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Exploring Spatial Boundaries and Power Relations in John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how spatial organization and physical boundaries function as instruments of dehumanization in John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Although spatiality has received increasing attention in literary studies, the relationship between the production of space and power in Holocaust narratives remains underexplored, particularly through the combined application of Henri Lefebvre's and Michel Foucault's theories. This study aims to analyze how spatial boundaries are represented in the novel and how spatial division operates as a mechanism of power, surveillance, and control over oppressed individuals. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, this research integrates Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space and Foucault's concept of disciplinary power. Lefebvre's framework explains how space is socially produced and ideologically shaped by dominant authorities, while Foucault's perspective examines how spatial arrangements function as technologies of surveillance, discipline, and control. The findings reveal that walls, barbed-wire fences, bedroom windows, trains, and the airtight room symbolize the Nazi regime's systematic dehumanization. From Lefebvre's perspective, these spaces represent conceived space, where ideological planning and institutional authority sustain domination and social exclusion. From Foucault's perspective, spatial division functions as a disciplinary mechanism through identity standardization, characterized by striped pyjamas, hierarchical surveillance, and biopower. This study contributes to literary studies by demonstrating that integrating Lefebvre's spatial theory and Foucault's disciplinary power provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting dehumanization in Holocaust fiction while expanding the application of spatial-power theory to the analysis of institutional control, spatial violence, and systematic oppression.

Keywords: *Dehumanization, Holocaust, Nazi, Power Relations, Spatial Boundaries.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of *space* in contemporary literary studies has evolved beyond its conventional understanding as a physical setting and is increasingly recognized as a socially and ideologically constructed phenomenon, a perspective commonly associated with the "Spatial Turn." Within this framework, space is actively produced through social practices that embody structures of domination, cultural values, and political interests rather than existing as a neutral container of human activity (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre conceptualizes this process through the interaction of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces, which together shape the lived experiences of

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individuals and communities (Timmerman, 2022). Complementing this perspective, Foucault argues that spatial organization functions as a technology of discipline through surveillance, segregation, and regulation, enabling institutions to exercise power over individuals and populations (Foucault & Moore, 2016). Accordingly, architecture, boundaries, and spatial arrangements should be understood not merely as reflections of power but also as mechanisms that actively produce, maintain, and legitimize systems of domination.

Narrative literature provides a particularly valuable medium for examining these spatial practices because literary texts reveal how power is experienced, internalized, negotiated, and resisted through the interaction between characters and their environments. Unlike historical documents that primarily record events, literary narratives expose the ideological meanings embedded within ordinary spaces and illustrate how these meanings shape identity, perception, and social relations. This function becomes especially significant in Holocaust literature, where homes, railway systems, fences, concentration camps, and gas chambers operate not only as physical locations but also as instruments that institutionalize exclusion, surveillance, obedience, and dehumanization. Moreover, narratives presented from a child's perspective illuminate these mechanisms with particular clarity by juxtaposing innocence with systemic violence, enabling readers to perceive structures of domination that might otherwise remain invisible. *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006) by John Boyne, space is a crucial subject that helps understand how the regime in power at the time forcibly shaped the way of seeing and thinking. The results of social practice and space in fiction refer to how a writer represents space as symbolic or metaphorical to shape a narrative, highlight characters, and convey a message to the reader (Nazeer & Sumathi R, 2024). Boyne describes the Nazi government in the novels as a manifestation of spatial domination that aims to expand its territory as a form of power control or political domination. Most spatial paradigms are only seen in the form of physical expanses (geographical areas), so the plurality that exists in them is eliminated and transformed into territorial units that are easily conquered or controlled (Chandna, 2009).

