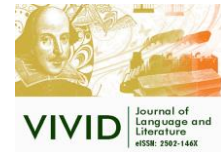


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# Main Character's Resistance Against Traumatic Experience in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*: Freud's Tripartite Model Analysis

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### A B S T R A C T

This thesis discusses about the effect caused by parent's neglect towards children's development as seen in the novel *The Secret Garden* by Francis Hodgson Burnett. The main character, Mary Lennox, has life without love and attention from her parents. This situation has a great impact towards Mary's development, mentally and physically. The role of "the secret garden" along with several characters that appears in the story have a big contribution in help Mary to change to a better person, based on the theory by Sigmund Freud about "id, ego and superego" or famous with the term "tripartite theory". The result of this research is how the contribution from the secret garden to help Mary changes to a better child. The secret garden has a role to helps Mary understands about her own intention, helped with the other minor characters that drives the "id" and "superego" of the main character.

## INTRODUCTION

Children's literature is a kind of literature for children characterized by a tone of joy and innocence, which is associated with children [1]. Additionally, children's literature is sometimes also characterized by agricultural life, closeness to nature, reliable friends, the extreme contrast between good and bad, the ideal and the practical, ideal family and the orphan, group and family responsibility and concern for one's self (3). One of the most dominant author of children literature who is able to combine all the elements associated with children is Francis Hodgson Burnett. Frances Hodgson Burnett is a British born author and playwright who is well-known for her works in the genre of children's literature. Burnett has written numerous works in her lifetime. One of them is *The Secret Garden* [2]. *The Secret Garden* was firstly published as a novel in 1911. It is considered as one of Burnett's most popular novels and included as a classic of English children's literature.

The garden in *The Secret Garden* has a vital part in developing the main character's behaviour. The contribution of the garden in changing the main character's personality is crucial. After Mary is transferred to Misselthwaite Manor, the garden becomes her obsession. She wants to obtain the garden for herself. Perhaps Mary thinks the garden as the projection of her inner self. Unconsciously, the garden represents her image from the past, when she was neglected by her parents and cared by servants who allowed her to become a spoiled, aggressive and selfish child. The interaction between the garden and Mary is the main issue that will be discussed in this research. The garden has a mystical power to attract people, especially Mary.

It somehow attracts people's attention with its deepest beauty that is hidden beyond its darkness. It is assumed that Mary thinks the garden as an image of herself, and then she is responsible to take care of it. This appearance of the garden turns her personality to become more controllable and healthier, both physically and mentally. This illustration makes the writer assume that Mary suffers from a psychological disorder. From here, the writer proposes to conduct a research by focusing on the contribution of the garden as the projection of the main character, Mary Lennox, to cure herself. Along with helps by other characters that appears in the story.

The main character experiences several traumatic events since the beginning of the story. Mary Lennox has faced tragic moments in her family. These traumatic experiences lead to misbehaviour of the main character. The progress of her development is crucially neglected. She becomes aggressive, temperamental, disrespectful, and depressed. She cannot think straight how to behave well to other people. From a psychological perspective, trauma occurs when a child experiences an intense event that threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical well-being [3].

In the novel, Mary has been abandoned by her parents since she was born. She becomes selfish, easily irritated, and frequently has troubles in interacting with other people. Furthermore, Mary has weak physical condition. After the tragedy that happened in her house, Mary moves to Misselthwaite Manor where she lives with her uncle, Archibald Craven. This is where Mary finds the secret garden that becomes her obsession. The garden has also been abandoned for ten years, which makes her unconsciously believes that the garden is like a projection of herself. Mary takes care of the garden and as the consequence with her action, her mental and physical states are progressively healed. The writer assumes that the main character has suffered from psychological disorder, deep in her psyche. In the end, taking care of the garden has the most important role in healing the state of her id, ego and superego.

