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A Hundred Years of *The Secret Garden*

Frances Hodgson Burnett's Children's Classic
Revisited

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Cover image: The illustration by Maria Louise Kirk shows the cover of the 1911 edition of "The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett. M. L. Kirk was a prolific illustrator, born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, circa 1860. She studied art in Philadelphia, and died in the 1930s. Thanks to James Stack, University of Washington Libraries.

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***The Secret Garden* Revisited**

Although Frances Hodgson Burnett published numerous works for an adult readership, she is mainly remembered today for three novels written for children: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911).¹ *The Secret Garden*, serialized from autumn 1910 to summer 1911 in monthly instalments in *The American Magazine*, has often been referred to as Burnett's best novel² – despite the fact that “for the first fifty years after its publication *The Secret Garden* was never as popular as *Little Lord Fauntleroy* or *A Little Princess*”.³ Critics who consider *The Secret Garden* Burnett's masterpiece tend to emphasise in particular “the increasing depth and subtlety in the portrayal of her main child characters” and argue that “the work as a whole is richer than its predecessors in thematic development and symbolic resonance”.⁴

One of the crucial differences between her earlier novels and *The Secret Garden* is the strong focus on nature and its healing properties and the loving attention to both plants and animals, which turns the novel into a celebration of nature and its beauty. The description of the robin is certainly a particularly striking example of this tendency.⁵ Due to the way nature is depicted in *The Secret Garden*, the novel has to be seen in the tradition of pastoral literature, and,

1 Today most readers are presumably not aware of the fact that Burnett was a prolific and enormously successful writer: “Burnett published more than fifty novels, most of them for adults, and wrote and produced thirteen plays. She was the highest-paid and best-known woman author of her time, and from the time she was eighteen and published a short story in *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* her work was never turned down by any publisher.” (GERZINA, Gretchen Holbrook. “Preface.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006 [1911]. ix–x, ix.)

2 Cf., for instance, BIXLER KOPPES, Phyllis. “Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett: A Generic Analysis of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Children's Literature* 7 (1978): 191–207, 191.

3 HUNT, Peter. *Children's Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. 211.

4 BIXLER KOPPES. “Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett.” 191.

5 On the depiction of the robin see also BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. “My Robin.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. 199–208.

as Phyllis Bixler Koppes puts it, Burnett “gave symbolic enrichment and mythic enlargement to her poetic vision by adding tropes from a literary pastoral tradition at least as old as Virgil’s *Georgics*.”⁶ In her contribution to this volume Anja Drautzburg examines specifically the healing properties attributed to nature in Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* on the background of the concept of ‘therapeutic landscapes’ developed in health geography. While many readers may perhaps be tempted to consider the description of nature and of the garden as a relatively ‘timeless’ aspect of Burnett’s novel, the notions regulating the depiction of gardening in the text of course have been informed by discourses about nature and gardening that have been shaped by cultural tradition. In his article Raimund Borgmeier situates the notions of gardening which are alluded to or implied in *The Secret Garden* in the wider framework of the cultural history of gardening. Especially the garden’s location in a landscape that is typical of Yorkshire, Northern England adds a special quality of ‘rough Englishness’. In his contribution to the present volume Thomas Kullmann discusses the representation of Yorkshire as the ‘Other’ and the redefinition of Englishness in *The Secret Garden*.

With the rise of the English landscape garden, garden architecture was of great interest in the nineteenth century, which also led to a growing importance of gardening advice manuals. The development one can observe in this text type in the course of the nineteenth century shows striking parallels to the depiction of gardening in Burnett’s novel: “The earlier garden texts tend to be pragmatic advice to the middle-class woman; later Victorian garden writing is indebted to New Woman and aesthetic prose and presents the garden as a varied scene of both energetic activity and dreamy, languorous contemplation.”⁷ In *The Secret Garden* the garden discovered by Mary certainly turns into a place “of both energetic activity and dreamy, languorous contemplation”. Moreover, the fact that Mary works in the garden with male companions is reminiscent of the way gardening was presented in advice texts from the nineteenth century: “Gardening is conceived in these texts less as a hobby passed from one woman to another, like (for example) cookery or dressmaking, and more as a past-time a woman was likely to indulge on her own or, at best, with advice from a competent male relative or neighbour.”⁸ Although it is Mary who discovers the neglected garden, she needs Dickon’s advice on how to turn the wilderness into an attractive garden. Thus, the novel follows the pattern established in the gardening advice texts with respect to gender roles. Given the fact that the advice texts from

6 BIXLER KOPPEs. “Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett.” 198.

7 BILSTON, Sarah. “Queens of the Garden: Victorian Women Gardeners and the Rise of the Gardening Advice Text.” In: *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36 (2008): 1–19, 1–2.

8 BLISTON. “Queens of the Garden.” 4.

the nineteenth century already “authorize[d] physical labour for women”,⁹ for instance digging and pruning, Mary’s work in the garden is certainly not a radical departure from a gendered division of labour. Yet *The Secret Garden* arguably explores the potential of the garden as a space in between the private, female sphere of the house and the public, male sphere, “push[ing] at the separation of public and private spheres”,¹⁰ which played such a prominent role in Victorian society. *The Secret Garden* thus allows analyses with regard to female and male gender roles and social expectations. Moreover, gardening “is not just about pottering picturesquely in the herbaceous borders in these works [the gardening advice texts], it is an opportunity both to act and to think”.¹¹ On this background it seems hardly surprising that gardening contributes to turning Mary Lennox into a more mature, responsible and active individual.

The Secret Garden has managed to fascinate countless readers in the last one hundred years and has become a classic, appealing to both children and grown-up readers. Talking about her own (re-)reading experience in an article, Madelon S. Gohlke points out: “It [*The Secret Garden*] is one of the few books from my own childhood that I carried in memory with me into adulthood, not to be displaced by the books of greater density and magnitude which I read as I grew older.”¹² In fact, one might argue that *The Secret Garden* can be seen as what has come to be called ‘all-ages literature’.¹³ Like other children’s classics, *The Secret Garden* may certainly give rise to multiple readings, depending on the age and (reading) experience of the reader, thus attracting young readers as well as more mature ones. *The Secret Garden* has been internationally successful, having “been translated into nearly every language”.¹⁴ Moreover, its place in cultural memory has been secured by a number of audiovisual adaptations based (more or less loosely) on Burnett’s novel. In her contribution to this volume Hanne Birk compares different audiovisual adaptations of *The Secret Garden*: Agnieszka Holland’s filmic adaptation of Burnett’s novel from 1993, an animated version directed by Dave Edwards from 1994 and a third version which has been shaped by the Asian tradition of the anime and thus can be seen as an intercultural

9 BLISTON. “Queens of the Garden.” 4.

10 BLISTON. “Queens of the Garden.” 2.

11 BLISTON. “Queens of the Garden.” 5.

12 GOHLKE, Madelon S. “Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” In: *College English* 41,8 (1980): 894 – 902, 897.

13 Cf. EWERS, Hans-Heino. “Das doppel sinnige Kinderbuch. Erwachsene als Mitleser und Leser von Kinderliteratur.” In: Dagmar Grenz (ed.). *Kinderliteratur – Literatur auch für Erwachsene?* München: Fink, 1990. 15 – 24; BECKETT, Sandra L. (ed.). *Transcending Boundaries. Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults.* New York/London: Garland, 1999; BONACKER, Maren (ed.). *Das Kind im Leser. Phantastische Texte als all-ages-Lektüre.* Trier: WVT, 2007.

