, she believes they are faking being innocent in front of the adults at Bly and at church in the presence of adults. Later, when she converses with Miles, he asks her if his uncle thinks of him the same way as she does and she realizes that her thoughts have been sensed by him. And she tells Mrs. Grose, "They know—it's too monstrous: they know, they know!" (James 51). But the question of what the children knew arises. Certainly, they know how the governess views them as corrupted; thus, they act innocent to avoid being punished. This illustrates how the projection of adult fears can force the child to perform certain tasks which they do not represent, forcing them into secrecy. Moreover, the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel end up being the uninvited guests of Fraiberg's concept in the governess's mind. Her absolute obsession with wanting to banish ghosts by having control over the children

demonstrates how she is being controlled by her own paranoia. She fails to see that ghosts cannot be gotten rid of by surveillance over children, as both the children do not control what the governess sees or feels at Bly. Instead, what she could have done is to acknowledge the ghosts and help the children move on from them, if they were really seeing them.

Similarly, Miss Minchin's cruelty towards Sara in *A Little Princess* also reveals the ghosts of Miss Minchin's past, which get reflected on Sara while she is staying in the seminary. She does not seem to be a greedy person, but there is a possibility that her own life was shaped by hurdles and neglect, and these are the ghosts she could not face easily. That is why she does not appreciate Sara being spoiled and loved unconditionally by her father and shows contempt towards that. And when Ralph Crewe (Sara's father) dies, Miss Minchin starts projecting how Sara is abandoned and does not deserve anything nice, as she does not have money. But Sara is a smart and strong child who refuses to be colonized by Miss Minchin's thoughts; therefore, she says to Becky, "we are just the same--I am only a little girl like you. It's just an accident that I am not you, and you are not me!" (Burnett 31). Sara refuses to acknowledge any form of social hierarchy even when she could not escape from her painful situation, and she in return refuses to allow Miss Minchin makes her miserable.

To conclude, this chapter discussed how the pathologized nursery functions as an instrument through which adults impose their projections of life with surveillance and absence onto children. The implementation of excessive surveillance changes spaces of children's comfort into environments which they do not recognize for themselves. This makes them feel trapped and helpless. Furthermore, a child who has been neglected or abandoned becomes a receptacle for adult anxieties. Converting their safe spaces like homes into traps and drains their vitality by making them sacrificial engines.

Chapter 4 The Consuming House and the Child as Sacrificial Engine

When one starts listening closely, one can hear whispers coming off the walls, which are low, persistent, and it demands to penetrate the psyche of a child through rooms and walls into the core of the child. That is what this chapter investigates: how the domestic interior of a child's home becomes a living being, demanding an existence which absorbs the adult's economic and emotional anxieties and projects it onto the child. Here, the house no longer stays a passive structure for living but an active, speaking presence, a "spasmic body", as Kristeva says, that whispers, drains and consumes children within it (4). This part of the thesis argues that in fin-de-siècle fiction, the child's emotional being is not just shaped by the people but is also transformed by the space, frequently with disastrous consequences.

This chapter argues how the house that consumes children dissolves the boundary between the self and the other. It can turn the child into alienated labor that transforms healthy childhood space into a space of corruption. But, even in this gloomy and draining landscape, a garden sometimes can provide a liminal counter-space where healing remains possible. Even though it is often shadowed by the very anxieties that produce the issue. This chapter discusses D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner", where the whispering house enforces brutal financial logic. Here, from Marxist theories and D.W. Winnicott's ideas of "failed" environments, the thesis will see how the child becomes labor for a family which devours it entirely. Later, the story, "Odour of Chrysanthemums", is seen through the lens of Kristeva's ideas of "abjection" and the scary collapse of the self and the other. Mansfield's "Prelude" offers another lens where a mother's emotional withdrawal from her children turns the house into an emotionless abyss. Lastly, Burnett's *The Secret Garden* gives a sense of

healing, while also probing into whether the garden truly liberates the protagonist or just repackages healing as labor that heals.

D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner" shows a home where the family becomes a source of fear for pre-teenager Paul, as his labor was capitalised by his family. Instead of providing care and safety, Paul's home is haunted with worries related to finances. As the author describes, "the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: There must be more money! There must be more money!" (Lawrence, "The Rocking-Horse Winner" 20). The story also shows how the family members "trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: 'There must be more money!'" (Lawrence, "The Rocking-Horse Winner" 30). Paul's family belongs to an upper-middle-class background but his father does not earn enough to keep up with their lifestyle, which is the primary reason for the financial strain in the house. Furthermore, Paul's mother, Hester, is shown as a woman who is incapable of loving. She cares more about finance than that of her own children, as it helps her maintain an illusion of higher social status. This obsession fills the house with whispers that her children could not ignore.

