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Healing and Personal Transformation in Frances Hodgson

Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911)

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Submitted by

Ms. Maz Salima

Supervised by

Dr. Djohra Oulefki

Members of the Jury

Supervisor: Dr. Djohra Oulefki

Chair: Dr. Slimi Sabrina

Examiner: Dr. Saïbi Sihem

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Abstract

This dissertation explores healing and personal transformation in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, using literary analysis, historical context of the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras, Burnett's biography, and psychological theories to examine the health state of the primary characters Mary Lennox, Colin Craven, and Archibald Craven. The analysis demonstrates how neglect, grief, and isolation cause their ill-health. It then traces their paths to recovery, through nurturing human companionship, the restorative power of nature, and the symbolic "Magic", Burnett's concept of Divine Grace working through interpersonal love, faith, positive thinking, and nature's vitality. The study concludes that *The Secret Garden* presents an everlasting view of full healing, demonstrating that these essential elements of recovery remain highly relevant for well-being and the human capacity for renewal in the present day.

Keywords: *The Secret Garden*, Magic, psychological and physical health, recovery, companionship, nature.

Dedication

First, I'm extremely grateful to God, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for giving me the strength, patience, good health, and guidance to complete this work. Without His Divine help, this achievement would not have been possible.

My heartfelt thanks go to my family, especially to my dear parents for their endless love and care. I also extend my sincere appreciation to my dear friend for his support and deep understanding. His friendship has been a source of strength and inspiration, and I am truly grateful for everything he has done to stand by my side during this important stage of my academic life.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to everyone who believes in the healing power of knowledge, human connection, and nature. This dissertation is a reflection of that belief.

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General Introduction

Mental disorders are increasingly recognized as a serious contemporary health challenge. Research confirms these conditions profoundly impact both mind and body. An individual's internal emotional state can directly influence physical health, leading to either improvement or decline. Many people, at some point, will experience periods of loneliness, depression, anxiety, abandonment by family or close relatives, the loss of a loved one, or a severe physical illness. Such feelings and situations are natural aspects of life. However, prolonged negative emotions can lead to tangible physical health issues. Medical interventions may not resolve these physical problems when the origin is not primarily physical. Such issues often stem from profound sadness or mental stress. Therefore, if the root is psychological, healing must also address the mind and spirit.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, specifically during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the world witnessed significant changes. Scientists began making new discoveries in medicine and understanding how the body functions. They also started to more broadly recognize the impact of the mind and emotions on physical health. Many writers of that era sought to highlight these issues. People were also influenced by an earlier time called the Romantic movement, which glorified nature. And by emerging psychological thought, there was a growing awareness of the importance of mental health and its effect on the body. Furthermore, psychological treatments at the time were often harsh and punitive. Doctors and others started to argue that madness was a "disease of the mind" that needed to be studied and treated with care, not cruelty (Wright 24).

This new perspective on mental illness opened the way for reform movements. Figures like William Tuke, a member of the Religious Society of Friends (commonly known as Quakers), believed everyone possessed an inherent "divine light" and deserved treatment with kindness and respect (Edginton 9). Such reformers proposed that supportive human connection

and time spent in nature could promote healing. As one expert explained, "Nature was to heal insanity like all the other problems caused by chaotic social progress" (Doerner 9). This growing cultural awareness formed an important backdrop that continues to play a pivotal role in modern concepts of psychotherapy.

Frances Hodgson Burnett, the author of *The Secret Garden*, lived during these changing times in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (1849–1924). Her own life had many sad and difficult parts. Her father died when she was young, her family struggled with financial instability, and later, her own son Lionel died from a serious illness, which was a terrible blow for her. She also experienced two failed marriages. These experiences negatively impacted her psychological state, as she suffered from depression, anxiety, and insomnia for years. After being disappointed by medical treatments, she turned to seeking other means of healing. She came to believe in Victorian ideas which held that true friendship, belief, positive thinking, and being in nature could help a person heal. She believed, as she wrote in *The Secret Garden*, that "Everything is made out of Magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us" (Burnett 208). She also thought, like many did, that simple "thoughts—just mere thoughts—are as powerful as electric batteries" (244).

Her personal beliefs, born from her own difficult life, inspired her to write stories that showed her philosophy of healing. Her most famous book that shows these ideas is *The Secret Garden*, published in 1911. In this story, she shares a deep idea about healing: that love, faith, hope, thinking good thoughts, and being close to nature are all gifts from God that can heal us. This connects to ideas in the Bible, which say that God gave us nature for "food" and life (Genesis 1:29–30, New King James Version), and that it's "not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Burnett believed in these paths to getting well soul and body.

The Secret Garden is more than just a children's story. It is a powerful book about how wonderful healing both psychologically and physically can be when it comes from faith, love,

and the beauty of nature. The story is set in the early 20th century, but it talks about things that are still important for us today: how our feelings affect our bodies, and how people can always find ways to heal and transform. The story is about three main characters: Mary Lennox, the unhappy and neglected child; Colin Craven, the sickly boy living in isolation; thinks he is going to die young or become a hunchback. Archibald Craven, Colin's father. He is the man grieving the loss of his wife. The novel describes him as "a man who for ten years had kept his mind filled with dark and heartbroken thinking" (Burnett 245). *The Secret Garden* shows us how these three characters change from being sad, alone, and ill to finding happiness, friendship, and health.

Frances Hodgson Burnett's own life experiences also influence the novel. She suffered personal loss and illness and believed in a type of spiritual force she called "Magic." This Magic is not supernatural, but a symbol of faith, love, and nature's power to heal. Eddie Enever's blog "The Lost Art of Healing" supports this view, saying that modern medicine needs to include emotional and spiritual care to be complete. Historical research on Victorian views on health included the use of nature, positive thinking, and companionship. Barry Edginton's article on "The York Retreat" shows how early mental health reformers believed in gentle care, nature walks, and fresh air as treatment for mental illness. These ideas are similar to what we see in the novel, where the garden becomes a place of emotional and physical healing.

Psychological theories also help in understanding the characters in the novel. The ideas of Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud about defense mechanisms explain how Mary and Colin show defense mechanisms like anger or fear because of childhood neglect. Colin's fear of death is also seen as a result of emotional trauma and lack of love. These theories are used in the dissertation to show how emotional wounds can cause physical weakness, and how love and attention help the characters recover. These ideas help understand how the characters' mental pain turns into physical illness. Studies such as Kiran Bedi's article on "The Four Bodies"

explain how healing affects not only the body, but also the mind, emotions, and spirit. This study supports the idea that true healing is not just physical, it also includes emotional and spiritual growth. Similarly, Firth et al. (2015) in their article “Healing: A Concept Analysis” argue that healing is not only about removing illness but also about finding peace, hope, and purpose in life.

This study aims to show how healing can happen through deep human connection based on love and forgiveness, as well as through the restorative power of nature. By examining the physical and psychological conditions of the main characters in *The Secret Garden*, Mary Lennox, Colin Craven, and Archibald Craven, the research explores the reasons behind their suffering and how their connection with others and with nature leads them to recovery. The study highlights how emotional neglect, grief, and isolation affect their health, and how healing begins when they receive love, form caring relationships, and spend time in nature.

In order to understand the novel deeply, the study will include historical and social background of the Victorian era, in order to gain a deeper understanding of its themes and its intellectual and psychological implications. This analysis will draw upon psychoanalytic theories, which explain how the human mind works by focusing on unconscious thoughts, childhood experiences, and inner conflicts. These theories were first developed by Sigmund Freud and later expanded by other thinkers such as Erik Erikson. In addition, the study will draw on the ideas of Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud about defense mechanisms, the ways people protect themselves when they feel emotional pain, which will be explained in detail in the second chapter. This will help uncover the emotional and psychological causes behind the characters' suffering. Special attention will be given to the healing power of supportive relationships based on love, care, and understanding, rather than judgment or rejection.

The novel illustrates how psychological disturbances can lead to physical illnesses, while emotional and spiritual harmony leads to the restoration of physical health. Through the

experiences of the three characters, Burnett presents a model of recovery that transcends traditional medical approaches, reflecting a profound vision of healing rooted in a spiritual and emotional awakening woven with threads of love, hope, nature, and faith in the power of transformation.

The significance of this research is highlighted in light of the increasing psychological challenges faced by people in modern societies, resulting from daily pressures, isolation, depression, anxiety, and alienation from natural environments. *The Secret Garden* offers a holistic healing vision that remains inspiring to this day, affirming that true healing is not achieved solely through medicine, but rather begins from within; through love, faith, companionship, hope, and interaction with nature. These are concepts that intersect with modern therapeutic practices such as the importance of social support, positive thinking, and nature therapy. Although more than a century has passed since the novel was published, it highlights issues that remain central to human life, such as the impact of childhood on psychological development, and how unprocessed grief can negatively affect overall health. Furthermore, Burnett's focus on the idea that the mind, body, and spirit all work together is something that modern doctors and psychologists also believe.

This research study seeks to analyze the following questions: how did the old ideas about healing, and Burnett's own life, shape the message in *The Secret Garden*? how did being neglected and lonely make the characters sick in their minds and bodies? And how does "Magic" help the characters heal, and how can this idea help us today? To answer these questions, the study proposes the following plan: the first chapter will answer the first research question. It will look at Frances Hodgson Burnett's life experiences and at the Victorian time she lived in order to understand the ideas about healing that influenced her. This will help us understand the deeper journey of healing that these characters go on.

The second chapter will answer the second research question. It will apply psychological theories to focus on understanding why the characters were sick and unhappy at the start of the story. This chapter will show how being emotionally neglected and isolated deeply affected the characters' mental and physical health, and how this showed in their actions and words.

The third chapter will explore the answers to the third question. It will look closely at how human relationships built on kindness and love help the characters and the powerful role of nature in healing. It will also deeply analyze the concept of "Magic" in the novel, viewing it as a symbolic representation of divine grace manifested in love, faith, hope, and the beauty of nature. Colin comes to believe strongly in this, chanting, "the Magic is in me. The Magic is making me strong!" (Burnett 212), and Mrs. Sowerby explains that this "Big Good Thing doesn't stop to worrit... It goes on makin' worlds" (242). This "Magic" is seen as a power that can bring real change and healing to people's minds and bodies, not just in the story, but also as an idea for us to think about in our own lives. We'll see how the characters move from believing they were "going to die" to shouting "I shall get well! ... And I shall live forever and ever and ever!" (185), thanks to this transformative power.

This study hopes to show that *The Secret Garden* is a rich and meaningful novel. It tells that even in difficult times, there is always a path to healing and happiness if only we open our hearts to love, look for each other, and to the natural world around us. It is a message of hope that is as important today as it was when Frances Hodgson Burnett first wrote it.

Chapter One: The Origins of the Healing Philosophy in *The Secret Garden*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
 Praise Him all creatures here below,
 Praise Him above ye Heavenly Host,
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen (Burnett 237)

These words, sung by the characters in *The Secret Garden*, encapsulate the novel's deep rooted themes of renewal, gratitude, and the miraculous power of healing through love and belief. Marghanita Laski argues that it is "the most satisfying children's book I know" ("Frances Hodgson Burnett"). Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel is far more than a children's story, it is a profound meditation on positive transformation, illustrating how love, companionship, and nature can restore both body and spirit. Through the journey of Mary Lennox, Colin Craven, with Dickon Sowerby and the mysterious hidden garden, Burnett conveys a message that transcends time: healing is not always achieved through medical process, but it can also emerge from experiences that nurture the spirit through faith, the heart through love, and the mind through wisdom and positive thoughts.

The Secret Garden reflects both the emerging interest in mental and physical well-being and the remnants of Victorian medical philosophies. The Victorian era witnessed a growing awareness of the connection between environment, emotional state, and health. Fresh air, outdoor activity, and human relationships were increasingly seen as essential components of recovery. Being influenced by her personal struggles as well as the shifting ideologies of her time, Burnett weaves these ideas into her novel, offering readers a story that resonates with themes of resilience, self-discovery, and personal growth.

To fully appreciate the novel's message, it is essential to understand the experiences that shaped Burnett as a writer. Her own life was marked by profound challenges; financial struggles, personal loss, and emotional hardships that informed her worldview and ultimately inspired her literary works. Yet, through these difficulties, she developed a philosophy of

healing that emphasized the restorative power of both human connections through love and the natural world. *The Secret Garden* became the vessel through which she shared this philosophy, offering a story that does not only entertain but also serves as a guide to emotional and physical recovery.

This chapter will first explore Burnett's life, from childhood to adulthood, highlighting how her personal experiences shaped her writing. Her belief in the healing power of companionship and nature was not only a literary theme but also a reflection of her own struggles and convictions. This chapter will begin by exploring Frances Hodgson Burnett's life, from childhood to adulthood, showing how her personal experiences influenced her writing. Her belief in the healing power of companionship and nature was not only a literary theme but also a reflection of her own struggles and inner convictions. The chapter will also examine the broader Victorian views on health, nature, and human relationships, shedding light on how these cultural ideas shaped the themes of *The Secret Garden*.