14 GERZINA. “Preface.” ix.

translation of Burnett's classic. Further evidence for the impact of *The Secret Garden* is provided by the fact that it has become the reference point for a rewriting, Noel Streatfeild's *The Painted Garden* (1949), which transfers the story to California and modernizes many aspects of the text. Ramona Rossa explores the relationship between *The Secret Garden* and its intercultural translation in *The Painted Garden* in her article.

The fact that *The Secret Garden* is not just read by children, but also fondly remembered and (re-)read by adults may partially be due to Burnett's experience as a writer of novels for a grown-up readership. In some respects, one may in fact argue that *The Secret Garden* resembles literary texts written for adults rather than other children's novels. In particular the similarities with novels written by the Brontë sisters are striking.¹⁵ These similarities include, of course, the setting: The Yorkshire Moors provide an ominous background for *Wuthering Heights* as well as for *The Secret Garden*. Moreover, regarding the semantisation of space, the isolation of Misselthwaite Manor is reminiscent of the location of the house of the Earnshaws in Emily Brontë's novel. The description of Misselthwaite Manor, however, echoes the presentation of Thornfield in *Jane Eyre*, including the uncanny sounds emerging from a secret and well-guarded room in the building.¹⁶ In addition, Gothic features can be found in *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Secret Garden*. The Yorkshire gardener Ben Weatherstaff may be seen as a significantly more genial version of the servant Joseph from *Wuthering Heights*. Gisliind Rohwer-Happe argues in her contribution to this volume that the parallels to *Jane Eyre* also have to be seen in terms of the genre tradition of the female *bildungsroman*. Finally, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Secret Garden* all celebrate the potential healing power of nature. In *Wuthering Heights* the new beginning and the reconciliation of opposites in the second generation is captured in the image of the younger Catherine and Hareton Earnshaw gardening together. While Heathcliff and Catherine are associated with the wild and dangerous moors, those characters that have learnt to discipline their emotions and to live together peacefully are interested in gardening, in making things grow.

In many respects *The Secret Garden* is very much a product of the era in which

15 Cf. SILVER, Anna Krugovoy. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors: Motherhood in *The Secret Garden*." In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21,2 (1997): 193–203 and FOSTER, Shirley and Judy SIMONS. "Frances Hodgson Burnett: *The Secret Garden*." In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006 [1911]. 324–41, 329.

16 Cf. BIXLER, Phyllis. "Gardens, Houses, and Nurturant Power in *The Secret Garden*." In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006 [1991]. 287–302, 296: "Miss Havisham's Satis House, Edward Rochester's Thornfield Hall, and Archibald Craven's Misselthwaite Manor are all patrimonial mansions with large unused portions and ghostly hidden residents."

it was written. Many literary critics have sought to identify the impact historical and political configurations have had on this children's novel; after all, as Danielle E. Price argues:

The Secret Garden is a novel that only could be nurtured in the late nineteenth century and brought to fruition at the beginning of the twentieth century – a time when interest in gardens reached a frenzy, when gender roles were being hotly contested, and when England was adjusting to the return of its colonizing subjects.¹⁷

In terms of its depiction of female gender roles *The Secret Garden* seems to strike an at times uneasy compromise between traditional and progressive notions of femininity. While Mary Lennox is certainly no 'New Woman' in the making, she is no demure little angel in the house, either. Her hot temper, her strong will and her bonding with male characters on largely equal terms turn her into a predecessor of female heroines of later twentieth-century children's literature ranging from Georgina/George in Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five* adventure series (1942 – 1962) to Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997 – 2007). Many literary critics have discussed the female characters (both Mary and the different mother figures) in the light of changing female gender roles, yet few critics have focussed exclusively on the male characters so far. In her contribution to this volume Stefanie Krüger examines the ways in which male identity is addressed in *The Secret Garden*.

Another aspect of the novel that clearly shows how much it was shaped by its time is the way spatial and interpersonal relations are seen in the context of colonialism. Both *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess* include references to (colonial) India. In this respect Burnett's novel can be situated in a literary tradition which includes Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1860), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892) and of course *Kim* (1901) and many other works by Rudyard Kipling. A number of literary critics have addressed the references to colonialism in Burnett's novels and have sought to evaluate them. In addition to Mary's childhood experiences in India, the references to Indian characters and the diamond mines in Burnett's *A Little Princess* of course also lend themselves to a discussion from a postcolonial perspective. In this volume Sara Strauß re-examines *The Secret Garden* from the point of view of postcolonial criticism by discussing how both India and Yorkshire are constructed as a significant 'Other' in the course of the novel.

One of the features that contribute to rendering *The Secret Garden* fascinating to the present day seems to be its enigmatic character. The reader time and again

17 PRICE, Danielle E. "Cultivating Mary: The Victorian *Secret Garden*." In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4 – 14, 4.

is confronted with mysteries – some of which remain unresolved right to the end. In terms of cognitive narratology one can argue that *The Secret Garden* offers the reader a number of red herrings by employing features that induce the reader to draw upon the literary frame of Gothic fiction or the sensation novel. All of the necessary ingredients are there: the isolated location, the large, old mansion, the mysterious crying at night, the apparently sinister hunchback, forbidden rooms and the locked and forbidden garden. Ultimately, however, there are no evil supernatural powers, nor is there any sinister conspiracy. And Mary Lennox certainly is no maiden-in-distress. Right from the start, Mary's demeanour prevents the reader from seeing her entirely as a helpless victim. She obviously has stamina and a will of her own, which eventually helps to make her own life better as well as Colin's. On a more concrete level, the reader is invited to join Mary's exploration of the unknown, be it her 'mother country' England, the halls and corridors of Misselthwaite Manor or the garden which has been locked for many years. What child can resist the lure of exploring the unknown?

The heterodiegetic narrator's stance may certainly appear quite unusual in *The Secret Garden*. While narrators in children's literature sometimes emphasise their superior knowledge, thus 'looking down' on the (child) protagonists (as well as occasionally 'talking down' to young readers), a narrator who at least at first expresses downright dislike for the protagonist is still rather uncommon. One can argue, however, that the narrative voice is quite effective. The denigrating comments on Mary Lennox will hardly convince the reader to dislike the protagonist. Given the fact that the reader gets a vivid description of the way Mary has been neglected by both of her parents and has been forgotten by everyone after the outbreak of the cholera epidemic, it is not particularly hard to account for Mary's sour face. By emphasising Mary's disagreeable nature and employing a narrative voice that criticises her instead of expressing pity for the lonely little girl, Burnett eschews the obvious danger of indulging in an overly sentimental depiction of the protagonist. In this respect *The Secret Garden* is very different from both *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *A Little Princess*. The differences concerning the concept of the protagonist in *The Secret Garden* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* as well as the linguistic and rhetorical implications of these differences are discussed in detail by Angelika Zirker in her article on "Redemptive Children in Frances Hodgson Burnett's Novels" in this volume.