When analyzed from a Marxist perspective of commodity fetishism, one can see Paul's house turns money into an obsession. Here, the family commodifies money as their goal to have a more comfortable lifestyle where they do not have to rely on their rich relatives. Hester loves the better things in life, like riding cars, always trying to keep up with her rich relatives despite her family not having enough financial capacity. As Karl Marx says, "A commodity is ... a mysterious thing" as it makes a person's labor seem like a character who has an existence (Marx, *Capital*, ch.1 47). In this context, the commodity is the car and finer things in life that Hester wants that are being bought by Paul's labor. He rides the horse not for fun, but as a means to earn money for his family's needs. His alienated labor occurs

completely under a consumer ideology, as his mother tells him, “It’s what causes you to have money. If you’re lucky, you have money. That’s why it’s better to be born lucky than rich” (Lawrence, “The Rocking-Horse Winner” 21). Paul is born into a family where money is the solution to everything, especially to his mother, who loves money more than anything. And at the end, it results in Paul losing his life through the excruciating labour of riding his wooden-horse.

Paul is forced to be a breadwinner of the house, changing his bodily form to a machine of financial production. As Marx states “the worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces ... [t]he worker sinks to the level of a commodity” (Marx, “Estranged Labour” 1-2). Paul’s very machine-like behaviour becomes his downfall: “he would slash the horse on the neck with the little whip he had asked Uncle Oscar for. He knew the horse could take him to where there was luck if only he forced it” (Lawrence, “The Rocking-Horse Winner” 22). He is too swayed by his mother’s financial well-being that he rides the wooden horse till he dies. This further shows how right Marx has been when he states, the person becomes the commodity even in death as “even as he lay dead, his mother heard her brother’s voice saying to her: ‘My God, Hester ... he’s best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner’” (Lawrence, “The Rocking-Horse Winner” 34-35). This statement explicitly highlights how he is simply sacrificed to keep the broken economy going on at his home. His family shows no remorse for him as a person; they rather glorified his death.

D.W. Winnicott’s ideas of “good-enough mother” and “holding environment”, which were originally published in 1971, explain why Paul cannot escape his mother’s demands (7, 56). He argues that a child’s healthy development depends on a mother “who makes active adaptation to the infant’s needs,” which is what an environment holds on to as the child grows (7). In “The Rocking-Horse Winner”, this idea fails. Hester is incapable of loving, as

she is always thinking of money, which shows the failure of Winnicott's idea. Hester's coldness and the whispers from the house create a situation where Paul develops a "false-self" which makes a lucky money-making child, and in the process the child-like qualities die from within. Paul's constant riding the horse is not a play but a desperate attempt to be a "lucky" child who was constructed to fulfil the family's wishes by betting more money each time with others' help. Lawrence illustrates Paul's "secret of secrets" as "his wooden horse," and this secret reveals that he is nothing but a designated victim of his family's requirements (31). Ultimately, this represents a collapsing environment where a child's imagination, which is supposed to be a source of glee, turns to a compulsion which drains them entirely.

Mansfield's "Prelude" highlights a much quieter but equally failing emotional holding environment. The home or the parents do not ask or demand money in this story, but it drains children's happiness through parental absence. The mother, Linda Burnell does not directly harm or exploit her children; she is just never present in their lives. It is evident from the part where her children come home extremely late at night, "but Linda did not really care; she did not even open her eyes to see" (Mansfield 11). She feels nothing for her children and also feels that her current pregnancy is a form of punishment, as it stripped away her agency. It shows Linda's withdrawal and inability to feel anything for her children, representing not only coldness but also a radical collapse of the holding environment. In this failed environment, the maternal role becomes so painful for mothers that only agony survives.

In a paper "Regretting motherhood: A sociopolitical analysis", Orna Donath speaks of how mothers "dar[ed] to say that although they love children, they hate motherhood ... sometimes even before the child was born, prior to their acquaintance with their children and independently of their children's characteristics" (355). This withdrawal from maternal

nurture is also a reflection of her marriage. It shows a deep failure of the environment that fails to provide care and love for a mother, which further impacts children. As Winnicott argues, a child requires a “good-enough mother” who makes active adaptation to their child’s needs; Linda offers no adaptation whatsoever. She emotionally abandoned her children in the care of their grandmother and often left them to wander through the household without any warmth or response to her children. She might be suffering from emotional distress herself as her own marriage is collapsing and the children are a reflection of that, which might have produced such separation from her maternal instincts towards her children.

