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Escaping institutional- rebellion and gendered space in *Eric, or Little by Little* and *A Little Princess*

Abstract: By the convention of nineteenth-century school narratives, students are supposed to grow up in the school while their characters are being molded by the standardized educational system. Eric, or Little by Little and A Little Princess both resist the very idea of linear growth that is a trope of the Bildungsroman through endowing their protagonists with the rebelliousness and outsider status of the unruly child. This essay examines how Eric Williams and Sara Crewe, disobedient students who leave their schools after deriving no benefit from the institutional education, illuminate the ways in which institutionalism is incorporated with the gendered agendas of nineteenth-century England. Eric and Sara both challenge the authority of the central adult in each tale by exploiting and changing the interior space of the schools; not only the inner structures of each school but also the connection/disconnection between school and home differ in the two stories. My proposition is that in the nineteenth-century school narratives discipline and character-building in the institution are not viewed as inevitable in reaching adulthood for girls, while for boys there is neither exit from the institutionalism nor way to recover their lost home and childhood.

Keywords: children's literature, rebelliousness, institutionalism, gender, school space, home space, nineteenth-century school narratives, linear growth, unruliness

Nineteenth-century Anglo-American school stories use space in a way that reflects contradictory perspectives on childhood and institutionalized education. During this period, the school became more and more independent from the home because of the institutionalization of education (Gargano 1); while followers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau sometimes celebrated school as the ideal site for transforming young savages into ideal citizens, Wordsworthian Romantics viewed edu-

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cation outside the home as maleficent to children (Holt 77, 95–96). Although some school stories hint at ways to improve the school system, they still tend to adhere to the notion that institutionalized education is necessary for children to become respectable adults, suggesting that both positive and negative experiences at school help them to achieve maturity. For instance, Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857), one of the best-known canonical school stories, is a Bildungsroman that stresses how the protagonist undergoes "consistent, linear growth" in the school space even though he sometimes experiences personal failures (Holt 88). In contrast, other Victorian novelists such as George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Charlotte Brontë portray schoolroom scenes negatively to express suspicion towards standardized education (Gargano 3–4).¹

The school story's interest in standardization makes it a natural venue for the discussion of unruliness, an issue that has recently preoccupied children's literature critics. Marah Gubar, for instance, argues in *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* that Victorian children's authors frequently offer their readers strategies for deploying "canny resourcefulness" in negotiating and to some extent resisting "the pervasive and potentially coercive power of adult influence" (5). Similarly, in *Tales for Little Rebels*, Julia L. Mickenberg and Philip Nel anthologize texts that, while in many cases designed for pedagogical use, seek to construct a child citizen whose stance toward the society in which they live is oppositional; their collection shows leftist authors, a number of whom are writing at the moment of Burnett's novel, "inviting children to subvert—instead of submit to—dominant power structures" (7). These earlier investigations, however, have not been centrally concerned with school or with the school story in particular, and in the present essay I seek to direct attention toward the rebellion of selected male and female characters within the school space and the results of such rebellion.

While earlier studies have not combined *Eric, or Little by Little* (1858) by F. W. Farrar and *A Little Princess* (1905) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, reading the two novels side by side is illuminating as both are themselves "unruly texts" that run against the dominant stream of the nineteenth-century school story. Though both are mainly set in schools, they both refuse to follow the conventions of canonical school stories. Dieter Petzold differentiates *Eric* from works such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* (1899), arguing of the latter that even though it has been generally considered to represent a departure from the conventions of the school story, in fact it "confirms rather than rejects" such conventions (19). Ac-

According to him, both Hughes and Kipling view the public school as “the only institution that can achieve the feat of reconciling the two opposed principles, of teaching acceptance of authority and leadership without destroying the child’s vitality and spontaneity” (20). By contrast, *Eric* neither celebrates the public school as the place for socialization nor proposes a method to develop the institution, but presents a pessimistic view of education (Petzold 17). Considering that Farrar seeks to offer constructive ideas of improving adolescent education in his other stories (Holt 100), his pessimistic view gives *Eric* an exceptional position both in his career and in the school-story tradition. Similarly, though concerned almost entirely with the years that its heroine spends at school, instead of describing life and education at a girls’ school *A Little Princess* focuses primarily on Sara’s life outside the classroom. This emphasis differentiates Burnett’s novel from the mainstream girls’ school stories published in the late nineteenth century, including many books by L.T. Meade and her followers such as Evelyn Sharp and Evelyn Everett-Green (McGillis 17).

