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The Secret Garden: An Exploration of Psychology Through Fairy Tale and Gothic Narrative Devices

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The Secret Garden: An Exploration of Psychology Through Fairy Tale and Gothic Narrative Devices

How does the narrative in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) use fairy tale and gothic elements as literary devices to explore the psychology of the central characters?

Abstract

This thesis examines how *The Secret Garden* explores the psychology of the central characters Mary Lennox, Colin Craven and Mr. Craven through fairy tale and gothic narrative devices. Fairy tales and gothic tales share many similarities, both in structure as well as tropes to present a world filled with curiosity, dangers and monsters. By using a psychoanalytical perspective, one may extract the meaning behind the desires and fears present in fairy tales and gothic tales and thus have a deeper understanding how these functions in the work, for good or ill.

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1.0. Introduction

This thesis seeks to examine the question of how the narrative in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) uses fairy tale and gothic elements as literary devices to explore the psychology of central characters, with special focus on the protagonist, Mary Lennox. This thesis will examine how she grows into her role as a heroine and how she directly and indirectly changes, or inspires change in the people at Misselthwaite Manor. The thesis will also seek to clarify the importance of the gothic and fairy tale elements to further along the narrative.

The Secret Garden follows the story of Mary Lennox from India, a dislikeable child who is sent to live with her uncle, Archibald Craven, after the death of her parents due to a cholera outbreak in the country. Mr. Craven lives in Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire, an old house full of closed doors and secrets. Here she comes in contact with a variety of people, befriending a prancing robin, a servant girl, a crabby gardener and two boys who falls in love with the titular secret garden, just like her.

1.1. Structure

The thesis begins with defining exactly what the fairy tale and the gothic are in section 2.0. The section draws attention to their defining characteristics as well as how these narrative elements and devices overlap and closes with the most beneficial analytical perspective for these combined genres. Section 3.0. highlights the importance of childhood and its role in society, as well as discusses the implications of society failing to protect it. Section 4.0 seeks to explore and establish the gothic elements and literary devices in the narrative. The central characters Mary Lennox, Colin Craven and Mr. Craven each gets their own section where their most important gothic characteristics are presented, and how this informs the characters' psychology. This section also concretises the basic requirements for a fairy tale happy ending in regard to *The Secret Garden*. Section 5.0. outlines and tracks the journey to happiness, mostly through the eyes of Mary before the conclusion in section 6.0. summaries the thesis.

2.0. Defining Tales of Magic – The Fairy Tale and The Gothic

It is not easy to properly define what the fairy tale is or what purpose it has in society. This is largely due to how integrated such tales have been with human history and culture over thousands of years (Teverson 5). This has resulted in countless versions of the same tale that are constantly being reiterated and developed. One of the major reasons why these narratives do not grow stale is because they are moulded to fit the needs of the time and culture in which they are recreated. However, while the finer details may differ and take the fairy tale in a new direction, it still carries the historical importance of what came before (5). The past is present through combinations and re-combinations of familiar plots, characters, narrative devices and symbolic images (Warner, *Fairy Tale* xxiii).

Another reason why fairy tales are still so popular is because they offer answers to important questions such as: “What is the world really like? How am I to live my life in it? How can I truly be myself?” (Bettelheim 45). This need to make sense of reality and our place in it is present from a young age. Furthermore, as the truth of how everything in the world functions is difficult to grasp for a young mind, the explanations offered by the fairy tale makes sense as it already “conforms to the way a child thinks and experiences the world” (45). A parent can banish the monster under the bed, toys are living people and animals can understand human speech. This animistic thinking is natural for children (46) and also an often-used narrative device in gothic tales (Botting, 8).