Since it was published in 1911, *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett has been discussed by using several different perspectives. Thus, the writer has also reviewed several researches from other writers. Kathryn DiGiulio in her article entitled "Between Misselthwaite Manor and The "Wild, Dreary" Moor: Children and Enclosures in *The Secret Garden*" explains how children employ agency to negotiate space, specifically in the garden. She says that in Burnett's narrative, each physical space encodes regeneration and death to the child characters and the garden operates as a key side of influence in Mary's personal development [4]. The enclosures in *The Secret Garden*, as stated by DiGiulio, prove problematic and nurturing for

the liminal character, Mary Lennox. Mary's journey to find out trip from India to the English Yorkshire, makes herself defined by a perpetual state of liminality. At the onset of the novel, Mary's isolation from her familial ties and uprooting from the national identity tie her character to the neglected garden. Her gained interest in discovering the entrance to the flowery enclosure and cultivating a "piece of earth" (Burnett 95) demonstrates her heightened comfort in the space, in stark contrast to her alienation in Indian and English society. In fact, the garden becomes the central space into which Mary belongs to; the close association between the two constructs her as liminal character, much as the garden remains in liminal space. The writer finds that this article mostly discusses about the problematic of nurturing character that comes from a different region. It helps the writer to understand that Mary as the main character, can be classified as a liminal character because she does not belong to a single country, but fluxes between space and people.

The next article is written by Frances E. Dolan entitled "Mastery at Misselthwaite Manor: Taming the Shrews in *The Secret Garden*" [5]. This article explores the characteristic of Mary Lennox as the main character to the 'shrew', where the disorderly character dating back at least as far as Noah's wife in medieval drama. Just as Mary resembles the stereotypical shrew, Dolan argues that the novel plot is indebted to the venerable shrew-taming tradition. The shrew taming plot depicts how a feisty woman, isolated in part by her refusal to conform, is domesticated in order to accommodate herself to social relationship. *The Secret Garden* is being tamed as a largely benevolent process of learning to be 'friends with' person and things. It produces a positive result such as improved health, better manners and brighter spirits. By reading this article, the writer finds out that shrew taming is actually a way to help the readers to obtain a social relationship. It is a step to help the character to know how to be friends with other character appears in the story.

Added to an article by Francis Michael McCarthy entitled "Forget the Devil and keep your Pink Lamps Lighted: The Metaphysics of Francis Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*" that explores the way Burnett uses the novel as a vehicle to spread a "beautiful thought" to the masses [6]. After the death of her eldest son, Burnett suffers a depression and physical exhaustions, and through this novel she tries to show that the garden could be a vital role in someone's self development. The garden, as it always be an important place for Burnett, is used as metaphor in *The Secret Garden*. Through *The Secret Garden*, the main character undergoes a metamorphosis from being a tyrannical and miserable child to an agent of healing.

### **Sigmund Freud : Psychoanalytical Theory**

Psychoanalytical Theory on a literary work is influenced by the study of human psyche based on the theory invented by Sigmund Freud. There are three parts of human mind that are very popular by people studying psychology. They are unconscious, preconscious and conscious (ego, super-ego, id). The conscious mind is what you are aware of any particular moment, your present perceptions, memories, thoughts, fantasies and feelings [7]. Another one, working closely with conscious is called preconscious, which is anything that can easily bring to mind with. The largest part by far is the unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to the awareness, including many things that have origins in human mind, such as

drives or instincts, and also things that we cannot bear to hold, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma (5).

A tripartite model of the structure of the mind are id, ego and super-ego [8]. According to Freud, the id is the part of the mind which situates the instinctual sexual drives which requires satisfaction. An example of this is an infant screaming for something. It does not know what it wants, it just knows it wants it now [7]. While ego searches for objects to satisfy the wishes that id creates to represent the organism needs, related the organism to reality by means of its consciousness. Ego attempts to balance the desires of the id and the reality of the external world. Lastly, superego is like a personal moral standard. It derives from rewards and positive models presented to the child (6).

