

**AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER REPRESENTATIONS
IN CHILDREN'S NOVELS BY
FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT**

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines gender representations in three children's novels by Victorian author Frances Hodgson Burnett. It focuses specifically on the construction and representation of femininity in the novels Little Lord Fauntleroy(1886), A Little Princess (1888) and The Secret Garden (1911). Employing the methodology of feminist literary criticism I examine the mechanisms through which these novels teach children lessons about appropriate and inappropriate female gender roles analyzing specifically how these books represent the female gender. In addition, I present a case study of literary interpretation based on an in-depth interview with a contemporary young female reader in order to examine how she relates to and interprets the gendered messages within these novels. This study will inform discussions about gender representations in children's literature and highlight the need and importance of gender education in school curricula.

Resumen

Esta tesis examina las representaciones de género en tres novelas de la autora victoriana Frances Hodgson Burnett, centrándose específicamente en la caracterización de niñas y mujeres y la construcción de la feminidad en Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886), A Little Princess (1888) y The Secret Garden (1911). También se examinan los mecanismos a través de los cuales estas novelas enseñan a niños y niñas lecciones sobre los roles apropiados y no apropiados del género femenino. Además, se incluye un estudio de caso de interpretación de estos textos basado en una entrevista en profundidad con una joven puertorriqueña contemporánea. El objetivo de este estudio es examinar la manera en que la entrevistada responde a los mensajes que las novelas comunican en torno a la feminidad. Mi investigación pretende contribuir a discusiones en torno a las representaciones de género en la literatura infantil, así como recalcar la importancia de la educación sobre género en el currículo escolar.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my advisor, Jocelyn Géliga Vargas, for all of her support and encouragement throughout the thesis writing process. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my parents who have made me the person that I am today and have provided me with the education that I needed to become a productive citizen of this society. Also, to those who are not aware of the stereotypes that their society directly or indirectly places upon them.

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Chapter I:

Introduction

Children's literature possesses certain qualities and characteristics that appeal to its target audience. According to Lois Stern, children's literature "should be pleasurable to hear, should help children absorb words, rhythms and tones of the language that surrounds them, should evoke emotional appeal and should create visual images (1-5). Children's literature should thus appeal to children and be useful in their overall cognitive, psychological and social development.

Children's literature also presents societal values and is therefore an especially useful indicator of societal norm. Children's books persuade children to accept the values represented by the characters and plots, and provide children with role models for what they can and should be like when they grow up (Bender 187). Among other things, children's books set standards for gender roles, defining the parameters for acceptable notions of femininity and masculinity. Generally, the characters in children's books are stereotypes that might offer a limited representation of reality and human subjectivity. Elizabeth Yeoman's analysis of females in fairy tales is a case in point. In her article, she concludes that "in most of the best known versions of fairy tales (Perrault, Grimm, Disney), the only strong females are witches; witches are typically wicked and females (other than witches) are often victims who survive only because they were rescued by men" (430).

According to gender scholar Hillary Lips, "sex stereotypes are socially shared beliefs that certain qualities can be assigned to individuals based on their membership in

the female or male half of the human race” (2). If children are not taught to analyze and question these stereotypical representations they may take them at face value and use them as models for their own behavior and worldview. However, before we can proceed to teach children how to interrogate these representations, we need to fully understand how these representations are constructed in the literary texts written for and about children. The purpose of this investigation is to make progress in this direction by engaging in a gender analysis of children’s literature and an exploratory study of how these gender representations are interpreted by a young reader.

Focus of the Study

I focus specifically on the construction and representation of femininity (both girlhood and womanhood) in three books by renowned British writer Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924). Burnett wrote novels and plays in both England and the United States but what she is best known for are her children’s books. The books I consider and analyze in my research are: Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886), A Little Princess (1888) and The Secret Garden (1911). I specifically examine the mechanisms through which these novels teach children lessons about appropriate and inappropriate female gender roles. I hope that my analysis contributes to informing discussions about these representational processes in children’s literature.

My justification for using the work of Frances Hodgson Burnett to develop an analysis of gender representation in children’s literature has to do with both the popularity and scope of her work, and her standing as a children’s book writer. The novels under consideration “have been published in various editions, including multi-title

volumes, anthologies and collections, and have been translated into different languages including Portuguese and Spanish” (Bixler 99). Furthermore, these texts have been adapted into audio materials for elementary school classrooms. This fact renders the books particularly useful for ESL educational contexts, such as Puerto Rico’s, because using audio materials with L2 learners has proven to be effective in developing students’ oral proficiency, reading, writing and listening skills (LeLoup 4). English teachers in Puerto Rican schools could potentially employ these books and audio materials to integrally develop all communication skill areas (speaking, reading, writing and listening) while simultaneously engaging in gender education. It should also be noted that Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden have been adapted into motion pictures and plays, which offers prospective users of these texts additional resources to develop students’ English-language abilities.

The books selected for my analysis have remained popular amongst readers over the years and have reached millions of readers across the globe. According to The Dictionary of Literary Biography, The Secret Garden was voted “one of the nation’s 100-best loved novels” by the British Public as part of the BBC’s The Big Read in 2003” (100). Little Lord Fauntleroy became a best-seller in English and was soon translated into a dozen languages (Bixler 100). The novel, A Little Princess was made into a play in 1902 in London’s Avenue Theatre and the following year in New York, at the Criterion (McGills 5). I believe these texts are relevant because of their continued popularity amongst children not only then but also at the present time.

My second motivation for focusing on the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett has to do with who she was as an author. She was a nineteenth century novelist and

playwright. Her very first novel for children was Little Lord Fauntleroy, which was written at the suggestion of her son. The book earned her more than \$100,000 with a successful play following it. Hodgson Burnett's lawsuit against Seebohm for turning Little Lord Fauntleroy into a stage play without her permission paved the way for all authors who wished to protect their works from plagiarism. The Society of British Authors gave Burnett a banquet in her honor and a certificate of thanks for this action. After Little Lord Fauntleroy was published, five other novels followed. Burnett's impact and influence on the genre of children's literature has been established by Bixler, who argues that The Secret Garden, A Little Princess and Little Lord Fauntleroy paved the way for other children's classics of the era including, Lewis Carroll's, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Peter Pan and Cinderella (110). Another critic, Anne Thwaite, has noted that:

since Frances Hodgson Burnett's death, her three major children's books, Fauntleroy, A Little Princess, and The Secret Garden, have never been out of print. The Secret Garden has real children in a real story. It has steadily established itself as one of the few real classics of children's literature. Much of the appeal of her children's story A Little Princess is its period charm and Fauntleroy made an immediate impact on its first publication. It was one of the bestselling novels of its time in America, read by old and young alike. (1)

I believe this to be true about the book even today. Burnett won prestigious prizes for her works in both Europe and the United States and is remembered as one of the most respectable contemporary writers of her time (Lobo 3). She not only was a respected

children's writer, biographer and educator but also a well-known literary female who poured her own life experiences into her work. She wrote prolifically during the Victorian era, a time with "an underpaid workforce consisting of adults and children living in wretched poverty and where millions of workers lived in slums or in vacated old decaying upper class houses" (Fashion-Era 2). Burnett reflected and negotiated the gender struggles faced by women and women writers during the Victorian Era; her books reflect the tensions and contradictions of this period in their settings and plots. Victorian feminists complained about unequal distribution of power between men and women and the roles that they played in society. In the 1880's, literature was an outlet through which authors constructed a reality that sharply contrasted with the reality of their time.

One trend of feminist criticism of children's literature has been to reclaim and regard women authors who have been traditionally undervalued. In Girls, Boys, Books, Toys, Beverly Lyon Clark adds, "In children's literature there have been lost traditions-not just children's literature itself but also children's literature by women. Frances Hodgson Burnett falls under this category since most of the author's of 'classic nineteenth-century children's literature' are men" (3). For this reason, my research focuses on a female writer and examines how her writing defined femininity in the Victorian era and issues definitions of female gender roles for contemporary young readers. According to Judith Lorber, "most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and recreated out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life" (113). She also notes that "resistance and rebellion are the forces that manage to alter gender norms and push the limits of established gender roles" (115). My critical analysis of the female gender roles and stereotypes constructed

in Burnett's three novels discusses the extent to which she adopted, adapted and/or resisted "acceptable" notions of femininity in the Victorian era. Furthermore, my examination of how these texts are read and interpreted by a contemporary young reader shed light on the discussion about the changing character of gender roles and identities. I am convinced that notions of gender "acceptability" or "unacceptability" in literature reflect the social world but also alter it. As Lips contends, there is no single stereotype of femininity (or masculinity): "these constructs are specific to time and place and are continually being reworked and their boundaries renegotiated" (5).

In my analysis of gender representations in Frances Hodgson Burnett's children's novels I have chosen to focus specifically on the representation of femininity for three reasons. First, because the books under study are addressed primarily at a girl readership. Second, because "numerous studies have been conducted on children's books that reveal that males always outnumber females by a significant proportion and that males are most likely to be portrayed as positive, active and competent, while females are more likely to be portrayed as negative, passive, and incompetent" (Bender 185). Patty Cambell believes that "there is certain discrimination towards works whose content is female-based. Works whose content is male based is more often than not praised and not rejected as opposed to the female based content found in many works" (577). Aiming to address these omissions in the scholarship on children's literature, I have chosen to focus exclusively on the representation of girls. It is also my hope that my thesis will contribute to validating the study of girls and women in children's literature and offers educators a resource for gender re-education.

Objectives

My central objective is to engage in a gendered literary analysis of the representation of femininity (womanhood and girlhood) in three of the novels by Frances Hodgson Burnett: Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden. The first and most significant part of my study entails doing a critical reading of these texts, informed by gender theories, in order to examine the various ways in which the author proposes definitions of “appropriate” and “inappropriate” female roles, and the extent to which these definitions amount to stereotypical or non-stereotypical, conformist or non-conformist characterizations of women and girls.

The second part of my investigation consists of an exploratory case study of a young, contemporary Puerto Rican reader of these texts. My objective is not to confront my own scholarly-informed interpretation of the texts with the reader’s but to discuss the extent to which, as Lorber suggests, gender notions change over time and across cultural contexts. Furthermore, this exploratory exercise gives me some insights into how literature may be used for gender re-education in the Puerto Rican context.

Chapter II:

The Study of Gender Representation in Children's Literature

I argued in Chapter I that children's books play a part in defining gender roles and appropriate gender behavior for girls and boys. Furthermore, I stated that the objectives of my investigation are to analyze how femininity is represented in three children's novels by Frances Hodgson Burnett and to examine how these representations are interpreted and negotiated by a contemporary young female reader. My study is thus concerned with the relationship between *sex* and *gender* and how this relationship is mediated by the genre of children's literature. This Chapter is divided into two sections. In the Literature Review section I ground my work in the fields of gender studies and feminist literary and cultural criticism, and review prior studies of gender representations in the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett. The Methodology section presents my research questions and explains the process I followed to analyze the representations of women and girls in Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden.

Literature Review

Sex and Gender

Sex is not the same as *gender* but the terms are intricately related. This relationship has been studied by many disciplines, theorists and researchers who have attempted to define the limits of each concept. Psychologist and Women's Studies professor Hillary Lips explains that sex is associated with biology, and the biological distinction between *male* and *female* leads human beings to shape gender in the culture

that they live in. In other words, what you are labeled as at birth, whether boy or girl, is not developed into something gendered until it is functioning within a given society (1). This development takes place within the frame of “sex stereotypes,” defined by Lips as socially shared beliefs that certain qualities can be assigned to individuals based on their membership in the female or male half of the human race. Therefore, human beings often tend to divide and categorize males and females into discrete groups, constructing them as complete opposites in society (2). Anything that does not fall under the criteria that make males male and females female is considered to be wrong and unacceptable. When we tend to frown upon certain things that males or females do because we do not consider them appropriate for a male or a female we are stereotyping human beings into certain molds and structures provided by our culture and society (8). For Lips, then, gender is the term used for the expectations held by societies with respect to feminine and masculine roles. Gender stereotypes are based on certain personality traits and can be descriptive: describing what the typical woman and man are like; or prescriptive: saying what women and men should be like (6). Lips adds that gender stereotypes are multifaceted insofar as people hold variable sets of stereotypes about different “types” of males and females instead of affirming a single “typical” male and female (12).

Reflecting on the process through which gender is socially constructed, sociologist Judith Lorber notes that it is not a fixed category but an ever-evolving product of culture and society. She claims that gender is something everyone “does” without thinking about it or being conscious about its implications; it is such a naturalized part of everyday life that unless someone or something breaks our expectations, it tends to go unnoticed (113). She believes that gender operates at three levels: as a process, as a

stratification system and as a structure. Gender is a process because it creates “distinguishable social statuses for the assignments of rights and responsibilities” to women and men (115); it is a stratification system because in most cultural contexts gender ranks men above women (116); and it is a structure because it divides work in both domestic and public spheres and organizes sexual and emotional life for people according to their sex (117).

Gender communication scholar Julia Woods is also concerned with how sex and gender are imbricated in social and communicative practices. She notes that there is a tendency to think and speak about sex and gender in essentialist terms, as if there were a stable distinct essence that is “woman” and some stable, distinct essence that is “man” (Wood 180). When people essentialize, they have the tendency to reduce something or someone to certain characteristics assumed to be essential to its/his/her nature (Wood 18). In Wood’s view, gender is socially and psychologically constructed and can be altered more easily than sex. Her observation about the flexible and variable nature of gender opens a space for the critical consideration of gender representations in literature (as well as in other arts). It compels us to assess the ways in which nonstereotypical or nonessential gender images may contribute to transforming the stratification system and structure identified by Lorber.

All three authors agree that people often tend to equate sex and gender; the critical study of gender representations in literature is one way to increase gender awareness by demarcating the boundaries that separate nature from culture and exposing the constructed nature of gender stereotypes.

Gender Theories and Gender Representations

The scholarly study of gender representations gained prominence after the 1960s, when the Second Wave of the Feminist Movement brought attention to the far-reaching extent of sexism, defined by Blood, Tuttle and Lakey as “a complex mesh of practices, institutions, and ideas which have the overall effect of giving more power to men than to women” (134). Feminist activists, artists and scholars set out to understand and expose the multiple ways in which male superiority over women had been historically established. Over the past four decades a vast number of gender theories have been developed in efforts to explain not just women’s oppression and/or resistance but also how the very notions of “woman” and “men”, “female” and “male” are constructed and understood by different groups, disciplines, generations, etc.