Such overlaps of core narrative elements in fairy tales and gothic tales are fairly common. Carina Hart (2020) states that a protagonist in either tale must often deal with “similar stock characters”, inaccessible environments and resolutions that leans toward one extreme or the other, for good or ill (2). The protagonist also has a curiosity towards their environment that pushes them forward into the unknown and progresses the narrative (Bettelheim 61; Botting 6). Telling them ‘No,’ is like an incentive to act. Both genres are also arenas “populated by imaginary alter egos, dream selves and saviour figures” (Warner, *Fairy Tale* 4) that are capable of great good and terrible evil (Botting 10). These protagonists are often young, or a child (Botting 4; Warner, *Fairy Tale* 4). Thus, on their journey, change is inevitable, an ever-present possibility both figuratively and literally (Warner, *Fairy Tale* 23). These similarities and more allow authors to easily borrow elements from either genre and craft tales where the line between the two blur.

Because of this indistinction, both genres benefit from being analysed as singular stories that are historical products of their time and place, as well as ever-evolving pieces of literature that borrows from their past (Teverson 5; Botting 17). Fairy tales, due to their versatility and adaptive nature, symbolic language and presence in the “collective consciousness”, leaves room for interpretation (Teverson 5), a trait mirrored in the ambivalent and ambiguous gothic narrative (Botting 2). They both also have the “quality of plurisignification” (Teverson 5), in which fairy tale and gothic narratives and elements have many potential meanings *simultaneously* depending on the applied analytical perspective. With how integrated fairy tales and gothic tales are, the psychoanalytic perspective that examines how “latent fears and desires” manifests as symbols (5-6) is beneficial for this thesis’ analysis.

3.0. The Importance of Childhood and The Uncanny Dangers

There is almost an innate desire in adults to protect the fantasy of childhood. Children are warned to not grow up too fast, to believe in fairy tales. In this way, children and the world may still be a place of goodness and innocence, despite everything to the contrary (Warner, *Managing Monsters* ch.3). With war, famine, pestilence and death so present in the public eye, the drive to make the world a better place for the children and protect their innocence has never been more important or prevalent (ch.3). The reason for this is that children embody and reveal the true nature of the human soul and are “the keepers and the guarantors of humanity’s reputation” (ch.3). How children act and how they are treated is a direct reflection of society, its values and worth. As long as a child retains the ability to live in society and in the fantasy simultaneously and have them both be “real” at the same time without conflict (ch.3), the idealised childhood innocence endures.

Adults needs children to believe in fairy tales, because a world in which fantasy is real is fundamentally better than not. It is associated with kinder and more innocent times that adults can only relive through children (Warner, *Fairy Tale* 12). It is one of the reasons why the child protagonist has become so common, and especially so in fairy tales (Warner, *Managing Monsters* ch.3). A myriad of themes and stories may be explored through the perspective of a child, “making us as little children”, allowing adults to re-live lost innocence (ch.3). However, this attempt to recapture childhood is fleeting and futile. Adults can only

imitate and perform what they remember innocence was or how they observe it in present generations. (ch.3). This has given rise to social consequences for children and the idea of what they should be like, as well as childhood (ch.3). Never before has “childhood” been so restrictive. It has become something “special and magical, precious and dangerous ... which has to be contained” and protected (ch.3). Children should be like little angels, innocent, pure, happy and able to believe in fairy tales, and society cries out in defiance against forces that threatens this ideal (ch.3). To protect the children is to protect society. However, no child, save perhaps one completely sheltered from the entire world (ch.3), will ever be able to maintain this ideal (ch.3). For adults longing for childhood innocence, this failure can be considered a crime as the children have “betrayed an abstract myth about children’s proper childlikeness” (ch.3).

It is for these reasons that the notion that children are corrupt becomes all the more horrifying. “Children are our copy” (ch.3), our doppelgängers, and society’s failure to protect them and save them from abuse and killers, puts the human soul and the future in jeopardy. Children forced to face the most depraved sides of humanity either perish or grow up too fast. This forced growth and insecurity in one’s surroundings may then lead a child to try to master and control their immediate environment (Bettelheim 51). In light of this, the idea that children would combat “their own hapless dependence” on the kindness of adults by “imagining themselves huge and powerful and cruel” seems like a natural progression (Warner, *Managing Monsters* ch.3). Furthermore, children are capable of innocent cruelty, like plucking the wings off a fly for curiosity’s sake. Such “unruly passions” and impulse are usually restrained on the gradual path to adulthood (ch.3). A child, however, forced to grow up too fast would not learn this self-control and retain their ability to commit hedonistic transgressions without restraint (ch.3). Thus, to break free from cruel adults and mirroring the adults’ evil actions, the children have the potential to turn similar evil actions toward their fellow men. They have become “little beasts”, and rather than being a term of endearment, it becomes a statement of fact filled with “repulsion and fear” (ch.3). This disparity between what children should be and what they have become is what puts the human soul and the future in danger; the horrifying implications of the complete decay of society that has resulted in murderous and monstrous children.