### **Ego Defense Mechanism**

The ego deals with people's demands of reality; the id, and superego [9]. But when anxiety becomes overwhelming, the ego must defend it as best as it can. The way ego defends itself is by unconsciously blocking the impulses or distorting them into a more acceptable form. It means that the ego changes the impulses into a less threatening way.

### **Bernard J Paris : Imagine Human Being**

In his book entitled *Imagined Human Being: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature*, he states that a fictional character can be analyzed just the same with a real person [10]. The most fascinating about literature is its portrayal of human beings and their relationship. The author has developed a psychological approach in which to understand the behaviour of a fictional character in literary work with the same way we analyze the real person. It is not a universal theory but still, it deals with human's needs and defense mechanism that is portrayed in literary works. Without ignoring cultural differences, this approach enables the reader to see an underlying similarity in human experience. This approach can help the reader to understand the behaviour of character in literature from the past, to understand their inner conflicts and relationship.

When people try to understand a fictional character in psychological terms, they tend to escape their roles in the plot and to subvert the view about them advanced by the rhetoric (2). There is always conflict between an author's interpretation and judgments, which are parts of what the author means by rhetoric and the mimetic portrait of a character. Authors tend to analyze characters who embody the defensive strategies while they portraying their behaviour as damaging to themselves. However, there are some inconsistencies within the rhetoric itself, as the author presents conflicting interpretation and judgments toward the fictional characters appears in literary work. Since psychoanalysis deals with human beings in conflict with their inner self and other people, literature portrays such situation and condition that is related with this theory. Furthermore, human psychology is inordinately complex and can be analyzed in many ways.

## METHOD

In conducting this research, the writer evaluates the novel based on Mario Klarer's idea. Furthermore, literary critique is sometimes used to differentiate between the reader's interpretation of the story and the evaluate criticism that normally occurs with book reviews [11]. Additionally, there are several steps in evaluating a literary work. The first step is collecting the data. In collecting the data, the writer applies library research method. There are two types of data used in this research; the primary data, which are taken from the novel *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett and the secondary data taken by collecting some related information from articles, related theses, essays and theory books about the main subject in this research.

The second step is analyzing the data. The writer uses psychoanalytic theory invented by Sigmund Freud. The analysis starts by analyzing the intrinsic elements of the story, the plot progress of the story itself and the related events and conditions that trigger this subject. The writer analyzes the main character in this novel, Mary Lennox, and compares with other characters in order to support the idea of this problem. The idea is to find what kind of symptom occurs in the main character and how she deals with those problems. Nevertheless, the writer analyzes those problems by using psychoanalytical theory.

The last step is presenting the result of analysis. In this research the writer provides qualitative method in presenting the result of analysis. At the end of this research, the writer presents several points as the result of this research descriptively. These steps of literary critique shows that the evaluation of works in literary criticism is controversial, which mostly because this process requires too many variables [11].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the beginning of the story, it is clearly mentioned that Mary's mother did not want to have a child. As for Mary, who is just a nine years old little girl, knowing the fact that her parents ignorance about her existence causes an impact to herself. Furthermore, her servants do not give enough love and passion to her either, which makes herself more desperate and miserable. Of course, it creates an effect to her mental health knowing the fact that she is just a child who does not know anything. According to MHFA in the article First Aid Guidelines for Assisting Children, "Mental health first aid is being provided by a parent, the parental role takes precedence over the first aid role" [12]. It is obvious that parents is the most important for the children who endure from traumatic events. But in Mary's case, her parent's neglect is the main cause of her miserable life. She does not really have anyone that she can trust, neither friends nor servants. Her parent's abandonment has caused a great damage to Mary's mental health. However, not only on her mentality, this issue also affects her physical development. In the first chapter, Burnett clearly describes how Mary's appearance is. As stated in this paragraph, "she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. she had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another" (1).