1.1 The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett

Frances Eliza Hodgson Burnett is a widely recognized female author of children's literature. Frances Eliza Hodgson Burnett, a British-American novelist and playwright. She was born on November 24, 1849, in Cheetham, Manchester, England. Her career journey was not easy for her, but a path full of personal challenges, resilience, and transformation. She is an author who found her solace in writing fiction literature for children to save her family and even herself from the hard life they undergo. Most of her literary works revolve around her personal life, which was full of hardships and, at the same time, of striving and standing firm in pursuit of a better life. The writer was a subject of different kinds of difficulties such as financial struggles, the loss of her loved ones, and her divorce. Though she found herself facing the brutality of loneliness, she did not stop. Instead, she found her path to recovery, which is well depicted in *The Secret Garden*.

Burnett is the daughter to a British parent: her father, Edwin Hodgson, was a Yorkshire ironmonger who owned a shop in the town center, selling brass and other metal goods. Her mother, Eliza Boond, came from a wealthy background. Burnett was the middle of five siblings, with two older brothers and two younger sisters. During her early childhood, the family lives happily and comfortably until the circumstances shift in a blink of an eye. When Burnett was four years old, her father dies of a stroke in 1853. This marks the first stage of her grief and the beginning of a hard life. His death leaves the family without financial support, placing the entire burden on her mother. During this time, Burnett's grandmother takes care of her and all her requirements. She teaches her to read and write and introduces her to multiple kinds of books. However, Burnett's favorite book is *The Flower Book*, which is filled with poetry and colorful illustrations. This deepens her love for reading storytelling, literature, and strengthens her admiration for nature ("Frances Hodgson Burnett").

Due to the bad financial circumstances in which the family lives, her mother is forced to sell their home and move to live with their relatives in Seedley Grove, Tanners Lane, Pendleton, Salford. Though the new house is not as sophisticated as their previous one, Burnett enjoys its large enclosed garden where she spends most of her time. It is a pivotal experience that sparks a meaningful change in her life, leading her to find a way towards recovery and later her writing inspiration. The garden helps her to become more creative by stimulating her imagination and inspiring her to write stories in which the influence of the beauty and tranquility of nature is clearly seen. She develops an appreciation for gardening and the healing power of plants. Ultimately, the garden provides her with a sense of security and reinforces her belief in transformation, all of which are reflected in her novel *The Secret Garden*. After this, her mother enrolls her in a local small dame school, where she begins her early education and develops her basic literacy skills for reading and writing. She nurtures her imagination through literature by surrounding herself with books about fairies, which fuel her creativity and inspire

her to create her own stories in old notebooks. This early exposure to storytelling plays a significant role in shaping her future as a writer (“Frances Hodgson Burnett”).

In 1863, Burnett’s mother decides to sell her husband's business because the family needs financial stability and independence. Although they are living happily with relatives, she chooses to move into a smaller house that fits their budget. This decision negatively impacts Burnett’s education, as she has to stop studying entirely. A few years later, Eliza accepts her brother's, William Boond, invitation to join him in Knoxville, Tennessee. So, in 1865, the family emigrates to the United States. Disappointingly, he cannot receive them into his house due to his financial loss during the Civil War, as he is also unable to support them. The family settles in New Market, outside Knoxville, they live in a log cabin during their first winter, and move later to a home in Knoxville that Frances called "Noah's Ark, Mt. Ararat", due to its isolated hilltop location. In this vicinity, Frances befriends Swan Burnett, a young man with a childhood injury that left him unable to participate in physical activities. She introduces him to literature, sharing works by Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, and William Makepeace Thackeray (“Frances Hodgson Burnett”).

At the age of 19, Burnett decides to return to writing in order to support her family through publishing her stories in magazines like Godey's Lady's Book. However, her life takes another painful turn when her mother passes away in 1870. In the years that followed, her two sisters and one of her brothers get married, and she remains close to Swan Burnett. The publishing of her writings helps her significantly in raising money. As a result, this opens the way for her to travel. She first goes to Britain and then to Paris, where she accepts Swan's marriage proposal, and they wed in 1873. Their first son, Lionel, is born the following year. Hoping to leave Knoxville, the couple moves to Paris, where Swan pursues further medical training as an ophthalmologist. Their second son, Vivian, is born soon after. When Swan completes his studies, they intend to move to Washington, D.C., but financial difficulties force

Burnett to live with Swan's parents in New Market while he establishes his medical practice. Frances' writing career flourishes, and in 1877, she secures a contract for her novel *That Lass o' Lowrie's*. While visiting Boston, she meets prominent authors, including Louisa May Alcott and Mary Mapes Dodge, editor of *St. Nicholas*, a children's magazine. With Dodge's support, Frances begins writing fiction literature for children ("Frances Hodgson Burnett").

In December 1890, Burnett's elder son, Lionel, dies from consumption in Paris, which greatly affects her life and her writing. She returns to London, where she seeks entertainment through charity work, where she creates the Drury Lane Boys' Club in 1892. It provides friendship and education to street children to improve their lives. At this time, Burnett continues to struggle with financial instability, but this does not stop her from providing a better life for her son, Vivian. She continues paying for his education until he graduates from Harvard University in 1898. Burnett divorces Swan Burnett, and then she continues to live at Great Maytham Hall in England, where she enjoys country life and gardening. In 1900, she marries Stephen Townsend, but the marriage is also disastrous, as he is primarily interested in her money and control over her. So, they separate in 1902. At Maytham Hall, she is inspired by the walled and rose gardens, and there she initiates writing *The Secret Garden*, which is published in 1911 ("Frances Hodgson Burnett").

1.2 Frances' Philosophy of Healing

Frances defies her societal norms to trace for herself a path in the literature world and she succeeds to become the most famous novelist at her time "her name was everywhere, and everyone wanted to know her" (qtd. in Djaghout 27). However, behind this success there is a life full of professional and personal pressures. Burnett is a model of a strong, ambitious, independent, and creative woman, but at the same time she faces severe psychological challenges, exacerbated by her family responsibilities and her troubled marital relationship.

At the beginning of her marriage, Burnett is admired by her husband, Dr. Swan Burnett, who praises her intelligence and literary achievements, but this admiration does not last long. The relationship between them soon becomes tense, devoid of feelings and emotional support. Burnett does not find in her husband the support she needs, as he is not her security or comfort at any time. On the contrary, she feels unloved, unwanted, and alone. This emotional neglect mirrors the experience of Mary Lennox, the protagonist of *The Secret Garden*, who suffers from family neglect, which instills in her a feeling of deep isolation and ostracism from everyone. Just as Mary is cast aside and is forced to navigate the world on her own, Burnett finds herself battling loneliness within her own home; a place that should provide her with stability and peace. As a wife and mother, Burnett shoulders the burden of providing a stable home for her children. As her relationship with her husband deteriorates, she faces these responsibilities alone, creating immense psychological pressure. "He has never assumed a man's responsibility in his life...he has never had money for anything but his own self-indulgence and it is not easy for me to forget that everything I have he has actually claimed the credit for himself" (Albert et al.222). This increasing burden leaves her emotionally drained, depressed, anxious, and exhausted, to the point that she feels emotionally numb, as if she has lost the ability to feel joy or deep sadness.

However, the hardest blow to Burnett's life comes with the loss of her son Lionel in 1890. Lionel had falls seriously ill, and his mother does everything she could to save him. She travels to Germany in search of the best doctors and treatments, but despite her best efforts, she is unable to save him. Lionel dies in Paris, leaving an unfillable void in his mother's heart. This incident was a tragic turning point in Burnett's life, as she falls into a deep depression, withdraws from social life, and feels a stifling loneliness that cannot be filled. Grief becomes her constant companion, and her sense of helplessness and loss deepens. Kimberly Firth defines healing as a multifaceted process that involves safety, the restoration of wholeness, balance,

and harmony within an individual. He emphasizes that healing does not depend only on physical recovery from illness, but also encompasses spiritual, psychological, and physical well-being (Firth et al.). Through Frances' personal experiences with hardship and grief, she adopts the idea of self-healing, which she writes into her stories. Her philosophy of healing is based on three main points: self-reflection, the importance of human companionship, and the regenerative power of nature.

Burnett has a gift for self-awareness and the ability to understand her thoughts, channeling her feelings into writing, which makes her work deeply resonant. As she pours out her suffering and grief, she transforms pain into an art of hope and overcomes her loneliness through the companionship of her books. She sees in storytelling not just a means of expression but also a therapeutic process that allows her to process her pain and transform it into something meaningful. "Reading without thinking can be a soothing exercise for the mind, but self-reflection after reading can have a better effect on it, thus releasing what the soul really feels inside and wants the world to know" (Spiotta). Burnett's reflection on her own hardships allows her to create narratives that are not only entertaining but also deeply healing for herself and her readers. Burnett emphasizes that human connection is of great importance in the role of true healing, as being surrounded by people, whether through friendship, kindness, or assisting individuals helps overcome psychological pressures and move forward. She believes that treating others with love is central to a fulfilling life, reflecting the principle expressed in the biblical verse: "and the LORD God says, it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (New King James Version Bible Genesis.2:18). This idea underscores the necessity of companionship in fostering emotional and physical wellbeing.

In *The Secret Garden*, Burnett illustrates the relationship between Mary Lennox, Colin Craven, and Dickon Sowerby, despite their different social ranks and each with his own experience, they are brought together under the name of "love." Their acceptance of each other,

their humility, and their willingness to support one another create a shared journey of healing, proving that true recovery is not a solitary path but a collective experience. As Mary passionately declares to Colin, “You are going to get well! You are! You are! You are! And I’m going to help you!” is a testament to the power of companionship in overcoming adversity.

In addition, Burnett saw nature as a profound magical healer, providing a sense of renewal and rebirth. Her novel *The Secret Garden* embodies this philosophy and illustrates the power of nature through exposure to fresh air, sunlight, and enjoying the beauty of the natural world to revive and repair the broken soul, as well as renew the body and make it stronger. As Burnett writes, “everything is made out of Magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us” (Burnett 208). The emphasis is that nature’s magic is everywhere, offering healing and growth to those who embrace it.

This idea aligns with the biblical notion that nature is a divine gift meant for sustenance and healing, as stated in Genesis 1:29-30: “and God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so”. The passage emphasizes the nurturing power of nature, echoing Burnett’s belief that the natural world has the ability to restore and transform lives.

The protagonist, Mary, begins her journey as an unhealthy, ill-mannered, and lonely child, yet her interaction with Dickon helps her to change her morals to become humble and love people as well as life. Teaching her gardening and exposing her to the natural world led to a remarkable transformation in her body, emotionally and spiritually. Dickon's love for her and her assistance with the deep magic of nature made her a helper to Colin and was the reason for his physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery.

Ultimately, Burnett's philosophy of healing is rooted in the belief that all human beings are not meant to live in sadness; rather, they are capable of renewal, growth, and transformation. Their purpose on earth is to support one another, walk hand in hand, and embrace the beauty of the natural world that surrounds them. This can be compared to nature that undergoes cycles of change, moving from barrenness to bloom. The same journey can be experienced by people who can go through healing and renewal too. This idea aligns with the message in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope". From the beginning, God's plan for humanity was meant to bring happiness, comfort, peace, and a better life.

1.3 Victorian Perspective on Health

Frances' themes of healing through companionship and nature in *The Secret Garden* fit with the Victorian perspective on healing. Historically, the Victorian era (1820-1914) witnessed development in the medical field, like discoveries about diseases and devices' innovations. Likewise, it was a period of medical structural establishments such as hospitals, sanatoriums, and organizations, which contributed to the state licensing the practice of medicine as an official profession. This era also viewed the emergence of early advancements in psychiatry as a scientific discipline, paving the way for a deeper understanding of the human mind and human body's interdependence ("Medicine and Public Health"). Moreover, it observed the emergence of new philosophies about healing that showed a specific focus on the fact that treatment should not be limited only to physical health but should also address psychological well-being, recognizing mental health as a crucial factor in shaping a person's overall well-being.

At that time, the mental illnesses did not receive the same level of attention or effective treatment as it is done today. In fact, the concept of "mental health" did not exist in this society; instead, it was referred to as "mental disease," as society viewed it as a fatal condition requiring isolation (O'Brien). Those who suffered from mental illness endured harsh treatment in mental

health facilities. Society perceived them as a threat to others and believed that the only way to ensure public safety was to keep them under strict supervision in sanitariums. As David Wright states, many clauses of the 1845 Act emphasized the importance of sending the "dangerous insane" immediately to the new county asylums, where they could receive medical treatment (Wright 17).

Medical facilities of the era were often overcrowded, unsanitary, and dark, earning them a reputation as "death houses" (Kaz 7:36). With the limited medical understanding of mental disorders, treatment was often cruel. According to Ottin, this cruelty was driven by the widespread belief that mental illness was the result of a weak character, sin, or even demonic possession (Ottin). However, many medical professionals argued that madness was merely a "disease of the mind" (Wright 24), which needed to be studied scientifically and treated properly rather than being seen as a source of shame and danger. As a result, mental institutions focused more on imposing control and authority over patients rather than providing genuine medical care aimed at healing them. Treatment methods relied on forced isolation, mechanical restraints, lobotomies, and other inhumane medical practices ("Examining Victorian Mental Health"), making these institutions resemble torture prisons rather than therapeutic centers. This often worsened the psychological conditions of many patients instead of improving them.