It is such fears and terrors that has plagued the gothic narrative since the end of the nineteenth century (Botting 104, 128). Little incite as much unease as children whom society has failed as those children exists so beyond society that they have become unfamiliar. These

unfamiliar creatures taking the form of children are “uncanny disruptions of the boundaries between” what is and what should not be, reality and fantasy (104). As a result, children become potential “objects of fear” and monsters that reside in your home and family (175). Orphans, having lost their guardians, both literally and figurately, are especially vulnerable to this corruption. The potential retribution from the “aberrant individuals”, common figures in homely gothic (116), invokes the feelings of unease, “fear and terror” both within the characters in narratives and within the reader (Goring et al, 370).

4.0. Establishing the Monstrous

The Secret Garden, when bared to its core narrative structure, follows the Victorian gothic almost to the letter: a young woman (Mary Lennox) leaves her home and arrives at an old house (Misselthwaite Manor) in a moor (Yorkshire), ruled by its sullen masters (Colin Craven and Mr. Craven) and haunted by secrets and ghosts of the past (Botting 13). The central characters in the novel, Mary, Colin and Mr. Craven all have negative characteristics that make them “different” from what is considered “normal”. Normal, in this case, refers to positive members of society that fulfil their respective roles.

4.1. Mistress Mary

According to Holly Virginia Blackford, Mary arrives in her own personal version of the Underworld, a landscape that mourns a dead mother with a house that echoes these lamentations (135). For the residents trapped in this manor, Blackford further explains, the house becomes a “marooned island,” trapped in an eternal winter with a “lost boy who cannot grow up” (135). Mary is a stranger to this place, feeling “small ... lost and odd”, and is immediately shown to a room and is expected to keep to them (Burnett 22). This confinement mirrors the treatment Mary received in the past by her parents, purposely kept out of sight by fearful servants (7) to the degree that she becomes entirely forgotten when the rest of the household flees the bungalow during the cholera outbreak (10). She is a ghost that roams the shadows of her home, a secret that haunts the residents. Because of this treatment, this abandonment by parental love and society, Mary becomes guilty of the crime of being “the

most disagreeable-looking child ever seen” (7) rather than an innocent, beautiful and happy child that society expects. The lack of love has poisoned Mary with negative feelings such as rage, and these negative emotions affects her physically (Lamond 128-9). It is even speculated that if Mrs. Lennox had been more present in Mary’s life, meaning had she loved her daughter, Mary would have inherited her mother’s beauty (Burnett 14) Instead, Mary is repeatedly described as “little”, “thin”, “sickly” and “ugly” (7), physical traits that makes her unlikable, invoking the image of a wraith or goblin. Her appearance is further highlighted by the clothes she wears upon her arrival at Misselthwaite Manor. Dressed completely in black from head to toe, contrasting sharply to her skin and that “made her look yellower than ever” (15-6), bringing to mind how unhealthy she is. This image of “a child dressed in black wanderin’ about like a lost soul” in the moors invokes unease in Mr. Craven, evident in how he orders Mrs. Medlock to buy colourful clothing for Mary before her arrival to combat this. This action just reaffirms the idea that Mary has lived as a ghost up to this point. This is another example of how the adults draw attention to Mary’s appearance and behaviour. Margrete Lamond states that the adults around Mary constantly mentions and reinforces these “negative stories” about her (135), leading Mary to not only believe them but also reinforce them on her own, saying how they “wouldn’t like me. ... No one does” (Burnett 51).