In this sense, combining *Eric* and *A Little Princess*, the two exceptional school stories might remap the way we read nineteenth-century school stories. Although *A Little Princess* is technically a twentieth-century text, it can be connected to the nineteenth century not only because it originated in *Sara Crewe; or, What Happened at Miss Minchin’s*, a short story published in *St. Nicholas* in 1888, but also because it can profitably be read alongside another Burnett best seller, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886). Instead of celebrating or seeking for ways to improve school life, *Eric* and *A Little Princess* both focus on the problems of lost home. Eric Williams and Sara Crewe, the central figures of these two school stories, are separated from their homes. While in school stories many of the characters leave their homes to attend a school, the sense of homelessness is exceptionally striking in these two novels. Eric and Sara’s outsider status as Anglo-Indian children stresses the distance from school and home space as well as helping the authors to critique the British educational system.² Unlike Tom Brown who feels the sense of belonging as soon as entering Rugby and then feels that he finally found “the first place he could call his own” or a “home” (Hughes 94), both Eric and Sara suffer from a sense of displacement. Not only do their parents live in the faraway country across the sea, but also there is no parent figure functioning in their schools. In contrast to the ideal headmistresses of Meade’s school stories who function as role-models for girls, Miss Minchin of *A Little Princess* is far from an ideal parent (Reimer 208), just as Dr. Rowlands, the headmaster in *Eric*, has been described as

“a male authority figure who does not want close relationships with adolescent boys but who blunders into their games at infelicitous moments and wreaks punishment on those who least deserve it” (Holt 91-92).

This article examines how the interior space of school and the relations between the inside and outside of school illuminate the gendered agendas of Victorian and Edwardian England. I propose that in each story the connection/disconnection of the inside and outside of the school indicates the continuity/break between childhood and adulthood. Although both Eric Williams and Sara Crewe leave schools at the end, they face totally different endings. As Holt claims, *Eric* exemplifies an “excessive tragedy” (83) and “a non-heroic anti-adventure story” (92), while *A Little Princess* portrays its protagonist as “a role model and teacher for several of the girls in the novel” as well as for juvenile readers (Gruner 164). Even though Holt notes that the end of childhood brings about Eric’s tragedy, she misses how the concept of male adolescence itself brings about tragedy by taking the irrecoverable break between childhood and adulthood for granted. In contrast to Eric who becomes homeless within the linear order of life, wandering between lost childhood and not-yet-arrived adulthood, Sara does not lose girlhood at the end. While both children are subject to discipline, often of a brutal kind, for their unruliness, the gendered space of Miss Minchin’s Select Seminary permits Sara to retain both her age identity and her life, while that of Roslyn School is seemingly unable to accommodate Eric’s movement toward independence. Ultimately, a crucial element that differentiates *Eric* and *A Little Princess* from mainstream school stories is the fact that they resist the tropes of Bildungsroman. That Eric and Sara do not grow up makes the reader question the very idea of linear development that is stressed in the traditional school narratives. As the titles imply, Sara remains “little,” no more (and no less) mature at thirteen than she is at seven, and Eric gets degraded or fades away little by little instead of growing up.

The disciplinary school space and the lost home

Nineteenth-century Anglo-American school narratives shed light on the ways in which the school space is designed to control students’ bodies as well as the space they inhabit. Drawing on Foucault’s discourse over disciplinary space, Elizabeth Gargano insightfully asserts that in such stories the school space both visualizes and affects the idea of childhood as “a divisive, segmented, and conflicted site”

(1). As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, the enclosed and partitioned space is used to train and control the bodies that inhabit it (Gargano 13). At the same time, the school narratives show how students resist supervision through marginal experiences outside the official norms. Gargano notes that a school narrative combines the experiences regulated by the teacher's authority with "marginalized school experiences outside the official norms" (27), and students express their defiance through "mixed spatial practices" (25). For instance, in *Eric* the boys secretly attempt to trip Eric by extending their legs when he walks down the aisle between the desks, even while the schoolroom remains the official space where all the students should participate in learning (Gargano 26). It is also noteworthy that, as Farrar's narrator recalls, the dormitory was the place where the boys engaged in various activities.