The Victorians were not satisfied with this brutal treatment. Thus, they revived the traditional belief inspired by the Romantic movement, which asserted that companionship and nature played a vital role in psychological healing and mental well-being. This philosophy emerged as a direct response to the harsh asylum's conditions, fueling reform movements that rejected punishment and cruelty, in favor of healing through kindness, social engagement, and peaceful environments. One of the most influential figure in this transformation was William Tuke, who played a major role in reshaping mental health care by advocating for the humane treatment of the insane.

Tuke and others asserted that true healing occurs when patients are treated with love, kindness, respect, and understanding ("Mr. William Tuke"). Stewart demonstrated that Tuke's philosophy was inspired by his Quaker faith, which taught that every person carries a "divine light" within them, worthy of appreciation and respect. He believed that everyone possesses goodness, reason, and faith, and that mental illness could be treated not only with kindness but also by creating a healthy and supportive environment (Edginton 9). In addition to recognizing companionship as essential for recovery, Tuke also recognized nature as a powerful aid in the healing process. As Doerner explained, "the curative power of cure, romantic nature itself... was called into service. Nature was to heal insanity like all the other problems caused by chaotic social progress" (9). These reformist ideas led to significant improvements in British asylums. The York Retreat, an institution founded by William Tuke and the Society of Friends (Quakers), pioneered "moral treatment" of insanity by rejecting barbaric treatments of the mentally ill; such as the use of mechanical restraints and promoting the reintegration of patients into a non-threatening environment (Wright 23).

As a result, asylums gradually removed mechanical restraints, improving patient care through recreational activities like arts, crafts, music, reading, light physical exercise, as well as gardening and knitting. These activities helped to provide patients with a sense of renewal, purpose, and daily routine. Such significant practices aimed at contributing to their sense of achievement, as they served also as a means of distraction from illness and psychological stress, assisting in the restoration of psychological balance. Asylums also encouraged social gatherings, such as communal meals and group discussions, which enhanced interaction among patients and helped them feel connected to others and regain their sense of human dignity after the isolation they had previously endured. In the past, asylum staff relied on force and strict discipline to control patients. However, following the reforms, this approach shifted, and caregivers were trained to treat patients with respect and love, recognizing them as individuals

in need of healing, rather than as threats to be subjugated. Instead of punishing patients for their symptoms, it became necessary to provide them with guidance, encouragement, and companionship, which contributed to creating an environment where they felt themselves valued and understood. In 1813 Samuel Tuke, grandson of William Tuke, published *Description of The Retreat*, a report on the work of The Retreat in its first 15 years. Tuke outlined the procedure of care:

The use of fear to control patients was rejected; patients' attempts to control themselves were encouraged; individuals were treated as rational beings as far as possible; patients were not urged to reject their feelings and delusions; and a good diet, exercise, occupation and social activities were provided. Religious observance and reading were recommended but excessive stimulation was to be avoided. The use of manacles and chains was forbidden. (Mindham 286)

Additionally, the belief in nature's healing power became widely accepted, leading to the establishment of asylums in natural settings or the addition of parks and green spaces to existing asylums within cities. These environments were carefully designed to promote recovery, with gardens, trees, bushes, and flowers arranged to create a calming and restorative atmosphere. Recognizing the importance of light and fresh air in the healing process, Tuke mentioned in a letter to Bevans that his wife and Jane Stickney suggested adding larger windows in the galleries to provide a pleasant view and allow more natural light and air to enter (Edginton10). As a result of this new approach, asylums were completely transformed from places of cruel and inhuman treatment into institutions that provided gentle care based on love and respect. Patients were also encouraged to walk, gardening, and interact with nature, which reinforced the idea that a calm and relaxing environment was essential for healing and recovery.

Burnett's philosophy in *The Secret Garden* reflects key Victorian beliefs about healing, especially the growing recognition that emotional support and a natural environment are

essential to recovery. During this era, medical reforms emphasized not just physical treatment but also psychological well-being through companionship and nature. Burnett, influenced by this cultural shift, presents healing as a holistic process. This is evident in Colin's transformation from a fragile invalid depend only on medical supervision to a healthy boy revived through friendship, fresh air, and nature. His recovery embodies the Victorian views that healing depends not only on medicine but also on emotional connection and a restorative power of nature. Through *The Secret Garden*, Burnett illustrates this transition, laying the groundwork for modern views on psychological healing.

Chapter Two: Understanding Characters' Health States

In psychology, mental health plays a crucial role in people's daily lives. It affects how they feel, think, behave, and interact with others. Mental health refers to a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which helps them face life's challenges, maintain healthy relationships, and adapt to changes. However, mental health can get worse because of negative factors that affect it, which in turn also impact the person's physical condition, leading to a weak immune system, sleep disorders, chronic fatigue, and even heart and digestive problems. Neglect and isolation are among these factors which do not only prevent children from developing strong mental health but also negatively affect their physical health. Adults who suffer from neglect and isolation also find it difficult to maintain their mental and physical strength when facing life's difficulties.

Neglect can appear in different forms, as shown in *The Secret Garden*, where both children and adults suffer from various types of neglect that directly affect their mental and physical health. The novel highlights three main kinds: emotional neglect, self-neglect, and social neglect. Emotional neglect appears when individuals lack love, care, and attention, leading them to feel deep loneliness and isolation, which may cause high stress levels and hormonal imbalances, increasing the risk of physical illnesses such as high blood pressure and chronic inflammation. Self-neglect is seen through some characters who stop taking care of themselves due to sadness or loss, which makes them withdraw from others and ignore their physical health, such as eating unhealthy food and avoiding physical activity, which leads to weak muscles and low energy. Lastly, social neglect is present in those who are forced into isolation, either because they lack family support or struggle to maintain healthy relationships, which may cause sleep disorders, low physical activity, and a weak immune system, making them more vulnerable to diseases.

Frances Hodgson Burnett underscores the profound connection between the mind and body, illustrating how psychological states directly influence physical health. The novel's

central characters Mary Lennox, Colin Craven, and Archibald Craven experience varying degrees of emotional neglect and social isolation, resulting in physical ailments that serve as reflections of their inner turmoil.

This chapter will examine the impact of neglect and isolation on the health of these three characters, analyzing their psychological and physical conditions before their transformation. Drawing upon psychological theories, it will explore how loneliness, grief, and a lack of affection contribute to their illnesses. Mary's weakness and anger, caused by being ignored as a child, will be explained using John Bowlby's Attachment Theory and Erik Erikson's stages of growth. These theories show how broken relationships and slow emotional growth can hurt her well-being. Colin's illness and fear, caused by feeling unloved, will be understood through Attachment Theory and Freud's defense mechanisms, which explain how emotions can cause body problems. Archibald's sadness and loneliness, caused by losing his wife, will be explained using grief theories and the biopsychosocial model, showing how deep sorrow can harm both mind and body.

2.1 Mary Lennox: The Unwanted Child

At the outset of *The Secret Garden*, Mary Lennox, the protagonist, shows the effects of neglect and isolation on her mental and physical state. From the moment of her birth, she is immersed in an affluent milieu characterized by material abundance, yet emotionally barren, devoid of warmth, affection, or genuine human connection. Her parents are always busy with their social life and do not show any interest in taking care of her, leaving her under the responsibility of the servants, who are not able to give her the affection and emotional support she needs. This is clear in the scene where Mary's mother is completely busy with social parties. In fact, she does not want to have a child at all, so she does not notice her daughter's presence and does not interact with her emotionally or care about her, even when she is sick.

Psychologist John Bowlby's Attachment Theory explains that children need a strong emotional bond with their caregivers for healthy development. According to Bowlby, infants are biologically born ready to make bonds with others because it helps them survive. There is an important time for creating these bonds, which is the first two and a half years. If a child does not develop a secure attachment with their caregiver during this time, it may become difficult to form one later and develop insecure attachment styles (McLeod, "John Bowlby's").

Mary's mother was emotionally distant, and her father was not involved in her life, depriving her of the nurturing bond she needed. As a result, Mary displays signs of avoidant attachment; she neither seeks comfort from others nor appears to need emotional support. This detachment appears when her parents die of cholera; rather than feeling sorrow or panic, she focuses only on how her life will change. Her lack of emotional connection with them has inhibited her ability to express grief or form strong relationships. This emotional neglect she experienced deepened her loneliness and reinforced her emotionally cold personality, making it difficult for her to understand the needs of others or build healthy connections. The novel describes her reaction: "She did not miss her at all, in fact, and as she was a self-absorbed child she gave her entire thought to herself, as she had always done"(9). This passage highlights the absence of a warm relationship with her mother, explaining why her loss had little emotional impact on her. As a result of this neglect, Mary developed aggressive behavior toward others. She uses anger and control as a way to express her hidden feelings. This appears in the way she treats the servants in India, as she shouts at them and gives orders in an arrogant way, expecting immediate obedience without considering their feelings. She speaks to them in a cold, demanding tone, treating them as if they were inferior. The novel describes her as a spoiled and rude child who commands them impolitely, and she never uses polite expressions such as "please" or "thank you." When she feels angry, she dares to slap her Ayah in the face (24).

Frances Burnett emphasizes this behavior by saying, “she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived” (1).

Mary’s arrogance and harsh treatment of the servants can be explained through displacement, a defense mechanism in Freud’s theory. Displacement happens when a person redirects their strong emotions, usually anger, onto someone or something weaker because they cannot express their true feelings toward the true cause of their pain. In Freud’s model of the mind, the “Id” wants to act on impulse, but the “Superego” stops it, so the “Ego” finds another target. Sometimes, people even turn their anger toward themselves, leading to guilt or feelings of inferiority. Many psychologists believe that hidden anger can cause depression when people suppress their emotions instead of dealing with them (McLeod, Defense Mechanisms”).

Mary could not express her frustration toward her parents for the neglect she perceives, so she redirects her anger onto the servants, who had less authority than her. Even after moving to Misselthwaite Manor, Mary continues to act in an arrogant way. When she first met Martha, the friendly maid, she spoke to her coldly and refuses to have a friendly conversation. When Martha mistakenly thinks she is a native, Mary becomes very angry and shouted: “You thought I was a native! You dared! You don't know anything about natives! They are not people—they're servants who must salaam to you. You know nothing about India. You know nothing about anything!” (26).

This reaction is an example of projection, a defense mechanism described by Anna Freud. Projection happens when a person places his/her own unwanted thoughts, feelings, or desires onto someone else. This helps to protect their self-esteem by making them believe that these thoughts do not belong to them. Anna Freud describes it as "displacement outward," which means that people instead of seeing these feelings inside themselves, the person thinks other people have them (McLeod, Defense Mechanisms”). Mary feels powerless because of her past, so she projects her fear onto Martha. Her aggression does not reflect a natural cruelty in her,

but a result of years of deprivation of love and attention from her parents. This made her emotionally insecure and unable to maintain a healthy control on her emotions and feelings. Consequently, she develops defense mechanisms to protect herself. Instead of facing her pain, she tries to control others because she has no control over her own emotional life. This explains why she treats the servants arrogantly, acting as being superior to them.

Equally important, Mary shows selfish behavior because she has never met any good example of kindness or generosity in her childhood. She can't understand the idea of sacrifice in relationships and focuses only on her own needs, considering them the most important. This was clear in how she treats those who try to help her, such as the servants and other children. She acts with arrogance and disrespect. For example, she is shocked when the maid Martha speaks to her in a normal way. Unlike the servants in India, she cannot be convinced that Martha was not afraid of her. According to Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, Mary's struggles come from unresolved childhood stages. In the Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt stage (1-3 years), children need emotional support and encouragement to build confidence and learn independence. If children are overly controlled or criticized, they may start to feel ashamed of their abilities and doubt themselves (McLeod, "Erik Erikson's Stages"). Since Mary's parents were distant, she likely felt insecure and never learned how to be an independent or a resilient individual. This is clear when she asks Martha, "Who is going to dress me?". At the age of ten, she should already be able to dress herself, but she had always relies on others. Martha's surprised response: "Canna' tha' dress thysen?" (25) challenges Mary to take responsibility for herself.

Mary struggles also with social skills because she has never learned how to interact with others in a friendly or positive way. With a complete absence of a supportive parental figure, she fails to develop any ability to understand other people's feelings or show empathy. Social Learning Theory, introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura, explains that children learn

behavior by observing and imitating those around them. For Bandura, learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modelling, and is influenced by factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions (Cherry).

Mary's personal experience in a home deprived from positive social interactions is clearly seen through her behaviors which interpret the reality that she has never learned basic social skills. This seems clear when she first meets Mrs. Medlock on her way to Misselthwaite Manor. She displays lack of knowledge of how to have a normal conversation. As a result, her answers are short and proud. Instead of trying to connect with others, she acts in cold and arrogant manners, which keeps her isolated. She also struggles to express her emotions in a healthy way. Because she does not understand her own feelings, her reactions are often harsh and unbalanced in front of new situations.

Her lack of emotional understanding is also seen in her first interaction with Colin. When he conveys to her that he is approaching the end of his life, instead of comforting him, she directly says: "If you were a nice boy, it might be true—but you're too nasty!" (148). This shows her low emotional intelligence (EI), a concept from Daniel Goleman's theory. It refers to the ability to understand, and manage both one's own emotions and relationships. According to Goleman, it has five key parts. Self-awareness means understanding one's emotions and how they affect them. Self-regulation which is a control of emotional reaction and act wisely. Motivation gives the drive to achieve goals. Empathy helps in understanding others' emotions, and social skills helps to communicate and build good relationships ("Goleman's Theory of Emotional Intelligence").