This acceptance and resignation also fit with another observation about Mary: how she often behaves “like an old woman” (16). With this in mind, “Mistress Mary” as she is often called when she acts at her most disagreeable (13, 14, 25, 26, 28, 33, 34), is less like a child and more like a bitter old woman. Ben Weatherstaff, the secret caretaker of the garden before his old age caught up to him (169), even compares her to himself, calling them “a good bit alike, ... wove out of th’ same cloth ... as sour as we look” and “the same nasty tempers” (35). This comparison makes it clear: Mary is not a child but an old “crone” (Blackford 136) and the furthest apart from what a child should be. Her familiar child form is distorted, leaving behind an ugly and frail, old woman. This disparity and her outcast status, marks her as a monstrous creature (Botting 10) with an uncertain future, capable of unspeakable acts.

4.2. Hysterical Colin

Colin Craven, on the other hand, is first referred to by explicitly *not* mentioning him at all. During the carriage ride to Misselthwaite Manor, Mrs. Medlock takes time to give Mary some information on her uncle. She says: “He never troubles himself about *no one*” (my emphasis) and then the narrative describes her stopping herself from saying anything more (Burnett 17), thus implying there is some secret she cannot discuss. This secret, we soon learn, is Colin. The servants of the house know of Colin but are ordered to keep him secret and Mary only becomes aware of something afoot when the wind starts to sound “rather like a child crying” (41). Much like Mary, Colin starts off haunting the household, and it is Mrs. Medlock’s job to keep the status quo (22). The door to Colin’s room is even hidden behind a tapestry (48), a secret door that the desire to discover the secrets behind it (Botting 6). To press forward, however, has the potential to put her in grave danger.

Opening the door leads to Mary’s first meeting with Colin, and she is so surprised by this that it casts doubt on whether she is awake or dreaming (Burnett 95). Colin is described as having ivory skin and grey eyes too big for his sharp and delicate face (97). He hungers for what information she can provide him (101) and her attention (126) and is possessive of what he considers his (104). At first, Mary welcomes it, wanting to talk more with the “mysterious boy” (99). However, the more they reveal themselves to each other, the more danger Mary is in. Colin is ravenous in his appetite, and this added to his pale appearance and “black-rimmed eyes” (165), invokes the image of a vampire (Blackford 138). He feeds on her, and once Mary notices the danger she is in, she becomes frightened of what he has the potential to do (Burnett 101). If she does not distract him, he will destroy the garden she loves, thus destroying everything she has become and everything she has the potential to be. This young master, who for a brief moment “looked almost beautiful” at Mary’s descriptions (103) exposes his monstrous nature.

The reason behind Colin’s behaviour is that he is expected to die in the near future, both by his own reckoning and by the surrounding adults (100-1). These “negative stories” have eroded his self-image of health, reinforced his abandonment by society and pushed him into hysteric fits and tantrums that terrify the servants (Lamond 135). Even his father cannot bear to see Colin awake and visits him only at night (98) as if his room is an open casket. According to Emma Hayes, these antics, his illness and fragility “symbolically connects him

to a Gothic model of femininity” (43). By ailing from a feminine disease that attacks the mind and unravels it (Botting 120), he takes on a feminine role. With his gender now swapped, he has “no legitimate role” in the narrative (Blackford 145). Rather than making the servants comply using his “insane tempers”, his “outbursts paralyse the staff with fear” (Hayes 43-4). Colin embodies the cruel indifference the patriarchy has for girls and women (44). This added his potential for destroying Mary and failure to present as an ideal (male) child by his inability to exert power in what should be his domain (Burnett 100), marks him a ghost in his own home intangible and unable to affect his surroundings.