John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006) exemplifies this dynamic through the perspective of its nine-year-old protagonist, Bruno. Rather than serving merely as narrative settings, Bruno's house, the surrounding garden, the camp fence, and Auschwitz itself function as ideological spaces that shape the characters' understanding of belonging, identity, and exclusion. Through Bruno's limited perspective, Boyne demonstrates how the Nazi regime embeds ideological control within everyday spatial arrangements, transforming ordinary spaces into mechanisms of segregation and dehumanization (Canani, 2022). Consequently, the novel illustrates that political power operates not only through direct violence but also through the production and organization of space. The relationship between Bruno and Shmuel further reinforces this spatial logic. Bruno represents privilege, security, and innocent ignorance, whereas Shmuel embodies exclusion, suffering, and systematic oppression. The fence separating them symbolizes the racial segregation imposed by the Nazi regime while paradoxically functioning as the only space where friendship and shared humanity temporarily transcend ideological boundaries. This contradiction reveals that spatial boundaries simultaneously operate as instruments of domination and as sites that expose the fragility of oppressive systems by allowing moments of human connection to emerge (Anshori, 2023).

Several previous researchers have analyzed the same novel as Mary & Priya (2025), titled "Unveiling Humanity's Dilemma: A Critical Analysis of Morality and Compassion in John Boyne's *'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'*" which discusses human dilemmas through the concept of Social Identity Theory, focusing on the psychological trauma of the Holocaust that led to the destruction of social identity. Utami et al. (2022) in their work titled "Social Issues in John Boyne's *the Boy in the Stripped Pyjamas*" discuss various social issues during the Holocaust that reveal its cruelty through the innocence and perspectives of children. Another study that examines the impact on the psychological and social

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development of children is Ningrum & Margawati (2024), titled "Impacts and Consequences of Protagonist's Inner Conflict in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* Novel By John Boyne" which uses Karen Horney's theories of inner conflict and neurosis. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the emotional, ethical, and psychological dimensions of the narrative, they generally position space as a passive background against which events unfold. Consequently, they do not sufficiently explain how architectural boundaries and spatial arrangements actively construct mechanisms of exclusion, regulate social interaction, institutionalize ideological control, and normalize dehumanization. As a result, previous scholarship has not fully demonstrated how the organization of space itself functions as a mechanism through which power is materialized and exercised, leaving an important dimension of the novel insufficiently explored.

Similarly, studies employing Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space or Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power have generally applied these frameworks independently and primarily in literary contexts outside Holocaust fiction. Gamze AR (2023) employs Lefebvre's theory to examine the relationship between ideology and space in Allen Ginsberg's Howl, whereas Jauhari (2018) applies Foucault's concept of power relations to analyze cultural domination in Divergent. While these studies demonstrate the explanatory potential of each framework, they do not investigate how spatial production and disciplinary power operate simultaneously to construct institutional systems of surveillance, segregation, and dehumanization. Consequently, the reciprocal relationship between the production of space and disciplinary mechanisms remains underexplored in Holocaust literary studies, leaving an important theoretical gap in understanding how spatial organization functions as a technology of power.

The novelty of this study therefore lies not merely in applying Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space and Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power to The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, but in synthesizing these complementary perspectives to develop an integrated analytical framework for interpreting Holocaust fiction. By combining Lefebvre's macro-level analysis of the ideological production of space with Foucault's micro-level analysis of disciplinary mechanisms, this study demonstrates how spatial organization simultaneously structures surveillance, regulates bodies, standardizes identities, and institutionalizes dehumanization. This theoretical synthesis reveals dimensions of spatial violence and institutional control that cannot be fully explained when either framework is applied independently, thereby providing a more comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between space, power, and dehumanization in Holocaust narratives. Accordingly, this study contributes not only a new interpretation of Boyne's novel but also demonstrates the analytical value of integrating spatial theory and disciplinary power as a complementary framework for examining literary representations of violence, exclusion, and oppression.