Many of the articles in the present volume are based on papers delivered in the context of a conference dedicated to Burnett's *The Secret Garden* which took place at the University of Bonn in November 2010. We would like to thank the participants of this conference as well as the contributors to this volume for sharing with us their thoughts on one of the classics of English children's literature. We are grateful to Anna Coogan, Katharina Engel, Hatice Karakurt, Elisabeth Rüb and Klaus Scheunemann for their help with the organization of

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“Oh! the things which happened in that garden! If you have never had a garden, you cannot understand, and if you have had a garden you will know that it would take a whole book to describe all that came to pass there.”

(Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 136)

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Raimund Borgmeier

The Garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* in the Context of Cultural History

In the opening paragraph of her relatively recent essay “Strip Mines in the Garden: Old Stories, New Formats, and the Challenge of Change”, Margaret Mackey asserts the central importance of the garden not only in Burnett’s novel but in literature generally; she writes:

The image of the garden has a long and powerful literary and social history. It offers connotations of security, enclosure, beauty, and fruitfulness. It implies a convergence of the powers of nature and the powers of human intervention. It remains a primal image of paradise, lost but regainable. It can stand for safety but also for restriction.¹

This is certainly true, but it is not the complete picture. I would suggest that in addition to literary and social history one should also look at cultural history. And as far as the garden is concerned, there is, in British cultural history (one might even say European cultural history), the phenomenon of the English garden. As I intend to show, this concept plays a remarkable role in *The Secret Garden*. Considered from this point of view, the garden cannot only stand “for safety” and “for restriction”, as Mackey argues, but also for qualities like imaginative spontaneity and liberty.

The general importance of the concept of the English garden in the context of British and European cultural history can hardly be overestimated. The leading *History of British Gardening* expresses this with the following ironical but at the same time unmistakable statement:

The pundits – and the word inevitably, to an Englishman, must carry some of the jocularity attached to its secondary dictionary meaning – assure us that one of our few contributions to the visual arts is the landscape garden; long ago it became canonized in the world of taste as *le jardin anglais*.²

1 MACKAY, Margaret. “Strip Mines in the Garden: Old Stories, New Formats, and the Challenge of Change.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. 367 – 87, 367.

2 HADFIELD, Miles. *A History of British Gardening*. London: Murray, 1979. 179.

With less sense of humour and British understatement, the same idea is expressed by a German scholar who claims unequivocally: “The landscape garden is considered England’s most important contribution to European history of art.”³ And for a long time it has been understood – though this knowledge seems to be more or less forgotten or suppressed⁴ – that this concept of the English garden or *jardin anglais* or *Englischer Garten* was an early manifestation of the Romantic Movement, of the great European movement that is generally referred to as Romanticism.

As early as 1933, in a series of lectures later published under the title *The Great Chain of Being*, Arthur O. Lovejoy observed:

The vogue of the so-called ‘English garden’, which spread so rapidly in France and Germany after 1730, was [...] the thin end of the wedge of Romanticism, or of one kind of Romanticism. [...] this change of taste in gardening was to be the beginning and – I do not, assuredly, say, *the* cause, but the foreshadowing, and one of the joint causes – of a change in taste in all the arts and, indeed, of a change of taste in universes. In one of its aspects that many-sided thing called Romanticism may not inaccurately be described as a conviction that the world is an *englischer Garten* on a grand scale.⁵

This Romantic concept of the English garden appears to have, directly and indirectly, influenced the secret garden in Burnett’s novel. I am going to discuss certain features and passages, where this becomes particularly manifest, and compare them with parallel elements in the early discussion of the concept. But, first of all, I would like to give a brief sketch of the essential features and the historical context of the new idea and mention a few names.

Before the new style of gardening was established in the 30s and 40s of the eighteenth century in England, the French or formal or baroque garden was the dominating model.⁶ Everybody knows its most illustrious example, Versailles, mainly the work of the famous garden architect André Le Nôtre, which he created for Louis XIV, the Sun King. The manner of Le Nôtre and his school in laying out ornamental gardens was popularized by Dezallier d’Argenville in his

3 “Der Landschaftsgarten gilt als der bedeutendste Beitrag Englands zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte.” (MAIER-SOLGK, Frank. “Nachwort.” In: Horace Walpole. *Über die englische Gartenkunst*. Edited by Frank Maier-Solkg. Translated by August Wilhelm Schlegel. Heidelberg: Manutius, 1994. 79.)

4 See my essay “The English Garden: An Early Manifestation of the Romantic Movement.” In: Christoph Bode and Sebastian Domsch (eds.). *British and European Romanticisms*. Trier: WVT, 2007. 273–83. I have freely used this essay for the present purpose.

5 LOVEJOY, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961. 15–16. Cf. also LOVEJOY, Arthur O. “The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism.” In: *Essays in the History of Ideas*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948. 99–135, 101.

6 Cf. JELICOE, Sir Geoffrey and Susan JELICOE (eds.). *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. *passim*.

treatise *La Théorie et la pratique du jardinage*, which came out in 1709 and three years later became also available in an English translation. In the England of the late seventeenth century the formal style of gardening was generally admired as well, not least by the then reigning William and Mary, who, amongst other things, had the Frenchman Daniel Marot design the Great Fountain Garden at Hampton Court.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the leading English garden-designers, George London and Henry Wise, still adhered to the formal model. But in the second decade of the new century, the baroque style was more and more challenged and criticized. Charles Bridgeman and Stephen Switzer, the next generation of English garden-architects, can be seen as representing a period of transition. From 1730, with William Kent, who was originally a painter, the triumphant advance of the English or landscape garden set in. This was remarked by Sir Thomas Robinson of Rokeby in a frequently quoted letter, which he wrote, in 1734, to his father-in-law, the Earl of Carlisle:

There is a new taste in gardening just arisen, which has been practised with so great success at the Prince's garden in Town [Carlton House], that a general alteration of some of the most considerable gardens in the kingdom is begun, after Mr. Kent's notion of gardening, viz., to lay them out, and work without either level or line.⁷

(The phrase “work without either level or line” seems to be an appropriate way of describing the new style.) Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, the leading garden-designer of the next generation, and Humphrey Repton, in Jane Austen's time, continued and developed the concept. Yet also rich landowners, like Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, to whom Alexander Pope dedicates his “Fourth Moral Essay: The Epistle to Burlington”, and Henry Hoare, the owner of Stourhead, had an important share in the development of the new style of gardening.

How fundamental the change from the formal to the English garden was and that this is truly to be considered a change of paradigm can easily be seen when one compares representative plans, for example, of Versailles and Stourhead in Wiltshire. Without going into details, one can tell, virtually at first sight, the enormous difference between the two plans.

The first one is formal, regular, ornamental, with straight lines and definite geometrical patterns, like rectangles, squares, and circles, almost symmetrical with a middle axis and corresponding side axes. The total effect, particularly seen in the abstract form of a plan, seems to be that of a piece of embroidery; and this is, indeed, what Dezailler d'Argenville called his flower garden units: *parterres de broderie*. Accordingly, the trees and shrubs in a baroque garden were

⁷ JELlicoe and JELlicoe. *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*. 310.

treated merely as raw material; they were mostly evergreens clipped into different kinds of geometrical forms, like spheres, pyramids, and cylinders (and sometimes into sculptures of animals and human figures, known as topiary). The paths of the formal garden usually meet at a right angle. The general impression is decidedly artificial. The underlying principle can be expressed in terms of the rhetorical tradition as “*ars est demonstrare artem*” – the art that is applied here proudly delights in showing off as art.