In her review of theoretical approaches to gender development, Julia Wood groups these theories into three main schools of thought. First, biological theories of gender attempt to explain sexual difference, focusing on “how X and Y chromosomes and hormonal activities influence a range of individual qualities from body features to thinking and motor skills” (38). We may say then, that biological theories are more concerned with *sex* than with *gender* difference. Second, interpersonal theories of gender try to explain the process through which individuals become gendered, or become *girls*, *boys*, *women*, *men*, in the process of growing up. According to Wood, these theories emphasize the ways in which family relations and societal role models (parents, teachers, celebrities, etc.) teach children and young people “lessons about gender and provide the models of how to enact masculinity and femininity” (48). Third, cultural theories of gender focus on a broader range of dynamics and their effects on gender. These theories

do not deny the influence of biological and interpersonal factors in the construction of gender identities but contend that these are also shaped by the forces of culture. Cultural theories of gender assume that it is through communication that we learn who we are and what that means in the particular culture into which we have been born. Each society not only assigns roles to boys and girls, women and men but also as Lorber noted, defines their value and their place in the social hierarchies of power that characterize that society. Cultural theorists thus view gender as a “set of social expectations and values that are systematically taught to individuals” (55).

The field of feminist literary and cultural analysis, which informs my research, draws from and contributes to cultural theories of gender insofar as it grounds its analysis on the textual manifestations of sexism, examining the representations of gender in literary and other cultural texts and the social implications of these representations (Hall 199). In this literature the term representation is not used in its political sense (i.e., the representation, through institutional bodies or pressure groups, of the interests of political subjects) but in its mimetic sense. As Andrew, Edgar and Peter Sedgwick explain, this notion of representation refers to the practices and conventions that are used to present and circulate images of particular groups, that is to construct (female) identities (339).

According to Hall, feminist literary and cultural analysis is grounded on the recognition that:

Language, institutions, and social power structures have reflected patriarchal interests throughout much of history; this has had a profound impact on women’s ability to express themselves and the quality of their daily lives. Yet at the same time, women have resisted and subverted

patriarchal oppression in a variety of ways. This combination of patriarchal oppression and women's resistance to it is apparent in many literary and other cultural texts (202).

In efforts to understand this tension feminists resort to various gender theories. As Hall adds:

for traditional feminists, the most important way to resist patriarchy is to challenge laws and other institutional barriers to women's equality. For post-structuralist feminists, man/woman is a hierarchical binary that may be challenged through intense critical scrutiny. This may include an exploration of prelinguistic experiences of essential femininity or attention to gender as performance (201).

As theorist, Judith Butler puts it in her book Gender Trouble, "genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived...genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically incredible" (201). This quote implies that gender can vary for different scholars and that it is a highly interesting and intriguing topic.

Children's Literature and Gender

The significance of gender in children's literature has been established by a plurality of scholars who, like scholar Elizabeth Dutro, regard the world of children's books as a highly gendered one (376). Dutro notes how the mere design of the book raises gender questions: the cover of children's books will entice a boy or a girl based on

the color or the characters it contains, and this will be what girls and boys will use to decide whether the book is for “them” (376).

Manjari adds that, “gender bias exists in the content, language and illustration of a large number of children’s books. This bias may be seen in the extent to which gender is represented as the main character in children’s books and how that gender is depicted” (Manjari 20). The growing body of research into issues of gender representations in children’s literature may respond to the perceived importance of such representation for children’s social and psychological development (Wharton 1).

Sharyl Bender notes that gender development is a critical part of the earliest and most important learning experience of a young child. She adds that children’s books are especially useful indicators of societal norms, which include gender roles and expectations (2). Manjari agrees and argues that, “The manner in which genders are represented in children’s literature impacts children’s attitudes and perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior in society” (3). It seems, however, as if more often than not, the types of gender representations in children’s books are negative. As Sue Wharton notes:

there is a consensus among those studying the portrayal and construction of gender in books for children, that many such books are and have been sexist. Books categorized as sexist may represent more males than females, offer stereotypical images of males and females, and treat a masculine perspective on experience as the social norm (1).

For all the reasons mentioned it is important to analyze the content of children’s books from themes to characters to determine where gender is specifically found and how it is transmitted to the readers.

Gendered Analyses of Frances Hodgson Burnett's Children's Books

According to Marie Messenger Davies, Frances Hodgson Burnett's books are contemporary even if they were written during the Victorian period because they represent prevailing gender tensions (48). Because of their currency and relevance, a number of authors have paved the way for my study, engaging in analyses of gender representation in Burnett's books. I will proceed to summarize first the discussions regarding the representations of boy characters and then the arguments regarding girl and woman characters, which is the focus of my own study.

The Representations of Boys

Three scholars who have engaged in the analysis of gender representations in Frances Hodgson Burnett's works are Phyllis Bixler, Linda Parsons and Marie Messenger Davies. They have focused on the study of the following texts: Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden.

In Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett, Bixler analyzes all three texts. She turns her attention to the male protagonist of Little Lord Fauntleroy, Cedric, who has been characterized as a "sissy" by other critics such as Anne Thwaite. Bixler claims that Cedric earned this reputation partly because of the illustration on the cover of the book. She notes that other authors have contested this characterization reciting evidence to prove that Cedric is not really a "sissy." She challenges critics to also take into account the kind of tale in which the character figures to try to come to understand how his masculinity was constructed (197). In other words, Bixler highlights

the importance of analyzing characters in their context, which includes both the historical context and the literary form in which they are framed.

On the other hand, Linda Parsons centered her attention on The Secret Garden. In ‘Otherways’ into the Garden: Re-visioning the Feminine in the Secret Garden, she states that she “does not agree with the male appropriation and domination that seems to prevail within the book” (249). In other words, Parsons feels that there are far more male protagonists present within the story than female protagonists. There is only one female protagonist within the story, named Mary Lennox. She goes on to point out that Colin (one of the main male characters), has a more stereotypical characteristic of being female than of being male. Therefore, Parsons argues that The Secret Garden questions traditional notions of masculinity presenting boys who act as traditional girls would.

As we have seen, scholars who have looked at the representation of boys and masculinity in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s works arrive at different conclusions. They do not seem to agree on whether or not these male characters challenge or reproduce traditional notions of masculinity.

I will now proceed to review prior analysis of the representation of girls in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s literature.

The Representations of Girls and Women

For Phyllis Bixler, one way in which female characters are revealed in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s books is through social identity. For example, Bixler argues that in order to make Colin recuperate from his illness, the society of the garden including the female protagonist, Mary Lennox, had to come together in a ceremony of human effort

which is an expression of social identity (Bixler 202). This interpretation overlaps with the cited interpretations of male characters in the sense that the critic takes into account the setting and the web of social relations that contribute to shaping the characters.

Linda Parsons' study of the The Secret Garden grants that the setting of the garden is itself problematic for a feminist reading because it represents an enclosed, domestic space, and it is there where Mary (the female protagonist) learns traditional female values within it (247). Nonetheless, Parsons concludes that in the end Mary does not represent stereotypically feminine characteristics. She breaks away from that, Parsons claims, because "Mary advances much further than Colin along the path to self discovery, thereby enhancing her power" (257).

According to Mary Jeanette Moran, these books were written at a time when women were portrayed as negative, passive and incompetent while males were portrayed as positive, active and competent. "The Secret Garden and Little Princess seem to reinforce patriarchally sanctioned gender roles even though they also provide scope for feminine self-exploration and self-expression. There is an existence of nurturing feminine presence in The Secret Garden" (33).

Roderick McGills agrees and notes that the latter novel says, "A Little Princess has much to say about a female's strength, her imaginative ability, her ability to learn, her education, and her place within social order. McGills adds that in both A Little Princess and The Secret Garden, Burnett's position is conservative. "She champions the female as nurturer, a dispenser of largesse and a person willing to sacrifice for others, especially for men" (11).

As we have seen, prior analyses of the representation of gender (both femininity and masculinity) in Hodgson Burnett's work have been concerned with demonstrating whether the author endorsed or challenged traditional gender stereotypes in her characterization of male and female protagonists. The authors' conclusions vary but they all agree on the importance of examining the relationship between characterization in children's books and gender socialization. This is the motor of my own investigation as well, but unlike the reviewed authors, I have attempted to study and analyze gender representations looking not just at the protagonists of the stories but also at the larger community of women and girls that surround them. While I am particularly concerned with the representations of females my study has also considered male characters as constructions that explicitly or tacitly articulate notions of "appropriate" femininity in ways that merge the categories of sex and gender.

Methodology

My investigation seeks to contribute to the literature on the representation of gender roles, and femininity in particular, in children's books in a number of ways. First, my project legitimizes the scholarly study of gender stereotypes in children's literature as a way to contribute to cultural theories of gender that seek to understand and explain the various forces that shape gender identities. Second, my study focuses on a woman writer and on the representation of girls, giving voice to women, who have not yet received a fair share of attention in academic writing. Third, considering Elizabeth Dutro's contention that girls read with a gendered mindset (380), my study sets out to examine how a contemporary girl living in our society interprets the gendered messages of the

texts under study. By exploring one reader's engagement with and interpretation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's books I hope to offer some reflections on how these texts might be used for gender education in our contemporary context.

Research Questions

In conducting my research I was guided by two central research questions. Each branched out into a set of sub-questions that address some of the central concerns of feminist literary and cultural criticism cited above:

1. How do Frances Hodgson Burnett's books, Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden represent the female gender?
 - How does the author characterize girls and women in these novels?
 - What are the sources of support for girl and woman characters in these novels?
 - What are the venues for girl and woman self-fulfillment in these novels?
 - How does the author define "appropriate femininity" in these novels?
2. How does a contemporary young female reader interpret the gendered messages of these novels?
 - To what extent does she identify with the plots of the story?
 - To what extent does she identify with the female characters?
 - How does she interpret and respond to the notions of femininity represented in the texts?

Research Process

In my study I employed two qualitative methodologies: feminist literary analysis and a case study of literary interpretation.

The first and main component of my investigation draws from Hall's elaboration of the key principles in feminist textual criticism specifically:

“language institution and social power structures have reflected patriarchal interests throughout much of history; this has had a profound impact on women's ability to express themselves and the quality of their daily lives; for materialist feminist, resistance to patriarchy must include thorough questioning of the class system as well as the gender system; for post-structuralist feminists, man/woman is a hierarchical binary that may be challenged through intense critical scrutiny. This may include an exploration of prelinguistic experiences of essential femininity or attention to gender as ‘performance’” (Hall 202-08).

I employed these principles in the development of two instruments used to analyze the representation of female characters in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novels. The first one (see Appendix A), identifies the female characters in each novel, their roles and their traits. The second instrument (see Appendix B) builds on Research Question #1 in order to systematically examine Frances Hodgson Burnett's representations of femininity in the three novels under study.

For the case study on literary interpretation by a young female reader I developed a third instrument, which intended to examine how Frances Hodgson Burnett's female gender constructs are read and interpreted in a contemporary context (see Appendix C).

This component of the investigation examines how a Puerto Rican young woman reads and construes the novels written by Frances Hodgson Burnett in the Victorian Era. I conducted an in-depth interview with a sixteen year old bilingual Puerto Rican girl. I provided her with the novels and gave her a three-month time-frame to read them. After confirming that she had read them I conducted an in-depth interview to examine her responses to the representations of femininity issued in Frances Hodgson Burnett's Victorian novels.

The Literature Review and Methodology sections of this chapter identify the gender theories and analytical framework that inform my study of Burnett's female representations novels Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden. In the following chapter I will address each one of these novels individually in order to systematically address research question #1.

Chapter III:
The Representation of Femininity in
Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden

In this chapter I analyze the representations of femininity in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novels Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden. My analysis is based on a close examination of the texts using the instruments included in Appendix A and B in order to address my first research question. I begin with a summary of the plot of each of the novels. Then, I proceed to analyze each novel, carefully examining Burnett's descriptions of female characters, their sources of support, and their venues for self-fulfillment and drawing connections between the texts. I conclude with a discussion of the notions of "appropriate femininity" iterated by Burnett. Also, I make connections between the novels based on the analysis of each one individually. Even though my focus is on the female characters, at times it is necessary for me to discuss as well the roles that male characters play in defining female gender identity in the novels.

Plot Summaries

Plot Summary of Little Lord Fauntleroy

Little Lord Fauntleroy centers on the plight of a young boy named Cedric who, at the beginning of the novel, lives a quiet and humble existence in New York. Cedric lives with his American mother named Mrs. Errol, the widow of a British soldier who died in battle. One day Cedric discovers that he is to be sent to England to inherit a title and a fortune and live in a castle he didn't even know existed. This castle and fortune is owned

by his grandfather, the Earl, who is a powerful but bitter old man. Cedric moves to England with his mother to adopt his new identity as Little Lord Fauntleroy. In the castle Cedric meets different characters including his very selfish grandfather, the grandfather's advisor, Mr. Havisham and Vivian Herbert, a member of the upper class of English society. His initial reactions to his new relationships and context are positive, he seems to make friends with all the people he comes in contact with and is kind to everyone around him. The central conflict begins when another boy, named Fauntleroy, appears to claim that he is the rightful heir to the fortune currently in the hands of Cedric, or Little Lord Fauntleroy. Fauntleroy and his mother cause quite a stir in the castle and amongst the people who live in it. The Earl is outraged by this unexpected development and wants to make sure that Little Lord Fauntleroy is the one to inherit his fortune. The ending of the novel reveals the "truth" about Fauntleroy's origins seeing that his mother had been with another man after Bevis (the eldest of the Earl's sons) and that Fauntleroy's mother had lied about the age of the child and where he was born. This turn of events establishes Little Lord Fauntleroy's rights to the Earl's inheritance.