The significance of this analysis extends beyond literary interpretation. By uncovering the architecture of repression represented in Boyne's novel, this study encourages critical reflection on how power continues to operate through the organization of space in contemporary societies, including border regimes, detention centres, surveillance infrastructures, and other institutional environments. Understanding these mechanisms therefore contributes not only to Holocaust literary scholarship but also to broader discussions of how architecture and spatial planning can function as instruments of ideological control, political domination, and the denial of human dignity. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze how spatial boundaries are represented in John Boyne's The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas and to examine how the division of space functions as a mechanism of power and control through an integrated analytical framework that combines Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space with Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical methods. This approach is

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used to conduct an in-depth analysis of spatial boundaries and power relations in John Boyne's novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, published by David Fickling Books in 2006. The qualitative approach aims to understand phenomena related to what the research subjects experience, such as behaviour, perceptions, motivations, or actions (Moleong, 2015). Researcher can explore phenomena in depth by analyzing data expressed through words, sentences, and narratives within texts. The primary data source is the novel itself, while secondary data consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and previous studies related to Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space, Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, Holocaust literature, and spatial criticism. The unit of analysis comprises textual passages that explicitly represent spatial organization and power relations, including descriptions of physical settings (e.g., the house, the fence, the camp, trains, and the gas chamber), dialogues between characters concerning spatial restrictions or social boundaries, narrative descriptions, and Bruno's internal reflections that reveal his perception and experience of space. These units were selected because they directly illustrate the interaction between spatial structures and mechanisms of power within the novel. Data were collected through documentation techniques involving literature review and close reading. The novel was read repeatedly to identify, record, and classify textual evidence related to the research objectives. During this process, all relevant quotations were compiled and coded according to predefined analytical categories derived from the theoretical framework.

The coding process adopted Henri Lefebvre's (1991) triadic conception of space as the primary analytical framework. Data categorized as perceived space (spatial practice) include descriptions of material or physically observable environments and everyday spatial activities. Data were coded as conceived space (representations of space) when the text reflects spaces designed, regulated, or ideologically organized by institutional authority, such as spatial planning, segregation policies, or administrative control imposed by the Nazi regime. Meanwhile, lived space (representational space) refers to passages that emphasize subjective experiences, symbolic meanings, emotional responses, or personal interpretations of space expressed by the characters. Quotations that did not explicitly represent spatial production or spatial experience were excluded from this categorization.

To complement Lefebvre's framework, the categorized data were subsequently interpreted using Michel Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power. In this stage, textual evidence was analyzed according to indicators of surveillance, regulation of movement, spatial segregation, normalization, bodily discipline, and hierarchical control. The integration of both theories enabled the researcher to examine not only how space is socially produced but also how it functions as an instrument for exercising and maintaining power. The analysis followed Miles et al. (2014), which involves three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, only textual passages that directly represented spatial boundaries or mechanisms of power according to the predefined coding criteria were retained, whereas quotations unrelated to spatial organization or ideological control were excluded from further analysis. In the data display stage, the selected data were systematically organized into Lefebvre's spatial categories before being interpreted through Foucault's perspective on disciplinary power. Finally, the conclusion drawing stage synthesized the findings to explain how spatial boundaries operate as mechanisms of segregation, surveillance, and dehumanization within the narrative.

To enhance analytical credibility, this study employs theoretical triangulation by integrating two complementary theoretical perspectives. Lefebvre's theory provides a framework for understanding the ideological production of space, whereas Foucault's concept explains how spatial arrangements function as technologies of surveillance, discipline, and control. The combined application of these theories allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between spatial organization and power relations in the novel. Despite these strengths, this study has several limitations. The analysis is confined to a single literary text and relies exclusively on qualitative textual

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interpretation, meaning that the findings cannot be generalized to all Holocaust narratives or literary representations of oppression. Furthermore, the coding and interpretation of symbolic meanings inevitably involve the researcher's analytical judgment, although efforts were made to minimize subjectivity through systematic coding procedures and the application of an integrated theoretical framework.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that spatial boundaries in The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas function as more than physical divisions separating places and social groups. Instead, they operate as ideological constructions through which the Nazi regime organizes social relations, regulates movement, and legitimizes systems of exclusion and dehumanization. The findings further indicate that these mechanisms cannot be fully understood through a single theoretical perspective. Rather, Henri Lefebvre's concept of the Production of Space and Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinary power operate in a complementary manner, revealing how spatial arrangements are simultaneously conceived through ideology and enforced through disciplinary practice.