Mary's low emotional intelligence affects her relationships with others. When she and Colin have their first argument, she does not try to calm him down when he throws a tantrum. Instead, she screams back at him: "you're the most selfish boy I ever saw!" and threatens, "if you scream, I'll scream louder and frighten you!" (154). Her reaction is not emotionally mature,

it shows that she also struggles with her emotions and lacks social skills. Instead of handling the situation calmly, she mirrors his anger, proving that she never learned how to control her feelings properly.

2.1.1 Mary's Physical State

The effect of neglect and isolation is not only shown through Mary's mental state but also through her physical health. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, she lacks proper nutrition, fresh air, and care, which prevented her from meeting her basic physiological and safety needs. Maslow maintains that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, starting with survival needs like food and water. If these needs are not met, the body cannot function properly. After fulfilling survival needs, people seek safety, which includes emotional and financial security, health, and protection. Then comes the need for belonging, where individuals desire friendship, love, and acceptance (McLeod, "Maslow's Hierarchy").

From an early age, Mary experienced physical weakness and diminished health status which goes back the absence if proper care or good nutrition. She has pale skin, a thin body, and easily gets sick due to her weak immune system. The novel describes her as "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. 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" (1). Her physical weakness is a result of her lifestyle; she doesn't not exercise, go outside, or get fresh air. She lives in a closed environment without healthy stimulation. Additionally, she has no guidance about her diet and eats irregularly, which caused a lack of essential nutrients for her growth. Her long isolation worsens her condition, as little movement and no outdoor activity left her muscles weak and her energy low. Unlike other children, she gets tired easily, has low stamina, and often gets sick.

According to Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, a child's physical and cognitive development depends on their social and environmental interactions (McLeod, "Vygotsky's

Theory”). Mary’s isolation and lack of physical activity led to weak motor skills and poor physical strength. As the novel says, “in India she had always been too hot and languid and weak to care much about anything” (60). Without encouragement to explore, play, or interact with the world around her, her body remains weak. Wolff’s Law, by German surgeon Julius Wolff, explains that bones grow stronger with physical stress like walking or lifting. Without this stress, bones become weak and thin (Zelman). Since Mary does not experience such movement, her body remained fragile.

Moreover, Mary also experienced stress from neglect and isolation, which likely affected her HPA Axis; a system in the body that controls stress hormones. When a person is under stress for a long time, the body produces too much cortisol. High cortisol levels can cause muscle weakness, low energy, and a weak immune system (Knapp). This chronic stress made Mary even more likely to get sick, lack of appetite, trouble sleeping, and feel tired all the time.

Psychoanalytic theory, especially Sigmund Freud’s idea of repression, suggests that hidden emotions can cause physical problems. Repression happens when a person unconsciously blocks painful thoughts, feelings, or memories. Freud believes that this can lead to physical symptoms. Studies link repressed emotions to issues like high blood pressure, skin conditions, and fatigue. Keeping emotions buried for a long time can create stress, weaken the immune system, and increase the risk of heart disease and chronic pain. The body often reacts to emotional suppression with symptoms such as muscle pain, headaches, sleep problems, digestive issues, and tiredness (Curtis). Mary’s weak health and constant fatigue can be seen as a result of emotional neglect, as her body shows her inner struggles.

Lastly, psychiatrist George L. Engel, in his Biopsychosocial Model, explains that health and disease result from the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors (Marschall). In Mary’s case, her poor health stems from a combination of these elements. Biologically, malnutrition and lack of exercise weaken her body. Psychologically, isolation and

emotional neglect led to low self-esteem and stress-related issues. Socially, the absence of caregivers, playmates, and a nurturing environment further hinders her development. This model emphasizes that Mary's condition is not solely genetic but it is significantly shaped by her psychological and social experiences.

2.2 Colin Craven: A Child Controlled by Fear

Colin's psychological struggles come from the way he was raised and the lack of care from his father. After Colin's mother's death, his father, Mr. Craven, is very depressed and doesn't want to be close to his son. He considers Colin as a reminder of his loss and pain, so he stays away from him. During Colin's first meeting with Mary, she asks, "does your father come and see you?" Colin replied, "Sometimes, generally when I am asleep. He doesn't want to see me. My mother died when I was born, and it makes him wretched to look at me, he almost hates me" (112). As a result of this neglect, Colin grows up isolated, deprived of love and emotional support. With no friends or meaningful connections, he is apparently weak, unwanted, and unimportant. This lack of affection leads him to develop a short temper, a sense of self-pity, and difficulty to control his emotions. He also struggles to interact with others often behaving arrogantly or throwing tantrums, especially when he doesn't get his way. His father's neglect shapes his thoughts and behavior, pushing him to believe that he is fragile and doomed to illness, reinforcing his reclusive and self-centered nature. As Martha states "he wouldn't even look at the baby. He just raved and said it was another hunchback like him and it had better die" (123).

Colin's biggest psychological problem is that he believes he will die young. He always thinks he is very sick, even though doctors have never found real proof. He is afraid that he will have a hunched back like his father and that he will not live long. As he says: "because I am like this always, ill and having to lie down. My father won't let people talk me over either. The servants are not allowed to speak about me. If I live I may be a hunchback, but I shan't live. My

father hates to think I may be like him” (111). Although Colin talks about his father's fear that he might be physically deformed, the real fear is that he may have also inherited his father's depression and inability to deal with life's struggles.

Colin's symptoms are often exaggerated or imagined, which shows his emotional pain. He shows signs of “hypochondria”, which Ladan Nikravan Hayes defines as a type of anxiety disorder, where a person is extremely afraid of having a serious illness, even when doctors say they are healthy and there is no real proof of sickness (Hayes). Colin is always afraid of getting sick or dying, even when there is nothing wrong with him. His fear grows stronger because of the people around him. His servants do everything he asks, which makes him feel even more alone and dependent on his weakness. His fear controls his life and stops him from doing normal activities.

Martha tells Mary: “I won't say as he hasn't been ill a good bit. He's had coughs an' colds that's nearly killed him two or three times. Once he had rheumatic fever an' once he had typhoid. Eh! Mrs. Medlock did get a fright then. He'd been out of his head an' she was talkin' to th' nurse, thinkin' he didn't know nothin', an' she said, 'He'll die this time sure enough, an' best thing for him an' for everybody” (123). At the slightest discomfort, Colin tends to perceive it as a serious ailment. He always asks others to check his health to feel safe, but even when they say he is fine, he does not believe them. His constant fear of being sick prevents him from enjoying life or trying new things.

Since Colin has always been told that he is weak and sick, he believes it is true. Over time, this belief turns into a strong fear; he is afraid to move, afraid of pain, and most of all, afraid of dying. Even though there is no real proof that he is sick, his mind makes his body feel weak. This makes him more sure that he is dying. Indeed, the way people treat him only strengthens his fears. His servants obey his every command —“everyone is obliged to do what pleases me”(113) — because they believe he is too fragile to be denied anything. No one

encourages him to test his strength or step outside, which convinces him that he must remain in bed. Every worried glance from Mrs. Medlock, every hushed conversation between the doctors, only reinforces his belief that he is truly sick.

Fear has a strong effect on the body. When Colin panics, he breathes fast, his body shakes, and he cries uncontrollably. His emotions manifest as real physical pain, much like how anxiety can cause headache, stomach-ache, or a racing heart. He worries all the time about his health, focusing on every small discomfort, which only makes him feel worse. In one of his panic episodes, he screams: "I felt the lump—I felt it, I knew I should. I shall have a hunch on my back and then I shall die" (154). This creates a cycle where his fear makes his body feel weak, and his weak body deepens his anxiety.

Moreover, access to his fear of illness, Colin struggles also with social anxiety, which makes him afraid to interact with others. He spends most of his life alone in his room, avoiding people because he believes that his fragility prevents him to socialize. He refuses to meet other children because he thinks that they will not accept him. He also hates being stared at, as he recalls: "then when they took me to the seaside and I used to lie in my carriage everybody used to stare and ladies would stop and talk to my nurse and then they would begin to whisper and I knew then they were saying I shouldn't live to grow up. Then sometimes the ladies would pat my cheeks and say 'Poor child!' Once when a lady did that I screamed out loud and bit her hand. She was so frightened she ran away" (132). This isolation makes Colin even more anxious and lonely. With little experience in maintaining social connections, he struggles to communicate properly and often pushes people away when they try to help him. His fear of social situations is not just a choice but a real psychological struggle.

Colin's fear of abandonment plays a crucial role in shaping his behavior and can be explained through Attachment Theory (McLeod, "John Bowlby's"). Since his mother died when he was a baby, he feels alone and unloved. His father, avoiding him because he reminds

him of his late wife, deepens Colin's sense of rejection. As a result, he likely developed an insecure attachment style, causing him to push people away before they can leave him, while also seeking constant reassurance. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs further highlights Colin's struggle with the need for love and belonging. Feeling unloved and rejected, he demands attention in an attempt to fill this emotional void. His fear of abandonment makes it difficult for him to trust others, leaving him emotionally isolated. Instead of forming meaningful relationships, he resorts to controlling those around him, believing that dominance will secure their presence.

Furthermore, Colin suffers from low self-esteem. He sees himself as weak, useless, and different from other boys. Having been told all his life that he will never meet his physical strength, it becomes an internalized belief in his both mind and heart. His identity revolves entirely around his illness, leaving him uncertain about who he is beyond it. This lack of self-confidence prevents him from any possible endeavor toward change. His deep belief in his sickness and weakness contributes to depression, leading him to spend most of his time lying in bed, feeling hopeless about his future. Lacking motivation, he sees no reason to get up, go outside, or try new occupations. These negative thoughts trap him in a cycle of fear and inactivity, preventing him from fully engaging with life. However, as he begins to challenge these beliefs, he gradually gains confidence and a sense of purpose.

Colin exhibits also emotional instability, with his moods shifting rapidly from sadness to anger and then to happiness. He frequently has tantrums, screaming and crying when things do not go his way. His outbursts often serve as a way to seek attention from adults, ensuring that everyone hears him and forcing others to comfort him. However, this behavior does not bring him true happiness; instead, it deepens his sense of loneliness. To cope with his fears and insecurities, Colin adopts an authoritarian attitude, often behaving like a tyrant; ordering people around and demanding constant attention. However, this behavior serves as a defense

mechanism, masking his fear of abandonment. His arrogance and controlling attitude act as a shield against his deep fears of rejection and weakness. By insisting that everyone obeys him, he tries to assert dominance to feel strong though his inner fragility. His aggressive reactions, particularly when people question his illness, reflect displacement instead of confronting his fears, he directs his frustration at others.

2.3 Archibald Craven: A Sorrowful Widower

Archibald Craven, the master of Misselthwaite Manor in *The Secret Garden*, is a character whose life is shaped by profound grief and self-imposed isolation. Following the death of his wife, Lilies, he retreats emotionally and physically from his home, his responsibilities, and most significantly, from his son, Colin. His psychological struggles mirror those of Colin, demonstrating how unresolved trauma and guilt can affect not only an individual but also those around them. Lilies Craven was a kind and gentle woman, full of warmth and love for nature. She is described as the heart of Misselthwaite Manor, bringing joy to those around her, especially her husband. She was lively and deeply connected to the beauty of the world. She spent much of her time in her own special garden, tending to flowers and enjoying its peacefulness. Her love for the garden reflects her nurturing spirit, making it a place of happiness and life.

However, tragedy struck all of Misselthwaite Manor with the accident that occurred in the secret garden. While Lilies was pregnant, she sat on a swing attached to a tree, but the branch suddenly broke leading her to death. Her sudden death shattered Archibald, leaving him overwhelmed with grief. Unable to bear the pain of his loss, he locked the garden, letting it fade into a forgotten, lifeless place; just as his own heart shut itself off from the world.

Archibald Craven decides to isolate himself from everything and everyone. According to a Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief model, introduced in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, outlines a framework for understanding the emotional

response to loss. According to her, individuals experience five psychological stages when coping with loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. While these stages do not always follow a linear progression, they offer insight into how people process grief, eventually leading to healing and adaptation. Archibald's journey through grief reflects these stages, illustrating his struggle before he ultimately reaches acceptance and healing (Tomasic).

The first stage, denial, is characterized by an individual's refusal to fully acknowledge the reality of their loss. It functions as a psychological defense mechanism that temporarily shields the person from overwhelming emotions. Archibald exhibits denial by distancing himself from Misselthwaite Manor and neglecting his responsibilities, as if avoiding the place associated with Lilies will suppress his pain. Instead of confronting his grief, he chooses a life of constant travel, creating an illusion of detachment from his past. His neglect of Colin also reflects this denial; by staying away from his son, who was born around the time of Lilies's death, he avoids facing the emotional weight of his loss.

This emotional isolation is evident in the way he becomes consumed by negativity, allowing dark and sorrowful thoughts to dominate his mind, despite being surrounded by the beauty of nature:

man wandering about certain far-away beautiful places in the Norwegian fiords and the valleys and mountains of Switzerland and he was a man who for ten years had kept his mind filled with dark and heart-broken thinking. He had not been courageous; he had never tried to put any other thoughts in the place of the dark ones ... a terrible sorrow had fallen upon him when he had been happy and he had let his soul fill itself with blackness and had refused obstinately to allow any rift of light to pierce through (245).