Although I agree with Gargano's argument about the undermining effect of marginal experiences, I argue that Roslyn's interior space is nonetheless more institutionalized than that of the girls' school, and that the uniformity of the space is designed to prevent the boys from revolting against the teacher's authority. In *Eric*, spatial uniformity is stressed by the fact that the boys are constantly exposed to the danger of being caught in misbehavior by the teachers outside class hours. The narrator states that the Roslyn dormitories are arranged in such a way as to enable the teachers to "keep all the boys in order while they are getting into bed" by walking up and down the aisle (36). Moreover, the boys are watched by the teachers even during the official leisure time: "one of the masters was always in the room, who allowed them to read amusing books or employ themselves in any other quiet way they liked, as soon as ever they had learnt their lessons for the following day" (36). In other words, there is no space where the boys can escape surveillance as long as they are within the school territory.

Because of the uniformity of space, the Roslyn boys use blocks of marginalized time to use their bodies and space as they please. Sometimes they temporarily change the interior space of the school by taking advantage of the teachers' absence; they usually pretend to sleep until the teachers go back to their own rooms in the night. However, even though they succeed in altering the interior, they must restore it to its former state before their teachers find out the alteration. For instance, there is a scene in which the boys perform bits of *Macbeth* in the night in the dormitory room. The moment they hear "Cavé," the warning signal, the boys struggle to get rid of the evidence of disobedience: "the sheet was torn down, the candles dashed out, the beds

shoved aside, and the dormitories at once plunged into profound silence" (52). They are punished when Mr. Rowlands, the headmaster, notices "an unmistakable tale" (52) from the room's dishevelment even though they instantly give up authority over the space.

Not only do the uniformity and fixity of the space make the boys' defiance temporary, but they are also used in controlling bodies and behaviors even while the boys are exploiting marginalized time. For instance, the scene in which Eric and Wildney's drinking is revealed highlights that the school space is designed to prevent the students' trespassing. In this scene, Eric and Wildney drink together in an empty schoolroom that they illicitly occupy. However, they leave the schoolroom once the sound of the bell informs them of the prayer time because they will be punished if they are not found at their seats in the prayer-room. Similarly, on another occasion "the conspirators" attempt to challenge the teacher's authority by planning to blow out the candles and to throw crusts at Mr. Rose when their bodies are hidden by the darkness (120). By announcing that "every boy not then in his place will be punished" and rekindling the candles, however, Mr. Rose recovers his authority and restores the hierarchy between teacher and student (121).

In contrast, Sara has her own marginalized space within the school that is almost always outside supervision: the attic. Sara's position in Miss Minchin's seminary becomes uncertain after she loses her fortune. Although she is not allowed to learn her lessons in the schoolroom by day any more, she still goes in and out of it to teach French to the younger girls and studies in it alone at night. At the beginning, she creeps into the schoolroom without Miss Minchin's permission, but soon Miss Minchin allows her to use it after class, hoping to use her as a teacher. In this way, Sara undermines the teachers' authority not only by disturbing their control over space and time, but also by demonstrating that she does not need teachers' help to learn something—a point made multiple times in the novel and seen by Miss Minchin as a challenge to her own standing.

More importantly, the ambiguous location of Sara's room helps to indicate that she is hard to locate within the school hierarchy. It is not certain whether the attic is part of the school space or not, and it is the marginalized state of the attic room that enables Sara to enjoy private time with her friends. Though Miss Amelia patrols the girls' bedrooms every night like the Roslyn teachers, both Miss Amelia and Miss Minchin scarcely set foot in the attic: "It was very seldom that Miss Minchin mounted the last flight of stairs" (141). The novel contains a scene in which a secret party held by Sara, Becky, and

Ermengarde is interrupted by Miss Minchin's intrusion into the attic. Although this scene resembles the Macbeth scene in *Eric*, the marginality of the attic space undermines Miss Minchin's control. Because she does not enter the attic again, she does not know that thanks to Sara's secret benefactors in the neighboring house, the room completely changes after her intrusion, which enables Sara to enjoy comfort in her attic without interference from the central part of the seminary. Therefore, it can be said that Sara's rebellion is not detected as easily as that of the Roslyn boys.

At first glance the space of Roslyn seems to promise more freedom to the students than Miss Minchin's school does. On first entering the schoolroom, Eric "finds himself in a high airy room, with three large windows opening towards to sea" (9). Further, the Roslyn territory includes the green playground where students can enjoy the sea-breeze (29) and "cosy places by the river" where Eric and Upton smoke (72); even the Stack and the islands to which the students go on excursions can be regarded as a part of it. However, despite the largeness and airiness of the space, it is impossible for Eric and other Roslyn boys to escape from institutionality even when their bodies are outside the school. For instance, when Eric and Wildney go to the pub and then narrowly evade the teachers' pursuit, it becomes apparent that the supervision of the boys is not limited to the inside of the school building. There is an interesting similarity between this scene and the scene, mentioned above, in which the boarders play *Macbeth* in the night. In both scenes the cry of "Cavé, cavé" interrupts the boys' pleasure. Additionally, the great commotion in the pub that follows the cry resembles the confusion caused by the boys' struggle to restore their room into the normal state. The overlapping of the two scenes suggests that not only the inside of the school but also its surrounding areas function as a site for discipline, and that the boys cannot escape the expanded but closed space.