From Lefebvre's perspective, spaces such as Bruno's house, the concentration camp, the railway, the fence, and the gas chamber constitute conceived spaces intentionally designed to materialize the ideological objectives of the Nazi regime. However, these spaces acquire their social effectiveness only when they discipline the bodies and behaviours of those who occupy them. In this respect, Foucault's concept of disciplinary power explains how surveillance, restricted mobility, standardized appearance, and hierarchical regulation transform spatial organization into a technology of control. Consequently, the production of space and disciplinary power should be interpreted as interconnected processes that jointly sustain institutional domination rather than as separate analytical categories. Nevertheless, Boyne's narrative does not merely confirm the effectiveness of authoritarian spatial control. Through Bruno's innocent perspective, the novel exposes the instability and contradictions embedded within spaces that appear to impose absolute order. Because Bruno does not fully understand the ideological meanings assigned to fences, uniforms, or concentration camps, he repeatedly interprets these spaces according to ordinary human values such as curiosity, friendship, and empathy. His limited understanding unintentionally reveals that the meanings attached to spatial boundaries are socially constructed rather than inherently natural.

This perspective creates a significant spatial irony throughout the narrative. The fence, conceived by the Nazi regime as a mechanism of segregation, paradoxically becomes the only place where Bruno and Shmuel can establish friendship and mutual understanding. Similarly, the striped pyjamas, designed to erase individuality and standardize prisoners' identities, ultimately allow Bruno to cross the imposed social boundary and symbolically share Shmuel's condition. The gas chamber, representing the culmination of biopolitical control over life and death, ironically eliminates the distinction between oppressor and victim when Bruno dies alongside Shmuel. These contradictions demonstrate that systems of spatial domination remain inherently vulnerable because they cannot completely suppress empathy, human relationships, or the possibility of crossing ideologically imposed boundaries. Accordingly, the following discussion does not merely identify examples that illustrate Lefebvre's or Foucault's theories. Instead, it examines how conceived spaces become effective through disciplinary mechanisms while simultaneously revealing their own limitations and internal contradictions. This integrated interpretation offers a broader understanding of Holocaust literature by showing that authoritarian power depends not only on violence but also on the production of spatial meanings, yet those meanings can be destabilized through the persistence of shared humanity. Consequently, the

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novel provides a critical reflection on both the operation and the fragility of ideological systems that seek to control individuals through spatial organization.

3.1 Representation of Spatial Boundaries in the Novel

The results of this study indicate that the representation of spatial boundaries in the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* consistently reflects how space functions as a tool for creating and spreading power. The ideology and power of the dominant authority are the main factors shaping the social structure in this story, which is set against the context of a totalitarian regime. The formation of authoritarian domains and subordinate domains further reinforces the spatial structure depicted through the commander's house and the concentration camp which are separated by wire fences. These boundaries are not only physically constructed and perceived but also convey symbolic meanings. These meanings are interpreted as mechanisms that control social relations while restricted the mobility of individuals based on their positions within the hierarchy of power.

The small space designed for them was the first spatial boundary they encountered. In his narrative, Shmuel explains that:

> Data 1
>
> *"...the soldiers built a big wall and my mother and father and my brother and I all had to live in one room."*
>
> (Boyne, 2006, p.128)

The forced separation from their social environment into small spaces that resemble a prison. Shmuel describes how he and his family first lost their freedom behind a big wall that cut them off from the outside world. This quote illustrates an extreme narrowing of space, where a small room is shared by several families. These walls serve as physical barriers designed to isolate them from privacy and personal freedom. These barriers were built to look like a prison before they were eventually moved to a camp.