Plot Summary of A Little Princess

A Little Princess revolves around a group of upper class girls that live in a Select Seminary for Young Ladies located in England and run by a strict woman named Miss Minchin. She did not tolerate nonsense of any kind in her seminary and the girls feared and obeyed her. Sara is the main character of this novel and is sent to the seminary by her father who adores her and gives her everything her heart desires. Before having been sent to the seminary, Sara lived with her father, Captain Crewe, in India; her mother died

when Sara was born. Sara's father felt forced to take her to England because the climate in India was allegedly not good for children. Since Sara had no other children to play with and was often lonely and marked as different, Sara took to playing with a doll her father bought her named Emily. Emily was Sara's only companion besides her father when she was living with him. Sara treated Emily as if she were a real person: she talked to Emily and dressed her fine clothes. When Sara first entered the Select Seminary for Young Ladies her life was excellent. Her father was paying willing to pay good money for her to study and live there. Sara made plenty of friends, she entertained herself with the other girls by telling them stories, and she passed her time with her daily lessons such as French. Her interactions with the other girls in the seminary formed the basis for all of the major events of the plot. However, when Sara's father dies and she is left without money her situation in the seminary changes dramatically as Miss Minchin takes control of Sara. She makes Sara work in the seminary as if she were just another maid. Her father's money was taken by a mysterious man whose whereabouts were unknown. Sara's fate finally changes when Mr. Carrisford, a wealthy Indian man who lived right next to the seminary, found Sara and admitted to being the man who had Sara's fortune. He takes Sara in as one of his own children and Sara regains her membership in the upper class of British Society.

Plot Summary of The Secret Garden

The Secret Garden centers around the main female protagonist Mary Lennox, a ten year old girl who goes to live at Misselthwaite Manor in England, which is owned by her enigmatic uncle, Mr. Archibald Craven. Her parents and servants all died from the

cholera in India when Mary was only a young girl. She was found in her house all alone by a couple of investigators who handed her over to a caretaker named Mrs. Medlock, who was also the caretaker of Misselthwaite Manor. Upon arriving at Misselthwaite Manor, located in London, Mary goes through a character transformation as she interacts with the people living in the house. One of the first people that Mary meets is Martha, her servant, whom Mary later also becomes friends with. Mary discovers more and more about her surroundings such as the Yorkshire moors while she is at Misselthwaite Manor. Ben Weatherstaff attends the gardens where Mary often times goes to play. One day she discovers the secret garden of the title, it was special because it was here where Mr. Archibald Craven's wife died and he had it locked up and the key hidden because of this tragedy. Mary was not supposed to have discovered it because Mr. Craven did not want anyone to go in there after his wife died. Mary finds that she can only trust the secret of the garden to Dickon, another boy about her age who loved to play in the moors, and Colin, Mr. Craven's son, who is confined to one room at Misselthwaite Manor and who never leaves it for fear of dying. Throughout most of the novel Mr. Craven refuses to see her or his son because remind him of his dead wife and the family he once had. It is not until the end of the novel that Mary is able to finally meet her uncle and reveal her secret of the forgotten and prohibited garden to everyone.

Characterization of Females in the Novels

This section provides an insight on how the female characters of each of the novels are characterized by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The two major categories in which each of the female characters are analyzed are physical and psychological. The analysis is

done for both the major and minor female characters as well as the adult and children female characters of each of the novels.

I begin my study of the representation of females in Little Lord Fauntleroy with a discussion of the physical and psychological characteristics of the female characters in the novel. The major female characters in the novel are: Mrs. Errol, the protagonist's mother; Mary, a maid and friend of Cedric and his mother; and Lady Fauntleroy, the former wife of Earl's eldest son Bevis, who claims that her son is the one who should inherit the Earl's fortune. The minor female characters are: Mrs. Dibble, Mrs. Shorts, Mrs. Mellon and Dawson who are all housemaids and caretakers associated with the castle; Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Perkins who are village workers in England and whom Cedric interact with when he leaves the castle to see what he can do for the common people of England; Lady Constantia Lorrindaile who is the Earl's sister; and Miss Vivian Herbert, a wealthy woman whom Cedric becomes fascinated with because of her beauty and charm.

The physical characteristics of these characters are not evenly defined. Burnett uses adjectives such as pretty, thin, tall, pale, young, and beautiful for the female characters that she casts under a favorable light. On the other hand, the female characters she unfavorably regards in her novel are not described in physical terms.

Mrs. Errol, the female protagonist and Cedric's mother, is physically described in detail: "she looked in the simple black dress, fittingly closely to her slender figure, more like a young girl than the mother of a boy of seven. She had a pretty, sorrowful young face, and a very tender, innocent look in her large brown eyes- the sorrowful look that had never quite left her face since her husband had died" (23-24). This is a positive

description of Mrs. Errol because it is justifying and defending the reason why she is sad so that one could feel compassion for Mrs. Errol. The statement made that Mrs. Errol looks innocent reveals a character trait praised by both men and women in patriarchal societies that value female purity; it is thus a stereotypical ideological description of femininity.

On the other hand, Lady Fauntleroy, the antagonist, is only described psychologically and in negative terms:

...she had a passionate temper and a coarse, insolent manner, she was neither so clever nor so bold as she meant to be; seemed sometimes to be almost overwhelmed by the position in which she had placed herself...a person from the lower walks of life. She is uneducated and untrained in everything, and quite unused to meeting people like ourselves on any terms of equality. She does not know what to do (207-08).

The psychological characteristics of the female characters of Little Lord Fauntleroy establish a polar opposition. The female characters that are endowed with positive traits are “fond of Cedric,” the male protagonist of the novel, while the female characters with negative psychological traits show no signs of being “fond of Cedric.” Charming, humble, kind, motherly and friendly are only a few of the words used to describe Mrs. Errol, Cedric’s mother as well as the majority of the female characters that Cedric interacts with. Wicked, crazy, ill tempered, clumsy and ignorant are used to describe Lady Fauntleroy with whom Cedric has no contact with throughout the novel. I believe that in these characterizations Frances Hodgson Burnett praises innocence in women and regards this as an admirable quality.

On the other hand, the major female characters in the novel A Little Princess include both girls and adult women. The girls are: Sara Crewe, the protagonist; Lottie, Sara's seminary friend; Becky, the seminary maid; Ermengrade St. John, one of the girls who lives in the seminary and is a friend of Sara's; Lavinia Herbert, girl of the seminary that disliked Sara; and Jessie, Sara's friend from the seminary.

The major child female characters of the novel are Sara and Becky. The major adult female character of the novel is Miss Minchin, the owner of the seminary. Another major character of the novel is not an actual human person but is treated by Sara as such. Emily, is Sara Crewe's doll whom Sara talks to and dresses as if the doll formed an integral part of her circle of friends.

The minor female characters also vary by age and status. The young minor characters are mostly girls that lived and studied at the seminary including: Ermengrade St. John, Lavinia Herbert and Jessie. The adult minor characters are: Mariette, Sara's personal French maid; Miss Amelia, Miss Minchin's sister who does whatever Miss Minchin asks of her; and Mrs. Carmichael, who is the seminary's neighbor.

Physical descriptions within the novel reveal standards of female attractiveness not only for males but for females as well. The physical characteristics of these characters are divided into two categories: unattractive and attractive or positive and negative. Those well liked characters that were also psychologically favorable had the attractive or positive characteristics while the characters that were not well liked or psychologically unfavorable had unattractive or negative physical characteristics. I define as psychologically unfavorable all those characters within the novel that are regarded as crazy, mean and controlling.

This can be seen through the various descriptions Frances Hodgson Burnett gives the reader of her female characters. The physical characteristics of Sara are as follows: "...an odd-looking little girl...she was a slim, supple creature, rather tall for her age, and had an intense, attractive little face. Her hair was heavy and quite black and only curled at the tips; her eyes were greenish gray, it is true, but they were big, wonderful eyes with long, black lashes..." (8). These are the narrator's qualifications of Sara's "beauty." Sara mentions on various occasions in the novel that she does not think that she is an attractive little girl at all; in fact, she even goes as far as to say she is ugly. This is evident by Sara's reaction to the statement made by Miss Minchin when she commented on how a beautiful child Sara was. Sara has the following to say about Miss Minchin's compliment:

Why does she say I am a beautiful child? I am not a beautiful child at all. Colonel Grange's little girl, Isobel, is beautiful. She has dimples and rose-colored cheeks, and long hair the color of gold. I have short black hair and green eyes; besides which I am a thin child and not fair in the least. I am one of the ugliest children I have ever saw. I believe I am as ugly as she is in my way. Why did she say that for? (7-8).

Sara's reaction to Miss Minchin's comments about her physical traits reveals Sara's psychological traits. In the world of the novel, Sara appears as aware of conventional standards of beauty as other characters and is thus also critical of her looks in light of the narrator's descriptions.

Physical descriptions of Miss Minchin, on the other hand, contrast with those of Sara and are directly connected to psychological traits. Burnett describes the Seminary director in the following terms: "Tall and dull, and respectable and ugly. She had large,

cold, fishy eyes, and a large, cold, fishy smile” (7). With this physical description, one might get the sense that Miss Minchin is not a friendly good natured person. The most obvious judgment to pass on Miss Minchin is negative based on the small physical description of Miss Minchin which uses negative words such as *cold* and *fishy*.

The girls at the seminary also have their idea of what beautiful is. Lavinia, one of Sara’s schoolmates at the seminary says this about her mother and Sara: “My mamma says that even big feet can be made to look small if you have a clever shoe maker. I don’t think she (Sara) is pretty at all, her eyes have such a queer color” (19). Jessie agrees with Lavinia by saying: “She isn’t pretty as other pretty people are” (9). The girls of the seminary, much like Sara, establish these standards of beauty that come from their surrounding, more specifically from their social class. These standards are all the girls have ever been exposed to because of their high class in society and therefore believe that every girl and or women should follow these standards accordingly. Not one of them ever questions whether or not these standards are correct or should be appropriately applied to all girls and all women. As mentioned in the previous chapter, most female characters fall under stereotypical physical and psychological roles that usually have their basis in society. The female characters with these stereotypical roles are the most liked and often seem to be the heroines of the novel while those female characters who step out of the stereotypical female roles are disliked and labeled as antagonists. This is the case for both Sara and Miss Minchin, where Sara is the protagonist / heroine and Miss Minchin is the antagonist.

I will now proceed to identify and characterize the females in the novel The Secret Garden. The major female characters are: Mary Lennox, the protagonist; Mrs.

Medlock, the housekeeper at Misselthwaite Manor; and Martha, Mary's maid. The minor characters are: Mem Sahib (Mrs. Lennox) Mary's mother; Ayah, Mary's first caretaker in India; and Mrs. Crawford, a woman who took Mary in for a short period of time right after Mary became an orphan.

The physical characteristic of the only female child in the novel, who also happens to be the protagonist, are not, in conventional terms, "positive." Mary is described as: "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another" (Burnett 3). "poor little thin, sallow, ugly Mary- she almost looked pretty for a moment" (48). Later in the novel, when Mary was playing outside with a robin, Burnett adds in a pitiful tone: Mary steps out of the expected model of obedient, pretty, nice, girlhood, to be the complete opposite. She keeps secrets as children shouldn't. She doesn't look like most girls of her age. This is the first description of Mary at the beginning of the novel when her character is introduced: "She was the most disagreeable looking child ever seen (3). The other characters of the novel have similar negative reactions to how Mary looks and acts. Mrs. Medlock for example had this to say about Mary when she first met her: "My word! She's such a plain piece of goods! And we'd heard her mother was a beauty. She hasn't handed much of it down, has she, ma'am?" (14) The English clergyman's wife who took care of Mary when she became an orphan said this about Mary: "She is such a plain child, the children call her 'Mistress Mary Quite Contrary' and though it's naughty of them, one can't help understanding it" (13).

The characters voice established notions of beautiful femininity and express the importance of physical beauty for women and girls.

In her article “A Bit of Earth”: Sexuality and the Representation of Childhood in Text and Screen Versions of The Secret Garden Mary Messenger Davies believes that, “Frances Hodgson Burnett was aware of contemporary psychological and educational theories and incorporated them into her book” (49). Also, Mary Jeanette Moran states in her article, Nancy’s Ancestors: The Mystery of Imaginative Female Power in The Secret Garden and A Little Princess, that, “The Secret Garden has received the greater share of attention as a novel more psychologically complex than Burnett’s other books for girls” (34). It seems like Frances Hodgson Burnett wanted Mary’s physical characteristics to reflect her psychological characteristics. Burnett squarely correlated physical and psychological traits in the case of Mary. Her physical attractiveness at the beginning of the novel matches Mary’s personality traits which are described as: tyrannical, selfish, spoiled, rude and insulting. The interesting thing about Mary is that both her physical and her psychological state changed from the beginning of the novel to the end. The prior descriptions were used to describe Mary at the beginning of the novel but towards the end of the novel, these descriptions change to more positive ones both physically and psychologically. For example Ben Weatherstaff the gardener at Misselthwaite Manor has a brief conversation with Mary about how he has seen the physical change in Mary since she’s been living there and Mary responds in agreement to his comment:

Tha’s a bit fatter than tha’ was an’tha’s not quite so yellor. Tha’ looked like a young plucked crow when tha’ first came into this garden. Thinks I to myself I never set eyes on an uglier, sourer faced young’ un.’ Mary was

not vain and as she had never thought much of her looks she was not greatly disturbed. I know I'm fatter, she said. My stockings are getting tighter. They used to make wrinkles (96).

As we shall see, Mary's transformation in the novel is tied into her chances for self fulfillment.

On the other hand, the physical description of Mary's mother is positive but these attributes are not matched by her psychological characteristics. Mrs. Lennox is initially described by Burnett as: "...a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people" (3). Later in the novel, Burnett elaborates on Mrs. Lennox physical attributes: "She was such a tall, slim, pretty person and wore such lovely clothes. Her hair was like curly silk and had a delicate little nose which seemed to be disdainful things, and she had large laughing eyes. All her clothes were thin and floating, and Mary said they were 'full of lace'" (5). Despite the positive "physical" description, Mrs. Lennox was psychologically described as unfit for motherhood: she "had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please Mem Sahib (Mrs. Lennox) she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible" (3). In this characterization, Burnett seems to suggest that beauty and frivolity make women unfit as mothers.

Mrs. Medlock, the Manor's caretaker, is physically described in the following terms: "She was a stout woman, with very red cheeks and sharp black eyes. She wore a very purple dress, a black silk mantle with jet fringe on it and a black bonnet with purple velvet flowers which stuck up and trembled as she moved her head" (13). The adjectives used to describe her personality are: serious and authoritarian based on the fact that Mrs.

Medlock imposes restrictions on Mary's movement in Misselthwaite Manor and thus is in charge of and control's Mary's behavior. Burnett's message here is that women who posses the physical traits that Mrs. Medlock possess are mostly know as authoritarian and serious in her society. Sharp, rigid female looks are thus associated with authoritative, perhaps manly, behavior.