As the disconnection between the inside and outside of the school implies, the Roslyn boys are not allowed to escape from institutionality either bodily or psychologically. Significantly, the image of the window functions differently in *Eric* and *A Little Princess*. Noting that in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Arthur, one of the central characters, looks from the window of his sickroom, Gargano contends that the window "promises escape from the school's stifling institutionality" in a number of school stories (129). Yet in *Eric* the window does not offer the boys a sense of freedom. Although Eric frequently looks at the outside through the window, the window reminds him of the fact that his body is imprisoned by the wall of the school, instead of giv-

ing him a sense of freedom. When Eric watches the sea through the window with Upton and admires “the network of rippled sunbeams that splashed over the sea” (56), he seems to transcend the boundary that confines his body to the inside of the school. However, his day-dream is interrupted by Mr. Gordon, who accuses him of “defy[ing] rules with impunity” (56); since he is not one of the “legitimate occupants” (55) of the classroom, he must be banished from it instantly. This kind of intrusion indicates that Eric is constantly watched and disciplined by the teachers as long as he is inside the school space, and that he cannot imagine himself being linked to the outside world by looking out from the window.

By contrast, girls can escape from institutionality even though their bodies are placed within the institution. In *A Little Princess* as in *Jane Eyre*, the window-seat of the schoolroom is presented as the place into which the girls creep when they feel that they want to escape. Finding there the lonely and low-spirited Ermengarde on her first day of school, Sara too gets into the window-seat and has a friendly conversation with her. This liminal location allows the two girls to have their own space within the schoolroom, temporarily separating them from other girls. Later, the window-seat is replaced by the attic room where Sara looks at the outside from the window. Her watching the beautiful sunset from the attic skylight resembles Eric’s looking at the sea from the schoolroom. However, unlike Eric who is forced to return to the schoolroom and to institutionality, Sara gets comfort from her relation to the outside world: “when it was at all possible to leave the kitchen without being missed or called back, she invariably stole away and crept up the flights of stairs, and, climbing on the old table, got her head and body as far out of the window as possible” (104). That her body is partially outside the seminary through the window suggests that it is possible for her to cross the boundary of the institution. As shown in this scene, Sara overcomes hardships by indulging in “dreams” and “visions” (140) even before her neighbor changes the attic room into a comfortable place. She is aware that Miss Minchin’s seminary is no home for her, but she turns her own room into the “home” where she can find “comfort and happiness” with the aid of her imagination (162).

The connection/disconnection between the inside and outside of the school tracks the characters’ relations to their home. In *Eric*, time and space work similarly inasmuch as it is suggested that Eric be reconnected neither to his past nor to his home. Although Eric and Russell become like brothers, and Mrs. Williams offers motherly love to Russell at the beginning of the novel, such a “familial framework”

is dismissed as Eric's parents leave England (Stoneley 82). Although India is both the place where he was born and the present home of his parents, for Eric India is a place to which he can never come back if not in dreams or visions. We can see that it is blurred and romanticized into idyllic images even before Eric enters the school: "Very soon he forgot all about India; it only hung like a distant golden haze on the horizon of his memory. When asked if he remembered it, he would say thoughtfully, that in dreams and at some other times, he saw a little boy, with long curly hair, running about in a flower-garden, near a great river, in a place where the air was very bright" (3).

In contrast, in *A Little Princess* the attic window not only connects the interior space of the school to the outside world, but it also helps Sara to be reconnected to India.³ Although Sara thinks, just like Eric, that her days in India are "like a sort of dream" and that "it could never come back" (107), her encounter with Ram Dass, the native Indian who moves into the house next door, allows her to recover her past. While looking out from the window, she meets Ram Dass, and the "sight of his native costume and the profound reverence of his manner stirred all her past memories" (107). Not only does the encounter on the roof help her to recollect the memories of her old home in India, but it also functions as a passage through which her new home is literally brought into the attic room. It is important to note that it is Ram Dass, the representative of Sara's birthplace, who invades her room in the night to transform it into a kind of home space. Before her room magically changes, Sara looks at the window of the neighboring house and thinks that "[i]t is a long time since [she] saw a nice place from the inside" (134). Her desire to see "a nice place from the inside" is fulfilled by Ram Dass's intrusion. That he carries domestic objects such as "a thick, warm crimson rug," "a curious wadded silk robe," "a folding-chair" and "a small folding-table" (153) into Sara's room through the window suggests that the outside world literally invades the school space in *A Little Princess*.