4.3. Hunchback Mr. Craven

Mr. Craven, despite being rarely present in the beginning of the novel and in the manor itself, manages to envelope it like a shroud with his very existence. He is the voice that commands servants from the past through flashbacks (15, 16, 26), the man whose guardianship over Mary and Colin ultimately decides their fate (26, 49). His first arrival at the manor makes Mary go pale with fright (88). He passes through life like a wandering soul, moving from place to place and hiding away in the West Wing whenever he deigns to return (17). He barely seems to remember Mary, even when she stands in front of him “as if they were seeing something else” (90), further suggesting that losing his wife left him frozen in time and lost in mourning. It was him that began the cycle of negative stories, ranting and raving about how Colin was “another hunchback like him and it’d (Colin) better die” (107). This behaviour likely stems from his own childhood that “set him wrong” due to his crooked back (17). He also reinforces these stories, saying “I am too ill, and wretched and distracted” (91)

His behaviour is a result of his own experiences with being abandoned by society and the emotional backlash of losing the only person who dared to love a monster. Their mutual love (17) had set him on the path to redemption, back to being a positive member of society and knowing what love and acceptance was. Her lose casts him into the depts of the underworld, and the transgressive and excessive nature of wishing an infant to die reveals just how abhorrent he has become. Rather than being a loving father and honourable master of the house, he exists in purgatory as “a hunchback” and is “horrid” (13),

4.4. The Necessary Metamorphosis

Ironically, all the central characters in *The Secret Garden* manages to haunt each other, as well as the rest of the household, further highlighting the ‘excess’ common in the gothic (Botting 9). Colin’s echoing moans in the hallways and dreamlike first encounter makes Mary question if he is a ghost, a question he returns due to his own failing mind (Burnett 97-9). Mary and Colin are also haunted by Mr. Craven, due of his potential crimes towards them and the grief he wears like a mantle. Mr. Craven, in turn, is haunted by Colin’s imagined death, Mary’s crone-like behaviour, as well as what they represent, the last remnants of his deceased wife. These haunting and uncanny descriptions, common in gothic tales (Hart 2) and the three characters’ individual statuses as “outsiders” of society, marks them as monstrous. The fact that these three are also family, making them a family of monsters, is a further transgression towards what society values in home and family (Botting 122). They are all broken without love for others or themselves.

Mary and Colin are the protagonists of *The Secret Garden* despite being remnants of “a greater darkness” of societal failings (Botting 121). They are monstrous and villainous, opposite of what children should be, and thus also a stark contrast to the good and optimistic fairy tale protagonists one would commonly think of. However, fairy tales promises a happy ending (Bettelheim 37; Warner, *Fairy Tale* 25) and *The Secret Garden* is no different. In order for this to happen, Mary, Colin and Mr. Craven must undergo a transformation. These monsters, victims of circumstance, must be restored to their “original form”, or even transformed into a “far more beautiful form” (Warner, *Fairy Tale* 27) and cast aside their gothic trappings and restore natural order: reform their broken selves and family, and live harmoniously together according to social norms.

5.0. The Journey to a Happy Ending

Mary’s restoration and metamorphosis begins with sowing the seeds for her potential for growth. This is necessary to signal that while it will take some hard work, Mary is not beyond hope and redemption. After detailing just how horrid and tyrannical she is by presenting how she treats her servants (Burnett 7), Mary wanders out to the garden and begins

to play, pretending to make flowerbeds (8). Later on, she is described to make “heaps of earth and paths for a garden” (12). In this manner, Mary is directly associated with the titular secret garden, cementing her fertility and role as the future caretaker of it and Colin (Blackford 135). Her eventual transformation is also foreshadowed by another woman suggesting that “Perhaps she will improve as she grows older,” meaning she will obtain beauty (Burnett 14).

The seeds are carefully covered by earth from stories about the late Mrs. Craven, and Mary is immediately taken into the positive mythos surrounding the dead woman despite the tragedy to the tale, linking her mother and aunt (17). From here on out, however, the narrative presents what I call an ‘inside narrative’ (gothic) and an ‘outside narrative’ (fairy tale) as literary devices to play a tug of war, battling for space and dominance as well as an ‘inside narrative’ and ‘outside narrative’. The inside narrative follows the gothic twists and turns, the illness, the decay and the uncanny present in the manor’s foundation. The outside, on the other hand, focuses on gradual emergence of spring.