On the other hand, Burnett characterizes Martha as: "a round, rosy, good-natured-looking creature, but she had a sturdy way which made Mistress Mary wonder if she might not even slap back – if the person who slapped her was only a little girl" (27-28). The adjectives that best describe Martha's psychological characteristics are cheerful, stern, outspoken, kind, generous and humble. We see her psychological characteristics mostly shown through her behavior and interactions with Mary. Martha treats Mary more like a daughter than as someone she is supposed to serve and attend. Martha gave Mary a skipping rope one day as a present so that Mary could go outside and get some exercise with it and so Mary could entertain herself. Furthermore, Martha informs Mary of her surroundings and guides her to use her mind to think about what Martha tells her. Martha also teaches Mary lessons about the world outside the Manor: She encourages Mary to eat all her meals and not waste food because there are other less fortunate children who wish they could be as well fed as Mary. Burnett's implied message about femininity is that women should be motherly and should teach others the ways of life.

The last two minor adult characters mentioned earlier, Ayah and Mrs. Crawford, are not physically described by Burnett in the novel. The only psychological characteristics that are described for Ayah are that she was scared of Mary, submissive and oppressed. This is also seen through her interaction with Mary and Mary's family in

India. Mrs. Crawford's psychological traits are that she really was not very fond of Mary but she was a motherly person to her children. It says in the novel that Mrs. Crawford "tried to be kind to Mary, but Mary only turned her face away when Mrs. Crawford attempted to kiss her, and held herself stiffly when Mrs. Crawford patted her shoulder" (Burnett 12). This behavioral characteristic of Mrs. Crawford is motherly and a type of behavior characteristic that Frances Hodgson Burnett promotes for women, as we saw in her description of Sara's biological mother.

Women's Sources of Support

This section analyzes the types of support that the female characters sought and obtained in each of the novels. The various kinds of support came from the women themselves or, in some cases, also from the male characters of the novel.

The kinds of support that woman find in their daily lives in Little Lord Fauntleroy varied. Mrs. Errol found support in her relationship with her son Cedric, a male character. However, the patriarchal figure of the Earl managed to take her away from her motherly support and comfort claiming that it would be in the best interest of her son. Mrs. Errol faced patriarchal restrictions to secure the support she sought in her relationship with Cedric. She was forced to live away from him in a place called Court Lodge near the castle by the Earl and was forbidden to visit Cedric. The Earl also did not allow Mrs. Errol to have any contact with Cedric. These were the instructions that Mrs. Errol received when she brought Cedric to the castle: "The Earl is very fixed in his determination not to see you. Lord Fauntleroy will be permitted to visit you; the only stipulation is that you shall not visit him or enter the park gates" (25).

How the female characters interact with each other and find companionship and support is directly linked to the psychological characteristics that Frances Hodgson Burnett presents to the reader in Little Lord Fauntleroy. Mrs. Errol and all the other women find companionship and support amongst other men because the men are the ones who are supporting or taking care of them throughout the entire novel despite the fact that the male characters are also the ones who do not allow for the female characters to thrive. For example, Mrs. Errol is permitted to live in a house near the castle and has a maid and servants to attend to her only because she agreed to let the Earl take control of her son. The servants and Mrs. Errol seem to be under the influence of men in the story and their lives seem to revolve around what the men do and say. This leads into yet another interesting fact about the female characters of the novel and that is that they also partake in close relationships with the male characters. For example, Mrs. Errol has interactions with Mr. Havisham, the Earl's lawyer, who was the one who presented Mrs. Errol with the news about the restrictions placed upon her once she arrived at the castle. Upon seeing that Mrs. Errol had no reaction to the restrictions placed upon her, he had this to say about her, "she thinks very little of herself, she does not make any terms for herself" (27). This is an implication of how the men constantly underestimated the women in the novel yet still had to interact with them.

The reason for The Earl not liking Mrs. Errol is because she was an American who married the Earl's English son. The Earl disliked America and Americans and did not want his son to marry her. The Earl said the following about Mrs. Errol, "I don't care about the mother..." (67). This attitude and prejudice towards Americans coming from the Earl could be a symbolical trait or feature found within the English society of this

particular time period. The American Revolution was only a decade before this time period leading to the speculation that American- British relations were highly negative during this time because of the tension that this revolution caused for both the American and British population. The American woman comes to symbolize a threat to the entrenched British authorities. However, as will be discussed, the relationship that the female characters have with the male characters often times leads the female characters to articulate voices of rebellion which are followed by oppression.

Lady Fauntleroy, for instance, rebels against the Earl by lying about her marriage and her son. She acts in a violent way, is loud and gets the attention of all the characters with whom she interacts. Mr. Havisham came to the Earl with this news about Lady Fauntleroy and her son: “She said your son Bevis married her six years ago in London. She showed me her marriage certificate. They quarreled a year after the marriage, and he paid her to keep away from him. She has a son five years old. She is an American of the lower class – an ignorant person” (182-83). Mr. Havisham, who interacts with Lady Fauntleroy the most in the novel, not only denies her any kind of support but also narrowly defines her proper place in the society in which they find themselves. During his interviews with her, Mr. Havisham notes that though she had a passionate temper and a coarse, insolent manner, she was neither so clever or so bold as she meant to be; seemed sometimes to be almost overwhelmed by the position in which she had placed herself. It was as if she had not expected to meet with such opposition (207-08). Mr. Havisham goes on to say, “she is evidently a person from the lower walks of life. She is uneducated and untrained in everything, and quiet unused to meeting people like

ourselves on any terms of equality. She does not know what to do”(208). She is only a clumsy plotter after all (223).

When Lady Fauntleroy showed the least sign of rebellion this is how she was oppressed or restricted, “She was fairly raging with fury... ‘come, come, my young woman,’ said Mr. Havisham, This won’t do at all. If you don’t want to be locked up you really must behave yourself. We shall have no more trouble with her” (226). This quote, is yet another example and reference of the consequences that women faced who did not meet the appropriate feminine standards in society. Not only did men feel the right to threaten women when they felt women were out of place, men also felt that they themselves had the right to carry out a sort of punishment to those women stepping anywhere outside established patriarchal boundaries. I interpret this as a warning sign to all women who read the novel. Burnett wants women to know that if they step out of line, they will be punished by men and will remain unsupported by society at large.

The types of support that women encountered in A Little Princess were consistently among themselves. Here is an example of the companionship/friendship that Sara and Becky, the seminary maid, shared: “Becky had scarcely known what laughter was through all her poor, little hard driven life. Sara made her laugh, and laughed with her. Sara says that she loves Becky and hugs her when Becky gives Sara a birthday gift” (Burnett 80). This type of friendship between Sara, who was considered a child from the upper class of society, and Becky, who was of the lower class, was strictly prohibited by Miss Minchin, so they had to struggle to make their friendship last without anybody finding out about it. Sara thus challenges traditional notions of female identity in the Victorian age where women of the higher class would not even dream of mingling or

looking at women of the lower class of society let alone become friends with them. Also, Sara had an interesting companionship with her doll, which oddly enough wasn't even real. Sara becomes over protective of her doll when Miss Minchin tells her to give her doll up. Miss Minchin ordered Sara to give her doll to her since she claimed it was no longer Sara's doll to own and Sara replied by saying: "No, I will not put her down, ...she is all I have... my papa gave her to me" (Burnett 108). Miss Minchin replies to Sara: "And she is mine, not yours, everything you own is mine" (Burnett 109). Here is another example of how the friendship between Sara and her doll Emily became prohibited at one point by Miss Minchin again and it somehow had to be defended by the oppressed party. Both Sara's father and Emily appeal to patriarchal Victorian rights but Sara defends emotional connections between the two of them as well.

According to Roderick McGills:

Emily comforts Sara. Sara tells Miss Minchin that "Emily is to be my intimate friend. But Emily is more than a friend, more than a reminder of Captain Crewe (Sara's father) when he is away from his daughter; she is also a sign of Sara's desperate need for a companion. Sara has enjoyed a life of comfort in material things, but she has had no other children to play with. Her father has been her constant companion, and as he prepares to leave her, he can only think that she 'ought to play more with dolls' (13), not that she ought to play with girls her own age. The doll serves as a point of contact between Ermengrade and Sara, and between the younger children and Sara; the children regard Sara 'as a goddess and a queen' after they share tea with Sara and her doll (65).

The female characters of The Secret Garden not only find companionship and support among themselves but also in some of the male characters. Mary Lennox and Martha find companionship and support in each other. Their friendship is interesting because of the difference in their social classes. Martha buys Mary a present, a skipping rope, that Martha feels will be good for Mary's health. Here we see how Martha cares for Mary. Mary feels then that she needs to be nice to Martha and she has become rather fond of her. Mary changes towards Martha at this point by thanking her for the skipping rope and it is interesting to note that thanking people who did things for her was not something that Mary was used to doing. Mary also begins to show an interest in Martha's family life. This shows that Mary is drawn to Martha and would like to get to know her better.

Mary Lennox also finds companionship and support with Dickon, Ben Weatherstaff and Colin who are male characters. This is interesting because Burnett states that "Mary knew nothing about boys" (102). When Mary first meets Colin and Dickon, she makes them keep the garden a secret therefore establishing a bond with them. Also, she seems to want to help Colin leave the room where he spends all of his time. Colin in return likes Mary because she is a distraction from him thinking of being ill and dying. Mary visits Colin in his room everyday and talks to him. Mary Messenger Davies, however, believes that "Mary and Colin's relationship is unsentimental" (55). I think that the relationship that Mary and Colin have with each other can't help but be sentimental because there are a lot of feelings involved. Colin, for example, throws a tantrum in chapter seventeen of the novel and Mary is called in to sooth and calm him down. Mary at first seemed to be harsh and uncompassionate towards Colin saying things like, "I hate you!" (Burnett 184) but after Colin stops crying and throwing a fit, Mary and

him are nice to each other. She whispers to Colin, “Would you like me to sing you that song I learned from my Ayah?” (Burnett 188). In response, Colin “put out his hand a little towards Mary, and I am glad to say that, her won tantrum having passed, she was softened to and met him half-way with her hand, so that it was a sort of making up” (Burnett 187). Mary thus managed to make Colin feel better and reestablish their bond at least in part because she was willing to adopt a motherly role towards him.

Dickon was another source of support for Mary. She liked him because he worked with her outdoors in the moors and explored them with her. He could play music and was a very active child. “It sounded as if he liked her and was not the least afraid she would not like him...” (Burnett 102). Dickon possessed qualities and characteristics that Mary was drawn to and since they both had things in common despite the fact that they were not of the same sex. This indicates that Frances Hodgson Burnett feels that traits and interests that embody both males and females or in this case, boys and girls, include physical work and play and a sense of adventure and a curiosity for the unknown. All these traits can be said to be possessed by both Dickon and Mary.

Ben Weatherstaff is Mary’s direct connection to the garden as he works out in the moors and knows a lot about the property itself. Burnett states that, “he did not object to her as strongly as he had at first. Perhaps he was secretly rather flattered by her evident desire for his elderly company” (95). The bond between Mary and Ben Weatherstaff is established by Mary’s curiosity with all things pertaining to the moors and the gardens themselves. Ben is Mary’s valid source of information when it comes to her desire for knowledge about her surroundings both from the past and present time since Ben has been a worker at the moors for a long time. Mary does not hesitate to ask Ben questions

about the moor and the garden and he seems to be pleased that he can provide her with answers she is looking for. Therefore, it seems that in general terms, Burnett is in favor of women having sources of support between themselves and amongst men.

Ending viewpoints to this section reflect on how women's sources of support compared across the three novels. For one thing, Burnett's representations of the three novels are not consistent across each one of them. For example, this is evident as she presents some female characters finding support amongst each other in one novel but presents women's sources of support to be the male characters in another novel.

Women's Venues for Self-Fulfillment

In this section, I focus on the female character's chances for self-fulfillment as represented in the three novels under consideration. In some instances, the female characters do not thrive, yet in others they do and they are able to find self-fulfillment as girls and women in Victorian society.

Frances Hodgson Burnett does not allow her female character to thrive in Little Lord Fauntleroy. This is mostly because of the fact that the male characters in the novel oppress the female character and place limitations and restrictions on them, impeding their self-fulfillment.

Mrs. Errol lived by the patriarchal rules of the Earl since the moment he invited Cedric to live at the castle in England. As a result, Mrs. Errol does not find self fulfillment. She stays the same from the beginning to the end of the novel. She is a follower who lets people manipulate her, and does what she is told to do by the male authorities around her. When Mr. Havisham (the lawyer of the Earl's family in England)

told her how she was to live back in England, she did not rebel or challenge her living conditions because she assumed that was what her husband would have expected of her and what she should do as Cedric's mother. Mr. Havisham made it clear to her that she was not to visit Cedric at the castle but that Cedric could go and visit her if he wished to. Also, he made it very clear to her that the Earl was not fond of her and wished never to have any contact with her. Mr. Havisham notes her subservient position in the following remark about Mrs. Errol: "She thinks very little of herself; she does not make any terms for herself" (27).

The female servants were also restricted to serving Little Lord Fauntleroy and assisting him at all times. All of his servants were females, which leads me to posit that for Burnett domestic work and poor women were bound to accept their subservient position in the power relations of the castle.

Another way to examine how Burnett envisioned women's chances for self-fulfillment is by analyzing the fate of characters who did not conform to the norms set for them in the microcosm of the castle. The fate of the nonconformist female characters is more drastic and negative than the fate of the nonconformist male characters in the novel. The nonconformist males seem to prevail while the nonconformist females do not. For example, Lady Fauntleroy tries her hardest to make everyone believe that her son is entitled to the Earl's estate and fortune and in the end she is regarded as a lying, crazy woman and pariah for the rest of the community.

On the other hand, in A Little Princess Sara and her friend Becky undergo a transformation and attain some level of self-fulfillment. This is an interesting combination that Burnett chose to have as self-fulfilling female characters because they

are from different social classes. Sara is from the upper class of society while Becky is of the lower class.

Sara's character seems to find self-fulfillment in the school with the other girls by being a motherly figure to them and when she was told she could no longer be a part of the pupils at the school because she had lost her inheritance, Sara found temporary self fulfillment by working as one of the maids in the school. This can be argued, however, since Sara's work as a maid was a forced means of survival for her rather than an option that Sara would have chosen for herself. Sara tells Miss Minchin: "Can I work? If I can work, it will not matter so much, what can I do?" (Burnett 110) With this statement, Sara presents that she wants to be productive and working at the seminary even after she has lost her upper class status. The rest of the girls in the seminary seem to fade into the background of Sara's existence and stay the same throughout the entire novel. However, Sara regaining her father's fortune at the end of the novel proved as the ultimate self fulfilling deed for Sara because this is what she desired more than anything.