After the construction of the big wall, they were forced to stay together in a small room. Then they were taken by train to the concentration camp. Spatial boundaries were also depicted through the cramped transport space. Shmuel described his experience on the train:

> Data 2
>
> *"The train was horrible," said Shmuel. "There were too many of us in the carriages for one thing. And there was no air to breathe. And it smelled awful."*
>
> (Boyne, 2006, p.129)

In this context, boundaries are not merely present in the form of fences or external barriers, but rather in the form of cramped train carriages that squeeze the people inside them. Spaces generally regarded as public spaces and transport facilities were instead used as tools for dehumanization, created through conditions of overcrowding and squalor. Before they even reached the concentration camps, they were forced into a situation of oppression that stripped them of their comfort as individuals. These transport spaces became an extension of the Nazi system of domination, trapping them within the same oppressive structure. Thus, the train carriage not only served as a means of transportation but became an instrument of organized oppression.

Once they arrive at the concentration camp, the narrative clearly depicts the physical barrier a fence that separates the oppressed from those in power. Through the character of Bruno with all his

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innocence and naivety, the story seeks to question the purpose of that barrier. His father gave an explanation that illustrates the spatial separation:

Data 3

"...the fence isn't there to stop us from going over there. it's to stop them from coming over here... Because they have to be kept together.... with their own kind.... with the other Jews, Bruno."

(Boyne, 2006, p.182)

This quote shows that fences are not merely physical barriers but tools designed to maintain a hierarchical social division. Furthermore, there is a power dynamic at stake, as the movement of one group must be controlled because it is perceived as a threat. The use of the phrase "with their own kind" implies an ideological meaning that they create space to distinguish people based on race. In the context of the novel, Jews are treated and segregated like animals that must be confined to a specific area to prevent them from interacting with the general public.

Spatial boundaries are also manifested in a more personal form attached to the body. This is explained:

Data 4

"He was wearing the same striped pyjamas that everyone else on that side of the fence was wearing, and a striped cloth cap on his head."

(Boyne, 2006, p.106)

The quote illustrates that on the other side of the fence, there is a "wearable boundary." The standardized clothing signifies that they share the same status and dignity. On the other side of the fence, Shmuel and the others lost their identities and were reduced to wearing identical pyjamas. This further reinforces the existence of a boundary that distinguishes between the "subject" who rules and the "object" who is ruled.

Another boundary present in the narrative is represented by the window of Bruno's room. Although the window is merely transparent, it serves as a powerful symbol of separation. Bruno often looks out the window to try to understand the world on the other side:

Data 5

"He paused for a moment and looked out the window to his left—the window that led off to a view of the camp on the other side of the fence. "When I think about it, perhaps she is right. Perhaps this is not a place for children."

(Boyne, 2006, p.190)

The representation of the window in the quote was not only a boundary for observing from one place to another, but also an illustration that Bruno was in a safe place yet perceived a cold and terrifying boundary. This emphasized that spatial boundaries are not merely physical fences, but rather the subject's position and visual mechanisms. Bruno might be able to see the camp from inside his room, but he never directly experienced the reality within it.

Still through the same window—a window that is usually represented as a symbol of hope for some people. In the context of Out-With, the window actually emphasizes spatial inequality:

Data 6

"All this time, I've been watching where you live from my bedroom window, and

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I've never even seen for myself what it's like."

"You wouldn't like it," said Shmuel. "Yours is much nicer," he added."

(Boyne, 2006, p.197)

In this dialogue, the window represents a tool for the fortunate observer. Bruno believes that through that window, he can glimpse an exciting journey. But for Shmuel and the people there, the window offers not a trace of hope for life. Instead, it represents a reminder that there is a better life out there that they will never achieve. That transparent barrier becomes a visible yet unachievable symbol. It is not a symbol of hope as it is for most, but rather represents an invisible social distance and despair for those trapped behind the fence. These boundaries depict Out-With as a closed system, where every space is designed to restrict movement and destroy dignity.

3.2 Division of Space as a Mechanism of Power and Control

3.2.1 *Analysis Based on Henri Lefebvre's Theory of Spatial Production*

Lefebvre argues that space is a social construct, emphasizing that humans both produce social relations and shape social space. In his book 'The Production of Space', Lefebvre states that "space is socially produced," while "we are spatially produced." To explain this further, Lefebvre's idea is that humans and the activities within it shape space, while humans and their activities are in turn shaped by that space. Thus, space is created according to the way we live our social lives within it (lived space), and this social life intersects with the physical, material aspects of space as perceived by our senses (perceived space) and the non-material (mental) aspects of space as conceived in our minds (conceived space).