The second stage, anger, is a natural emotional response to loss, often expressed as frustration, resentment, or even questioning why the loss happened. It can be directed at oneself, others, or even fate. Although it may feel overwhelming, anger plays a crucial role in the healing

process, helping individuals process their emotions and reconnect with reality. Suppressing it can be harmful, but acknowledging and working through it allows for eventual healing.

In Archibald's case, his anger is turned inward, contributing to his emotional withdrawal. His avoidance of Colin suggests an unconscious resentment; not directly toward his son, but toward the painful circumstances surrounding Liliast's death. Since she passed away around the time of Colin's birth, Archibald may have unconsciously associated his son with his loss, making it too painful for him to connect with him. Additionally, the unexpected nature of Liliast's death left him feeling powerless, blaming himself for not preventing her death: being unable to save her or protect the life they had envisioned together. Rather than processing these emotions, he suppresses them, which cause him deepening his detachment from those around him and impose himself into isolation.

Bargaining is the third stage of grief, in which individuals hope to change their circumstances, regain control, or lessen their pain through hypothetical scenarios, regrets, or desperate actions. This stage often involves making internal deals or seeking solace in external changes. It is frequently accompanied by guilt, creating a false sense of control, as if grief can be altered or reversed through these thoughts and actions. Archibald exhibits this stage through his false hope of escaping grief by traveling and staying away from Misselthwaite Manor. His absence allows him to avoid his responsibilities as a father, as if distancing himself from Colin will help him evade the painful emotions tied to Liliast's memory. His refusal to acknowledge the garden, locking it away and burying the key, further symbolizes his inability to negotiate with his loss in a meaningful way.

Depression sets in when the weight of grief becomes overwhelming, often leading to deep sadness, isolation, emptiness, and a sense of hopelessness. Individuals in this stage may feel numb, exhausted, and disinterested in life. They often withdraw from others, lose hope, and struggle to find meaning in daily activities. Archibald's prolonged sorrow takes a toll on

both his physical and emotional well-being. He neglects his home, his son, and himself, resigning himself to a state of emotional stagnation. His declining health and lack of engagement with life indicate a loss of purpose, reinforcing his belief that happiness and connection are beyond his reach. His grief becomes so consuming that it not only affects his own existence but also shapes how others perceive him. As described in the novel, he appears: “most strangers thought he must be either half mad or a man with some hidden crime on his soul” (246).

This suggests that Craven attempts to escape his sorrow by seeking beauty elsewhere, but his grief follows him. His suffering is internal and cannot be alleviated by a mere change of scenery. His detachment from Colin is not due to a lack of love but rather an inability to face the pain his son represents. Each time he looks at Colin, he is reminded of Liliias, making it too painful for him to connect. In trying to shield himself from further heartbreak, Craven only deepens his loneliness and neglects his duty as a father.

Craven’s avoidance of Colin goes beyond grief; it is deeply rooted in fear. His unwillingness to connect with his son is not merely a result of mourning the loss of his wife but also an unconscious defense mechanism to protect himself from further emotional pain. To him, getting close to and loving his son means exposing himself to the possibility of additional loss, a risk he is unwilling to be taken. Instead of building a strong relationship with Colin, Craven maintains a strict emotional barrier, convincing himself that his son is too fragile to actively participate in his life. This detachment is not just a reflection of his personal suffering but also an attempt to suppress the painful memories of his wife, whose death remains an open wound. In Colin’s presence, Craven is reminded not only of the love he lost but also of his perceived failure to protect and preserve his family. Thus, his absence from Colin’s life is not an act of indifference but a form of self-imposed exile; a way to avoid confronting his deepest fears and defenselessness.

Moreover, Craven's fear is exacerbated by his feelings of guilt and insecurity. He perceives Colin as a weak and sickly child, reinforcing his belief that any attachment would only lead to further sorrow. By distancing himself, he is convinced that he is sparing them both from inevitable suffering. However, this avoidance only deepens Colin's isolation and reinforces Craven's own emotional stagnation. In doing so, he unintentionally deprives himself of the healing and connection that a father son relationship could offer, trapping himself in a cycle of grief, fear, and regret.

To conclude, the chapter shows that neglect and isolation have serious effects on both the mind and body. As we have seen, mental health is deeply interconnected with physical well-being. Emotional neglect and prolonged isolation do not merely leave temporary wounds; they create lasting scars that weaken individuals, both psychologically and physically. When people are deprived of meaningful connections and support, their bodies become frail, and their minds are clouded by fear, loneliness, and despair. This is evident in the experiences of Mary, Colin, and Archibald Craven, each of whom suffers in distinct but equally damaging ways. Whether through childhood abandonment, overprotectiveness that breeds anxiety, or grief that transforms into selfimposed exile, these characters illustrate the devastating consequences of isolation.

The analysis of these characters reveals how emotional neglect and chronic isolation extend beyond the immediate individual, affecting every aspect of life. Isolation does not only prevent personal growth but also suppresses joy and limits the ability to experience the world fully. These emotional wounds become self-perpetuating cycles, acting as barriers to healing and trapping individuals in their own suffering. Without human connection and meaningful engagement, the characters' pain intensifies, reinforcing their emotional and physical struggles. In many ways, the novel suggests that neglect and isolation are not merely passive states of

being but active forces that drain vitality and prevent people from embracing the possibilities of life.

However, this understanding of the destructive effects of isolation paves the way for a hopeful perspective. The next chapter will explore how healing can be achieved through companionship and a deeper connection with nature. It will examine how friendship, love, and a nurturing environment serve as antidotes to emotional and physical suffering, offering renewal and transformation. The novel suggests that human bonds have the power to awaken dormant spirits, strengthen weakened bodies, and restore a sense of hope and belonging. As Mary, Colin, and Archibald Craven begin to reconnect with themselves, with one another, and with the natural world, they experience not only physical rejuvenation but also a revival of purpose, joy, and inner peace. Through this exploration, we will uncover how healing is not a solitary journey but one that flourishes in the presence of care, companionship, and the gentle yet powerful influence of nature.

Chapter Three: The Role of Companionship and Nature in Recovery

In her novel, Frances Hodgson Burnett reflects Victorian perspectives on healing through companionship, love, kindness, self-acceptance, and acceptance of others. In *Becoming Human* (1998), Jean Vanier explains what does it mean to be human. He writes that being human means staying connected to reality and to other people. It means leaving behind loneliness, fear, and false beliefs, and choosing to build connections. To be human is to accept ourselves and others as we are, and to work toward more openness, understanding, and love. Vanier also says that being human does not only mean being angry at the world or trying to change it with force, but instead working together to make life better for everyone (Vanier 17).

For Burnett, true healing is in emotional, spiritual, and physical sides because they are interconnected. In her article, Kiran Bedi supports this idea through explaining that healing happens through the balance of four elements in body system: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. When these four bodies are balanced, the person becomes healthier, understands himself/herself better, grows in self-awareness, and feels more connected to God. On the other hand, an imbalance in these four bodies can lead to sickness (Bedi). Moreover, Laurence H. Blackburn emphasizes on the fact that “healing the body is important, but healing the soul is eternally important. And, since it is true that most of our sicknesses has a psychosomatic basis, it is of the utmost importance that healing takes place in the person’s soul or spirit, the center of his being where the emotions lie” (Blackburn).

This chapter explores how each character begins to heal, and how their healing process supports the novel’s main message that is: life, hope, and change are always possible when people open their hearts through love, acceptance, humility, and connection with others and nature. By studying their healing journeys, we can understand how Burnett links personal growth and physical healing with emotional and spiritual health.

3.1 Friendship and Nature as a Healing Force

3.1.1 Mary's Friendships and Personal Growth

During her stay at Misselthwaite Manor, Mary experiences a profound transformation, both psychologically and physically. The surrounding nature and the human relationships she formed there helped her to break out of her isolation and reclaim her humane feelings, such as love and compassion. Each person she meets at the manor has a unique and different impact on her, and this is through the way they treat her and through the values they embody. Throughout her experience with these people, Mary learned important lessons that help her grow and change. Nature also plays a significant role in her healing. *The secret garden* functions as a symbol of hope and renewal as well as a clear reflection of the positive transformation in her personality.

The maid Martha is an important figure in Mary's development. She is cheerful and humble, but never treats Mary like royalty neither because she is the master Archibald Craven's niece nor because she is a little girl. On the contrary, she treats her with kindness and honesty, as if she were an adult who has to depend on herself. "The dressing process was one which taught them both something" (Burnett 27). This is the first instance of Martha's behavior, as she encourages Mary to begin taking care of herself, from dressing herself to combing her hair. Martha did not spoil Mary or obey all her wishes, but rather, she encouraged her to be independent and responsible in a respectful manner. At first, Mary feels confused by these new ways. She is not used to being treated this way by the servants, as she had always been pampered and spoiled. Martha showed no submission or excessive politeness; she was simple and straightforward. This catches Mary's attention and unexpectedly even earns her admiration "but gradually, as the girl rattled on in her good-tempered, homely way"(29). Mary begins to realize that Martha's behavior does not stem from a lack of respect, but from a genuine desire to help her grow and maturity. This first interaction is like the first seed of awareness planted within

Mary, prompting her to start seeing herself and the world around her in a new way, which reflects the beginning of an internal shift in Mary's view of human relationships.

In every conversation Mary and Martha have, Martha would share stories about her humble family, who lives in simple conditions but finding happiness in familial closeness and mutual satisfaction, rather than in wealth or social status. Through these conversations, Mary begins to realize that love is built on kindness, respect, and humility in dealing with others, regardless of their circumstances or flaws. This love reflects God's grace, which is given freely and is planted in the hearts of all people. It already exists in every human heart, but a person must recognize it and allow it to grow and guide their life.

The conversations about Martha's wise mother and her twelve-year-old brother, Dickon, who is known for his innate honesty and fascination with animals, help Mary to break down the emotional walls surrounding her. She is accustomed to see herself only in her own best interests, as if the world revolves only around her, but now she begins to care about others, especially Dickon, and a sincere desire is born in her heart to get to know him and his mother "she began interest to feel slight interest in Dickon, and as she had never before been interested in any one but herself, it was the dawning of a healthy sentiment" (29). This change has a positive effect on her psychological well-being, as she feels a warmth she has never known before.

This relationship becomes a source of profound lessons that pushes her to re-examine her thoughts and view of herself. Mary not only hates others, but also carries a hidden self-loathing, believing she is unworthy of anyone's admiration. When she tells Martha that she likes Dickon but believes he will not love her back and will be repelled by her. Martha gives her a reflection question that makes her curious about herself: "how does tha' like thysel? ... mother says that to me once: 'Tha' young vixon, tha'! There tha' stands sayin' tha' doesn't like this one an' tha' doesn't like that one. How does tha' like thysel?'" (56). These simple words of her mother's wisdom serve as an invitation for Mary to reflect on her feelings and behavior, not

only toward others, but also toward herself. She begins to realize that the problem is not in Dickon's opinion of her, but rather her own view of herself and her sense of worthlessness. This lesson teaches Mary that one must first examine one's own behavior before criticizing the feelings or attitudes of others, and that true love begins within, and that self-acceptance is the first step toward change. When a person loves himself as he is, he feels his true value, independent of the opinions or comparisons of others. This spiritual healing is evident where the meaning of grace becomes clear: that a person is loved by God as he is, without conditions. The term which Blackburn "defines from the late Very Reverend Noel Waring, sometime Dean of St. Patrick's Anglican Cathedral in Dublin is "Spiritual healing is God's loving action in all and every part of our nature" (qtd. in Blackburn).

Another significant aspect of Martha's influence on Mary is her introduction to the concepts of hard work and sacrifice. Martha speaks often of the joy, satisfaction, and positive pride one feels when one works and sacrifices for others. For Mary, who grows up in a spoiled environment and is never asked to work or serve, this idea is new and inspiring. For the first time, she begins to understand that effort and responsibility can be a path to building strong, loving relationships, and that sharing is one of the sources of true happiness. This realization leads to a profound change in Mary's behavior. She no longer expects others to fulfil her every need, but rather begins to realize that serving and caring for others can bring her a profound sense of fulfilment. This transformation is evident in her later assistance to Colin and in her involvement in bringing the secret garden to life. The love she receives from Martha inspires her to give, and she finds new meaning in giving.

Physically, Martha always encourages Mary to go out into the moor, exercise, and breathe fresh air. She believes that being active especially in nature is essential for healing a weak body. "you wrap up warm an' run out an' play you," says Martha. "It does you good and gives you some stomach for your meat" (Burnett 30). This advice leads Mary to spend more

time outdoors, which eventually makes her hungrier and gives her a bigger appetite, just like other normal children. Studies show that exposure to natural environments reduces stress levels, lowers blood pressure, and enhances overall mood. Time spent in nature promotes physical activity, which in turn boosts cognitive function, reduces the risk of chronic illnesses, and improves sleep quality. By prioritizing nature connection, individuals can create a positive feedback loop that leads to better overall wellbeing (Asher). Researchers shed light to the role of nature in mental therapy as well as impacting the physical well-being. Hugh Asher, a Forest Bathing Guide and Forest Therapy Practitioner emphasizes that, “spending time in nature can reduce feelings of loneliness by providing opportunities for solitude, self-reflection, and a sense of connectedness to the larger web of life” (Asher). Mary did not realize that her increased physical activity such as running on the fresh air was helping to strengthen her body, as it is expressed in the novel:

She did not know that, when she began to walk quickly or even run along the paths and down the avenue, she was stirring her slow blood and making herself stronger by fighting with the wind which swept down from the moor. She ran only to make herself warm ... the big breaths of rough fresh air blown over the heather filled her lungs with something which was good for her whole thin body and whipped some red color into her cheeks and brightened her dull eyes when she did not know anything about it.(Burnett 40)

In addition, Martha’s mother encourages her to play with skipping rope, she believes, “nothin' will do her more good than skippin' rope. It's th' sensiblest toy a child can have. Let her play out in th' fresh air skippin' an' it'll stretch her legs an' arms an' give her some strength in 'em” (63).