The fate of some of the female characters differ even if they found no self fulfillment. Becky, for example, steps out of her role as a maid and becomes one of the girls in the seminary to a certain extent. Since Becky decided to become friends with Sara in secret and without the permission or consult of Miss Minchin, Becky was able to time and time again take part in some of the activities of storytelling done by Sara for the other girls within the seminary. With this, Becky has found self-fulfillment in the sense that she got to do things that other maids her age were not permitted to do during that time period.

Sara steps out of the role assigned to her by becoming a motherly figure to the girls in the seminary and towards the end of the novel, she steps out of her assigned

“princess” role to become a maid of the seminary because of the loss of her inheritance. Sara tells Becky: “Oh Becky, I told you we were just the same, only two little girls, just two little girls. You see how true it is. There’s no difference now, I am not a princess anymore” (Burnett 115). One particular paragraph describes how dramatic of a change it was for Sara when she lost her inheritance:

One of the most curious things in her new existence was her changed position among the pupils. Instead of being a small royal personage among them, she no longer seemed to be one of their number at all. She was kept so constantly at work that she scarcely ever had an opportunity of speaking to any of them, and she could not avoid seeing that Miss Minchin preferred that she should live a life apart from that of the occupants of the schoolroom. (Burnett 120)

Miss Minchin had the following statement to express in reference to Sara and her new found status: “I will not have her forming intimacies and talking to the other children. Girls like a grievance, and if she begins to tell romantic stories about herself, she will become an ill used heroine, and parents will be given a wrong impression. It is better that she should live a separate life, one suited for her circumstances. I am giving her a home, and that is more than she has any right to expect from me” (Burnett 120-21).

Sara and Becky thrive because their characters change completely from the beginning of the story to the end. They seem to move up in social class and this happens twice for Sara who was upper class, went down to lower class and then back up to upper class. For Becky this “moving up” in social classes is only done within her own imagination only because on various occasions she gets to interact with Sara who is of

the upper class. Not only do they thrive in social classes but internally they grow as characters. In my interpretation, Burnett feels that women should be able to move up and down on the social scale within their society but realistically know that this can not be easily accomplished. With this said, it is important to take into account that this was not the case with Fauntleroy's mother in the preceding novel. She did not move up or down on the social scale.

In the case of The Secret Garden, Mary Lennox was the only female character who went through a significant transformation and attained self-fulfillment but only to a certain extent. All of the other female characters do not find self-fulfillment because of the male characters in the novel and the limitations or restrictions that they place upon them. In what follows I will analyze how Mary Lennox (the female main character) found self-fulfillment, why the other female characters didn't and what roles the male characters of the novel played in these dynamics.

Mary Lennox went through the most extreme transformation and self-fulfillment process of any of the female characters found in the novel. In the last chapter of The Secret Garden the following excerpt supports the thought that Mary went through a transformation and eventually did find self-fulfillment. The following quote best describes how Mary changed throughout the novel:

So long as Mistress Mary's mind was full of disagreeable thoughts about her dislikes and sour opinions of people and her determination not to be pleased by or interested in anything, she was a yellow-faced, sickly, bored and wretched child. Circumstances, however, were very kind to her, though she was not at all aware of it. They began to push her about for her

own good. When her mind gratefully filled itself with robins, and moorland cottages crowded with children, with queer crabbed old gardeners and common little Yorkshire housemaids, with spring time and with secret gardens coming alive day by day, and also with a moor boy and his “creatures,” there was no room left for the disagreeable thoughts which affected her life and her digestion and made her yellow and tired. (294)

Mary’s self-fulfillment process, however, is described by Burnett as fortuitous, giving the impression that Mary did not become an agent of her own self fulfillment because it was all due to the “circumstances” that were placed before her. It is as if she was not aware of her own venues for self fulfillment and one has to question if she would have been aware of her chances, would she have gone through the self fulfillment process on her own.

As I said, only Mary Lennox thrives in the text, all other female characters tend to stay the same or fade away into the background to be forgotten. Mary Lennox’s character thrived because of the evolution or change that she kept making throughout the text both physically and psychologically not because she put it in her mind to do so. I then conclude that even though Burnett made Mary seem as if she were a character that possessed characteristics not common to her gender and therefore made her different from other females of the novel, statements like the one made above about Mary’s self fulfillment show a type of representation found in women of the Victorian Era, not being able to completely free herself from stereotypical roles.

Mary Jeanette Moran believes that Mary missed out in the ending chapter because:

despite the positive and creative opportunities for Mary in the early parts of the novel, the conclusion silences her quite effectively. There the focus of the narration moves from Mary to Colin and Archibald Craven, and she does not speak a word in the entire final chapter. This disappointing development indicates the extremely vexed nature of the ‘mystery’ of feminine authority... (42).

I agree with Moran but not only do I believe this of Mary at the end of the novel but I know this to be true about Mary throughout the entire novel. I feel that Mary misses out on speaking her voice and doing what she would like to do because of the oppressions and restrictions placed upon her.

In her article, “A Bit of Earth’: Sexuality and the Representation of Childhood in Text and Screen Versions of The Secret Garden, Mary Messenger Davies believes that The Secret Garden is intended to be a book about, among other things, a theory of child development- a development based on organic growth and biological identification of children with other living, reproducing organisms. This identification is also with social communities...” (49). This interpretation can be looked at as a kind of self-fulfillment for Mary seeing how she developed as a child because of her surroundings.

The restrictions that are placed on the female characters within the novel are done so by the male characters and these limitations do not allow some of the female characters to find self-fulfillment completely. Mrs. Medlock and Martha are always following orders and doing what they are told as to not upset Mr.Craven, the man that

establishes patriarchal rule over them. Mr. Pitcher, who is Mr. Craven's right hand, imposed his authoritarian figure over Mrs. Medlock when he sternly says to her: "You are to take Mary to her room. Mr. Craven doesn't want to see her" (Burnett 24). Her reaction to his demand is very submissive because she does not question or hesitate in doing just what Mr. Pitcher has asked her to do. In fact she makes the comment, "Very well Mr. Pitcher...so long as I know what's expected of me, I can manage" (Burnett 24). Mr. Pitcher feels he has to remind Mrs. Medlock of what is expected of her and he responds, "What's expected of you Mrs. Medlock is that you make sure he is not disturbed and that he doesn't see what he doesn't want to see" (Burnett 24). This obvious suppression done by a male character to a female character was exactly what was common for men to do to women in the Victorian Era, the time period in which Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote.

Mary Lennox's restrictions are imposed on her by Mrs. Medlock. This type of restriction is still very authoritarian like because Mrs. Medlock is an adult while Mary is only a child at the beginning of the novel. Mary is restricted physically to only being allowed to visit or go to certain areas, rooms or corridors of Misselthwaite Manor by orders of Mr. Craven, Mrs. Medlock says this to Mary the very first day Mary arrives at Misselthwaite Manor: "This room and the next are where you'll live- and you must keep to them. Don't you forget that!" (Burnett 25) "You'll be told what rooms you can go into and what rooms you're to keep out of. There's gardens enough. But when you're in the house don't go wandering and poking about. Mr. Craven won't have it" (Burnett 19). Soon after Mary spends sometime living at Misselthwaite Manor, Mrs. Medlock again has to remind Mary of the rules by saying, "You stay where you're told to stay or you

will find yourself locked up.” (Burnett 61) Also, the secret garden located on the outside premises of Misselwaite Manor was closed off to everyone including Mary.

As I have demonstrated, in the end Mary transgresses the limits imposed on her and finds self-fulfillment. However, Burnett describes her accomplishments as the result of “circumstances” that were placed before her. Mary, thus, learns a lesson but is not cast as the force behind her own transformation.

Definitions of “Appropriate Femininity”

The last section of this chapter discusses the definitions of “appropriate femininity” found in each of the novels. Each text gives its own definitions based on the female characters and the roles they play. I analyze these definitions in order to determine whether or not they are based on stereotypical female representations.

Most female characters in Little Lord Fauntleroy fall under stereotypical roles that usually have their basis in society. Stereotypical female roles particular to the time in which Frances Hodgson Burnett wrote were being submissive, quiet and obedient, and to not cause any sort of trouble for men. The female characters with these stereotypical roles are the most liked and often seem to be the heroines of the novel while those female characters who step out of the stereotypical female roles are disliked and labeled as antagonists.

As I mentioned above, Lady Fauntleroy steps out of the roles assigned to women because she is the complete opposite of being docile, kind, honest and understanding. She seems to be the one to cause problems in the novel and she does not settle for things that she does not feel she deserves. As a result, she becomes an outcast who is punished and

sent away. The following quote is only one example of how Lady Fauntleroy was treated by one of the male protagonist characters of the novel, “Within a few days after she had seen Mr. Havisham, the woman who claimed to be Lady Fauntleroy presented herself at the Castle, and brought her child with her. She was sent away. The Earl would not see her” (Burnett 207). The fate of Lady Fauntleroy expresses Burnett’s notions of appropriate femininity claiming that this character’s behavior is unacceptable because she is a female and that this female characters fate is only one of many consequences that women can face for not acting “appropriately.”

On the other hand, Miss Vivian Herbert seems to embody the ideal woman in the novel: men idolize her for both her physical and behavioral traits. The following quote gives voice to how Miss Vivian Herbert was regarded by the authoritative voice of Mr. Havisham: “beautiful Miss Vivian Herbert, with the loveliest white gown and lace parasol, and a circle of gentlemen to take care of her” (233). Here, a reference to her “white gown” is symbolically making reference to her virginal pure status. Also, the fact that she has a circle of gentlemen to take care of her is yet another indication of a measure of appropriate female roles brought about by society.

Appropriate femininity in the novel was also defined in reference to women’s emotions. At one point Mr. Havisham’s reaction issued a statement about it: “He felt a little uneasy lest she should begin to cry or make a scene, as he knew some women would have done. It embarrassed and annoyed him to see women cry” (26). Legitimate male characters in the novel such as the Earl and Mr. Havisham valued docile, obedient women as opposed to the rebellious, loud, expressive ones.

It seems to me as if Frances Hodgson Burnett is promoting in this novel a model of “appropriate femininity” that is based on women’s subordination to men. I believe this because when there is any sign of rebellion coming from a woman in the novel, she is immediately put down and sent away by a man, leading me to interpret that Burnett insists on making her female characters adapt to the patriarchal norms of their time.

Lady Fauntleroy is the only female character that transgresses familial and societal norms in the novel. As a result, she is chastised, as the following quote suggests:

Almost everybody in England who read the newspapers at all knew the romantic story of what had happened at Dorincourt. . . .there was this strange marriage of Bevis, the dead Lord Fauntleroy, and the strange wife, of whom no one knew anything, suddenly appearing with her son, and saying that he was the real Lord Fauntleroy and must have his rights. All these things were talked about and written about, and caused a tremendous sensation. (202)

Another example that casts Lady Fauntleroy in a negative light with the male characters of the novel is this time stated by the Earl who was forced to say: “you say you are my eldest son’s wife. If that is true, and if the proof you offer is too much for us, the law is on your side. If your claims are proved you will be provided for” (208). This male reaction towards a female says much about Burnett’s notions of appropriate femininity. In this instance, it seems as though Burnett were suggesting that a woman’s legitimacy in society is contingent upon her ability to prove a legitimate marital and motherly status.

In light of the preceding discussion I would argue that in Little Lord Fauntleroy Frances Hodgson Burnett endorses the stereotypical roles that the female characters play

when it comes to appropriate femininity. She believes, much like the society that she lived in, that women were actually supposed to possess those “ladylike” qualities as mentioned above especially when dealing with men.

In A Little Princess, virtuous motherhood also emerges as a central aspect of “appropriate” femininity. In addition femininity is also predicated on the ability to exercise one’s imagination in a fantastical aspect.

Sara Crewe’s motherly quality was viewed as an appropriate role for women. Frances Hodgson Burnett describes Sara in this manner: “She was a motherly young person, and when people fell down and scraped their knees, she ran and helped them up and patted them, or found in her pocket a bonbon or some other article of soothing nature” (43).

“...Sara was an adopted mother” (51). Roderick McGills notes that “Sara not only served as a “mother” to Lottie, but she also offered bread to the populace. Sara impresses others with her generous nature” (41). Mary Janette Moran seems to agree with McGills when she says, “Victorian notions of parenting dictated that boys should assert themselves while girls should remain passive” (36). Therefore for Sara to not have a mother of her own, having only been raised by her father and then having the disgrace of her father dying only to allow her to become a mother figure to others is a greatly ironic triumph.

“Although these children seem to be disadvantaged, the lack of parental guidance actually sets the stage for opportunities of autonomy” (Moran 36). On a concluding note, Moran adds:

by accepting a maternal source of power, Sara risks giving up all other opportunities for self expression in favour of the limited sphere of a Victorian mother. Although Sara finds new ways of mothering that

exercise her own talents of personality traits...the danger in her occupation of this role is that she will shrink to fit its limits, that she will nurture not because she does it particularly well but because it is the only possibility open to her. Carol Dyhouse reminds us that women who find power in a maternal function succeed according to public opinion because 'the maternal role was (and still is) the most publicly acceptable kind of role for women in authority. And yet, this role is a very limited one'. As Dyhouse notes, motherhood does offer girls certain autonomy, and yet their role still confines them, since it is bounded by an ideology of 'proper' behaviour for women (38-41).

I agree with both McGills and Moran in that Sara was much like a mother to all of her female companions of the seminary. Frances Hodgson Burnett purposefully made Sara's character to possess these motherly like qualities because she was in favor of motherhood for women, being a mother herself. I think that Burnett promotes this stereotypical model for appropriate femininity because otherwise she would not have written for her main character or heroine, Sara, to embrace the role of motherhood as well as she did.

Another key quality that Sara has in A Little Princess that is regarded as an appropriate female role throughout the novel is her ability to use her imagination for storytelling. It is regarded as an appropriate female role because her imagination has a fantastical element that is not grounded on reality nor is it conducive to altering her and other's real-life situations. Roderick McGills states that "to find a feminist message in this novel, as Bixler has implicitly argued, is to look to the power of the nurturing spirit.