The moor unfolds like a black ocean, and Misselthwaite Manor serves as the lone isle amongst the waves (21), perfectly capturing the vastness and the decay of gothic nature and dwellings (Botting 4). Mary is then welcomed by a dark servant who warns her to stay out of sight (Burnett 22). These dark elements also mirror Mary’s current, monstrous state and Mary crossing the border between ‘outside’ (the dark nature that followed her) and into the ‘inside’ further marks the house as a place of confinement (Botting 4). This is why the introduction of the servant girl Martha becomes a lynchpin for Mary’s further growth. Martha is the first guide to recovery, the first proper and living template of what a happy childhood may result in that Mary may copy. Martha is akin to a prophet (Blackford 137), already knowing that once Mary awakens and is able to listen to the moor, to receive of nature’s gifts and boon, Mary “will like it” (Burnett 23). Even when Mistress Mary rears her ugly head, Martha’s sincerity and kindness are able to disarm the beast using her “queer Yorkshire speech and sturdy way” (26).

This burgeoning connection, barely a sprout, and the positive stories Martha spins, breaks the negative “feedback loop” Mary has been stuck in due to her parents’ death, relocation and unease of her surroundings (Lamond 132-3). As the frequent subject of these stories, Dickon, Martha’s younger brother, arouses curiosity and sentiment in Mary. He has the ability to seemingly enthrall animals, knows the secret paths and “everyone who knew the moor” knew him (Burnett 143). As a result, Dickon represents not only a connection to nature that Mary craves, but also Mary’s own animistic thinking (Blackford 147). Her familiarity

with him through Martha's stories ensures that they are like old friends, when they meet for the first time,

These positive stories continue on in her meeting with Ben Weatherstaff and the robin. While the comparison Ben makes between him and Mary brings forth anew the trappings of the gothic, old woman, this comparison also serves to encourage Mary "to examine herself" (Hayes 43) and discover her unattractive sides that she has never deigned to find (Burnett 35). Ben also has a profound connection to nature, one forged over many years with knowledge Mary covets (74). He too engages in animism, assigning both gender and what Bruno Bettelheim calls the human capacity for thoughts and emotions to the robin (46). Having faced this indirectly from Dickon and directly from Ben, Mary is instantly able to integrate this knowledge into her own perspective, and in doing so finds an important friend in the robin. This acceptance, according to Bettelheim, is a result of young people seeking to escape to the magical and fantastic because they "were prematurely pressed to view reality in an adult way" (51).

Slowly and surely, the light of the fairy tale narrative dots the story and purifies the monster inside Mary as the narrative focuses on the outdoors. Physical activity in the moor (Burnett 37) and positive thinking are steadily affecting her (Lamond 128). She is able to eat more, play and when her joy drives her to laugh, she almost looks "pretty for a moment" (Burnett 38). Mary learns through Martha's stories how children may be and grows on those stories, they provide her with a new perspective and makes "her think several entirely new things" (45). However, with her now almost awake and ready to receive from nature, a new mystery is reintroduced to bring balance between the fairy tale and the gothic.

With the arrival of bad weather, forcing the narrative indoors, the manor once more becomes a place of intrigue, disguised by what could have been the wind but is actually the cry of a wounded child (41). Had Martha been more dishonest, more like a monstrous child, she would have been able to withhold the truth from Mary. Instead, her honesty betrays her, revealing the existence of a secret (41-2) and inciting the desire to uncover it. In accordance with animistic thinking that Mary has fully embraced (38-9), the bad weather may thus be perceived as Mary's second boon from nature, the first being her friend the robin. This gives her the chance to pursue the secret without being distracted overly much. Thus, she explores the haunted manor, finding endless corridors of locked doors and portraits (44-5). At this point in her growth, capable of perceiving herself through the eyes of others (Hayes 43), she

is able to imagine herself as the outsider (Burnett 45). The narrative then awards her for her insight by uncovering the hidden door to the secret's room, Colin's room (48).