Another person who has a deep impact on Mary is Ben Weatherstaff, the old gardener. Unlike Martha, Ben does not treat her with kindness or politeness; he is blunt, rude, and

straightforward in his speech. When Mary first meets him, she finds him to be a weird man, quick-tempered, and seemingly interested in nothing but his work in the garden. This kind of behaviour wakens Mary's curiosity, as she is not used to being treated without special attention or fake respect. At first, Mary does not understand Ben's behaviour, but over time, she begins to notice how he interacts with the robin. The bird is small, with a bright red chest, singing and flying freely. Its beauty and freedom catches Mary's attention, and she feels drawn to it. Ben notices her admiration for the bird and says to her, "I'm lonely mysel' except when he's with me," and he jerks his thumb toward the robin. "He's th' only friend I've got". This statement deeply affects Mary, as she realizes that she, too, feels lonely. "I have no friends at all," said Mary. "I never had. My Ayah didn't like me and I never played with any one" (38). This awareness is a significant moment for her, she connects her emotions to a small creature and begins to understand that even the smallest beings need companionship and a sense of belonging.

Then Ben says to her, "Tha' an' me are a good bit alike," he says. "We was wove out of th' same cloth. We're neither of us good lookin' an' we're both of us as sour as we look. We've got the same nasty tem pers, both of us, I'll warrant" (38). These simple words bring him closer to Mary's heart, because she sees herself in him. She begins to think: perhaps the loneliness she feels is not just because of others, but because of her rejection of herself. Mary's self-rejection means that she views herself negatively, feeling unloved and unworthy of attention. She sees imperfections in herself that she believes push others away, which is why she tends toward isolation and anger. She does not just reject others; she also rejects herself, and feels ashamed of both her appearance and her personality. This inner feeling leads her to believe that no one can love or accept her.

This is the first step toward self-reconciliation, and the beginning of the path to build honest relationships with those around her. At that moment, she looks at the bird and shyly asks,

“would you make friends with me?” she says to the robin just as if she is speaking to a person.” Would you? And she does not say it either in her hard little voice or in her imperious Indian voice, but in a tone so soft and eager and coaxing” (38). This moment marks the beginning of her learning that true friendship is not imposed, but is built with trust, patience, sincerity, and acceptance. While Mary asks Ben about how plants grow, he answers wisely: “These don't grow up in a night,” says Weatherstaff. “Tha' has to wait for 'em. They poke up a bit higher here, an' push out a spike more there, an' uncurl a leaf this day an' another that. You watch ‘em” (57). He explains that plants do not mature instantly, but rather grow slowly, with small changes happening each day. This also shows that healing whether emotional or physical is a slow and continuous process that requires time and patience. Just as plants need sunlight, water, and daily care to grow, people also need support and effort to heal; this can include eating well, exercising, talking to kind people, and optimism as well.

Mary learns patience from the robin, and honesty and sincerity from Ben. Neither gives her attention easily, but rather slowly and steadily. No one forces her to change, but they give her the space to be herself and that allows her to grow and learn how to love without conditions or pretence. Through her friendship with Ben, she begins to understand that kindness does not always mean flattery or politeness. Sometimes, true kindness is found in simple, honest words, in quiet respect for others, or in giving someone the freedom to change. Ben does not push her to change, nor does he give her direct lessons, but he shares his wisdom and knowledge about life and nature, guiding her gently only when she needs him.

The relationship that she maintains with the other characters teach her a deep spiritual lesson: true love does not come from force or control, but from grace, honesty, and respect for other's will. As 1 Corinthians 13:4 says: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not selfseeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always

protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres”. In this way, Mary begins to see the world through new eyes shaped by sincere love, acceptance, and a desire to build flourishing relationships based on trust, not fear, and on freedom rather than control.

The last crucial character who is shown to have remarkable influence on Mary’s life is Dickon, a boy with a special connection to nature who finds joy in simple things. When she meet him for the first time in the moor, she immediately notices that he is very different from anyone she has ever known. He seats quietly among the grasses, surrounded by animals, as if he belongs to that natural world in a way no one else does. Dickon is friendly, kind, and completely free of arrogance or judgment, which leads Mary to feel comfortable immediately with his companionship. He speaks to her in equality just as Martha does, but with more warmth and acceptance. Unlike her previous relationships, which were often based on authority or dependency, her friendship with Dickon is built on respect and shared happiness. He has never saw her as weak or helpless, but as someone who can learn, grow, and find joy in nature and the beauty of simple life. What makes Dickon special is his deep kindness and ability to understand both animals and people, without judging them or making them feel anxious. He listens to Mary with care and honesty, helping her feel safe and understood. These qualities deeply affect Mary, who is still learning how to trust and connect with others.

Hugh Asher states that nature helps to fight isolation by giving “a sense of purpose and meaning” (Asher), and this idea influenced Mary. After Mary’s discovery of the secret garden by the robin, which has been locked and neglected for ten years, she feels a strong desire to someone to care for it and bring it back to life. This new purpose she finds changed how she regards herself; from someone powerless to a joyful one who can bring beauty into the world. She chooses Dickon to help her because he was trustworthy, kind, and deeply knowledgeable about the natural world. He shows her the beauty of things that grow slowly from the earth: plants, flowers, and amazing creatures. He teaches her how to dig the soil, plant seeds, and take

care of living things. She starts to feel different: "I'm growing stronger. I used always to be tired. When I dig I'm not tired at all. I like to smell the earth when it's turned up" (94). Every day she spends in the garden with Dickon is not only a lesson in gardening but also a lesson in self-care. Mary slowly learns how to take care of her own emotions and thoughts. She grows stronger both mentally and physically. The symbolic presence of the neglected garden reflects Mary's own emotional state: she is lonely, sad, and closed off from the world. The dead plants and empty spaces show how broken and isolated she feels inside. However, as time passes, and as Mary begins to care for the garden with love and attention, both the garden and Mary herself start to change. Slowly, the garden begins to renew and flourish, and at the same time, Mary's emotional and physical well-being improves. She becomes brighter, happier, and more full of life.

It is noteworthy to mention that Dickon's wisdom and deep understanding of nature and how things grow without being forced, marks an important change in Mary's life. Through him, Mary learns an important truth: healing and growth do not happen through force, pressure, or hurry. Instead, they come as a free gift through love, kindness, patience, gentle care, and trust in the natural process of life. This means believing that healing and growth happen in their own time, without forcing them. Just like a plant needs time, sunlight, water, and care to grow, people also need time, love, and patience to heal and change. A flower cannot be rushed to bloom, nor can healing or the development of strength be forced. Instead, it is essential to trust that, with gentle care and the right conditions, life moves forward naturally and beautifully. This trust gives peace and hope, because it teaches that even when change is slow or invisible, it is still happening deep inside. Dickon shows Mary this important lesson through his actions. He is always patient with her, explaining things kindly and with excitement. He never criticizes her, but supports her warmly, which helps her grow at her own speed, feeling calm, safe, and confident.

3.1.2 Colin's Journey from Isolation to Connection

Colin's journey of transformation and healing begins when Mary discovers him. While everyone else sees him as a sick boy deserving of pity, Mary completely rejects this perception. She does not treat him as if he is ill but rather sees his condition as a psychological delusion that requires challenge and confrontation. In one scene, when Colin has a panic attack and believes he is dying and becoming hunchbacked, Mary simply tells him that he is not, so she says:

there's not a single lump there. There's not a lump as big as a pin—except backbone lumps, and you can only feel them because you're thin. I've got backbone lumps myself, and they used to stick out as much as yours do, until I began to get fatter, and I am not fat enough yet to hide them. No one but Colin himself knew what effect those crossly spoken childish words had on him (155).

This is Colin's first time to hear positive words that are not filled with exaggerated sympathy, but with realistic hope. This approach is reflected again when they are talking about the garden and Mary says sharply: "of course you'll live to get into it! Don't be silly!" (165), showing that she challenges his fear of dying and replaces it with belief in life. Mary does not try to comfort him with empty reassurances. Instead, she forces him to face the reality of his condition and situation. She is not afraid to challenge his assumptions about himself. Mary encourages Colin to fight his fears and take small steps towards emotional and physical healing. In this way, Mary is not only a supportive friend, but also a guide who shows him that he is able to overcome his illusions.

Mary, who is herself once a lonely and isolated child, sees in Colin someone who needs help just as she once needs support from others. She speaks to him in the same caring manner she experiences from Martha and Dickon. She does not allow Colin to drown in self-pity, but instead gives him something no one has offered before: the belief in his ability to face his

challenges. As Colin himself declares later: “I shall get well! ... And I shall live forever and ever and ever!” (185). While everyone else distances himself from Colin and avoids him, Mary draws closer to him and treats him as an equal, which helps him overcome his fears. He sincerely describes her by saying: “I am better. She makes me better” (130). With her encouragement, Colin is able to step out of his closed-off world, open his heart to experience and growth, and begin to see life in a different way, full of hope and change. The novel shows his physical reaction to this inner change: “he felt as if tight strings which had held him had loosened themselves and let him go” (170), a clear sign of emotional relief and relaxation.

Dickon also has an important role in Colin’s healing journey. When he meets him, he introduces him to a new idea he has never known before: that healing is not solely dependent on medical treatments, but is a holistic process that involves the body, mind, and spirit together. Dickon explains that balance among these three aspects is the key to true recovery, and that caring for the psychological and spiritual sides is just as important as physical treatment. That is why he encourages Colin to believe in the good, trust himself, to think positively, to spend time meditating, to connect with others, and to open himself up to the beauty of the nature around him. Similarly, in the article “The Lost Art of Healing: Why Medicine Needs More than Just Science”, Enever explains that healing is not just physical; it is deeply connected to our emotions, thoughts, and beliefs. According to psychoneuroimmunology, when a person feels safe and hopeful, his/her body is better able to heal. Good practitioners recognize that words, trust, and emotional support play a big role in recovery. The placebo effect shows that belief in treatment can trigger real biological healing, while negative emotions and poor communication can block it. True healing needs both science and the human touch strategies, care, and someone who listens and understands the patient as a whole person (Enever). Colin begins to believe this deeply when he says: “the Magic is in me. The Magic is making me strong! I can feel it! I can feel it!” (212). Dr. Craven also notices this change and says: “your food seems to agree with

you. You are gaining flesh rapidly and your colour is better” (219). Colin’s belief in the power of Magic continues to grow until he joyfully cries: “I’m well! I’m well! I feel—I feel as if I want to shout out something—something thankful, joyful!” (236).

Moreover, he finally finds someone who listens to his pain and thoughts without judging or condemning him, and this becomes a true companionship for him, filled with acceptance and compassion. His confession of his feelings to Mary and Dickon is a crucial step toward restoring his inner balance. Through this sincere communication, Mary and Dickon provide him with a safe environment that encourages free self-expression and allows him to be honest with himself without fear. When a person is listened to with unconditional love, acceptance and a desire to understand, he/she feels that his/her feelings are valued and respected. The absence of judgment frees the speaker from the fear of criticism or rejection, opening the way for them to dive deeper into their feelings and rebuild themselves from within. In the book *Love for Imperfect Things...*, Haemin Sunim writes,

I think the process of healing begins when we open our hearts and listen empathetically.

We can help people not because we know the solutions to their problems, but because we care enough to stay and lend our ears. Knowing that others have gone through similar difficulties, they become better equipped to cope with theirs. (Sunim 96)

In this way, listening becomes a powerful tool for healing, not by giving advice or readymade solutions, but by being a simple human act that acknowledges the dignity and suffering of the person. For Colin, this kind of deep, caring attention gave him the chance to reshape his own story from a place of strength and self-belief, rather than weakness and surrender. Over time, Colin began to notice clear changes in his psyche, mind, and body. Interacting with Mary and Dickon, and spending time in the secret garden, helped him overcome the feelings of helplessness and despair he had been experiencing. It also helped him

transform his negative thoughts into positive ones. The pivotal moment in Colin's healing journey was his discovery of what he called "the Magic."

One day, as he watches the crocuses bloom, he asks Dickon: "Are you making Magic?" and Dickon answers, "Tha's doin' Magic thyself!... It's same Magic as makes these 'ere work out o' th' earth" (196). This moment shows how Colin begins to understand that the same power bringing life to nature is also helping him change from within. He realizes that the healing he feels is not separate from the world around him, but deeply connected to it. Thus, he says with excitement, "I'm going to see everything grow here. I'm going to grow here myself" (190). This shows that Colin now believes in the Magic and in his own ability to change and improve. Furthermore, He begins to express this belief through a joyful chant: "the sun is shining. That is the Magic. The flowers are growing—the roots are stirring. That is the Magic. Being alive is the Magic—being strong is the Magic. The Magic is in me—the Magic is in me. It is in me—it is in me. It's in every one of us. It's in Ben Weatherstaff's back. Magic! Magic! Come and help!" (210). These words reflect his deep belief that the same "Magic" that gives life to nature also lives in every person, giving them strength, joy, and hope.