The plan of the English garden looks quite different. Here everything seems irregular and accidental. There is decidedly no symmetry. The paths meet in irregular intersections, never at a right angle. We find a varied distribution of open country (lawn), sometimes interspersed with clumps (that is the term Kent used) of trees and shrubs and also with single trees or shrubs, and wooded areas, but there is no guiding principle or pattern discernible. The general impression here is clearly of natural scenery, and the underlying principle could be termed “*ars est celare artem*” – the art that is at work here is not meant to be recognized as art (in spite of the frequently enormous amount of expense and energy that was necessary to make an English garden).

The intended kind of reception is also different for both types of gardens. For the proud owner of a formal garden it may be sufficient – to simplify matters a little – to look out of the window or step out onto the terrace to admire its splendour because the whole garden is oriented towards his palace or mansion. In a landscape garden, however, it is necessary to walk around in order to appreciate all the beauties of the place, and for the famous English gardens, special routes are usually recommended.

Now, I do not want to maintain that Burnett’s secret garden *is* an English garden in the full sense of the term. By the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century, garden architecture had developed further, and the English or landscape garden was no longer the only possible and obligatory model. A survey speaks, for the nineteenth century, of “the equality of styles, the notion that no one mode of garden-making was correct, but that all styles were potentially valid and had to be judged by their own rules.”⁸

In Burnett’s secret garden there is also the older model of the *Hortus conclusus* discernible. A garden handbook gives the following definition for this:

Hortus conclusus, literally an enclosed garden, a secret garden within a garden. There is a literary/religious symbolism dating back to the Song of Songs which associated the Virgin Mary with the term: ‘enclosed’ represented her intact virginity, and the fruition of the garden represented the flowers of virtue. [...] When the medieval cult of the Virgin was at its height, Mary was identified frequently with the rose, and ‘Mary gardens’ would contain flowers each with its own meaning.

8 JELlicoe and JELlicoe. *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*. 171.

In practice the enclosed garden was often a rose-garden with fountains, walks, and arbours, surrounded by a hedge or wall, sometimes with turfed seats, a lawn, and paths.⁹

The secret garden that Mary discovers – and possibly the first name Mary in this context is no coincidence – is such an enclosed garden, and roses seem to be the dominant flowers in it. So this old, traditional concept appears to be at work here. Frances Burnett, who says about herself, “All my life I have been a passionate gardener” or “I have had many gardens in many countries”,¹⁰ consciously or unconsciously, was familiar with these conceptions.

However, I would argue that the secret garden where Colin recovers and regains his strength has, above all, decisive features of the Romantic concept of the English garden. In this regard, it is interesting to see that Frances Burnett herself views the garden and nature as completely positive, in contrast to the negative sphere of urban civilization – a contrast well-known from the works of the Romantic poets and writers. Quoting George Borrow's *Lavengro* and his remark “Life is sweet, brother!” she goes on with the following consideration:

One cannot murmur words like these to oneself when one lives in great cities where life is rank with the stench of petrol, day and night are roaring pandemonium, and sun, moon and stars seem not to belong to the system of things in which one is conscious only of smells and increasing uproar and the crowding of human bodies crushing past each other, while on all sides machinery drills and hammers, tearing down walls and roofs, reducing structures which once were homes to masses of bricks and mortar and flying clouds of dust.¹¹

From such a literally destructive sphere, one escapes to nature, to the garden, a place where wholeness, life, and health are to be found.

In the novel, we find, early on, a contrast established that is analogous to the antithesis between the formal garden and the English garden in cultural history. After Mary first hears from Martha about the secret garden that it is “locked up. No one has been in it for ten years,” (*Secret Garden* 21) and that it was Mrs. Craven's garden, she cannot help thinking about it. But when she walks outside what she observes at Misselthwaite Manor is different. We are told:

When she [Mary] had passed through the shrubbery gate she found herself in great gardens, with wide lawns and winding walks with clipped borders. There were trees, and flower-beds, and evergreens clipped into strange shapes, and a large pool with an old gray fountain in its midst. (*Secret Garden* 21)

9 JELICOE and JELICOE. *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*. 261.

10 BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. “In the Garden.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. 209–14, 209.

11 BURNETT. “In the Garden.” 211.

These “great gardens”, which Mary sees at the estate, are clearly a formal or baroque park. The “clipped borders” are clearly an indication of formality and artificial human interference – in an English garden, borders should not be noticeable. The “evergreens clipped into strange shapes” represent topiary, the most artificial and unnatural element of a formal garden.

This element, topiary, was most vehemently criticized by the early proponents of the English garden. The writer of an essay in *The Guardian* (No. 173, September 1713) – it is assumed that it was Alexander Pope – , for example, tells his readers with heavy irony of the views of “an eminent town gardener”:

He [the clever gardener] represents, that for the advancement of a politer sort of ornament in the villas and gardens adjacent to this great city, and in order to distinguish those places from the mere barbarous countries of gross Nature, the world stands much in need of a virtuoso gardener who has a turn to sculpture, and is thereby capable of improving upon the ancients of his profession in the imagery of evergreens.¹²

The most important signals of irony here are that Nature gets the epithet “gross” and that this presumptuous man wants to have somebody “capable of improving upon the ancients”. In his artificial garden assortment, ladies “may have their own effigies in myrtle, or their husbands in horn-beam.”¹³ The satiric irony is even carried further when the writer mentions an impressive “catalogue” of Biblical and historical figures available in evergreen (where the heroic element clashes with the banal material); amongst other things there is “A Queen Elizabeth in phyllyraea, a little inclining to the green sickness, but of full growth. [And:] Another Queen Elizabeth in myrtle, which was very forward, but miscarried, by being too near a savine.” So topiary, as Mary finds it in the grounds of Misselthwaite Manor, represents the extreme artificiality of the formal garden.

As opposed to this, the secret garden that Mary has discovered – like the English garden – represents nature and its mysterious fascination, as the girl finds:

It was this hazy tangle from tree to tree which made it all look so mysterious. Mary had thought it must be different from other gardens which had not been left all by themselves so long; and indeed it was different from any other place she had ever seen in her life. (*Secret Garden* 46)

The unique character of the place results, of course, from the individual power of nature that is not restrained or artificially controlled here. There is no stereotypical pattern imposed at this place, and life is free to grow unimpededly.

In this sense, nature was already discussed by the first theoreticians who

12 *The Guardian*. Edited by James Ferguson. Vol. 3 London: J. Richardson & Co. et al., 1823, vol. 15 of *The British Essayists*. 40 vols. 1823, No. 173. 249.

13 *The Guardian*, No. 173. 249.

pioneered the concept of the English garden in the early eighteenth century. Shaftesbury, for instance, has, in a climactic phase of his dialogue *The Moralists* (1711), Theocles come to the decisive insight:

I shall no longer resist the Passion growing in me for Things of a *natural* kind; where neither *Art*, nor the *Conceit* or *Caprice* of Man has spoil'd their *genuine Order*, by breaking in upon that *primitive State*. Even the rude *Rocks*, the mossy *Caverns*, the irregular unwrought *Grotto's*, and broken *Falls* of Water, with all the horrid Graces of the *Wilderness* it-self, as representing NATURE more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a Magnificence beyond the formal Mockery of Princely Gardens.¹⁴

This declaration can be viewed both as a plea for the naturalness to be found in the English garden (with the corresponding rejection of the artificiality of the baroque garden) and as a Romantic manifesto in favour of a return to nature. (In some English gardens an honorary grave of Rousseau can be found.) At the same time, the words of Theocles are not a disinterested statement but a passionate confession, so typical of Romantic ways of expression.