Linda’s behaviour results in the children having a decline in their own emotional resources. Unlike Paul who is desperately trying to generate a fortune to fill the emptiness, the Burnell children from “Prelude” did not have any strategy at all to fill theirs. Kezia tries to fill the void with other refuges, her doll house, and the hidden corners of the residence. Nonetheless, these places do not offer her sanctuary in a true sense, which is shown through their garden’s description. The aloe plant in the garden is described as “huge plant with thick, grey-green, thorny leaves ... split and broken ... with its cruel leaves and fleshy stem” symbolizes the environment’s failure to flourish (Mansfield 23). Moreover, the fact that it is the only plant that grows there strengthens the setting further. It is alive but strange and monstrous, just like the house that the Burnell family lives in, alive, vibrant but emotionally Sterile.

Winnicott’s idea of “potential space” is the “space varies a very great deal according to the life experiences of the baby in relation to the mother or mother-figure, and [he] contrast this potential space (a) with the inner world (which is related to the psychosomatic partnership) and (b) with actual, or external, reality (which has its own dimensions, and which can be studied objectively” (23). Here, from this idea, it can be said that the Burnell

children do not engage much in play (family), as they do not have anyone to interact with them or reflect and return their gestures and emotions to them. Again, when the claim to the absent mother comes up, it reflects that when the primary parent is absent, children start to disappear within. Children develop the sense of false-self obedience, which is not really a performance for a watchful adult, but it shows a default reaction to emotional shutdown for them. In the story, Linda's response to Kezia on the concept of flowering of aloe plants- she says, "'Yes, Kezia,' and Linda smiled down at her, and half shut her eyes. 'Once every hundred years'" captures her own emotional paralysis. Her saying it aloud works as a form of mockery to herself. It is as if she is stating how she has been repressed from blooming herself in her marriage, as her husband is mostly absent and rarely spends time with his family and is busy earning money. Another instance of a failed environment is seen as her emotional growth has been stopped and is being reciprocated towards her own children. It signifies as if she has been trapped with no avail to freedom or choice over her own body. In this failure, the children's emotional energy is not being sufficed by effort to make the mother happy (something that Paul does with Hester), but it deteriorates slowly and silently. This lack of freedom shows the most heartbreaking form of a consuming household where you can never grow and are stuck in the same unhappy feeling forever.

On the other hand, Lawrence's story displays economic anxiety as a paranormal whisper to a child's world, and in the story "Odour of Chrysanthemums" he displays another kind of domestic space which is a site of "abjection". The concept of "abjection" is discussed by Julia Kristeva, who states that it is a breakdown between self and the other. She defines it by stating how it is a reaction to threat that "disturbs identity, system, order" (4). She further states how the "abject" is not a subject of an object, but it is "The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." (4). In Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums", the Bates household, which

is set in the coal industrial area, becomes this space. The space where the boundary between living and dead, love, and despair blurs out, trapping the children of the household within its collapse.

The story focuses primarily on Elizabeth Bates, but her children remain silent witnesses to the “abject” that ruptures their family and ultimately impacts their psyches. This is evident in numerous instances of the story, when Annie plays with chrysanthemums and her mother takes them away. She is annoyed about it stating how beautiful they smelled. However, her mother took them away stating, “It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he’d got brown chrysanthemums in his button-hole” (Lawrence, “Odour of Chrysanthemums”). This resentful confession confused the children, but they could not fathom why their mother described her relationship with the flowers with such bitterness.

From that incident till the moment when their father’s dead body is brought home after the accident in the coal mine. Both children are kept in the dark about what is occurring in their own household. Their mother instinctively believes that she is protecting them, but the children are often bristled by the horror of what was happening within the household. They can hear their mother’s screams and heavy silences coming from the other side of their room, but when they ask anything, Elizabeth would hush them out, even if it meant scolding. It is vivid from her strictness in her commands ““Go to sleep!’ ... ‘What are you shouting about? Go to sleep at once—there’s nothing’,” right when their father’s dead body is brought to the home parlor (Lawrence, “Odour of Chrysanthemums”). They cannot fathom what is happening outside as they cannot leave their rooms as commanded.