The different positions in future homes

In *Ventures into Childland*, U. C. Knoepfelmacher notes that nineteenth-century middle-class males were forced to leave the feminized home circle "to prepare for a role in a world of paternal authority" (16). As we have seen, in *Eric* the distance between school and home implies that the boys will have nothing to do with the production of domesticity once their infancy ends, although as historians such as John Tosh have detailed, middle-class men remained devoted

consumers of domestic life in the Victorian period (see Tosh, ch. 2). In other words, the disconnection between the boys' school and home shows that home will not be a place controlled by men, while the girls are supposed to become the mistresses of their homes after reaching adulthood. The difference between boys' and girls' future is presented through the different view of aging in *Eric* and *A Little Princess*.

In addition to the memory of India, for Eric his aunt's home in Fairholm serves as another home where he spends his childhood. As Adrienne E. Gavin and Andrew F. Humphries argue, "gardens offer freedom and adventure to children" (7), as well as representing the innocence of childhood. When he returns to Fairholm during the holidays, however, he feels detached from the home circle despite the fact that it has not changed after he left it: "over all his happiness hung a sense of change and half melancholy; they were not changed, but he was changed" (93). When Eric returns to his aunt's home at the end, what is waiting for him there is not freedom but death. Being transported back to his childhood, he once more becomes child-like in the final scene; he is "dressed once more," is "once more fed on nourishing and wholesome food," and gets the opportunity to "move once more about the garden by Fanny's side" (183). Yet the tragic ending highlights that he is not allowed to recover his home and childhood after leaving the school. Through Eric's failure to recover a home, Farrar suggests that it is impossible for a boy to escape institutionality and survive.

That Eric dies as a sickened child after escaping from his school suggests that he will not be accepted as a man in Victorian society without completing his education. This is related to the fact that in nineteenth-century school stories boys are expected to follow a linear order of growing. Post-Darwinian science viewed children and criminals as primitive and undeveloped (Nelson 58). In other words, to be regarded as equal with adults, children should "evolve." In fact, the system of Roslyn seems to correspond with the concept of linear progress. Being classified as "fourth-form" or "fifth-form," boys are expected to act according to their forms, and those who do not match the expectations are despised by others as dropouts. This is why the friendship between Eric and Wildney, a younger student at Roslyn, is described as accelerating Eric's degradation. While his friends abandon boyishness as they become upperclassmen, Eric remains the same, refusing to evolve. The problem of remaining the same is stressed when he escapes the school at night to drink together with Wildney and his friends; when he attempts to get through a broken

window, following Wildney, his grown body makes it difficult for him to get it through, and the narrator notes, "Eric followed with some little difficulty, for the aperture would only just admit his passage" (103). Additionally, he alone feels "disgust and shame" in the pub when Wildney and his friends sing a song together "heartily and uproariously" (111). That only Eric feels guilty and senses something sinister about his situation in this scene suggests that he is aware that retreating or maintaining his present state is a form of unruliness that will lead to dying out.

In striking contrast, once in her new home Sara Crewe recovers her position as the "little missus" (51), of which she has been deprived during her stay at the seminary. While the Roslyn boys are supposed to develop with the aid of the institutional education, Sara does not need to develop or to discard her old self. Rebelling, albeit with nearly constant politeness, against Miss Minchin's attempt to own her either as a show pupil or as a slave, she does not change throughout the text, maintaining "the consistency of her Sara-ness" (Nelson 35), and her "Sara-ness" includes the mixture of childhood and adulthood in a single body. Her happy ending suggests that for girls the discipline and character-building that school is supposed to provide are not essential to reaching adulthood. She not only crosses the wall of the seminary as effortlessly as if it is nothing more than that of a cardboard house, but also leaves it forever while maintaining her own character unaffected by the time she spends there.