A similar message can be found in Addison's *Spectator* essays on "The Pleasures of the Imagination", where Addison gives preference to "the rough careless Strokes of Nature" and rejects "the nice Touches and Embellishments of Art" to be found in formal gardens.¹⁵ In a later number of the *Spectator* (No. 477), a fictitious correspondent takes this up, and after describing his own garden, which a "skillful Gardener" would look upon "as a natural Wilderness," concluding his description, he stresses particularly this aspect:

[...] you will find, by the Account which I have already given you, that my Compositions in Gardening are altogether after the *Pindarick* Manner, and run into the beautiful Wildness of Nature, without affecting the nicer Elegancies of Art.¹⁶

"*Pindarick*", of course, refers to the Greek poet Pindar, who was known for his (seeming) disregard of rules. One is reminded of such passages, in which the English garden is prepared and pioneered, while reading *The Secret Garden*. There are obvious parallels and echoes.

When the children decide to get to work for "wakenin' up" the secret garden they agree about their aim:

'I wouldn't want to make it look like a gardener's garden, all clipped an' spick an' span, would you?' he [Dickon] said. 'It's nicer like this with things runnin' wild, an' swingin' an' catchin' hold of each other.'

14 SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of. "The Moralists." In: *Complete Work, Selected Letters and Posthumous Writings*. Vol. 2.1. *Moral and Political Philosophy*. Edited by Wolfram Benda and Gerd Hemmerich. Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromman, 1987. 316.

15 ADDISON, Joseph, Richard STEELE et al. *The Spectator*. General editor Gregory Smith. 4 vols. London: Dent, 1907. No. 414. 284.

16 *The Spectator*, No. 477. 12 – 13.

‘Don’t let us make it tidy,’ said Mary anxiously. ‘It wouldn’t seem like a secret garden if it was tidy.’ (*Secret Garden* 63)

That the garden should, by all means, be unlike “a gardener’s garden” is a declaration against formality and artificiality, and in favour of naturalness (although the word ‘nature’ is not mentioned), as we find it in the English garden. The negative mentioning of ‘clipping’ – indicative of artificial human interference – must be viewed as significant. The decisive keyword appears to be ‘wild’ here: the garden is allowed to develop freely. Perhaps one is reminded of the early description of Kent’s working method, quoted above, who goes about laying out a garden “without either level or line”.

The contrast between the formality of the main part of the estate garden and the naturalness of the secret garden has been prepared early on when Mary first gets to know the grounds. She observes:

It seemed as if for a long time that part [where the secret garden is] had been neglected. The rest of it had been clipped and made to look neat, but at this lower end of the walk it had not been trimmed at all. (*Secret Garden* 28)

The artificiality of the garden being “clipped and made to look neat” is to be avoided by the children at any rate no matter how much work they invest in order to improve the secret garden. This is also emphasized by the narrator in a later passage where the term “a ‘gardener’s garden’” is significantly taken up:

Dickon had brought a spade of his own and he had taught Mary to use all her tools, so that by this time it was plain that though the lovely wild place was not likely to become a ‘gardener’s garden’ it would be a wilderness of growing things before the springtime was over. (*Secret Garden* 97)

Again we have the keyword ‘wild’ and the related term ‘wilderness’. It is made quite clear that the hard gardening work with various tools that the children carry out in the garden is not intended to impose a certain pattern or order onto the garden but to help it to develop its own potential in the best possible way. And that is what really happens. To borrow a phrase from Pope, an early advocate for the English garden, “the Genius of the Place”¹⁷ can realize itself most impressively, to create one admirable whole.

Mary is very much impressed by the beautiful picture that results from the various plants and flowers growing together in the spring; she says:

‘I think it [the secret garden] has been left alone so long – that it has grown all into a lovely tangle. I think the roses have climbed and climbed and climbed until they hang from the branches and walls and creep over the ground – almost like a strange gray mist. Some of them have died but many – are alive and when the summer comes there

17 POPE, Alexander. *The Poems*. Edited by John Butt. London: Methuen, 1963. 590.

will be curtains and fountains of roses. I think the ground is full of daffodils and snowdrops and lilies and iris working their way out of the dark. [...]' (*Secret Garden* 106)

The impressive aesthetic quality of the secret garden – the English garden has often been brought in connection with the paintings of artists like Poussin or Claude Lorrain – is developed perhaps even more powerfully in autumn. When, towards the end of the novel, Mr. Craven is led into the secret garden he is overwhelmed by its autumnal beauty:

The place was a wilderness of autumn gold and purple and violet blue and flaming scarlet and on every side were sheaves of late lilies standing together – lilies which were white or white and ruby. [...] Late roses climbed and hung and clustered and the sunshine deepening the hue of the yellowing trees made one feel that one stood in an embowered temple of gold. The newcomer [Mr. Craven] stood silent just as the children had done when they came into its grayness. He looked round and round. (*Secret Garden* 172)

This is the climactic final impression of the secret garden the readers of Frances Burnett's novel get. Again we find the keyword 'wilderness'; the garden is not a product of art, we are made to feel, but something natural where forces of nature work together to bring about an overwhelming creation. The different colours and the combinations and contrasts between them are, of course, something that the garden architects of an English garden deliberately tried to achieve, without giving away their intentional design but rather making it look completely natural.¹⁸

When the impression the garden makes is conveyed in the phrase "[it] made one feel that one stood in an embowered *temple* of gold" this must undoubtedly be viewed in the context of the religious conception of nature cherished by the Romantics. Dickon's mother, who is a "wonderful woman", who has much knowledge of nature, has expressed this before when she talked of "Th' Big Good Thing" (*Secret Garden* 161) that is at work manifesting itself and exerting a healing effect on the human beings who are there.

What is also eminently Romantic about the secret garden is that it is not only full of wonders but it conveys substantially pleasure and joy. We are told that the children enjoy being in the garden: "They ran from one part of the garden to another and found so many wonders that they were obliged to remind themselves that they must whisper or speak low." (*Secret Garden* 93) And furthermore: "There was every joy on earth in the secret garden that morning [...]."

18 Even the terminology of the classic pioneers of the English garden seems to be taken up in *The Secret Garden*. The word 'clumps', favoured, as I said, by William Kent, occurs, for example, in "a whole clump of crocuses" (*Secret Garden* 92) and "big clumps o' columbine" (*Secret Garden* 118).

(*Secret Garden* 93) Joy and pleasure is what Wordsworth emphasizes in his “Preface” repeatedly. So Jerry Phillips is right when he speaks about “a Wordsworthian romanticism” in Burnett’s novel, though he is certainly not right with the statement: “In aesthetic terms, the exquisite artifice of the garden, what Kipling called its ‘glory,’ represents nature at its most cultured or culture at its most admirable.”¹⁹ There is very little culture, I think, in the secret garden.