The children do not see their father’s body directly, but they can sense him coming home and it becomes a feeling where they could feel him in between life and death along

with a sense of love and horror. This is evident in the kind of questions they would ask, “‘Is he drunk?’ asked [Annie], timidly, faintly ... ‘Is he asleep downstairs?’” It represents the faint horror and care they have towards their father at the same time (Lawrence, “Odour of Chrysanthemums”). Furthermore, the house becomes a crypt instead of a refuge for a while, and the children living there are impacted by the abject atmosphere without fully understanding and knowing why. This displays how the childhood home can contain warmth and a terrifying idea of “Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A “something” that [cannot be] recognized as a thing” (Kristeva 2). This becomes their inheritance of childhood, a dread which would shape their psyche for long even after the corpse is taken away. Elizabeth’s lack of emotions towards her husband’s dead body and seeing him as a stranger also leaves a sense of shame within her, as she keeps on trying to hide the body from her children, fearing they will see him.

In contrast to Lawrence’s silent and consuming households and Mansfield’s emotionally absent homes, Frances Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* presents a more complex spatial dynamic. The garden in the story represents a site of more liminal energy, situated between the threshold of different cultures of India, Yorkshire and nature; it also represents death and rebirth. Unlike Paul who dies unloved, or the Burnell and Bates children who have to absorb their mother’s emptiness, Mary and Colin find comfort in the garden with a few people who care about them. Their garden became a safe holding environment for both of them which restored them to health and reconnected them to the adult world, unlike all the other children who were essentially abandoned by their family.

When Mary Lennox discovers the secret garden while following a robin after she comes to Yorkshire, her hard work with digging, weeding, and pruning helps her heal from within. Initially in the story, she is seen to be roaming around the estate feeling grumpy,

picking fights with everyone with her crude language. She is a heartbroken girl who had to endure her parents' death and her only living relative's absence, and finds a sense of purpose again through the garden. Burnett mentions that Mary "searched about until she found a rather sharp piece of wood and knelt down and dug and weeded out the weeds and grass until she made nice little clear places around them" (Burnett 93). This shows how she voluntarily works on the garden herself and is described as being "happy all the time" (93). This scene contrasts with Paul, where he rides his wooden horse compulsively, and it harms him in ways he does not recover from. Mary's choice in gardening is, in contrast, a voluntary task that she chose to do, giving her a sense of life through chores that helped her bloom. She loves doing the work; it is visible from her statement towards Martha, "I'm growing fatter ... and I'm growing stronger. I used always to be tired. When I dig, I'm not tired at all. I like to smell the earth when it's turned up" (123). The garden helps Mary to place her roots both literally in the garden and figuratively in her mind. Colin Craven, Mary's bedridden cousin, also discovers the physical tasks, and it changes how he sees himself. After finding out about the garden and learning to stand, he says, "This is only th' first day an' I've walked—an' here I am digging" happily (266). This further illustrates how the garden is a source of life for both children. While in the Bates' household the flowers and earth smelt of death, the garden where Mary and Colin played around embraced life and fulfilment through grass, soil and the digging of the earth.

What makes Burnett's stories different from the others in this chapter is their focus on how a child heals and re-connects their relationship with the adults and how they rebuild the relationship. In "The Rocking-Horse Winner," Paul's connection with his mother remains cold and distant until he dies from exhaustion. In "Prelude", Kezia tries to establish her connection with the mother. However, in *The Secret Garden*, the garden acts as a bridge

between Mary, her uncle and cousin, her only living family. Mary, in the beginning of the story, “was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived” turned herself over and learnt to care for others (2). She befriends Ben Weatherstaff, who is the grumpy gardener who calls her “A scrawny buttermilk-faced young besom”, till she slowly becomes a friendlier version of herself (255). Along with him, she also befriends Dickon and Martha, who stand beside her throughout all the things she dealt with. The garden helps her heal and these people do not allow her to feel lonely, which is the biggest torment of her life. Later in the story Ben’s perspective of Mary changes entirely from suspicion to real affection as he sees her helping Colin walk again. The garden, therefore, does not revoke any adult authority, but it instills support rather than oppression of any kind.

More than all these positive changes, the most significant repair occurs between Colin and his father. In the beginning when Colin meets Mary, he shares “My mother died when I was born and it makes him wretched to look at me. He thinks I don’t know, but I’ve heard people talking. He almost hates me” (146). It is as if his identity has no validity without affection from his father. However, when Archibald Craven sees his son walk and laugh freely for the first time, the reunion between them has not been observed in any of the other stories that this research looked at. The abandoned child finally finds a parent and along with him Mary also finds a guardian who would care for her. Colin is so elated to see his father that he ran to him and said “‘Father’ ... ‘I’m Colin. You can’t believe it. I scarcely can myself. I’m Colin.’” (339). His father, after knowing how the garden fixed and healed his son, said with great enthusiasm “‘Take me into the garden, my boy,’ he said at last. ‘And tell me all about it.’” (339). This enthusiasm of his father shows how the bond that was broken for a decade is healed with the help of the garden and Mary. Unlike the other guardians, Mr. Craven returns to his son and tends their relationship.