That Sara recovers her old self at the end implies that she does not really grow old. There is an interesting overlap between the scene in which she first appears at the schoolroom of the seminary and that in which she is dressed with the clothes that Mr. Carrisford buys for her and shows up in the schoolroom as "the Princess Sara" once more. While her luxurious clothes and adult behavior make her look like an adult in the first scene, she seems to go backwards through time and returns to her old self in the second scene: "It was the Princess Sara indeed. At least, since the days when she had been a princess, Sara had never looked as she did now. She did not seem the Sara they had seen come down the back stairs a few hours ago" (165). Interestingly, she returns to being a well-cared-for child in this scene. While her physical growth is hinted at by the image of the old black frock that does not properly fit her body, the new dress that perfectly fits her now turns her into the seven-year-old Sara again. This moment suggests that she recovers not only her fortune but also her childhood. That Mr. Carrisford, her adopted father, treats her much as Captain

Crewe did also indicates that she does not grow up. In this sense, "the Last Doll" is not a last doll for her, after all, though she once writes that she "will never live to have another given [her]" after having her eleventh birthday (51).

As Claudia Nelson argues, Sara, who takes "her dead mother's place as her father's companion and chief emotional interest" (34), gives comfort also to Mr. Carrisford, her second father. Her serving as a daughter/wife for her two fathers endows her with the role of the ideal woman of the nineteenth century who sends her father or husband "back to the emotional richness of his childhood" (Robson 53). For instance, Captain Crewe, who is described as "a rash, innocent young man" (9), enjoys buying small presents for Sara. The narrator reports that "*between them they collected a wardrobe much too grand for a child a seven,*" because he wanted to buy "everything she admired and everything *he admired himself*" (my italics 9). In this sense, he is fulfilling his own desire for childlike pleasure through his relationship to her. Similarly, Mr. Carrisford is "amused and interested" by making "a little joke between them that he was a magician" (189). In this way, the two fathers can get the sense of returning to their own childhood—a rejection of linear progression that is itself inherently rebellious against male norms.

Conclusion

In Burnett's *A Little Princess*, women are the only medium through which men can make contact with home after reaching adulthood. This suggests that Eric Williams's only way to recover the link with home and childhood would have been to finish his education, get married, and achieve success in the marketplace just as the middle-class men that Robson describes (see Robson, ch. 2). Probably Captain Crewe or Mr. Carrisford, both Eton graduates, represent the best possible future for Eric in nineteenth-century England, assuming that he does not fail in his version of the diamond mines. However, it is important not to forget that the home that Eric would build for himself is not the same as the place from which he was separated by society, and he can never return to his old home and childhood. Simultaneously, even though Sara does not lose her home and childhood, her happy ending is as problematic as Eric's tragic one because it indicates that she can never escape them even if she wants to; her life is depicted as "circumscribed" (McGillis 73) throughout the novel while she moves from one domestic setting from another.

As in neither case does their leaving the school help to change the educational system, reading the two novels together provides insight into Victorian England's separate expectations for boys and girls. It is noteworthy that Farrar's and Burnett's disruptive children illuminate their culture's gendered agendas about institutionality, domesticity, and aging. The accepted social/educational system may not be subverted through the portraits of the two children who struggle to escape the confinement of their surroundings, but these narratives tell us a great deal about what it was like to not grow up in the institutionalized school space.

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Notes

1 As John R. Reed notes, a number of Victorian writers believed that a public school education produces uniformity of manners and characters while home education nurtures individual spontaneity. For example, Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) contrasts "the monotonous and arrogant Philip," who was disciplined by institutionalized education, with Guy, who maintains a "lively, spontaneous character" because he was not sent to a public school (Reed 66).

2 As Jane Darcy notes, many of Burnett's child characters are "'outsiders' in respectable upper-middle class English society, either in terms of gender, nationality, culture or class—or a combination of these" (81). Darcy argues that Sara's having spent years in India allows her to see middle-class English society from the outside. Although Darcy does not link *A Little Princess* to *Eric*, Eric's being born in India likewise grants him an exceptional position within the tradition of the nineteenth-century school story.

3 In *A Little Princess: Gender and Empire*, Roderick McGillis notes that the window was placed at the center of the stage when Burnett's play *The Little Princess* was first performed in London's Avenue Theatre; "The action is bound-bound by the proscenium arch, by the schoolroom with its prominent window center stage, by the very weather visible out the window" (57). Also, Act 2 starts with Ram Dass entering Sara's attic room through a window (McGillis 6). That the window is placed at the center of stage and action implies that the interconnection between the inside and outside of the school space plays a key role in this text.

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