3.2.1.1 Perceived Space (Spatial Practice)

The concept of Perceived Space refers to the presence of space as perceived or sensed by the human senses, with a focus on the material elements that constitute space and contribute to an individual's perception of that space (Frehse, 2021). Within the framework of the theory of the production of space proposed by Henri Lefebvre, space is understood not merely as a physical place, but as the result of social practices that are continuously produced and reproduced. In concrete terms, spatial practices encompass various networks of interaction, communication, and production processes with space that emerge in daily life through patterns that appear "normal" yet are actually shaped by social structures and power.

In the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, perceived space is evident through Bruno's direct observations of his surroundings. He notices a significant difference between two groups of people occupied in different spaces:

Data 7

"...all he could see was two different types of people: either happy...shouting soldiers in their uniforms or unhappy, crying people in their striped pyjamas…"

(Boyne, 2006, p.208)

In this quote, the visual contrast reflects Nazi spatial practices the soldiers' uniforms symbolize freedom of movement, while those in pyjamas are confined to a room filled with suffering. This contrast illustrates how space can distinguish between those who hold power and those who are subject to it.

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3.2.1.2 Conceived Space (Spatial Representations)

The concept of The Conceived Space lies in how space is understood and shaped through the information and knowledge possessed by individuals (Stanek, 2011). Lefebvre refers to this concept as "the domain of scientists, urban planners and administrators, technocrats or authorities, as well as civil engineers." For it is they who possess the actual ability, power, and authority to "represent," manage, and determine how that space or territory is shaped. The representation of space refers to various attempts to describe the form of space: language, ideology. The issue Lefebvre examines is how established inter-spatial relations through the structure of scientific knowledge also establish relations between humans and objects within a represented space. In this situation, humans are subordinated within the framework of geopolitical logic imposed by the dominant group.

In the context of the novel, the Out-With camp can be understood as a manifestation of the "conceived space" shaped by Nazi ideology. This space is not merely a physical location, but rather the result of an ideological construction that positions one group as superior and another as inferior. This ideology is explicitly reflected in Bruno's father's statement:

> Data 8
>
> *"Ah, those people," said Father, nodding his head and smiling slightly. "Those people…well, they're not people at all, Bruno."*
>
> (Boyne, 2006 p.53)

This statement is not merely a personal expression, but also confirms the existence of concentration camps. By categorizing certain groups as "subhuman," the Nazi regime designed spaces that did not need to meet humanitarian standards. In this context, the camp environment was a direct result of the dehumanization process that had been previously established. This ideology of superiority was further reinforced by Bruno's belief, which derived from his family's doctrine:

> Data 9
>
> *"Well, because Germany is the greatest of all countries," Bruno replied, remembering something that he had overheard Father discussing with Grandfather on any number of occasions. "We're superior."*
>
> (Boyne, 2006, p.112)

This hierarchy forms the basis of a spatial arrangement that separates the rulers, who live in luxury and the prisoners who live in squalid barracks. In this context, the Out-With Camp is not merely a place, but a representation of a system of thought that actively regulates, restricts, and controls individuals' lives based on categories shaped by the dominant ideology.

3.2.1.3 Lived Space (Representational Space)

The concept of The Lived Space focuses on people's daily experiences within a space, including various activities and life encounters (Solak, 2022). This aspect of spatial production refers to the process of assigning meaning that links the space to symbols, as this social space is shaped and interpreted through the activities that occur within it. This includes how the occupants or users of the space interact with each other through practices and visualization methods. Conceptions of space also develop based on the real-life experiences each encounter, resulting from a dialectical relationship between spatial practices and spatial representations. Lefebvre specifically explains that the development of modern capitalist dominance leads to the creation of "abstract space." It is in this "abstract" space that capitalism fosters homogenization, hierarchy, and social fragmentation. In other

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words, the meaning of space does not always match its original purpose, as individuals can develop different understandings based on their personal experiences and perspectives.