The garden's power also contrasts with the fear that is evident in the children in "Odour of Chrysanthemums." The flowers in Lawrence's story smell like a funeral; Elizabeth connects it to her failed marriage as well. But on the other hand, the garden in Burnett's novel was filled with a "fresh scent of the damp earth", flowers and grasses that were welcomed by all (92). While Elizabeth Bates faces fear when they have to dig up her husband and feel dread, in contrast, Mary and Colin dig up the earth with glee. The garden soil is not a grave here; it is a womb from which beautiful flowers and plants grew. This is exactly why Colin shouts with triumph that "I shall live forever and ever and ever!" (245). This outburst of happiness and enthusiasm is the exact opposite of the outbursts that happened in the Bates' household, which is filled with dread and anxiety ending in hopelessness and death.

This chapter explores how the consuming house in fin-de-siècle fiction functions as a psychological mechanism. Through Kristeva's idea of abjection, this chapter argues how a house blurs the lines between self and the other, creating dread which a child internalizes. From Marxist lenses, this part demonstrates how a child can become a sight of alienated labor and become a sacrificial engine of the household. And, lastly from Winnicott's failed holding environment, it sees how a child creates a false self. While most of the stories discussed were filled with despair, *The Secret Garden* despite it all, provides a counter-narrative. It shows how healthy a holding environment can also be. While other stories highlight the parental emotional absence, it displays healing relationships and lastly, a possibility of love which thrives like a garden. Unlike Paul, who dies unloved and Kezia whose efforts are always unseen, Mary and Colin got to build relations which are acknowledged and appreciated.

Chapter 5 Counter-Spaces: The Child's Heterotopia and Limits of Reclamation

What happens when a child starts to form their own identity and refuses to be a scapegoat to adults? Can they create a refuge of their own or will they drown in further dread imposed by adults? This chapter explores the child's acts of spatial resistance vis-à-vis how certain spaces like the attic can be transformed into a space of imagination, the neglected garden can be reclaimed, and society can be converted through knowing glances and sometimes even with deliberate silences. These can be referred to as counter-spaces which the children construct, reform, reclaim, and reimagine to reset their own psychological development. However, these refugees are not truly innocent; heterotopia is not really utopia. Sometimes it exists nowhere and other times it is an absolute existing space at a location, like a garden with a locked door or an attic with a borrowed key.

Drawing from the concept of heterotopia, post-colonial spatial ideas and the notion of potential space, this chapter argues that the child's counter-space is almost always compromised. The garden which heals also represents colonial territory, the attic which fosters imagination also serves as a stage where self-mastery is displayed, and lastly the secret bond that offers agency can also become a trap under the weight of adult projection. This chapter analyzes these ideas in the context of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, and *A Little Princess*, as well as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. The analysis will demonstrate how the heterotopia that provides refuge can also serve as a prison. Additionally, the child's imagination, which can be so powerful that it keeps them feeling safe and sane, can never secure their freedom from the prison spaces. Moreover, the walls that the child built are never their own but are always already claimed by others, mostly

adults. In fin-de-siècle fiction, the counter-space which comes with a promise cannot always deliver its promises and in turn it can turn into a trap which children cannot escape.

In *The Secret Garden*, the walled garden serves as a classical heterotopia, a real space which existed outside everybody's access but remained anchored to a physical location. Mary discovers it and realizes it is a space where adult rules and regulations do not exist. As Burnett stated, "It was the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place anyone could imagine. The high walls which shut it in were covered with the leafless stems of climbing roses which were so thick that they were matted together" (*The Secret Garden* 89). This heterotopia also represents a colonial territory, as postcolonial spatial analysis reminds us that enclosed gardens in nineteenth and early twentieth-century English literature can often reflect on imperial anxieties about Europe's civilizing missions. As Parminder Bakshi-Hamm mentions in her work, "Burnett's garden can only be established after it is as far removed from India as possibly could be and is cleansed of Indians and everything India stands for. Unlike India, the garden is a civilized, white space with restorative powers where Mary can find her true identity." (26).