One aspect of this nurturing spirit... is Sara's storytelling gift" (42). A good example of how Sara uses her storytelling to help others is when she interferes in Lottie's tantrum at the seminary. "Sara employs storytelling as a means of reaching the spoiled, self pitying Lottie" (Moran 40). "In A Little Princess magic becomes a metaphor for the ability to see with the imagination, for example, Sara's ability to see her attic room as a dungeon or banquet hall in a romantic story and to see herself as a princess in a fairy tale" (Bixler 194). "A Little Princess emphasizes the power of imagination and optimism to transform a dreary world into a wonderful one" (McGills 14).

I believe that Sara's creative imagination is a stereotypical female trait because it is used in a fantastical way. An example of one of Sara's fantastical stories is about a "princess who was loved by a prince merman and who went to live with him in shining caves under the sea." (55) This quote is stereotypically feminine because the female Sara is referring to is not just any female but a princess (an upper class female) who eagerly leaves behind her comfort and habitat to live with a prince merman, not the other way around. Sara did not say that the prince merman was going to go and live with the princess, nor did she imagine a plausible, realistic scenario for female happiness. Sara's storytelling and creative abilities are thus constructed as stereotypical female tales that fantasize about profound and eternal connections with males in unrealistic settings. It is important to note that even though these traits of storytelling and imagination could be interpreted as "negative" female qualities, they are still enacted by contemporary women and girls. For example, most women often imagine or fantasize about their wedding day. If a man were to do this he would be considered weird or odd in the society we live in today. Therefore, fantasy is associated with femininity while reality is associated with

masculinity. There is thus a line of continuity from the fantasies of women in the Victorian era (i.e., Hodgson Burnett's protagonists) and women and girls of the contemporary period.

For Roderick McGills and his book: A Little Princess: Gender and Empire, the representations of the female characters of this novel can best be summarized with the following quote:

For much of the Victorian period, the good woman was an "angel": passive, pale, even sickly, but most of all domestic. In short, the connection with the princesses of so many fairy tales is direct. The princess is an ideal devoutly to be wished: obedient, agreeable, dutiful; she exhibits inner beauty. At least ostensibly, Burnett, like such other writers as George McDonald, was anxious to show that a "princess" was any little girl who exhibited these virtues. For a female to act with sensitivity and grace, politeness and generosity is to act like a princess- in fact, to be a princess. (16-17)

This "princess" representation for young girls can be dangerous because girls can grow up to believe that that they should be princesses and should act and look like princess and anything other than that is unacceptable and should not be tolerated in society. This type of view point is simply unrealistic.

While motherhood and a creative (fantastic) imagination seemed to be the parameters of appropriate femininity in A Little Princess, beauty and certain types of feminine behavior appear to be the central female standard in The Secret Garden. This is clear in the way the characters reject anything they don't consider pretty or beautiful and

in the way they express their feelings about beauty. They also have set standards for how women typically should behave and how they should not.

The following quotes show the way the characters reacted to Mary's behavior drawing from the fact that their beliefs were that she was not acting appropriately for a girl. When Mary was living under the custody of the English clergyman and his family, one of his sons has a conversation with Mary which clearly establishes his belief on what is one of the characteristics that girls don't possess, passing a judgment on all girls based on Mary's response or reaction to his comment. The clergyman's son, Basil, tells Mary: "You are going to your uncle. His name is Archibald Craven." "I don't know anything about him," snapped Mary. "I know you don't," Basil answered "You don't know anything, girls never do" (Burnett 12). The conclusion behind the little boys comment about Mary not knowing anything about her uncle is simply justifiable in his eyes because Mary is a girl, therefore, all girls don't know anything. A girl not knowing anything is an appropriate characteristic of femininity according to the male character Basil and I believe it is a stereotypical trait for women.

Another example of how the female characters are supposed to act in the novel and which are reflected by the mindset that the characters possess about appropriate behaviors of femininity is when Martha asks Mary about typical things a female should know how to do. Martha's first impression of Mary is seen in what she says with this reaction: "That's not the way for a young lady to talk" (Burnett 29). Also, she asks Mary the following questions upon meeting her, which implies that Mary should be able to do the things Martha asks if she can do, still Mary answers with a "no." Martha asks Mary, "Can tha' knit? ...Can tha' sew?" (Burnett 55). Martha's assumptions that Mary should

know how to knit and sew because she is a girl, are stereotypical female factors having their basis in the Victorian Era.

For males and females in the novel, women had to look and act a certain way in order for them to be considered feminine or to be able to carry the title of girl or women. In the case of Mary, the way that she was supposed to look and act like was a big focus on the part of both the male and female characters of the novel. For example, the following descriptions are taken directly from the novel and were presented in the “female character’s physical descriptions” section of this chapter. The following quotes are spoken by the female characters of the novel. Mrs. Medlock had this to say about Mary when she first met her: “My word! She’s such a plain piece of goods! And we’d heard her mother was a beauty. She hasn’t handed much of it down, has she, ma’am?” (14) The English clergyman’s wife who took care of Mary when she became an orphan said this about Mary: “She is such a plain child, the children call her ‘Miss Mary Quite Contrary’ and though it’s naughty of them, one can’t help understanding it” (13).

With these stereotypical appropriations of femininity found in The Secret Garden I believe that Frances Hodgson Burnett agreed with the terms and characteristics established by the male and female characters about women. The male and female characters of the novel believe that appropriate behavior’s associated with femininity are “not knowing anything” and being able to do things such as knit or sew which are, typical female domestic activities. The appropriate standards of femininity having to do with physical beauty are not being “plain looking.” In other words, girls should dress elaborately with lace and frocks and should be vibrant and full of life. All of which Mary does not possess therefore she does not identify with the appropriate standards of beauty

and behavior that the characters of the novel feel she should identify with. All of these appropriations of femininity could be found in Frances Hodgson Burnett's society and therefore the novel The Secret Garden reflects that in those specific terms.

On the other hand, the fact that Frances Hodgson Burnett chose to have a female protagonist that broke way from societal expectations of female appearance and beauty might be an indication of her own transgression of Victorian female codes. Frances Hodgson Burnett might be negotiating gender expectations where she agrees in that females should possess certain stereotypical female characteristics drawing from her time period, but there are also certain characteristics associated with females that she does not agree with. Her gender expectations seem to agree with her society in some aspects but not in all aspects and reflecting back on the novel The Secret Garden and the main character, Mary, Frances Hodgson Burnett seems to disagree with her society in that beauty is and should be a stereotypical female trait.

There are many patterns that emerged from analyzing all three of the novels in terms of the female characteristics, female sources of support, female chances of self-fulfillment and definitions of appropriate femininity. In terms of physical and psychological female traits, the novels didn't uniformly connect the two unattractive characteristics. Beauty was generally defined as pretty, lovely, lacy clothes, curly silky hair large laughing eyes, and beautiful skin. Beauty was regarded as a positive attribute even though there was a protagonist in one of these novels that was considered ugly, which is a negative attribute. The psychological characteristics that are valued for girls are obedient, cheerful, kind, generous and humble. The psychological characteristics that are valued for women are very similar to the psychological characteristics that are valued

for girls but also adding the characteristic of being motherly. Usually, it was found that if the female character had a positive physical trait, she would lack a positive psychological trait and vice versa.

When it came to the female characters finding sources of support in the novels, they either found it amongst themselves, amongst male characters or amongst both female and male characters. The self-fulfillment aspect of the female characters in each of the novels also reveals some sort of pattern. The female characters rarely found self-fulfillment; when they did, it was because of circumstances placed upon them and not because they were singularly capable of altering their realities. The analysis of the definition of appropriate femininity within the novels is geared towards the conclusion that the novels define appropriate femininity within the female characters by their behavior or the roles that they play as females. They are either described as stereotypical or they either act in a stereotypical way. I believe that Burnett defines appropriate femininity using the women of her society as models who possess all of the qualities stated above. I think Burnett herself possessed some of the qualities of appropriate femininity such as being motherly towards her son but most of the other qualities she herself broke away from. For example, just being a woman writer of the Victorian Era and working in this type of profession was something that was not very common for females to do and therefore not seen as positive behavior in women. Burnett defines appropriate femininity based on what her society believed it to be for both men and women alike.

The following chapter will present a case study on literary interpretation by a bilingual sixteen year old Puerto Rican girl using the instrument included in Appendix C

of this thesis in order to address my second research question: how does a contemporary young female reader interpret the gendered messages of these novels.

Chapter IV:

Case Study on Literary Interpretation

For this case study I interviewed a fifteen year old bilingual Puerto Rican girl who read all three of Frances Hodgson Burnett's novels: Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden. I used the instrument in Appendix C of this thesis and asked her questions pertaining to her interpretation of the novels. The following sections of this chapter address three main questions: to what extent does the subject identify with the plots of the story? to what extent does she identify with the female characters; and how does she interpret and respond to the notions of femininity represented in the texts?

Identification with the Plots of the Stories

I first asked the subject about the plot of each of the novels for the purpose of getting a sense of her recollection and understanding of the stories.

The subject of my case study had a very general idea of what the plot of each of the stories was about. When asked about the plot of Little Lord Fauntleroy, the subject answered, "the story is about a little boy who discovered he is the heir of a great fortune and traveled to England to stay with his bad tempered grandfather." The subject didn't address that the little boy traveled with his mother and that they moved from America.

When asked the same question about the plot of A Little Princess, the subject answered, "this story is about a little orphaned girl in England, that lost all her money and had to work to live." The subject didn't emphasize that the little orphaned girl reclaims her money at the end of the story.

When I asked about the plot of The Secret Garden was about the subject answered, “it’s about an orphaned girl who lived with her uncle and discovered a secret garden. The orphaned girl brings back the happiness to her uncle and cousin.” With this general answer, the subject again didn’t address to acknowledge other important factors, like the fact that the orphaned child never sees her uncle until the end of the story and how exactly does she go about bringing back happiness to her uncle and cousin.

Taking the answers given by the subject of the plots of the different stories, I believe that what the subject interpreted as being the plot of each of the novels was in fact the most important part of each novel to her. She only mentioned the protagonists of each of the novels in her interpretation of the plot which suggests that it is their protagonism, and not their gender what made them memorable to her.

Identification with the Female Characters

In this section I will analyze how the subject of my case study identified herself with the female characters of each of the novels in terms of their behavior and physical attributes. The purpose of this section is to determine whether or not the subject identifies with the female characters on the basis of her society despite the differences in temporal and spatial locations between them and the reader. This is important because gender representations have their origin within a given society, in this case Victorian society, but can also be relevant or pertinent in other temporal and spatial context. The characters under analysis include both the minor and major female characters as well as the adult and child female characters of the novels. The major questions that address each of the novels and which I asked my subject were: Would you have acted like any one of the

female characters mentioned in the situations she confronted? Who do you like in this novel? Who do you dislike? Why?

For the novel Little Lord Fauntleroy, the subject said that she would have acted like most of the female characters found in the novel. One exception was Mrs. Dibble because the subject “doesn’t talk about other people’s lives” unlike this female character. She also found that she would not have acted like Miss Vivian Herbert’s character because “she had to be cared for and she liked to be adored and indulged by men.” The subject added that she did not possess any of those qualities. Finally, the subject said she would not act like Lady Fauntleroy because “she didn’t really love her son and she was a liar;” again characteristics found in this female character that the subject feels she does not possess. The subject is echoing the moral judgments of other characters in the novel in stating this opposition. The female characters of the novel that the subject did identify with possessed feminine qualities such as being loving and caring which are also stereotypical. My subject did question traditions female traits however by stating that she would not talk about other people’s lives and that she would not like to be cared for or adored and indulged by men. In this situation, the subject is moving towards a sense of independence drawn from the latter statement and towards the sense that females being considered gossips are not something she feels is a “positive” attribute in females.

There are two characters in the novel that the subject clearly liked or disliked. The subject liked Cedric because he was “brave and beautiful.” Being brave is a stereotypical masculine trait not a stereotypical feminine trait but the opposite can be said about the adjective: beautiful. Therefore, the subject seems to admire the fact that Cedric was brave which her society today would agree is something to admire in men and boys but she

breaks from society in saying that she likes that Cedric is beautiful, a stereotypical feminine trait. The subject appreciates courage and beauty in a boy which is a rare combination of traits for males in her society but I think she also appreciates these traits in females as well which will be seen in the analysis of the other novels further in this chapter. Again, with these types of appreciations that the subject possess for these characters especially for the male character mentioned above, I can also see her breaking away from her society to a certain extent. The subject disliked the Earl of Dorincourt because he was “evil and indifferent to the suffering of others.” The subject liked the protagonist not only for his psychological characteristic but also for his physical characteristic. This is interesting because the subject choose a male character as the one she liked the most and she also used an adjective to describe the character that is more often times used to describe girls or women.

For the novel A Little Princess, the subject said she would have acted like the following female characters of the novel: Sara Crewe (protagonist), Becky (the maid) and Mrs. Carmichael (neighbor of the seminary). When asked why she would have acted like the female characters mentioned above, the subject stated “positive” adjectives that made up the personality of each of these female characters. The subject said that Sara Crewe was: “brave and positive;” Becky was “caring and comprehensive” and Mrs. Carmichael “cared about the poor orphan Sara and was nice to her.” It is interesting to note that my subject admired bravery as one of the qualities that Sara (a female character) possessed because that is the same quality that my subject admired about Cedric (a male character) in Little Lord Fauntleroy. This brings me to the conclusion that this contemporary female

reader appreciates courage and bravery and is eager to see these as traits that could characterize both males and females.

When asked why she didn't identify with the other female characters found in the novel, the subject had this to say:

I would not identify with the character of Lottie Legh because she is only four years old and I am older than her. Miss Minchin was an evil character so I would not act like her. Emily was just a doll and I would not act like a doll. I would not act like Ermengrade St. John because she was dumb. I would also not act like Lavinia Herbert because she was jealous of Sara, and Miss Amelia didn't think for herself so that is why I would not act like any of those female characters.

With these descriptions and the subject's interpretation of them, it seems as if the subject liked certain female characters because they possessed "positive" attributes that are also acceptable in her own society but this is certainly not always the case. She did not identify with the female characters that possessed "negative" qualities within their personality and this is expressed in the adjectives she used to describe them such as: jealous, dumb, evil and most importantly the description of "not thinking for herself" as in the case of Miss Amelia. This suggests that the subject does not deem these characteristics to be appropriate forms of femininity, not even the act of "thinking for herself", something that in the Victorian society would have definitely been a stereotypical feminine quality. The subject appreciates female courage and women's ability to think independently in ways that question traditional female gender stereotypes.