The writer believes that her disagreeable-looking and sour expression is not something that she has since she was born. But it is the effect of her parent's abandonment. Both her physical and mental are damaged. Additionally, the writer argues that she is not only ignored by her parents, but also has no one to trust. Mary has temper tantrums or become fearful, crying and clingy as the effect of her parent's abandonment. She feels very upset and fearful. Furthermore, the incident of sudden death of the people due to cholera has developed her tantrums even worse. Her mother, Ayah, and other servants are dead instantly while she just stands in the nursery room by herself without knowing that tragedy. She feels even worse because she realizes that no one cares about her. Traumatic experiences lead to Mary's development disposure and has more chances to be introvert. It is clearly a threat when she faces-up with other people, especially adults. Childhood traumas may include experiences such as abuse or neglect, witnessing family or community violence, accidents, exposure to parental drug or alcohol abuse, separation from parents through parental death or divorce, or parental incarceration. The writer believes that the traumatic events experienced by Mary can be categorized into chronic level and of course can have a detrimental impact on child's functioning, including brain development, regulation of emotions, attachment, and behavioral functioning. Basically, Mary just imitates the way people treat her, or at least that is the way to behave in society. There is nobody who taught her which one is right, or wrong. Living by herself and ordering people around is the way of living for her before she meets Sowerby's. The effect of abandonment and sudden death has caused her suffer a personality disorder. Her exposure to several maltreatments damages her developing brain and body in number ways.

The brain continues to develop and significantly change throughout childhood into adolescence. The progress goes on, as each area of the brain that develops, there are specific periods when the brain region is forming mass and creating connection. During this period, the impact of maltreatment may be particularly damaging Mary's developing brain. The traumatic experiences have been found to result in unpredictable changes to her brain and body. The writer believes that Mary is exposed to traumas that damage her brain development, which caused her to be emotionally reactive, having some difficulties regulating behaviours and having problems with verbal memory. These damages can disrupt her normal development and lead to emotional, cognitive and behavioral issues. Such behavioral issues may include increased aggression, poor social skills and inability to moderate emotional responses, attachment problems and an increasing impulsivity. Mary, as the main character who has experienced complex trauma, also becomes vulnerable to develop her mental health. She may present with a combination of problems. Additionally, if two children meet diagnostic criteria for stress disorder, there is still a chance that they have a very different set of symptoms. Meanwhile, in the story, there are two characters that suffer from personality disorder, Mary and Colin. In addition, the signs of symptoms can look very similar to other neuropsychiatric disorders in children, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and major depression.

Sigmund Freud, who invented the theory "id, ego, super-ego", has an idea that every living organism have a very important part in their mind. It is called nervous system, which has one characteristic to the organism's needs. In other word, when Mary finds out about the Secret Garden, she unconsciously demands to obtain the garden for herself. She instantly feels some

sort of connection between herself and the secret garden. At first, she does not care at all about who owns that garden, about why this garden is just left behind without anybody mentions about it. She just knows that she wants it, and she wants it right now. The secret garden has a great contribution in helping Mary to heal herself. As matter of fact, taking care of the garden is actually the first step for Mary to cure herself from her traumatic experience. The writer argues that the garden is actually a projection of Mary's inner self, because both of them have been abandoned for years. Nobody truly have a responsibility in taking care of them. They have been through a hard time, in a different ways. Since the first time Mary knows about The Garden, she uncounsciously feels attracted toward the garden. Unconsciously, Mary's inner self is wondering about the garden. But deep inside, she does not know that the garden is actually her own projection. The presence of the garden is similar with the tragedy happened to Mary. When Burnett describes about the garden, it is said that the only door to the garden is nowhere to be seen, and the key is buried in the ground by Mr. Archibald. This appearance of the garden, which the writer believes actually symbolizes the tragic event happened to Mary. The garden is described like a place that is surrounded by high-walls and the ground is covered with grass. The writer believes it represents the situation of Mary's personality. Because of the tragedies happened at her bungalow, Mary's trust is being sealed to other people. She isolates herself from society. Her parents neglect her, and her servants do not want to stay longer with her, especially when she behaves badly.