This imperial narrative of India is vivid from the description of Mary provided within the story; she is described as the "most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. She had a little thin face and a little body, light hair, and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another" at the beginning of the story (Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 1). It is as if she has to leave the cholera ridden colony and embrace the fresh air of the Yorkshire moor to be a child of "civilized" English culture. Mary herself also thought how "in India she had always felt hot and too languid to care much about anything. The fact was that the fresh wind from the moor had begun to blow the cobwebs out of her young brain and to wake her up a

little” (53). From this perspective, it can be argued that the garden is not a neutral space for refuge but a space where re-education about imperialist ideas is taught. The child’s labor in digging, weeding, and pruning also represents internalized values of British culture in the empire. It showed agency through self-reliance, order, and mastery over something, in this context nature. When Mr. Craven allows Mary “a bit of earth” he tells her, “When you see a bit of earth you want ... take it, child, and make it come alive.” (136-137). These choice of words can be decoded as showing imperial possession of land and claiming of property to a child. This would be criticised by Sandra Chang-Kredl and Gala Wilkie who state that adults should “distinguish between different ways of thinking about childhood ... to interrupt [their] tendencies to project [their] own experiences onto others” (316). Mr. Craven teaches Mary that a garden is a place to be owned, not one to be shared. This colonial mindset is further strengthened by Ben, the gardener, when he refers to the robin as one who helped Mary find the key as “th’ head gardener” (43). It shows their joint authority as they had a sense of ownership over space, refuting the bird’s wild freedom over the garden. This severe imperial idea is passed onto the child from the adults, which affects their potential space.

The garden also functions as the “potential space” that D.W. Winnicott speaks of being the middle ground where play becomes possible (40). Winnicott states that “it is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult can be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self” (53). Therefore, in the garden Mary finds a potential self, which leads her to find herself as well in the process of making the garden her own space. It is clear from the statement she makes towards Martha that “When I dig I’m not tired at all. I like to smell the earth when it’s turned up” (Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 123). Colin too learns to stand and walk inside the garden

and claims he will live forever when he previously believed otherwise. Thus, for a brief, magical moment the garden offers a genuine counter space to the children.

The garden is seen to be evolving along with the children in the later part of the story. Michel Foucault states that “Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (26). The garden’s gate is locked by the adults, but Mary’s discovery of the garden does not represent any form of liberation from adult authority but rather shows secret appropriate appreciation of nature within it. Later, when Colin learns to walk in the garden, this signifies him being reintegrated into society again. He states how he sees himself as “The Athlete, the Lecturer, the Scientific Discoverer” (Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 340). These roles show the possibility of a growing child becoming an adult with achievements and mastery of subjects. Therefore, the garden heals children, and they are able to build connections by allowing the children to socialize. It is a heterotopia that serves as both a space of entrapment and refuge, a place where play returns to the child when they wish to escape adult scrutiny and encroachments.

In *The Secret Garden*, the garden represents a sanctuary for children, whereas, in *A Little Princess*, the attic transforms into a safe place where imagination creates new realities to ease pain and struggle. When Sara Crewe’s father dies and she loses family wealth, she is moved from a luxurious setting to a cold, empty attic. Here, she does not have her wardrobes filled with beautiful dresses or the ability to be like a princess anymore. Despite it she continues to thrive even without riches, wealth and dresses and transforms the attic space through imaginative work. It is an intentional choice, which is clear from her statement “If I pretend it’s quite different, I can ... or if I pretend it is a place in a story” (Burnett, *A Little Princess* 62). The space turns into a space of self-control where she is learning how to survive in her new reality. As she says to Becky, “we are just the same--I am only a little girl

like you. It's just an accident that I am not you, and you are not me" (31). By saying this Sara breaks the social class barrier between Becky, herself and others, challenging the control of class differences.

Winnicott's idea of "potential space" explains what Sara is doing as a caregiver. As Winnicott mentions, a potential space requires a good-enough holding environment for children, but in Sara's case the environment had already failed her. Both her parents are dead and Miss Minchin treats her harshly. Yet, Sara creates her own potential space through imagining that her life is still under her control and shows readers her agency of choosing to be who she wants to be by having a caring nature. Her caring spirit is built despite her not having a mother who took care of her, it is clear from what she says to Lottie "I will be your mamma ... [w]e will play that you are my little girl. And Emily shall be your sister" (Burnett, *A Little Princess* 25). It does not seem like a way for Sara to escape her reality, rather it seems like she is taking control of her life and more importantly ensuring the comfort of others who are in need. It mainly happens because she does not have any adults to protect her, so she took over the role of a carer and supported others. The narrator of the story mentions that her unique thinking and "her trick of pretending things was the joy of her life" (36). For a child, who lost everything at an early age, her imagination is the only possession she has which truly belongs to her and she uses that to show her caring side.