Based on the narrative in the novel, Bruno is portrayed as a naive and imaginative child who does not completely understand the activities taking place within the camp. He does not consider the camp a place of oppression, but rather a place for social activities. This perception is reflected in his statement:

> Data 10
>
> *"It's so unfair. I don't see why I have to be stuck over here on this side of the fence where there's no one to talk to and no one to play with... You get to have dozens of friends and are probably playing for hours…"*
>
> (Boyne, 2006, p.110)

Unlike the previous discussion, which interprets Bruno's perception through Lefebvre's concept of lived space, this passage is analyzed using Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power. Bruno's mistaken belief that life inside the camp is enjoyable demonstrates not the nature of the camp itself but the invisibility of the disciplinary mechanisms embedded within its spatial organization. Observing the camp only from a distance, Bruno fails to recognize that the barbed-wire fences, restricted movement, constant surveillance, and separation of prisoners are all technologies of power designed to regulate and control human bodies. This misunderstanding reveals an important dimension of Foucauldian power: effective discipline often operates without making its coercive nature immediately visible to outsiders. The camp appears orderly rather than oppressive because its mechanisms of control have been normalized through spatial organization. Boyne therefore suggests that authoritarian regimes do not rely exclusively on overt violence but also on the strategic arrangement of space that conceals repression behind an appearance of order and routine.

At the same time, Bruno's innocent perspective exposes the fragility of this disciplinary system. His inability to perceive the ideological purpose of the camp prevents him from accepting the distinction between those inside and outside the fence. Instead of viewing Shmuel as an enemy or an inferior, Bruno simply sees another child in need of friendship. Consequently, the novel reveals that disciplinary power depends not only on physical boundaries but also on the internalization of ideological meanings. When those meanings are absent or questioned, as illustrated through Bruno's naïve perspective, the legitimacy of the spatial order itself becomes vulnerable.

3.2.2 *Analysis Based on Michel Foucault's Concept*

Power is not merely repressive but also productive. The processes of discipline and surveillance created by power succeed in making individuals submissive and can even influence various aspects of the individual themselves. Based on Michel Foucault's book Discipline and Punish, he argues that the human body is not merely an object that can be moved on command. Furthermore, the body is an element that can be positioned, moved, transformed, and manipulated to be directed in accordance with specific norms, rules, and objectives. Therefore, one of the keys to power is discipline. The primary goal of this discipline is to shape docile bodies and foster obedience. The aim of forming these useful, obedient, and compliant bodies is an effort to continuously maintain and control power. This discipline is carried out not merely to shape the body to do what we want, but to make them do what we want even when they are fully conscious. Foucault argues that docile bodies can be found primarily in social institutions such as the military, schools, prisons, and hospitals. This is achieved through techniques of

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enclosure and the categorization of subjects into specific groups to facilitate hierarchical observation.

In the context of the Holocaust depicted by John Boyne in his novel, the Out-With camp functions as a place of punishment to discipline prisoners within a mechanized system of mass extermination. The most prominent symbolism of power and discipline that first appears in the novel is through the clothing worn by the prisoners and the soldiers' uniforms. This is revealed through Bruno's innocent question:

Data 11

"And who decided which people wore striped pyjamas and which people wore the uniforms?"

(Boyne, 2006, p.100)

This quote reflects Foucault's concept of hierarchical observation. In this concept, one method of power to enforce compliance is to erase signs of individuality and replace them with collective markers that reflect the subject's position within the hierarchy. The Nazi regime divided the space into two sides, the military uniform representing the side that supervises while the striped pyjamas represent the side being supervised. Nazi authorities designated certain races as subjects to be disciplined or eliminated. This passage demonstrates that the meaning of space is not determined solely by its physical form but is continuously constructed through individual experience and interpretation. Bruno perceives the camp as an appealing environment because it contains many children with whom he imagines he can play, while his own house appears empty and isolating. His perception stands in sharp contrast to the camp's actual function as a site of imprisonment, forced labour, and systematic dehumanization under the Nazi regime.