Colin believes that healing starts in the mind, and this idea is clearly expressed when the narrator states: "he had made himself believe that he was going to get well, which was really more than half the battle, if he had been aware of it" (214). This highlights the power of belief and positive thinking in the process of recovery. Colin's transformation suggests that the mind plays a key role in overcoming weakness, both emotional and physical. As Jessica Forrest explains, "if you believe you can improve yourself and your circumstances and that your position in life can change, positive thinking is a natural result, which in turn enables you to deal with problems and hiccups in your life" (Forrest 22). In this context, ignorance and negative thoughts are the first enemies that prevent a person from recognizing the blessings given to them and from truly enjoying life. "One of the new things people began to find out in

the last century was that thoughts—just mere thoughts—are as powerful as electric batteries — as good for one as sunlight is, or as bad for one as poison” (Burnett 244). When a person is lost in fear, doubt, or sadness, they cannot see the goodness around them. Therefore, awareness and a strong positive mindset become necessary for healing and for accepting the good things that life provides.

As Colin becomes more aware, he begins to understand that life is full of gifts. This awareness also gives him the desire to give thanks for what he receive. He gives thanks to what he calls “the Magic” which he sees as the reason for his healing. His thankfulness rises in him like a song, and he joins the others in singing the doxology: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above ye Heavenly Host, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen." (237). Following the song, Colin says: “it is a very nice song. I like it. Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout out that I am thankful to the Magic.” He pauses, then adds: “Perhaps they are both the same thing. How can we know the exact names of everything?” (237). This shows that for Colin gratitude, the Magic, and faith are connected. He does not need to fully understand or name everything. What matters is the deep feeling of thankfulness and wonder that helps him heal and grow. This "Magic" as described by Mrs. Sowerby, is a symbol of God's goodness. She explains that it does not matter what name people give it, because it is the same in every country.

I never knowed it by that name but what does th' name matter? I warrant they call it a different name i' France an' a different one i' Germany. Th' same thing as set th' seeds swellin' an' th' sun shinin' made thee a well lad an' it's th' Good Thing ... Th' Big Good Thing doesn't stop to worrit, bless thee. It goes on makin' worlds by th' million—worlds like us. Never thee stop believin' in th' Big Good Thing an' knowin' th' world's full of it—an' call it what tha' likes. Tha' wert singin' to it when I come into th' garden (242).

Mrs. Sowerby makes it clear that what matters is not the name, but the goodness and joy behind it. She adds, “Th’ Magic listened when tha’ sung th’ Doxology. It would ha’ listened to anything tha’d sung. It was th’ joy that mattered. Eh! lad, lad—what’s names to th’ Joy Maker” (242). Burnett shows that this spiritual force is always present in the world, no matter how it is called. What matters most is believing in it, rejoicing in it, and letting it bring healing and transformation. The concept of “Magic” includes several important ideas such as the power of faith to change life for the better, the positive influence of human relationships, and the healing power of nature. First, faith is presented as a source of new hope that can transform lives. Second, human relationships are shown as expressions of divine love, which are placed within individuals’ heart to encourage, support, and compassionate each other. Three, nature contributes to the healing of both body and mind; fresh air, sunlight, and natural remedies improve physical health, while the beauty and calmness of the natural world reduce stress and promote mental well-being.

Colin's belief in the Good Magic helps him experience real change in his condition. He becomes able to stand and walk like other children, demonstrating the connection between mental strength and physical health. “Each day he grew stronger and could walk more steadily and cover more ground. And each day his belief in the Magic grew stronger—as well it might. He tried one experiment after another as he felt himself gaining strength and it was Dickon who showed him the best things of all” (222). In addition to this, the children exercise their bodies regularly, which helps them improve even more, “the exercises were part of the day's duties as much as the Magic was”. (223). Through his transformation, Colin learns that every human being possesses great value, and that love, hope, and faith are essential elements for personal growth and renewal. As John Erskine says: “We know that affection is health- giving, not only to those who are sick but to those who are sound. We know that the presence of friends who wish the sick to get well, contributes something to the recovery . . .” In order to help another

person, we show him love, and acceptance. Dr. Leslie Weatherhead writes, “. . . that healing energies are at work more powerful than men have ever dreamed, wherein the key of this fellowship seem to be ‘faith’ on the part of the patient and ‘love’ on the part of the healer” (Kew 32).

Burnett captures Colin’s healing moment in the garden, where he is accompanied by Mary, Dickon, and Ben Weatherstaff. The setting of springtime symbolizes renewal and transformation, as the garden blooms with new life with their caring and planting. Colin says: “it’s planted. And the sun is only slip ping over the edge. Help me up, Dickon. I want to be standing when it goes. That’s part of the Magic.” And Dickon helped him, and the Magic—or whatever it was—so gave him strength” (200). Before, Colin blames his mother for his condition. He feels that because she died, his father became distant and angry, and this makes Colin feel unloved and unwanted. He even hates to look at her picture because it reminds him of his pain and loss. But after spending time in the secret garden and with Mary and Dickon, something changes inside him. He begins to feel peace and hope, and his anger slowly disappears. Colin’s inner transformation is clearly shown when he says:

because it doesn’t make me angry any more to see her laughing. I wakened when it was bright moonlight two nights ago and felt as if the Magic was filling the room and making everything so splendid that I couldn’t lie still. I got up and looked out of the window. The room was quite light and there was a patch of moonlight on the curtain and somehow that made me go and pull the cord. She looked right down at me as if she were laughing because she was glad I was standing there. It made me like to look at her. I want to see her laughing like that all the time (231).

This moment shows that the Magic has truly touched his heart, helping him to rebuild broken relationships and discover the beauty of life. Colin no longer sees his mother as a symbol of sadness but as someone full of light and love. His words show forgiveness, acceptance, and

a new way of seeing the world. The characters gather at a significant moment to express gratitude to the Good Thing, or what they refer to as the Magic, for the healing and transformation they have witnessed. They interpret this event as an invisible force that positively impacts their lives. The natural environment appears to participate in this celebration, as the blooming flowers and singing birds create an atmosphere of renewal and harmony, symbolically reinforcing the sense of blessing and transformation experienced by the characters.

3.1.3 Archibald Craven's Healing from Grief

Archibald's healing journey is closely tied to Colin's transformation. As Colin grows stronger both mentally and physically, Archibald also begins to recover from the grief he has carried for ten years. His emotional recovery reflects the Victorian idea that healing is not just about overcoming personal loss, but also about reconnecting with others and reviving human relationships. The garden symbolizes emotional renewal, as Archibald closes it off for ten years, both physically and emotionally. This garden is once a shared place of love and happiness between him and his wife. However, it becomes a painful reminder that he cannot face due to his deep grief. As a result of his neglect, the plants wither and life within it deteriorates, just as his heart withers with sorrow and despair. His act of closing the garden is not merely a physical action, but a reflection of his emotional state; he closes his heart to love, hope, and life itself. Thus, the garden becomes a symbolic mirror of his psychological condition: a desolate place that has lost its freshness, just as Archibald has lost his ability to feel happiness and connect with life.

However, Archibald's journey of healing begins indirectly when he sits and meditates on the flow of clear water in the mountains. As he sits gazing into the clear running of the water, Archibald Craven gradually feels his mind and body both grow quiet, as quiet as the valley itself. He wonders if he is going to sleep, but he is not. He sits and gazes at the sunlit water and

his eyes begin to see things growing at its edge. There is one lovely mass of blue forget-me-nots growing so close to the stream that its leaves are wet and at these he finds himself looking as he remembers he looked at such things years ago. He is actually thinking tenderly how lovely it is and what wonders of blue its hundreds of little blossoms are. He does not know that just that simple thought is slowly filling his mind—filling and filling it until other things are softly pushed aside. It is as if a sweet clear spring begins to rise in a stagnant pool and rises and rises until at last it sweeps the dark water away” (Burnett 246-47).

There, he feels as if a pure thing begins to flow within him, giving him a sense of inner calm and peace for the first time in years. This sense of renewal coincides with a special moment in the garden, where everyone has gathered to praise and thank the Creator for the blessings of grace they have received. In that very moment, Colin shouts enthusiastically, saying: "I am going to live forever and ever and ever!"(247), reflecting the new spirit of hope that begins to spread among the characters. In this deep moment of meditation, Archibald, “without his knowing why, the black burden seems to lift itself again and he knows he is a living man and not a dead one. Slowly—slowly—for no reason that he knows of—he is "coming alive" with the garden” (247). It is as if a burden that has long weighed him down quietly breaks. This moment shows that his return to life is not just an emotional event, but is also connected to a greater awareness and deep appreciation for the beauty of life and creation. It marks the beginning of an internal awakening, as this spiritual experience leads him toward other positive thoughts that slowly and quietly enter his soul. Reflecting on the beautiful nature restores his sense of connection to the world around him, making it clear to him that true healing comes from believing in the possibility of change. During his isolation in nature, Archibald notices that “he begins to sleep better, he knows, and his dreams cease to be a terror to him” (247), showing that nature is healing his soul as well as his body. When he receives a letter from Mrs. Sowerby asking him to come back home, he slowly starts thinking about returning to

Misselthwaite Manor, a decision of great importance because he always avoids facing his past there. During his long train journey to Yorkshire, he suddenly realizes: “perhaps, my body is growing stronger. It is growing stronger but—because of the rare peaceful hours when his thoughts are changed—his soul is slowly growing stronger, too. He begins to think of Misselthwaite and wonders if he should not go home”(248).

However, instead of falling into negativity, he chooses to believe in the possibility of change and growth. In fact, Archibald's emotional return is not easy. As the passage says: “he has to make an effort to bring himself back to the place he is standing in and when he feels he is on earth again he turns and goes out of the room” (254). This shows that healing is not fast. It is a slow process that needs courage and honesty to face pain. His hesitation to enter the garden is a symbol of his fear of facing the deep sadness he endures. But in the end, he decides to take the first step toward change and growth, showing his inner desire for life and renewal.

In the final scene, when Archibald joins Colin, Mary, and Dickon in the garden, the full meaning of healing and emotional renewal is embodied. Archibald is no longer the man who is full of sadness and fear. He is now a new person, open to life, to hope, and to love. He is surprised to see Colin; the boy looks completely different from how he was before. Colin is no longer the weak and sick child that Archibald left behind. Now, he is a healthy, strong, and active young boy. Archibald feels shocked and deeply affected when he realizes that his son is fully healed, and that he has not lost him like he once believed. In this moment, Archibald feels that he is discovering the meaning of life once more. For the first time in years, he feels that the world still has chances for renewal, health, and real happiness. This scene shows that love can rebuild the bridges that pain and loss broke. The reunion between father and son is a positive emotional shock. It wakes up feelings of fatherhood and connection that have been sleeping inside Archibald. It also removes the emotional walls he built during his years of loneliness. The garden, which once symbolized sadness and death, is now a symbol of hope, unity, and the

beginning of a new life. It represents emotional healing and the crucially of human relationships. This experience is like an emotional cleansing and the true beginning of a healing journey. Archibald realizes that his deep sadness is not a sign of love for his wife, but a heavy emotional chain that stops him from living. This sadness makes him forget his duties as a father and become distant from his son, who really needs him. This moment of awareness pushes him to free himself from painful memories and to accept that life does not end with loss. Instead, it continues through the power of true love, which never disappears. He also understands that life is worth living with happiness and gratitude. Its true value lies in giving each person a chance to grow, heal, love, accept others, and connect with the beauty and goodness of the world. Archibald recognizes that people are not created to the world to live in suffering, but to maintain mutual love, peace, and satisfaction. The Canadian philosopher Jean Vanier supports this idea when he writes:

Change of one sort or another is the essence of life, so there will always be the loneliness and insecurity that come with change. When we refuse to accept that loneliness and insecurity are part of life, when we refuse to accept that they are the price of change, we close the door on many possibilities for ourselves; our lives become lessened, we are less than fully human. (Vanier 14)

In the end, the emotional distance between father and son disappears. A new connection grows between them, based on love, trust, and real emotional communication. Archibald is no longer a man full of sadness. He becomes a mature and renewed father who can see his son as a symbol of hope not just as a reminder of loss. Colin's health no longer brings pain to his heart. Instead, it becomes the beginning of a new life full of possibilities, connection, and unconditional love.