In the final sentence of the paragraph quoted above (“He looked round and round.”), incidentally, a feature characteristic of the appropriate reception of an English garden seems to be taken up. As I mentioned before, a landscape garden is not just to be looked at, but you walk around to discover and admire its various beauties. Apparently, such a mode of reception is represented in the case of the secret garden as well. When Colin is first shown the secret garden – he is unable to walk then – we are told:

Dickon pushed the chair slowly round and round the garden, stopping every other moment to let him [Colin] look at wonders springing out of the earth or trailing down from trees. It was like being taken in state round the country of a magic king and queen and shown all the mysterious riches it contained. (*Secret Garden* 125)

Precisely such an approach would be recommended to visitors of an English garden like Petworth, Stourhead, or Rousham.

Before I finally come to a close let me mention two further aspects that link Burnett’s secret garden with the concept of the English garden, which was so important in cultural history. Burnett’s garden is not only a place where Nature in the sense of the Romantics is at work, produces wonderful pictures and impressions, and exerts its healing powers; it is also a place of liberty, where human beings can freely develop their individual potential. This is, early on in the novel, expressed by Mr. Craven when he follows the advice given by Mrs. Sowerby and orders Mrs. Medlock to look after Mary in a suitable way: “Let her run wild in the garden. Don’t look after her too much. She needs liberty and fresh air and romping about.” (*Secret Garden* 71) In the garden, Mary will have the liberty she needs, and the positive results of this therapy show that Mr. Craven was right: the garden is the place of liberty.

Liberty is a quality that was frequently connected with the English garden. While the French garden, with some justification, stood for tyranny and oppression, the English garden was considered as constituted and shaped by the contrasting spirit of liberty. In this way, Addison, as early as 1710, in an essay in *The Tatler* (No. 161) depicted a place which shows all the features of an English garden, “[a] place [which] was covered with a wonderful profusion of flowers,

19 PHILLIPS, Jerry. “The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. 342–66, 350.

that, without being disposed into regular borders and parterres, grew promiscuously".²⁰ Significantly, Addison represents "this happy region" as the realm of "the goddess of Liberty",²¹ and he chooses "The Goddess of Liberty" significantly as the title of the whole essay.

A final aspect I want to mention may escape most readers' attention. But I think it is interesting, too. There is one passage in the novel which refers to the English garden indirectly. When spring has come the children are happy and they react accordingly: "'Open the window!' he [Colin] added, laughing half with joyful excitement and half at his own fancy. 'Perhaps we may hear golden trumpets!'" (*Secret Garden* 115) The last remark is, in my edition, explained in a footnote: "Music played by angels at the entrance of paradise."

This may remind one of the most famous depiction of Paradise in English literature, Eden in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Surprisingly, Milton already describes paradise with the characteristic features of the English garden. This was observed by Horace Walpole in his early survey *On Modern Gardening* (1770), where he states: "He [Milton] seems with a prophetic eye of taste to have conceived, to have foreseen modern gardening".²² And he goes on to say: "The description of Eden [in *Paradise Lost*] is a warmer and more just picture of the present style than Claud [sic] Lorrain could have painted from Hagley or Stourhead [which, of course, are famous examples of the English garden]."²³

Milton's Paradise looks, indeed, like an English garden. The detailed description of the place culminates in the passage:

Flowers worthy of Paradise which not nice art
In beds and curious knots, but nature boon [i.e. liberal]
Poured forth profuse on hill and dale and plain,
[...] ²⁴

The rejection of the formal garden with its artificial "beds and curious knots", amongst other things, is unmistakable. Already, Milton's Paradise was not "a gardener's garden" but a place where plants and flowers grow naturally, and this may also have inspired Burnett when she conceived her secret garden. Apart from this, I hope I have shown convincingly that Burnett's secret garden derives its most essential features (above all, naturalness, aesthetic qualities, quasi-religious status and power, liberty) from the Romantic concept of the English garden.

20 *The Tatler. Selected Essays*. Edited by Alexander Charles Ewald. London: Frederick Warne, 1888, No. 161. 298–99.

21 *The Tatler. Selected Essays*, No. 161. 298.

22 WALPOLE, Horace. *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*. London: Garland, 1982. 248–49.

23 WALPOLE. *History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*. 248–49.

24 MILTON, John. *Paradise Lost*. Edited by Scott Elledge. New York/London: Norton, 1975, IV. 241–43.

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‘There was every joy on earth in the secret garden’ – Nature and Female Identity in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*

“Where gardening is done all sorts of delightful things to eat are turned up with the soil.” (*Secret Garden* 81)¹ This comment, made from the point of view of the robin while Mary Lennox is digging in the secret garden, is symptomatic of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*. It refers to the beneficial productivity and nutritious effect of gardening. Ultimately, it is not only delightful things to eat that are turned up or rather turn up with the soil and through the soil, but a much more delightful and satisfactory fact: the protagonist Mary Lennox’ development into a responsible character. The emergence of a self-confident and responsible female identity and the growing receptiveness to nature and her fellow human beings are triggered by nature and by working in the secret garden during the seasonal cycle. The secret garden does not only provide the title of the novel; it proves to be the central and determining space: a place formerly associated with loss and self-seclusion, but now with new splendour, growth and maturation, as Madelon Gohlke recognises:

The garden at the house of Mary’s uncle, Archibald Craven, is clearly the symbolic center of the book. It is both the scene of a tragedy, resulting in the near destruction of a family, and the place of regeneration and restoration of a family. Mrs. Craven had been sitting in the garden when she was struck by a falling branch which brought on the premature labor and delivery of her son Colin and ultimately caused her death. It is as though the natural processes of life and growth, through this incident, are seen to be destructive. Mr. Craven, in his grief, has the garden closed, [...] Mary’s interest in [Mr. Craven’s] story is generated by her intuitive and sympathetic response to someone who is hurting like herself.²

Intuition and sympathy are indeed the fundamental qualities Mary needs to discover within herself. Equipped with these as well as with the outdoor skills she

1 Quotes from *The Secret Garden* are taken from BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. Harmondsworth: Penguin/Puffin Books, 1994 [1911].

2 GOHLKE, Madelon. “Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” In: *College English* 41,8 (1980): 894–902, 895.

is taught by Dickon, Mary eventually finds her true self: Through the discovery and re-opening of the garden, as the symbolic, spatial centre of the book, Mary Lennox finds her true identity. This argument can be supported by an environmental, partly ecofeminist reading of *The Secret Garden* with special regard to the semantisation of space.³ In Burnett, place does not only serve as a setting; it dominates the plot, and the secret garden as well as the moors that surround the manor have an impact on the people living within the house. The environment shapes their character, underlines the atmosphere and clearly has a function beyond that of a mere setting. According to Lawrence Buell, in literature the (nonhuman) environment's presence is not merely a framing device but a presence that firmly embeds human history in natural history.⁴ Along these lines, he argues for a more intense interest in (natural) place in the field of literary studies. This idea is in accordance with the spatial turn.⁵

In addition to its more general implications, the presentation of the garden in Burnett's novel appears to be indebted to traditional notions of female development. At least initially, the importance of the patriarchal order seems to be diminished within the garden. With the closing of the garden by a grieving man, who is dominated by the memory of his deceased wife, and the re-opening of the garden by a young girl, the circulation of power also seems to be on the female side. The garden is owned by a male figure, Mr Craven, but it only belongs to him in name and is still considered the beloved garden of his wife. Through care, it then becomes Mary's garden – 'a bit of earth' – or, along the lines of an eco-

