

How Does Your Garden Grow?:  
Boundaries, Belief, and Struggles of Secularization in *The Secret Garden*

Faced with the marriage of rationality and adulthood during the period, many Golden Age writers created stories as an outlet for belief within the confines of socially secular Protestant Britain. Golden Age classics have long been celebrated for the awe and wonder their stories evoke, but scholarly interpretations typically overlook religious themes. However, the struggle to experience belief in an increasingly secular Victorian Britain is relevant to our contemporary political landscape. Investigating the role of childhood belief in the face of secular adulthood is a project Golden Age novels frequently undertake. By addressing how one author, Frances Hodgson Burnett, uses the enchantment of childhood to assuage the power of secular thinking in her novel, *The Secret Garden*, we can understand the power of this classic children's book in our contemporary culture. In my paper, I focus specifically on the social transgression of Mary Lennox to explore the power of the boundaries of adulthood, specifically when those boundaries push enchantment and belief out of everyday life. I argue that Mary Lennox, a girl from outside the cultural norms, ultimately creates hybrid spaces out of the garden, the manor, and the moor through the intersection of Christianity, paganism, and Indian religions. Mary's specific version of childhood allows for porosity of space, thus infusing belief back into the adult world within the novel. No one yet has investigated the overt and significant inclusion of religion and belief in the text and what the hybridity of belief systems means for *The Secret Garden's* lasting influence in our culture.