Her answers to whether or not she liked or disliked certain female characters and why connect with the first question about whether or not the subject would act like any of the female characters. The subject only mentioned one character that she liked, Sara (the protagonist), and one character she did not like, Miss Minchin (the antagonist.) When asked why, the subject said, “I liked Sara because she was honest and spontaneous. I disliked Miss Minchin because she was evil.” With this an analysis can be made about the fact that the subject picked both the protagonist and the antagonist to like and dislike respectively and she also picked positive and negative traits as the reason behind why she liked or disliked the character in question. This implies that the subject focused on the overall morale of the text to decide whether or not she liked or disliked them. Therefore, she adopts the values of the text and there is no questioning or critical thinking on her part regarding the (female) polar oppositions established in the text.

For the novel The Secret Garden, the same question was posed to find out if the subject identified with the female characters of that novel. The subject noted she would have acted like the following female characters in their situations: Mary Lennox (protagonist), Martha (maid) and Ayah (caretaker). Her explanation as to why she would have acted like the female characters mentioned above rested on their “positive” qualities as well. For Mary, the subject said, “she does some nice things, like fixing the garden for example which is also nice for her uncle.” This meaning the subject felt that Mary was caring and industrious and she identified with these traits. For the female character of Martha, the subject said, “I would act like Martha because she likes Mary.” Finally, for the female character of the Ayah, the subject said, “she cared about Mary when nobody

cared about her.” Here, we see again how the subject believes that being caring is an appropriate form of femininity.

When asked why she did not identify with the other female characters present in The Secret Garden, the subject said, “I would not act like Mary’s mother, Mrs. Lennox, because she was a bad mother and she neglected Mary. Mrs. Medlock’s character was not understanding with Mary and that is the reason why I can not identify with her.” The only character the subject refused to comment about was Mrs. Crawford because she felt this character was not present enough in the novel for her to have formed an opinion about the character.

It seems as if the subject identified with the first set of female characters because of the “good” qualities they had, for example being caring towards others, being industrious, etc. The subject chose not to focus on the “negative” qualities that Mary had at the beginning of the novel but rather on the positive qualities she possessed during the middle and end of the novel. Being nice and caring to others seem to be found within the subject’s own appropriations of femininity; that might have been why she identified with these female characters. The female characters the subject could not identify with were those that possessed “negative” female attributes unacceptable in the subject’s society. These negative attributes include, “being non-motherly like and not being understanding.”

The subject found that she liked only one character in this novel. The character that the subject liked the most was the character of Martha “because she was a good natured person and she was very humble.” She didn’t like the main protagonist, Mary, because she was “spoiled.” The subject also did not like Mr. Archibald Craven “due to

his unhappiness.” The answers the subject gave as to what characters she liked or disliked were based on the characters’ psychological characteristics. For Mary in particular, the subject is critical about the fact that Mary was “spoiled” and she did not like this. So this can also be an indication that in the society that the subject lives in today, children who are spoiled are not accepted by the majority of people. The subject’s gender transgressions refer to the fact that a young girl today seems to be rejecting girl’s princess’s attitude. The subject rejects girl’s princess’s attitude by saying that she likes that a girl is industrious and that she believes that a girl should not be spoiled. My subject seems to be questioning upper class gender roles as well which she demonstrates by liking the character of Martha the maid because she was a humble and caring person. This means the subject associates humility with the lower class. The subject believed that Martha possessed “positive” psychological characteristics and that Mary and Mr. Craven did not and that was what influenced her decision. I believe that the subject felt this way because to her, Martha was a character who was the most content being in her lower class status, whereas Mary and Mr. Craven were consumed with their upper class status and therefore could not be content or make others content.

Responses to Notions of Femininity

The final section of this chapter focuses on how the subject of my case study responded to notions of femininity represented in each of the texts. Also, I will consider whether the subject finds the notions of femininity to be stereotypical and will compare her views with the interpretation I offered in the previous chapter. The question that was

asked to the subject was: “Do you believe each of the female characters behaved appropriately? Why or why not?”

The responses that the subject gave to the notions of femininity in Little Lord Fauntleroy were mostly of a positive nature stating that most of the female characters were loving, caring and thankful and possessed qualities that had to do with their profession such as “the servant behaved properly because she served.” The only female character that the subject did not feel behaved appropriately was Miss Vivian Herbert which the subject said was “not an independent person, therefore she did not behave appropriately.” Here the subject is advocating for female independence. This is non-stereotypical while in the prior comments she seems to endorse typical female traits but not in all of the cases as mentioned previously in this chapter.

The responses that the subject gave to notions of femininity within A Little Princess were very much conformist and conventional. She felt that most of the child female characters of the seminary behaved appropriately because of their age. The subject made it clear, however, that even though she liked Sara, she did not believe that Sara acted appropriately for her age and she also felt that Sara’s character was an unrealistic one. When I asked her to elaborate on that comment, the subject simply said, “a girl Sara’s age just wouldn’t act in real life the way that Sara acted in the novel.”

The subject also felt that most of the adult female characters of the novel did not act appropriately towards the female children of the novel. For example, the female character of Miss Minchin was “too evil with the children.” The only adult female character that the subject felt acted appropriately was Mrs. Carmichael because she was “a caring person.”

With these responses the subject's view of femininity goes hand in the hand with the views that patriarchal society has of women and children. The subject bases her responses on how old each of the female characters of the novel are and whether or not their behavior is appropriate for their age. She defines as "appropriate" behavior for young girls as being caring, kind, loving and brave. For adult women she defines appropriate behavior as caring for children or being motherly towards them. However, the subject does value female courage and independence and disregards female characters who are spoiled as mentioned previously in this chapter.

In The Secret Garden, the responses to the notions of femininity found within the female characters of the novel came from the same question asked at the beginning of this section to the subject: to what extent does she interpret and respond to the notions of femininity represented in the texts? Her response to all of the female characters of the novel was the same except for the characters of Mrs. Lennox and Mrs. Medlock. The subject felt that all of the characters behaved appropriately in the situation that each one found themselves in. For the female character of Mrs. Lennox, however, the subject stated that "she was a bad mother and didn't care about Mary when she was supposed to." With the character of Mrs. Medlock, the subject said, "she was too indifferent to what happened to Mary or to Mary's feelings." The responses that the subject gave for this novel on notions of femininity seem to go along with the responses that the subject gave for the novel A Little Princess on the same concept which was that the child and adult female characters of the novel had to act according to their age. I believe the subject draws these conclusions based on the society in which she lives. I believe that she might

think that she needs to act according to her age as well and if she were to act in any other way that would not be acceptable.

The subject finds the notions of femininity of all the novels to be the same ones that her Puerto Rican society places upon females according to the answers she gave about the questions for each female character. The subject herself, however, is not aware of the stereotypical roles present within the female characters of the novel and seldom does she attempt to break away from them when she is asked if she can identify with any of the female characters. The subject can mostly identify with the female characters that possess stereotypical feminine qualities except on a few occasions where she takes a critical standpoint. Therefore she represents the part of her society that believes that possessing stereotypical feminine qualities is acceptable for all women but there is also a small part of her that also believes that a few stereotypical masculine roles can be appropriate for females. This has a lot to do with the specific society that she is living in. There are parts of her society today that encourage women to work and to be brave. Her society has shown a small break in the pattern of stereotypical feminine traits found in females but it is only a small evolution from the Victorian era. If she were living in a different society at a different time, her responses might be different to those she is currently giving. For example, if she were living in the Victorian Era, most of her society would not encourage her to work or to be brave.

The answers the contemporary young reader gave for each of the questions suggest much about the endurance of Victorian notions of appropriate femininity. The answers she gave restated the fact that gender representations are found within a given society and a connection with characters that possess stereotypical characteristics is

possible amongst people of her time. Also, her interpretation gives me the sense that she is unaware of the stereotypical female characteristics found within the female characters of the novel and that she is unaware of the gender representations that have their base in her society. In other words, the subject does not, for the most part, adopt a critical stance towards the female representations present in Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden. In the cases where the subject does adopt a critical stance is where a small change can be seen from the Victorian era to the current era. My subject is negotiating gender stereotypes and is perhaps moving beyond them. My questions set a certain set of gender expectations which at times contrast with those of my subject. This concept leads me to believe that gender education is important within a given society.

For a society to move towards developing an importance and a respect for gender education the society first needs to be well aware of the gender representations that its books contain to be able to use them as a tool in teaching the much needed gender education to children. Frances Hodgson Burnett's books however are not representative of Puerto Rican society. This exploratory case study suggests that the texts mentioned above may be used for gender education by having them be an integral part of any school curriculum. The evidence for this being that my subject was at times breaking from societal norm and at times she was not. Often times, schools only provide one textbook for each grade level and a novel is seldom assigned to the student for him or her to read and interpret. These novels relate to children and can and will capture their attention. I believe this to be true because they captured the attention of my subject and she found that she related to them in more ways than one.

Chapter V:

Conclusions

This chapter discusses the results of my study in light of the literature review presented in Chapter II, which considered gender theories and feminist literary and cultural criticism, as well as prior studies of gender representations in the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the limitations of my study and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

For the first section of my literature review titled *sex and gender*, I defined the difference between the two terms and gave the point of view of theorists Hillary Lips, Julia Wood and Judith Lorber regarding the construction and dissemination of sex stereotypes. All of these scholars seem to agree that sex, gender and sex stereotypes are all different terms but are all connected in societal practices. Within the books of Frances Hodgson Burnett, we see sex and gender dynamics playing out in the development of the various characters of the novels. The fact that the three novels under analysis in this thesis are primarily aimed at girls and that gender representations can be found within the characteristics of the female characters directly links this author and her books to this study.

Gender representations make up for the second section of my literature review and are the basis of my analysis in this thesis. Gender representations, according to scholars Blood, Tuttle and Lakey are forms of having males predominate over females in

society. Within the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett, gender representations were found in the novels Little Lord Fauntleroy, A Little Princess and The Secret Garden that did show time and time again male characters predominating over female characters whether by establishing patriarchal rule over them, by placing restrictions on them or by stereotyping them. One of the theoretical approaches that Julia Wood uses to explain gender development has to do with the ways in which family relations and societal role models teach children and young people “lessons about gender and provide the models of how to enact masculinity and femininity” (48). As my findings suggest, Frances Hodgson Burnett does teach children certain lessons about gender in her three novels. She teaches them how women and girls should behave and act in a given situation and she teaches them, indirectly, stereotypical roles that the female characters possess and how society is the basis for this type of characterization. In this way, she teaches girls that this is the norm and that this is the way in which they should behave.

Frances Hodgson Burnett was influenced by her Victorian society when creating her male and female characters that is why much of the gender representations of her time were presented in her books. I believe it is important to note that “society” and the individual are different in the sense that a person living in society has the capacity to think and act differently but society has a certain influence on how that individual thinks. It is not possible, however, for children to live and act outside of society but it is possible to create an awareness of gender representations and stereotypes within them. These books were written for children and function as a tool and a guide for the children who read them. If gender representations in the books are a mere reflection of the society in

which Frances Hodgson Burnett lived, I can only assume that she wants children to read about these gender representations and follow them accordingly.

According to scholar Sue Wharton, “the bias in children’s books may be seen to the extent to which gender is represented as the main character of the books and how that gender is depicted”(1). The main characters of both A Little Princess and The Secret Garden are females. These females are not seen in a favorable light as far as gender is concerned because of the stereotypical roles they play. Even in Little Lord Fauntleroy, I think that the gender belief systems present are stereotypical of male characters because they are dominant and suppressive towards women. In all of the novels, all the female characters fall into both physical and psychological characteristics that are stereotypical and this is shown through their behavior and dialogue with the male characters. Therefore the gender messages that Frances Hodgson Burnett presents in the three novels are limited. Phyllis Bixler feels that it is important to analyze characters in their historical and literary context and if this is the case, then the characters of Frances Hodgson Burnett might be seen as replicas of the historical and literary context in which she wrote.

The scholars mentioned in my literature review had different viewpoints when it came to the representations of masculinity and femininity that the characters of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s novels possessed. Some felt that the representation of masculinity and femininity were obscured while others thought the characters fully represented masculinity and femininity as they should. I believe, however, that Frances Hodgson Burnett represented masculinity and femininity in terms of stereotypes through her characters. Therefore, I feel she endorsed gender stereotypes in her characterization of

male and female characters. What Frances Hodgson Burnett deems as “appropriate” femininity is in fact a stereotypical concept.

Implications

The goal of teachers and educators is not to “feed” children the way they should act and think, but rather to give them the tools and guide for them to think for themselves and make their own decisions; a very difficult and challenging task that should be taken on even at the earliest stages of a child’s development. As Sharyl Bender states, “gender development is a critical part of the earliest and most important learning experience of a young child” (2). This local concern has not been established before. I believe that teachers in Puerto Rico first need to be well instructed on how to detect gender representations and gender stereotypes within textbooks in order to serve as a guide of gender education to their students. I feel that a good way to get students involved in the textbook to prepare them to critically analyze the book is to get them to start by analyzing the specific male and female characters found in the book and how they interact with each other and their surroundings, much like my study analyzed the female characters in the novels of Frances Hodgson Burnett.

This statement goes with my interpretation on how the works of Frances Hodgson Burnett affect children when involving the issue of gender. In the Puerto Rican context I believe that Frances Hodgson Burnett’s books would be relevant for students to analyze and interpret today because there is currently no set novel for any of the academic levels in the public school curriculum. The books that were analyzed in this thesis prove that society has evolved only slightly throughout time where gender education is concerned

and the books are a reflection of that small evolutionary process given that they are written in the Victorian era. The textbook that is provided for students at all grade levels in public schools in Puerto Rico is limited in terms of content and needs of the student. I believe this is true because for the most part the stories that students have to read in the classroom are short and the lessons that most teachers expect students to undergo with these short stories is to go as far as to find vocabulary words and identify characters not to establish critical thinking. The student needs to be encouraged to read longer texts such as novels and needs to be challenged in the area of critical thinking by his or her teacher. It is evident that this has to be emphasized in schools because the case study conducted in this analysis reports on how a young contemporary Puerto Rican girl endorsed certain stereotypical and non-stereotypical feminine traits when reading and interpreting the three novels by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Furthermore, the current texts under study in my thesis should and could be adapted to the Puerto Rican scholarly context by finding parts of the textbooks that Puerto Rican students could actually relate to and by adapting them to the grade level in question. This is justified because the books under study in this thesis were given to a subject which the books were appropriate for in terms of age and relation. The rewards and benefits that this analysis brings to light overall is a general awareness that there are books out there targeting children that present messages to them whether indirectly or directly of how females and males should look like and act like, implying that they themselves should look and act like the characters of these novels according to their sex. The fact that a contemporary young reader generally endorses the female stereotypes presented in the texts written over a century ago offers a contradictory tale about the endurance of patriarchal notions of femininity.