However, her imaginative space also holds an illusion that acts as a mirage. As Foucault states, heterotopic spaces "create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (27). Sara's attic fits this description to an extent; her pretense was only real because of her benefactor. It is Mr. Carrisford who provides her with expensive rugs and fancy dinner; it is not really magic, which breaks apart Sara's illusion of her being a magical princess. And when Miss Minchin

destroys the feast and the decorated space, the illusion breaks apart “the table was left bare, the golden plates and richly embroidered napkins, and the garlands were transformed again into old handkerchiefs, scraps of red and white paper, and discarded artificial flowers all scattered on the floor; the minstrels in the minstrel gallery had stolen away, and the viols and bassoons were still” (117-118). This incident shows how Sara’s efforts to be in control of her life is dependent on adult support. Sara’s attempt to escape her reality with the help of illusions is real, but the impact of it is not strong, as the attempt is based on imagination and pretense of being someone, who she no longer is, a princess. It certainly gives her a sense of refuge but does not help her to escape the attic. Nevertheless, in the end she is saved and she regains her comfortable life again with the generosity of Mr. Carissford. However, it did not really give her any form of freedom; it just gave her back her status which she had lost and regained with the help of another adult. The attic that holds and gives her a space to imagine, turning her focus to illusory freedom, could not really free her without the help of another adult and the things provided by him.

In Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, the children create a complex counter space which does not take place in a physical space like a garden or an attic. But they form a relational heterotopia which is formed by silence, evasions of private life and shared secrets between siblings. They create a safe territory for themselves to save them from the governess’s surveillance, and in return this territory collides with one another. The children often communicate through unfinished sentences and knowing looks. Moreover, they constantly refuse to confess anything when the governess asks them anything. This frustrated her which is visible from her outbursts. The children’s idea of counter-space is the knowledge which they refuse to share with adults, and they do not allow the adults to control any narratives. In a sense, it shows a heterotopia of deviation, as they do not allow the governess

to intrude on their secret; they create a space for themselves where their behavior falls outside the expected childhood innocence.

The counter-space of the children is maintained by a performance of self-mastery where they feign innocence and show their agency. The showcase of innocence is not submission but a strategy they form to evade the questions about their past from the governess and to ensure that what they wanted was maintained. When Miles is expelled from school and is asked about what happened, he says “Well— I said things.” to the governess, trying to maintain the narrative without giving away much information. And when he is asked about what he said he only responded with “They thought it was enough!” instead of giving an actual answer (James 146). This shows a significant communication gap between the two parties, and what he chose not to disclose represents the gateway to the heterotopia and maintains their agency. In another instance, when Miles is asked about what he wants he responds to the governess with “You know, my dear, that for a fellow to be with a lady always—!” with an arch smile (92). This sentence ends in an unclear yet knowing silence. This incomplete sentence further represents the door to the child’s mind which the governess could never cross. An intentional withdrawal of speech that marks the boundary of their own space which serves as a defense mechanism against the adults who sought to intrude on it. This is the only way both children can protect each other after losing their parents and being abandoned by their uncle.

Despite what the children tried to do with this counter-space, it always remains fragile. The governess does not accept the children having secrets and having ambiguous thoughts or desires that she disagrees with. She demands explanations and confessions which the children refuse to acquiesce to. When Flora is asked about Miss Jessel, her face took a shift “she was literally, she was hideously, hard; she had turned common and almost ugly”

(James 122). Later, Flora, who is much younger than her brother, claims how she does not like the governess in a stern voice. This incident shows how at times Flora failed to keep the performance intact. The heterotopia in this instance does not break because of the children; it happens because of the adult projections which they no longer can bear. When Miles is cornered at the end of the story, his threshold collapses entirely as he cries “Peter Quint—you devil!” right before he dies (148). The secret they tried to keep does not provide them with the protection they thought it would, but it turns into a trap which promised agency under adult supervision. Instead of keeping them safe, it pushes them towards a calamity they could not escape.

The heterotopia fails because the governess fails to provide a safe space for the children to be themselves. As Winnicott states, a good mother (caregiver) maintains a good-enough reliable space which would withstand the child’s fantasies (7). The governess fails in this regard. As she retaliates against the children’s choices by forcing them to open their secrets, she destroys the fragile boundary between the children’s heterotopia and the adult world. Their performance of self-mastery fails for the same reason, the counter-space which promised them a holding environment ended up annihilating them.