Nature's third boon, having unravelled more of the gothic inside narrative, is to gift her the key to the garden (54) Mary desires so much and lead her there with the aid of the robin (61). Just like Mary, the garden requires hard work to set it back on the path of recover Mary's present state, being well on her way to become her most beautiful self, affirms that this transformation will happen, and Mary is now responsible for this (Blackford 135-6). She begins the work alone with only the robin at her side (Burnett 64) and gathering knowledge and materials (66, 74, 78, 91) to achieve her nature-given task. With Dickon joining her endeavours (79) Mary has her second guide, this time a present template of childhood innocence. Empowered by this and everything she has learned from those around her, human and not, she gains the strength and courage to successfully carry the outside fairy tale narrative to the inside and to ask for "a bit of earth" from the greatest monster she has met so far; her uncle Archibald Craven (91). Mr. Craven sees Mary for the first time and can barely *see* her past the flooding reminders of his late wife (90, 92). The shock of seeing her and her request manages to dig underneath his apathy, sowing a singular seed of potential that may one day grow to purify his revulsion towards the children in his care and his "implicit condescension" (Warner, *Managing Monsters* ch.3). He freely admits to Mary that he wants her "to be happy and comfortable", he is just incapable of providing these things to others beyond using material wealth (Burnett 91). Mary cleverly manages to get permission from the wretched monster to do whatever she wants (92) and her time living in the manor and hearing the negative stories about him, has made her sympathise with him (93). It is her time to break the negative feedback loop as she Martha that "he is a really nice man, only his face is so miserable" (93). Through this encounter, Mary has learned that scary first impressions can be misleading, and so she will have an easier time accepting and by-passing these first impressions (Bettelheim 50).

Having dealt with her first monster, and sowed the seed of transformation in him, it is time for Mary to use her empowered state to open the door to Colin's room, mingling the outside with the inside once more. This time, she does not know to be afraid, for Colin mirrors who she used to be, too sickly and almost stuck in a dream (Burnett 97). While Mary has learned some self-reflection and the ability to by-pass first impressions, she is unable to recognize her ghostly doppelgänger before its selfish will threatens to destroy her (100). Once

more, she uses her wit to save herself (102), and as the only one to win escape from its' grasp, she has become its caretaker (Blackford 140).

Using stories of the secret garden, outside fairy tales, Mary slowly begins the task of restoring Colin to what he should be according to society; a healthy young boy who is coming into himself. She challenges the set beliefs he has about himself and the negative stories he has inherited (111), she scolds him for his unwarranted tantrums (131) and reprimands his rude behaviour (172). Colin is receptive to this because he accepts her as a mothering figure (Hayes 43). As the fairy tale narrative empowers them both, the gothic narrative gradually gives away. Rather than illness, sorrow and rage, the children work Magic into their lives, convinced that "something is there" (Burnett 173). With their hard effort the garden becomes alive, filled with the magic of life and Colin starts to experiment on what magic can do (177) with enthusiastic support from Mary and Dickon. Their transformation is complete and has led to "recognition" for now their "true form" appears (Warner, *Fairy Tale* 27). Whatever dark curse has been broken and the monsters are no more. Furthermore, the seed that Mary planted seems to have gained strength as well, because Mr. Craven returns to Misselthwaite Manor, full of life from a dream (Burnett 211). Their reconciliation as what marks the true happy ending, family reunited at last (219)

6.0. Conclusion

In this manner does the tale of Mary, Colin and Mr. Craven end in *the Secret Garden*, flushed by the joy of banishing the monsters that inhabited the house forever. The similarities between the fairy tale and the gothic makes the two genres difficult to define when they are used in such an interwoven manner. While the Victorian gothic structure is followed almost to the letter, the gradual infusion of light and spring and magic from the fairy tale overwhelms the dark origins that tale has.

The monstrous children are no more, replaced by children who have discovered childhood innocence after being kindly guided and protected by envoys of nature and the late lady that was mourned at tales beginning. Now, Mrs. Craven has gained new life, for the garden symbolises her, and Mary's efforts has nourished the land and restored balance.

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