This is very troubling to me because this indicates to me that our particular society still has a long way to go in terms of gender education. Gender stereotypes will last for a long time seeing how these books were written so long ago and even in the present time, these gender stereotypes are having their effect on contemporary children today. The possible effect that gender stereotypes have on contemporary young readers today brings to light a critical perspective on their part because of the fact that my subject answered that being “brave” was a stereotypical feminine quality and being non-independent was also not a stereotypical feminine quality. She appreciates the courage of both male and female characters. The fact that my subject did take some sort of critical standpoint when she answered a few of the questions about the behavior of the female characters of the novels does fill me with hope that our society is slowly but surely moving towards some sort of change involving gender representations and stereotypes through out time.

Limitations

The first limitation to my study was that I only focused on three of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s novels. These novels are neither widely available nor are they required readings in the schools of Puerto Rico despite the fact that they were and are still popular amongst children and adults. In addition, these novels paved the way for contemporary children’s literature classics that are widely read and or viewed in films by children, as I also referenced in my introductory chapter of this thesis.

Another limitation of my study which was in part to analyze how a young Puerto Rican female interpreted the texts was that only one subject gave her interpretation of the

books when more subjects could have been used and that these three novels of Frances Hodgson Burnett are currently not a part of any school curriculum in Puerto Rico. I believe that they should be a part of the school curriculum because they are useful tools in guiding students towards critical thinking and eventually a full awareness of gender education and its importance. This is justified because as stated in my literature review, there have been studies and analyses done on gender education and its effectiveness. If my analysis would have had some sort of connection with a study done with using these books in a middle school classroom in Puerto Rico for example, the female students of these schools could become more aware of the stereotypical gender roles that are found within them.

Only focusing on femininity in the three novels of Frances Hodgson Burnett is a limitation because the concept of masculinity was not analyzed in depth. Only the feminist point of view was documented leaving the masculine point of view in the dark.

Suggestions for Further Research

My research could be further developed by comparing this author with another children's book writers of the Victorian Era and see how their gender representations correlate. Since gender is an ever evolving process, this would be an interesting study to undertake focusing on whether or not significant changes have been made between authors throughout time.

For future research this thesis could be developed further by adding more subjects to the case study thereby getting more interpretations from bilingual Puerto Rican young girls who could read the three novels of this study. As was clearly established at the

beginning of my thesis, in the literature review, most scholars believe that gender education is and should always be an important part of a child's educational development. Therefore, establishing some sort of gender education within the Puerto Rican schools and these students would be of great benefit and success to the Puerto Rican society. Furthermore, this study can be further developed to include children from other cultural contexts to see if the effectiveness of the study can be expanded to places even outside of the cultural parameters of Puerto Rico and its students.

I believe that my analysis of gender representations in Frances Hodgson Burnett's books can be expanded to include a full research on masculinity. I feel that analyzing on this standpoint will bring to light other important concepts behind gender representations and gender stereotypes that could help further develop gender education in general. Also, I understand that adding an extensive research on the public school teaching materials (specifically the literature) used in Puerto Rico might be a helpful step in the process of acquiring gender education to be an integral part of the school curriculum on the island.

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Appendix A:

Instrument Used to Analyze the Representation of Female Characters

1. What are the restrictions that female characters face? How do they respond to these restrictions?
2. Which female characters live by patriarchal rules? Do they find self-fulfillment? How so? Where?
3. Are there explicit female voices of rebellion?
4. Which female characters step out of the roles assigned to them? What is their fate? What message, theme or morale is communicated through that fate?
5. How does the fate of nonconformist female characters differ from the fate of nonconformist male characters?
6. Do female characters exercise power in any way? Where (social circles, daily family life, female friendships, etc.)?
7. Where and how do female characters find companionship and support? (In relationships with other females? In relationships with males? In the family? In institutions?)
8. Do characters disagree on what appropriate women's roles are? How is this disagreement expressed (explicitly through dialogue? implicitly in their behavior? Etc)?
9. Which female characters thrive and which fail to thrive? What are the reasons for their different fate?
10. What characterizations and narrator comments help reveal the gender belief systems present in the texts?

Appendix B: Analytical Tables of Female Characters

Novel: Little Lord Fauntleroy

Female character	Minor/ Major	Age Group	Relationships: community/social group	Physical traits	Psychological traits
Mrs. Errol	Major	adult	Isolated from society; mother of Cedric.	Pretty, pale, thin and sorrowful.	Humble, kind, motherly; “voice like a silver bell.”
Mary	Major	adult	Old servant: cook, housemaid, nurse to Mrs. Errol and Cedric.	N/A	Very proud and fond of Cedric.
Bridget	Minor	adult	Sister of Mary, has 12 children and a husband out of work.	N/A	Seems to be a good mother, is fond of Cedric.
Mrs. Dibble	Minor	adult	Sister of one of the upper housemaids (Jane) in the castle; knew everything about the castle.	N/A	Fond of Cedric.
Jane Shorts	Minor	adult	Upper housemaid; intimate with Thomas.	N/A	Fond of Cedric.
Miss Smiff	Minor	adult	Village dressmaker	N/A	Fond of Cedric.
Miss Perkins	Minor	adult	The milliner	N/A	Fond of Cedric.
Mrs. Jennifer	Minor	adult	N/A	N/A	Fond of Cedric.
Miss Mellon	Minor	adult	Housekeeper of Cedric at the castle.	Pleased handsome old face	Fond of Cedric.
Dawson	Minor	adult	Caretaker of Cedric at the castle; husband was a soldier and was killed; son was a sailor.	Comfortable, middle aged woman with a kind good humored face.	Friend of Cedric.
Lady Constantia Lorrindaile	Minor	adult	Sister to the Earl; advises the Earl in personal matters especially family.	N/A	Fond of Cedric, straight forward, nice, friendly
Miss Vivian Herbert	Minor	adult	Men take care of her; seems to be wealthy in society and admired by all.	Tall, young, proud little head, very soft hair, large eyes the color of purple pansies, lips and cheeks the color of a rose, beautiful white dress, pearls around her throat.	Charming, is fond of Cedric and is known as a follower.
Lady Fauntleroy	Major	adult	Wife of Bevis (son of the Earl). Not liked at all by the community.	N/A	Wicked, crazy, ill tempered, a clumsy plotter, unintelligent, lower class, ignorant.

Novel: A Little Princess

Female character	Minor/ Major	Age Group	Relationships: community/social group	Physical traits	Psychological traits
Sara Crewe	Major	Child	Main character, girl in seminary. A member of the high class in society at the beginning of the novel, a member of the lower class in the middle of the novel and then a member of the high class again at the end of the novel.	Odd looking little girl, slim supple creature, tall for her age, intense attractive little face. Hair: heavy and quite black and only curled at the tips; eyes were a big wonderful greenish gray.	Motherly, story teller, strong, independent and kind.
Lottie Legh	Major	Child; 4 yrs. Old	Girl in seminary (youngest); member of the high class.	Pretty, little, curly haired, round eyes.	Playful, very childlike and dependent.
Becky	Major	Child	maid in seminary; lower class.	Dingy, smudgy face, wide open eyes,	Eager, timid, afraid, kind
Miss Minchin	Major	Adult	Owner of seminary for young ladies. High class.	Large, cold fishy eyes and a large cold fishy smile, tall, dark, respectable and ugly.	A woman who likes to domineer and feel her power. Mean and self interested. She thinks money and power is the most important thing. Grows to dislike Sara.
Emily (doll)	Minor	Child	Belongs to Sara.	Large, naturally curling golden-brown hair, eyes were a deep clear grey blue. She was dressed in lace frocks, hats, coats, handkerchiefs, furs and gloves.	Very significant in Sara's life, she is treated as if she were a real friend to Sara. Sara believes the doll is like her real child and says she will take care of her.
Mariette	minor	Adult	Sara's personal French maid.	N/A	
Ermengarde St. John	Minor	Child	Girl in seminary. High class.	A fat child who did not look like she was in the least bit clever. She had a good naturedly pouting mouth. Braided hair with a ribbon.	Friend of Sara.
Jessie	Minor	Child	Girl in seminary.	N/A	
Lavinia Herbert	Minor	Adolescent; 13 yrs. Old	Girl in seminary (oldest) was only liked by some of the girls in the seminary. High class.	N/A	Jealous of Sara; bitter; non-friendly, ready to make mischief.
Miss Amelia	Minor	Adult	Sister of Miss Minchin, obeyed her always.	Fat and dumpy.	Better natured than Miss Minchin. Known as a follower.
Mrs. Carmichael	minor	Adult	Woman who lived next door to the seminary; she is married and has children.	Pretty, and comfortable.	Understanding, compassionate and kind.

Novel: The Secret Garden

Female character	Minor/ Major	Age Group	Relationships: community/social group	Physical traits	Psychological traits
Mary Lennox	Major	Child	She is isolated from society and is restricted to Misselwaite Manor and its immediate surroundings.	Disagreeable looking, little thin body, little thin face, sour expression, yellow hair, yellow face, sickly, ugly and plain.	Tyrannical, selfish, spoiled, rude and insulting (beginning of the novel). Caring, motherly and active (at the end of the novel).
Mem Sahib (Mrs. Lennox)	Minor	Adult	Mother of main character; died of the cholera in India when Mary was very young.	Tall, slim, pretty, lovely lacy clothes, curly silky hair, delicate nose, large laughing eyes, beautiful.	Cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. Left her only daughter always in the care of an Ayah.
Mrs. Medlock	Major	Adult	Housekeeper at Misselwaite Manor.	Stout, red cheeks, sharp black eyes, purple dress, black silk mantle, black bonnet w/purple velvet flowers	Serious and strict. She is a follower.
Martha	Major	Adult	Housemaid at Misselwaite Manor; lower class.	Round, rosy, good-natured-looking, sturdy	Cheerful, stern, outspoken, kind, generous, and humble.
Ayah	Minor	Adult	Caretaker of Mary in India; lower class; died of the cholera in India.	N/A	Scared of Mary. Submissive and oppressed.
Mrs. Crawford	Minor	Adult	Caretaker of Mary for a short time after she was left an orphan; lower class.	N/A	Not fond of Mary. Motherly.

Appendix C: Case Study Interview Questions

I. Little Lord Fauntleroy

1. What is Little Lord Fauntleroy about?

2. Who do you like in this novel? Who do you dislike? Why?

3. What do you think about the following female characters?
 - a. Mrs. Errol-
 - b. Mary-
 - c. Bridget-
 - d. Mrs. Dibble-
 - e. Jane Shorts -
 - f. Miss Smiff -
 - g. Miss Perkins-
 - h. Mrs. Jeniffer-
 - i. Miss Melon-
 - j. Dawson-
 - k. Lady Constantia Lorrisdale-
 - l. Miss Vivian Herbert
 - m. Lady Fauntleroy

4. Tell me whether you would have acted like any one of the female character mentioned below in the situations she confronted. Tell why or why not.
 - a. Mrs. Errol-
 - b. Mary-
 - c. Bridget-
 - d. Mrs. Dibble-
 - e. Jane Shorts -
 - f. Miss Smiff -
 - g. Miss Perkins-
 - h. Mrs. Jeniffer-
 - i. Miss Melon-
 - j. Dawson-
 - k. Lady Constantia Lorrisdale-
 - l. Miss Vivian Herbert
 - m. Lady Fauntleroy-

5. Do you believe the following female characters behaved appropriately? Why or why not?

- a. Mrs. Errol-
- b. Mary-
- c. Bridget-
- d. Mrs. Dibble-
- e. Jane Shorts -
- f. Miss Smiff -
- g. Miss Perkins-
- h. Mrs. Jeniffer-
- i. Miss Melon-
- j. Dawson-
- k. Lady Constantia Lorrivale-
- l. Miss Vivian Herbert
- m. Lady Fauntleroy-

II. A Little Princess

1. What is A Little Princess About about?

2. Who do you like in this novel? Who do you dislike? Why?

3. What do you think about the following female characters?

- a. Sara Crewe-
- b. Lottie Legh-
- c. Becky-
- d. Miss Minchin-
- e. Emily-
- f. Mariette -
- g. Ermengarde St. John -
- h. Jessie-
- i. Lavinia Herbert-
- j. Miss Amelia-
- k. Mrs. Carmichael-

4. Tell me whether you would have acted like any one of the female character mentioned below in the situations she confronted. Tell why or why not.

- a. Sara Crewe-
- b. Lottie Legh-
- c. Becky-
- d. Miss Minchin-

- e. Emily-
- f. Mariette -
- g. Ermengarde St. John -
- h. Jessie-
- i. Lavinia Herbert-
- j. Miss Amelia-
- k. Mrs. Carmichael-

5. Do you believe the following female character behaved appropriately? Why or why not?

- a. Sara Crewe-
- b. Lottie Legh-
- c. Becky-
- d. Miss Minchin-
- e. Emily-
- f. Mariette -
- g. Ermengarde St. John -
- h. Jessie-
- i. Lavinia Herbert-
- j. Miss Amelia-
- k. Mrs. Carmichael-

III. The Secret Garden

1. What is The Secret Garden about?

2. Who do you like in this novel? Who do you dislike? Why?

3. What do you think about the following female characters?
 - a. Mary Lennox-
 - b. Mem Sahib (Mrs. Lennox)-
 - c. Mrs. Medlock-
 - d. Martha-
 - e. Ayah-
 - f. Mrs. Crawford -

4. Tell me whether you would have acted like any one of the female character mentioned below in the situations she confronted. Tell why or why not.

- a. Mary Lennox-
- b. Mem Sahib (Mrs. Lennox)-
- c. Mrs. Medlock-
- d. Martha-
- e. Ayah-
- f. Mrs. Crawford –

5. Do you believe the following female character behaved appropriately? Why or why not?

- a. Mary Lennox-
- b. Mem Sahib (Mrs. Lennox)-
- c. Mrs. Medlock-
- d. Martha-
- e. Ayah-
- f. Mrs. Crawford -