3.2 Interpreting the Symbolism of “Magic”

Frances Hodgson Burnett, in her novel *The Secret Garden*, presents the idea of “Magic”; written with a capital M, as a deep and symbolic force. This “Magic” is not like the magic in fantasy stories with spells or wands. Instead, it is a quiet, invisible power that brings healing and change through love, grace, positive thoughts, and the beauty of nature. Burnett believed in the healing power of spiritual grace, and she shows how this power connects the characters and helps them grow. She uses the garden as the central place where this transformation happens, and where “Magic” works to restore life, both physically and emotionally. In the story, “Magic” works slowly and gently. It begins with small actions: Martha’s kindness, Dickon’s peaceful nature, and Mrs. Sowerby’s wise and loving care. These people do not talk about magic, but their actions bring life and hope. They guide Mary, Colin, and Mr. Craven without force. Instead, they show love and give support. The changes in the characters happen gradually. Mary becomes kinder and healthier. Colin learns to walk and smile. Mr. Craven begins to hope again. These changes are the result of the “Magic”; a symbol of healing grace and love. Mrs. Sowerby, though not always present in the story as other characters, plays an important role in this symbolic “Magic”. She is like a symbol of God’s love: quiet, caring, and always near, even when unseen. She helps through her children Martha and Dickon, giving advice, food, and emotional support. As Martha told Mary: “Mother said I must tell you to keep out o’ doors as much as you could, even when it rains a bit, so as tha’ wrap up warm” (Burnett 63).

Additionally, Martha reveals how her mother’s gentle influence affects others, particularly Mr. Archibald Craven, saying: “he’d forgot, but mother hadn’t an’ she made bold to stop him. I don’t know what she said to him about you but she said somethin’ as put him in th’ mind to see you before he goes away again, to-morrow” (101), which shows how she encourages Craven to pay attention to Mary and care for her, reminding him not to neglect her needs despite his own distractions. Her way of helping is soft and wise. She does not control

others. Instead, she allows them to learn and grow. This shows how divine grace works; it does not force change but invites people to open their hearts freely. With her guidance, Mary and Colin feel free and happy. They breathe fresh air and play in nature, which helps them heal. She also sends a letter to Mr. Craven, giving him hope and encouraging him to return home. When he sees Colin walking and laughing, he is filled with joy and begins to change. This moment shows the full effect of the “Magic.” It has healed a family that was broken by sadness and loss.

Dickon, too, is a very important part of the symbolic “Magic.” He is a boy who is deeply connected to nature. He talks to animals, cares for plants, and brings peace wherever he goes. His connection to the natural world is strong, and through him, Burnett shows how nature can heal the human spirit. Dickon never judges others. He accepts Mary and Colin as they are and helps them gently. His presence in the garden makes it a place of joy and safety. Because of his kind and calm nature, Colin starts to believe in the “Magic”, in himself, and in the healing power of the garden. As Mary believes: “there really was a sort of Magic about Dickon. When Mr. Roach heard his name he smiled quite leniently. “He'd be at home in Buckingham Palace or at the bottom of a coal mine,” he said. “And yet it's not impudence, either. He's just fine, is that lad” (180). Dickon’s goodness and simplicity make him welcome everywhere, and that his magic comes from his pure heart and strong bond with nature. Dickon’s role is to guide without controlling. He listens more than he speaks and teaches by example. His simple and loving way of living reflects the quiet strength of the “Magic.” Through his relationship with the animals and the garden, readers understand that healing can come through harmony with nature. Dickon represents the part of the “Magic” that comes from living with humility, love, and respect for life. He inspires both Mary and Colin to care for others and to find peace within themselves.

In addition, the garden itself is a symbol of the soul. When it is locked and forgotten, it is like the hearts of the characters closed, hurt, and lifeless. But once it is opened and cared for, it becomes full of life and color. This transformation of the garden reflects the healing of the

human spirit. The “Magic” helps to open the heart, let in love and light, and bring joy and meaning to life. The garden starts as a place of mystery and silence, covered in dead branches and hidden from view. But through the care of Mary, Dickon, and Colin, it begins to change. Flowers bloom, birds return, and everything begins to grow again. This growth is not only physical but emotional and spiritual. Just as the garden needs patience and attention to bloom, the characters also need time, love, kindness, and care to heal. The more time they spend in the garden together, the more they change. It becomes their safe place, where they find peace and happiness. The garden teaches them important lessons about friendship, hope, and the beauty of life. It becomes a symbol of rebirth and new beginnings. In this way, Burnett uses the setting of garden to show how “Magic” can help people reconnect with themselves, others, and the world around them. It is a place where pain is replaced by joy, where isolation becomes connection, and where broken hearts become whole again. When Colin embraces the transformation, he delivered a speech about his experience with Magic:

When Mary found this garden it looked quite dead, then something began pushing things up out of the soil and making things out of nothing. One day things weren't there and another they were... I don't know its name so I call it Magic. I have never seen the sun rise but Mary and Dickon have and from what they tell me I am sure that is Magic too. Something pushes it up and draws it. Sometimes since I've been in the garden I've looked up through the trees at the sky and I have had a strange feeling of being happy as if something were pushing and drawing in my chest and making me breathe fast. Magic is always pushing and drawing and making things out of nothing. Everything is made out of Magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us. In this garden—in all the places. The Magic in this garden has made me stand up and know I am going to live to be a man...When I was going to try to stand that first time Mary kept saying to herself as fast as she could, You

can do it! You can do it!' and I did. I had to try myself at the same time, of course, but her Magic helped me—and so did Dickon's. Every morning and evening and as often in the daytime as I can remember I am going to say, 'Magic is in me! Magic is making me well! I am going to be as strong as Dickon, as strong as Dickon!' And you must all do it, too. (207- 08)

Here, Colin serves as Frances Hodgson Burnett's mouthpiece to express her belief in the healing power of Magic, which represents Divine Grace. He believes that Magic works through love, belief, hope, people encouragement, and the natural world, and that everyone can connect with it to become better. This Magic is not just imaginary; it is a spiritual power found both within individuals and in nature. Through Colin's speech, Burnett presents Magic as a mix of faith, natural forces, and human will. It has the ability to heal and transform people physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. This also reflects how grace works: it does not force change but invites it, offering love and patience to those who are open. This quiet force is often revealed in simple moments; a kind gesture, the beauty of a flower, or comforting words at the right time. It respects human freedom and waits for hearts to open. As Colin says: "you learn things by saying them over and over and thinking about them until they stay in your mind forever and I think it will be the same with Magic. If you keep calling it to come to you and help you it will get to be part of you and it will stay and do things" (208). Magic or grace becomes part of a person, and by opening oneself to it and calling it with belief, one invites healing and inner transformation. Burnett shows that when people accept this grace, by embracing love, faith, hope, and nature, they begin a real transformation. This change does not come through rules or fear, but through a deep sense of being cared for and understood. Like the garden that grows with patience and care, people also flourish when they are nurtured. In the end, "Magic" becomes a symbol of the quiet yet powerful work of grace, bringing healing, joy, and a renewed life.

General Conclusion

This dissertation has explored Frances Hodgson Burnett's timeless novel, *The Secret Garden*, as a profound literary examination of healing and personal change. It has argued that Burnett, drawing from her own life experiences and the evolving understanding of health in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, masterfully illustrates the deep connection between the mind and body. The study explained how neglect, isolation, loss and grief can cause both mental and physical problems, as seen in the lives of Mary Lennox, Colin Craven, and Archibald Craven. It also showed that people can improve through belief in Magic, which represents a divine blessing manifested in various forms, such as love between people, mutual respect, positive thinking, and spending time in nature.

The analysis began by establishing the historical and personal context that shaped Burnett's philosophy. The Victorian era was a time of significant change, with growing interest in the impact of emotions on physical health, alongside new ideas about psychological treatment influenced by Romantic ideals of nature and humane care, as exemplified by reformers like William Tuke. Burnett's own life, marked by personal loss and illness, led her to seek and embrace healing methods that went beyond conventional medicine. This belief made *The Secret Garden* more than a story for children, it became her message about how people can become whole again.

The analysis delved into the initial states of the main characters, employing psychological theories. Mary Lennox's emotional and physical ill-health was shown to be a direct result of parental neglect in India, leading to an aggressive, unhappy disposition and a frail body. Colin Craven's belief of his early death and physical weakness stemmed from his father's avoidance and negative thoughts of his unawareness of the right. Archibald Craven, in turn, was paralyzed by unresolved grief after his wife's death, isolating himself from his son

and his home. These characters demonstrate how a troubled mind can indeed manifest in a suffering body.

The heart of this dissertation focused on the transformative journeys of these characters. It showed how the simple acts of kindness, love, and guidance from figures like Martha, her brother Dickon, and Mrs. Sowerby, along with the shared purpose of restoring the secret garden, initiated profound changes. Mary began to feel better after being surrounded by adorable characters, exposure to the fresh air of the moor, the responsibility of caring for the garden, and her strong belief in the Magic, began to dissolve her bitterness and improve her physical health. Her awakening, in turn, became the catalyst for Colin's healing. By challenging his fears and introducing him to the wonders of the garden and the companionship of Dickon, Mary helped Colin discover his own strength and will to live.

Nature itself, particularly the secret garden, was shown to be a powerful symbol of healing. Its initial neglect and deterioration mirrored the characters' inner lives, while its gradual revival, through their care and attention, paralleled their own physical and emotional recovery. The garden became a peaceful place where they connect with each other and with nature, engage in physical activity, and experience the simple joys of growth and renewal. This connection with nature fostered a sense of wonder and belonging, counteracting the effects of their previous isolation.

The concept of "Magic," as portrayed in the novel, was analyzed not as supernatural fantasy, but as a symbolic representation of several interconnected forces: quality of love and human connection, positive thinking, and nature, which were all connected to the Divine grace. Characters like Mrs. Sowerby and Dickon showed this "Magic" through their intuitive wisdom and deep connection to life. Colin's chanting about the "Magic" making him strong signifies his embrace of hope and his active participation in his own recovery. This "Magic" underscores Burnett's view of healing, where body, mind, and spirit are linked and respond to nurturing

influences. Archibald Craven's own journey toward healing, prompted by Mrs. Sowerby's gentle intervention and his eventual reunion with a healthy, vibrant Colin in the rejuvenated garden, completed this picture of family restoration. His reengagement with life demonstrates that even deep-seated grief can be overcome when the heart is open to new experiences and connections.

In conclusion, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* remains a significant work because its themes of interconnectedness, resilience, and the healing power of love and nature are timeless and universal. This study has highlighted how the novel presents a path to recovery from deep psychological and physical suffering, primarily through an awakening to "Magic", a spiritual force understood as a divine blessing.

Burnett masterfully illustrates that people experience this "Magic" in important ways: the development of nurturing human connections built on love and mutual respect, the restorative power of a bond with the natural world, and by learning to think positively and believe. By putting together her own personal and Victorian philosophy, she created a narrative that continues to resonate with readers today. It reminds us how these healing elements are important. The journey from darkness to light experienced by Mary, Colin, and Archibald is ultimately a testament to the human capacity for transformation, affirming the enduring hope that true healing is always possible when we open ourselves to this powerful "Magic" that is a natural part of life.

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Résumé

Ce mémoire explore la guérison et la transformation personnelle dans le roman *Le Jardin Secret* de Frances Hodgson Burnett. Il utilise l'analyse littéraire, le contexte historique de la fin de l'époque victorienne et du début de l'époque édouardienne, la biographie de Burnett, ainsi que des théories psychologiques pour étudier l'état de santé des personnages principaux : Mary Lennox, Colin Craven et Archibald Craven. L'analyse montre que la négligence, la tristesse et l'isolement causent des problèmes de santé. Ensuite, il suit le chemin de leur guérison grâce à l'amitié sincère, à la force régénératrice de la nature, et au « magique ». Ce « magique » représente la grâce divine, qui agit à travers l'amour entre les personnes, la foi, la pensée positive et la vitalité de la nature. Ce travail conclut que le roman *Le Jardin Secret* propose une vision durable de la guérison complète, prouvant que ces éléments essentiels pour se rétablir sont toujours très importants pour le bien-être et la capacité humaine de se renouveler aujourd'hui.

Mots-clés : *Le Jardin Secret*, magique, santé mentale et physique, guérison, amitié, nature.

ملخص

مَدخْتسم تينروب نوسجوه سبسنارف "تيرسلا مقيدحا" تياور في صخشلا ل وحتلاو عافشلا ةحورطلا مذهب فشتست تايرظنلاو، تيتاذلا تينروب قريسو، يدراودلا رصعلا لئاوأو يروتكيفلا رصعلا رخاوأ في خيراتلا قايسلاو، يبدلا ليلحتلا ليلحتلا رهظي. ن فارك دلابيشراو، ن فارك نيلوكو، سكونيل يرام تيسيئرلا تايصخشلا ىدل تيحصللا ةلاحلا ةساردل تيسفنلا فوقو، تيدعما تيناسنلا ةقفرلا للاخنم، مهيفاعت راسم عبتتيم م. مهتخصي في لالتعا ببست ةلزعاو نزحلاو لامهلا نأ فيك، صاخشلا نيب بحلا للاخنم لمعتي تلا تيهلا ةمعنلا نع تينروب موهفم وهو، يزمرا "رحسلا" و، ةددجما تعييطلا، ل ماکلا عافشلا ةمئاد تيور مَدَقَت "تيرسلا مقيدحا" تياور نأ ل ةساردلا صلخت. تعييطلا تيويحو، ي باجلا ريکفتلاو، ناميلاو، ي لاحلا انرصعي في ديدجتلا لىء تيرشبلا قردقلاو تيهافرلا ةغلاب تيمها تاذ لازتلا في فاعتلا تيساسلا رصانعلا مذهب نأ تيتبم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحديقة السرية، السحر، الصحة النفسية والجسدية، التعافي، الرفقة، الطبيعة