This chapter shows how the children’s counter space can provide a heterotopia which can be both a refuge and a trap for them. The arguments show how walls built by the children are never truly theirs. The garden provides a colonial space; the attic becomes a stage for self-mastery for an audience who gives charity. And a secret which becomes a prison waiting to be trapped within. The imagination of the children can be immensely powerful, but it cannot give them freedom with their agency. In *fin-de-siècle* fiction, the child’s counter architecture is always colonized, not only by ghosts but also by the structures of class, colonialism, and adult authority.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This thesis argues how fin-de-siècle fiction can turn physical space into a psychic mechanism where someone disciplines, consumes and confines children's psyche. Across three analysis chapters, this thesis found a pattern of adult projections which are often followed by child resistance with agency. However, this resistance towards adults does not free them or allow them to escape to a safe space. The central argument is that children in these fictions are not beings to care and nurture, but they represent territories which are there to be exploited and controlled, with space as the primary tool. Furthermore, the agency which they try to practice sometimes works in their favor, but in the cases of Paul and Miles, their agency or lack of it caused their destruction.

The arguments begin with childhood homes (nurseries) in the first analysis chapter. In this chapter, the arguments present how adult figures, such as governesses, headmistresses and parents, transform a domestic space into an institutional space which is controlled through the panoptic vision of the adults. Through Foucault's panopticons, this chapter shows how surveillance can produce problems with children, which later require corrections. Through Freud's Uncanny, the portrayal of adult anxieties is shown. In this instance, repressed adult anxieties surrounding class and gender are explored in this chapter. Furthermore, through Klein's projective identification and Fraiberg's concept of "ghosts in the nursery", the mechanism through which adults put down their unwanted feelings on children is analysed. All these concepts make the child feel confined within their own comfortable spaces, their homes, and schools, where they are no longer in a neutral zone, but rather are exposed to a battlefield where they constantly fight for freedom.

The next chapter explores how the homes and people surrounding children do not just discipline them, but they also consume their emotional wellbeing. In this chapter, this thesis explores how homes and adults can turn a child into compulsive labor, sacrificing the child's life. Through Kristeva's concept of "abjection", this thesis explores how within a home people start seeing each other as "others" producing an unknown dread onto children. Moreover, through the concept of a failed holding environment by Winnicott, the chapter shows how it drains a nursery rather than sustaining it with care and love. This chapter also displays how a holding environment does not always work negatively, as it argues how a liminal space like gardens can provide a good-enough holding environment for children. A space where children can flourish and grow along with nature and the adults surrounding them, making them happy and independent to a certain extent. However, the major issue is that, whether these children are broken or molded firmly by space, they are never free from adults.

This understanding of children asking to be freed has led to the last analysis chapter, where the children are constructing a counter space to practice their agency to feel safe. Through Foucault's heterotopia, the gardens, attics and secret societies are contested within the social norms by children. The idea of postcolonial spaces displays how the garden's healing power is inseparable from having a sense of property ownership. And with Winnicott's potential space, the chapter helps to understand that the child's capacity to create a counter-space depends on a safe holding environment which is often absent or compromised. Finally, this chapter also analyses how a counter-space can collapse when secrets get too heavy. In this chapter, the garden is presented as a colonial property and the attic a stage where self-mastery of imagination is formed. Lastly, the secrets are portrayed as a prison, which is often waiting to be sealed or destroyed.

Across the major themes of the thesis, control, consumption and resistance; a constant pattern of restraint emerges. Adult society, which is already anxious about its own fractures, puts those anxieties into the children's environment, projecting itself onto them. The child responds to these and internalizes the ideas or attempts to form a counter-space to keep them safe. Yet, these counter-spaces which they try to form are often already colonized by adults where they collapse under adults' surveillance. A child's attempt to escape is always real, but they can never fully be liberated from adults.

In conclusion, the stories in this thesis refuse to comfort the narrative of childhood as a time of innocence and safety. In turn, the chapters argue that the child's emotional being is structured under a trial of adult fear. Furthermore, the walls that children built for themselves are always used against them. Whether the spaces they are occupying are a nursery, an attic, or a garden, each of them reflects adult anxiety, where children are never truly freed. The child becomes a keeper of these anxieties through ghosts, being economic beings, or screens for adults to project themselves. Ultimately, the space they live in becomes a record of a society where adults refuse to look into themselves and fix themselves, but rather become a space where adults just put down their anxieties onto the children without reflecting them.

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