

There is something disturbing about the world

[Psychology](#), [Motivation](#)



Perhaps the most disturbing character of all is the thirteen year old Bryony Tallish, a precocious girl with the habit of traumatizing and romanticizes events that occur in her own life, leading to disastrous consequences. Cecilia and the Tallish parents are also a cause for concern, the former due to her lack of direction and purpose and the latter because of their absence and failure to fulfill their roles as head of house. Finally, the house that the family reside in can be seen to reflect them and their faults.

Overall, Mclean presents a family that has deep problems, which gives rise to many concerns. With absent parents and a sister that does little other than aimlessly smoke cigarettes, Bryony Tallish can be viewed as a by-product of the poisonous environment in which she has grown up in. As her mother battles with depression and her father is in a senior position at the war office, she has had to grow up largely on her own, which perhaps contributes to her tendency to dramatize and fantasize everything, as she needs to create her own worlds in order to escape from her truthful lonely reality.

Perhaps what concerns us the most, however, is when she dramatizes events that she sees, or in the case of the incident at the fountain, which she only sees part of. Also, she links events that happen in the adult world to experiences she has had or read about whilst growing up. Bryony dreams that the incident will precede a 'proposal of marriage, which she then relates to her childhood, stating that 'She herself had written a tale in which a humble woodcutter saved a princess from drowning and ended by marrying her,' a story plausible only in a fairy tale.

This is in stark contrast with what she refers to as her entering an arena of adult emotion and dissembling from which her writing was bound to benefit,' highlighting that even in the strange events she has seen, she feels that she can still profit, which disturbs the reader as she has a sordid sense of what is right and wrong, instead of showing concern for her sister she views herself as a form of gladiator as she has entered an arena, implicit that she will be her sister's savior. Another disturbing characteristic of Bryony is her flawed idea of what is right and what is wrong, which could be due to her solitary upbringing.

She feels that the OFF intrusion into his private life. Her inability to cope with events is perhaps showcased most oddly when Lola coerces her into giving her the part of Rubella and Bryony feels that 'her only reasonable choice would be to run away, to live under hedges, eat berries and speak to no one, and be found by a bearded woodsman one winter's dawn, curled up at the base of a giant oak,' showing that she deals with what goes on in her life by making it into a play and basing her actions on what heroines or people in fairy tales would have done.

Overall, Briton's delusions of grandeur coupled with her incessant capability to transform any event in her own life into a work of fiction leads to one being disturbed because of her warped visions of what is real and what transcends reality. The crumbling family can perhaps be attributed to the lack of a strong patriarchal or matriarchal figure in the family. Emily Tallish battles with what she calls her 'monster' and Jack Tallish holds a senior position in the war office, and thus this family has little unity, as Betty the

maid takes the role of surrogate mother for the children, doing what Emily Tallish no longer feels that she can do.

Her opening description as being 'inert' alerts us to how useless she is in this house, and her life is described as 'invalid nullity highlighting how little she does. However, one must appreciate the fact that she has depression, brought on from Britons birth, and thus she cannot solely be criticized as being a lazy character, as it is not her fault, however, her lack of desire to change things is a disturbing problem, and she takes a great deal of time just to find her 'dark glasses. Emily movements are described as being 'slow and 'awkward. Overall, Mclean shows a mother utterly failing to fulfill both her role as a career for her children and as leader of the house in Jack Italian's perpetual absence, owing to his busy job, and he is even late for Loon's homecoming meal, leaving the women to run the show, a disturbing situation in the patriarchal early 20th century society. Despite her privileged background and the chances she has been given, Cecilia Tallish has failed to achieve much at all thus far in her life.

She graduated from Gorton with 'a third' showing that her opportunity for a good start has been squandered. Whilst Cecilia does attempt to do something, she often fails, as her start on a family tree was 'half-hearted' and she even states that 'nothing was holding her back from leaving the house, other than the thought of packing a suitcase' which 'did not excite her,' showing her reluctance to make any changes to her otherwise boring life.

Perhaps her reading of *Claries* can be seen as an interpretation of her own life, as Richardson novel tells the story of a girl whose attempts at something (virtue in this case) are continually thwarted by her parents, and for Cecilia Tallish, her attempts at starting a relationship with Robbie are thwarted, first by Bryony Tallish naming and thus condemning him as the rapist of Lola Quince, and then due to World War II.

However, Cecilia does also have some desire to be independent, shown through her smoking her own cigarettes, which contrasted with the early 20th century that women had to be offered and could not possibly ask or smoke their own, yet she does both of these. She also shows some desire to live independently, as she 'had a little money in her account' and 'offers to help her find a job' yet she labels all of her options as 'unpleasing. Mclean presents to the reader a flawed pair of siblings, who have been left to cope, in essence, without parents, and whilst Bryony has the activity and direction her older sister lacks, it is utilized negatively. Overall, despite her chances that other would have craved for is disturbing. Means's setting for the novel reflects the Tallish family, serving only to reinforce and highlight their inherent flaws.

From the outside, the house is described as being 'ugly and condemned as 'charless to a fault' and as a tragedy of wasted chances' perhaps here referencing Cecilia Italian's lack of motivation and direction in life, shown by her failures to achieve much since arriving home from university and this could perhaps also foreshadow the tempestuous and ill-fated love between Cecilia and Robbie.

The temple is shown to be in disrepair, as the exposed laths 'showed through like the ribs of a starving animal,' referencing how the family is falling apart and their flaws are easily visible, also shown through the building having a 'mottled, diseased appearance. Cilia's lack of purpose is reflected in the temple which 'had of course no religious purpose at all' and was meant to enhance the 'pastoral ideal' meaning that it had an artificial premise, which relates to Cilia's whim of staying home through the feeling that 'she was needed' even though she does little to look after Bryony and when she does there are selfish motives coursing through her actions, as seen when she strokes Bryony and gets comfort from it.

Her other motive that she was required to help her mother is also shown to be false, as she does nothing to aid her other than putting flowers in Uncle Clime's vase, and even that is eventually broken. Means's tendency for his architecture to be flawed can be seen to display the family within the walls, a family in disrepair that is completely and utterly 'a tragedy of wasted chances,' disturbing when considering all the opportunities the characters have been given which have been ruined by themselves or others.

Overall, Mclean presents a disturbing set of characters, all in a toxic environment which serves only to exacerbate their already prominent flaws, leaving the reader disturbed as a collection of flawed individuals in an environment such as this will only lead to catastrophic consequences.