3 For the notion of the semantisation of space, see: BÖHME, Hartmut (ed.). *Topographien in der Literatur. Deutsche Literatur im transnationalen Kontext*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005; BUELL, Lawrence. "Place." In: David Lodge and Nigel Wood (eds.). *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader*. 3rd edn. Harlow et al.: Pearson Longman, 2008. 665–91; BUELL, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Maldon, MA/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005; DENNERLEIN, Katrin. *Narratologie des Raumes*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2009; HALLET, Wolfgang and Birgit NEUMANN (eds.). *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur. Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009; LEHNERT, Gertrud (ed.). *Raum und Gefühl. Der Spatial Turn und die neue Emotionsforschung*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011; TUAN, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977; NEUMANN, Birgit and Ansgar NÜNNING. *An Introduction to the Study of Narrative Fiction*. Stuttgart: Klett, 2008; for an introduction to ecofeminism, see among others: ABRAMS, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2005. 86–91; COUPE, Lawrence (ed.). *The Green Studies Reader. From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000; PLUMWOOD, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002; TWINE, Richard. "Ecofeminisms in Process." <<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/twine/ecofem/ecofem2001.pdf>> (accessed 2 November, 2010).

4 BUELL. "Place." 665.

5 On this aspect, consult a.o. TUAN. *Space and Place*; NEUMANN and NÜNNING. *An Introduction to the Study of Narrative Fiction*. 59–62. Compare also LEHNERT's ideas on the aura of a certain space that is created through a connection between place and emotion: LEHNERT (ed.). *Raum und Gefühl*. 15.

feminist reading, a bit of 'mother earth'. The world associated with the garden does not seem to be dominated by patriarchal structures. Archibald Craven is a weak man, still mourning for his wife, who died years ago. His spoilt son, who is hidden away inside the manor, may behave like a little tyrant, and is even referred to as a little Rajah, but he is not a patriarchal ruler either: After all, he needs to learn about life from a girl, Mary Lennox. Mourning has shaped Mr Craven's life for many years, and he only learns about the worth of living from the loyal mother of one of his servants, Mrs Sowerby, who exerts an enormous influence on a range of characters, including her independent, nature-wise son Dickon.⁶

On the whole, there seems to be no oppression of the female gender nor of nature in *The Secret Garden*, once it has been rediscovered by Mary; neither women nor girls, nor nature are subdued once the garden has been detected. This place is not reduced to the function of a mere setting, a backdrop to the story.⁷ At the beginning of the novel, the garden has been closed for years, only tended in secrecy by the odd and seemingly grumpy gardener Ben Weatherstaff, and the garden was closed because a woman died inside the garden. As such, the place has predominantly been associated with death, loss and grief, a meaning of the garden that has been perpetuated by Mr Craven. Yet Mary Lennox manages to alter the meaning of the garden: nature is rediscovered, and it becomes apparent that the seasonal, natural cycle has never ceased to work in the garden. The garden has been closed, but life has continued to thrive. This is a reminder of constant change and thereby of life. When the garden is rediscovered, spring with its (re)birth of flowers is just about to begin; nature has persisted, and the garden clearly has been a place of growth even in its untended state. Nature is rediscovered at a moment of visible revival, but it has never been dead to begin with. The characters only needed to become aware of nature inside the garden. Although growth inside the garden is not dependent on human help, the characters can contribute to the garden's visible growth. Nature seems to be in full bloom thanks to Mary – just as the garden helps her to develop in return. Through her work in the secret garden, Mary discovers a sense of her identity that is in tune with nature. By realizing the impact the garden has on Mary, the reader is made aware of the significance of the "nonhuman environment"⁸.

The Secret Garden begins with the depiction of Mary as a selfish girl in India,

6 For readings of Dickon, see a.o. KEYSER, Elizabeth Lennox. "'Quite Contrary': Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*." In: *Children's Literature: Annual of the MLA Division on Children's Literature and Children's Literature Association* 11 (1983): 1–13; PRICE, Daniella E. "Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden." In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4–14.

7 Cf. BUELL. "Place." 668.

8 BUELL. "Place." 672.

neglected by her parents and “most disagreeable-looking” (*Secret Garden* 1): “as she was a self-absorbed child she gave her entire thought to herself, as she had always done.” (*Secret Garden* 8) Mary starts off as this “disagreeable child” (*Secret Garden* 12) without a sense of belonging, manners and responsibility. The verses about “Mistress Mary, quite contrary,/ How does your garden grow?” (*Secret Garden* 9) annoy her and cause her to shout and get angry, even though they are nothing more than a nursery rhyme. The second verse of the nursery rhyme appears to foreshadow what is to come. At some point Mary’s garden will grow; yet “How does your garden grow?” does not apply at the beginning of the novel (when the garden is still untended and Mary tries to grow flowers in barren earth in India).

The first impression of Mary in Yorkshire is one of “a very small, odd little black figure, and she felt as small and lost and odd as she looked” (*Secret Garden* 22). Soon Mary’s role changes dramatically from being a spoiled but neglected child in India to being an unspoiled, free child in Yorkshire. Slowly, Mary becomes ‘contrary’: her behaviour is radically different from her demeanour before her arrival in England. At Misselthwaite Manor, Mary’s curiosity begins to awaken with Martha’s report about her brother Dickon, in whom Mary immediately develops an interest; this is a first change of character, which signals that she will overcome the lethargic state that was characteristic of her life in India. Mary becomes interested in Dickon and in the “locked up” (*Secret Garden* 34) garden. Moreover, Mary begins to be interested in mystery and the unknown in general,⁹ something that never appealed to her in ‘exotic’ India: “Mary turned down the walk which led to the door in the shrubbery. [...] She wondered what it would look like and whether there were any flowers still alive in it.” (*Secret Garden* 34) A similar new impulse, a positive emotional response is also aroused by the robin, Mary’s first animal friend and comfort who can be read as a personification of pleasant nature:

[S]omehow his cheerful, friendly little whistle gave her a pleased feeling – [...] and the bright-breasted little bird brought a look into her sour little face which was almost a smile [...] [and later, almost talking to the robin] Mary began to laugh, and as he hopped and took little flights along the wall she ran after him. Poor little thin, sallow, ugly Mary – she actually looked almost pretty for a moment. ‘I like you! I like you!’ (*Secret Garden* 37, 46)

Talking to the bird, which eventually shows her the way into the secret garden, and expressing her affection for the robin is indicative of a changing attitude towards life in general and life in the Yorkshire moors and around the secret

9 This interest could be compared to emotions of curiosity which are released through a certain sensation in connection to space. Cf. LEHNERT. *Raum und Gefühl*. 13–19.

garden in particular.¹⁰ The Yorkshire moors, a place that may appear rough and uninviting, become phenomenally healing for Mary: Her health and looks improve,¹¹ as do her behaviour and attitude: “[S]he was not sorry that she had come to Misselthwaite Manor. In India she had always felt hot and too languid to care much about anything. The fact was that the fresh wind from the moor had begun to blow the cobwebs out of her young brain to waken her up a little.” (*Secret Garden* 48) The moors and gardening are presented as having a reviving quality. Mary slowly realises how good life is in this new place. Nature, as represented by the Yorkshire moors and the secret garden, has a life-changing effect on Mary: “She was getting on.” (*Secret Garden* 50) Nature also has a cultural meaning within the story since it teaches Mary to be responsible and caring, as the following quote shows, which also highlights Burnett’s repetitive, forceful hammering home of the healthy effect of nature in Yorkshire: “In India she had always been too hot and languid and weak to care much about anything, but in this place she was beginning to care and to want to do new things. Already she felt less ‘contrary’, though she did not know why.” (*Secret Garden* 68) Caring, as a consequence of feeling sympathy and intuition, is what makes Mary tend to the garden. Writing about nature here is clearly anthropocentric and not eco-centric, though: the lovingly detailed depiction of the garden is subservient to the development of the protagonist; the place apparently dominates, yet its main function is to help Mary grow and overcome human “separateness and the world’s indifference”.¹² Such an anthropocentric stance is often criticised in ecocritical approaches.