From Lefebvre's perspective, this contrast exemplifies the concept of lived space, in which spatial meaning emerges through subjective experience rather than through official or ideological design. Although the camp is conceived by the Nazi authorities as a highly regulated space intended to segregate and control Jewish prisoners, Bruno reconstructs its meaning according to his own emotional needs and limited understanding of the world. His interpretation therefore challenges the assumption that the intended function of a space automatically determines how it is experienced. More importantly, Boyne employs Bruno's innocence to reveal the instability of ideological spatial constructions. The discrepancy between the camp's intended purpose and Bruno's personal perception suggests that spaces designed to enforce oppression may generate alternative meanings when interpreted outside the dominant ideological framework. Consequently, the novel illustrates that lived space remains dynamic and open to reinterpretation, exposing the limits of authoritarian attempts to fix and control the meaning of space. Furthermore, Foucault's concept also addresses biopower. Here, power is not merely about expanding the territory of sovereignty, but can also be exercised by intervening in the human body. Indirectly, discipline can be enforced by emphasizing their status in the face of the authorities. The narrative depicts how the Out-With camp stripped prisoners of their bodily autonomy, evident in their nutritional consumption and personal hygiene. This is reflected in the following quote:

Data 12

"...they were all terribly skinny and their eyes were sunken and they all had shaved heads."

(Boyne, 2006, p.208)

This indicates that the shaving of their hair was not merely a form of self-discipline but a stripping

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away of their identity. Their emaciated bodies and sunken eyes are evidence that Nazi power had stripped their bodies of their biological rights. Their fragile physical presence indicates that power holds complete control over a person's life and death.

The peak of this entire Foucauldian spatial and disciplinary mechanism is found in the transition from isolation to total destruction in the gas room. In the novel, the gas room is depicted as a closed space that brings the entire disciplinary process to an end:

> Data 13
>
> *"...they were all piling into a long room that was surprisingly warm and must have been very securely built because no rain was getting in anywhere. In fact, it felt completely airtight."*
>
> (Boyne, 2006, p.212)

This quote is a manifestation of the technology of power. The airtight room was built in such a way that the prisoners could neither breathe nor move. Inside that room, the prisoners' lives were effectively ended without resistance. This shows that the authorities have succeeded in taking away their right to life. This tragedy confirms Foucault's theory that buildings and spatial arrangements are never neutral, but rather active instruments used by those in power to manipulate, control, and systematically end human lives.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that space in The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas functions not merely as a physical setting but as an ideological mechanism through which segregation, surveillance, and dehumanization are systematically produced and maintained. By integrating Henri Lefebvre's theory of the Production of Space with Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, the analysis shows that spatial organization and disciplinary practices operate simultaneously to construct the Nazi regime's system of domination. Rather than existing as neutral environments, spaces within the novel actively shape identities, regulate movement, and legitimize unequal power relations. Beyond confirming the operation of these mechanisms, the study also reveals an important spatial paradox. Through Bruno's innocent perspective, Boyne exposes the instability of authoritarian spatial systems by showing that boundaries intended to enforce exclusion can unintentionally become sites of empathy and human connection. This finding suggests that ideological attempts to impose fixed meanings on space remain vulnerable to alternative interpretations and lived experiences that challenge institutional control.

The study therefore contributes to Holocaust literary criticism by demonstrating the analytical value of combining Lefebvre's and Foucault's theories within a single interpretative framework. This synthesis provides a more comprehensive understanding of how literary narratives represent the relationship between space, power, and dehumanization while also revealing the limitations of systems that rely on spatial organization to sustain domination. Nevertheless, this research is limited to the analysis of a single literary text and focuses primarily on qualitative textual interpretation. Future studies are encouraged to apply this integrated spatial-power framework to other Holocaust narratives or comparative literary works from different historical and cultural contexts. In addition, further research may examine adaptations in film or other media to explore how visual representations of space reinforce or transform literary depictions of power, exclusion, and human dignity.

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