The writer argues that perhaps it is quite unacceptable for a little girl who has been abandoned in her life to feel attracted by such presence. But there is an idea why Mary feels

amazed by the garden. Since the beginning of the story, Mary is rejected by the people around the bungalow, that is why she isolate and lock herself in her room. She knows that she lives in other people's world, not hers. Even though she is allowed to do anything she deserves, she realizes that her freedom does not belong to her. Ironically, the writer believes that Mary's presence is just like a pet in a big house, a living thing that is allowed to do anything without anyone to complain. She feels free to wander around because she has servants who bath and feed her. But the fact is she just temporary lives in that bungalow. So, when she finally finds a place where no one cares about her, she finally understands and for the first time, finds a place that belongs to her.

Although Mary's wish to obtain the garden might enough to satisfy her unconscious desire, it is not enough to satisfy herself as a living organism. Her need only gets stronger, and the wishes just keep coming into her mind. The writer believes that Mary has notice that, when she has not satisfy some needs, such as the need to obtain the garden, it begins to demand more and more of your attentions, such as the attention to taking care of it and so on, until there comes a point where Mary cannot think of anything else. This is the part where the wish or drive breaking into consciousness state. As for the consciousness, the writer argues that it comes not from Mary herself, but comes out from two minor characters. They are Dickon and Colin. The writers believe that these characters represent each parts of consciousness, Dickon symbolize "super-ego", meanwhile Colin symbolize "id". Both of these features are located in conscious mind, which is hooked up to the world through senses. Furthermore, around this little bit of consciousness, during the early year of children, some of "id" might become "ego". Freud states

that human personality is divided into three parts: id, ego and superego. From those three, the id and superego are contradicting between each other. The id is motivated by the pleasure principle, which seeks instant gratification of needs (7). Mostly in reality, the desires of the id are not always socially acceptable. Meanwhile the superego consists of the perfect ideals of people strive to live and the value of society (7). Maybe this is rather unacceptable because the writer argues that the garden symbolizes the unconscious desire, meanwhile the other characters symbolizes the “id” and “superego” of the main character. In other word, the writer believes that the projection of id and superego located in Dickon and Colin, but those features are actually referred to the main character.

## CONCLUSIONS

The writer assumes that the main concept behind psychoanalysis is to address and resolve any issues that arise due to lack of harmony with the three structural elements of the mind, which include “id, ego and superego”. Hence, psychoanalytic is geared towards attaining self-understanding as the character becomes more capable of determining and handling unconscious forces that may either motivate or fear her. In order to obtain a person’s mental well-being, it is important that all of these elements are in harmony with each other [13]. Otherwise, psychological problems may occur including neurosis due to repression, regression, and traumatic events.

The main concern of the writer here, is to analyze the psychological problems of the main character Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*. Mary Lennox suffers several behavioral problems due to her parent’s neglect in her early childhood. She has been abandoned by everyone and no one gives enough attention to her. This situation has put her in her misery and depression. She is unable to trust other people, and often treats others impolitely. This traumatic experience leads to misbehavior of the main character, Mary Lennox. The progress of her development is crucially neglected. She becomes aggressive, temperament, disrespectful, and depressed. She cannot think straight how to behave to other people. From a psychological perspective, trauma might happen when a child experiences an intense event that threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical condition, basically only to themselves.

Furthermore, the writer finds the contribution of the secret garden and another minor characters in the story that eventually helps Mary to regain her health, both physically and mentally. Those characters are Dickon and Colin, who are also believed by the writer to symbolize “id and superego” of the main character. *The Secret Garden* is a great book, a little different, and more sentimental work by Francis Hodgson Burnett. The story is all about the damage that neglect can do to children, emotionally and physically. The writer believes that children who suffers from traumatic stress are the ones who have been exposed to several traumatic experiences over the course of their lives and develop reactions that persist and affect their daily lives after the traumatic events ended. But in the end, the main character, Mary Lennox, manages to find a better way to heal herself, along with the presence of the secret garden and all the other character who helps her to be a better child.



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