Through becoming responsive to her environment,¹³ Mary presumably develops an “environmental humility”,¹⁴ or at least an environmental awareness. Mary feels better when running around in the garden – she gains both physical strength and serenity. Hallet and Neumann observe that such an interrelation between characters and places plays a vital role in the context of the characterisation in literary texts:

Orientierung und Positionierung im Raum haben ebenso reale wie symbolische Bedeutung für die fiktionale Subjektkonstitution: Figuren werden durch die Räume

10 On the semantisation of space with regard to feelings and emotions, see especially the introduction in LEHNERT. *Raum und Gefühl*. 9–25.

11 KEYSER. “‘Quite Contrary’: Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*.” 9.

12 TUAN. *Space and Place*. 44.

13 Cf. BERRY, Wendell. *Standing by Words*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983; BUELL. “Place.”; BUELL. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*.

14 On this concept see PLUMWOOD, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002, especially the introduction. Compare also basic ideas in RELPH, Edward. *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1981.

identifiziert, in denen sie sich aufhalten, und durch die Art und Weise charakterisiert, in der sie in einem Raum handeln, Grenzen überschreiten, mobil werden oder immobil bleiben. Räumliche Strukturen ermöglichen Handeln.¹⁵

Mary develops her identity through spending time and working in the secret garden. Having been largely immobile and passive in India, she becomes increasingly active in Yorkshire. Spending time in the garden and running free like an animal contribute to making her a more mature person:

She did not know that this was the best thing she could have done, and she did not know that, when she began to walk quickly or even run along the paths and down the avenue, she was stirring her slow blood and making herself stronger by fighting with the wind which swept down from the moor. [...] the big breaths of rough fresh air blown over the heather filled her lungs with something which was good for her whole thin body and whipped some red colour into her cheeks and brightened her dull eyes when she did not know anything about it (*Secret Garden* 44).¹⁶

The spatial experience clearly has a physical quality for Mary,¹⁷ and it also has a psychological dimension:

Just as it [the fresh, strong, pure air] had given her an appetite, and fighting with the wind had stirred her blood, so the same thing had stirred her mind. (*Secret Garden* 68)

She was beginning to like to be out of doors; she no longer hated the wind, but enjoyed it. (*Secret Garden* 89)

Mary develops a *topophilia*, a love of the place she inhabits and an “emotional identification” with it¹⁸ which is referred to as “place sensitivity”¹⁹ by Val Plumwood and “place-consciousness” respectively place-sense by Lawrence Buell.²⁰

Feeling at last at home,²¹ Mary develops and grows with the seasonal cycle, the growth of nature – still being ‘wick’, alive, despite having been neglected in the first years of her life. The “coming of spring and the awakening of life in the

15 HALLET and NEUMANN (eds.). *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur*. 25.

16 Cf. also: “Tha’s beginnin’ to do Misselthwaite credit, [...] 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.’” (*Secret Garden* 91); “[...] she had run in the wind until her blood had grown warm; she had been healthily hungry for the first time in her life; and she had found out what it was to be sorry for someone.” (*Secret Garden* 50)

17 Cf. HALLET and NEUMANN (eds.). *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur*. 27.

18 BUELL. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. 72.

19 Cf. PLUMWOOD. *Environmental Culture*. 233: “[P]lace sensitivity requires both emotional and critical approaches to place”.

20 BUELL. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. 72.

21 The sense of being at home is an important dimension of human lives. See BUELL. “Place.” 673.

garden²² are depicted as running parallel to Mary's (and later also Colin's) rebirth as children. Mary works in the garden, exhausting herself but enjoying herself nevertheless.²³ This is an example of the process of "re-defining our relationship to nature and our habitat",²⁴ which is one of the basic ideas of ecocriticism. Mary learns to feel responsible for her environment.

When Mary first discovers the secret garden and it appears to be quiet and static, she wonders whether life still exists in this place, "perhaps some of [the roses] had lived" (*Secret Garden* 80). She is fascinated by the possibility of discovering life in the garden. Like the garden, Mary turns out to be alive beneath the surface, as Gohlke observes:

Her concerns about the state of the garden [...] directly reflect her concerns about herself. Her first questions are crucial: 'I wonder if they are all quite dead,' she said. 'Is it all a quite dead garden? I wish it wasn't.' Here Mary's pain and sense of abandonment are balanced by her fierce desire to live.²⁵

Mary kneels down in front of the flowers in the garden, a gesture that could be interpreted as an expression of reverence to nature and the recognition of its revitalisation in spring: "She bent very close to them [the flowers] and sniffed the fresh scent of the damp earth. She liked it very much." (*Secret Garden* 80) She bends towards nature, as she also insists on the garden being natural and wild, not tidy and thoroughly arranged.²⁶ Arguably, nature is depicted as a (largely) "undomesticated feminist space"²⁷ here. Mary feels at home at Misselthwaite, on the moors, and in 'her' newly discovered secret garden. She experiences happiness and satisfaction ("[...] she would cry out joyfully under her breath when she caught sight of the least shade of moist green", *Secret Garden* 105), and she matures as a consequence of her gardening. The harmony between Mary and the nature that surrounds her is increased by Dickon, the 'animal-boy', who appears to embody the energy of all of the "thousands of little creatures" (*Secret Garden* 145) from the moor. Mary's life is altered radically, as she remarks herself: "I am so happy I can scarcely breathe!" (*Secret Garden* 157)²⁸

22 GOHLKE. "Re-Reading the Secret Garden." 896.

23 The following quotation supports this interpretation: "She went from place to place, and dug and weeded, and enjoyed herself so immensely that she was led on from bed to bed and into the grass under the trees. The exercise made her so warm that she first threw her coat off, and then her hat, and without knowing it she was smiling down on to the grass and the pale green points all the time." (*Secret Garden* 81)

24 BUELL. "Place." 665.

25 GOHLKE. "Re-Reading the Secret Garden." 895.

26 On the concept of the English garden, see a.o. Raimund Borgmeier's article in this volume.

27 ALAIMO, Stacy. *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000. 171.

28 A similar conclusion can be drawn from the following passage: "[...] there she was standing on the grass, which seemed to have turned green, and with the sun pouring down on her and

Wendell Berry argues that “[i]n the moral (the ecological) sense you cannot know *what* until you have learned *where*.”²⁹ Mary learns about joy and responsibility in the secret garden: “There was every joy on earth in the space that she finds as a refuge – a place of her own, the secret garden that morning, and in the midst of them came a delight more delightful than all, because it was more wonderful.” (*Secret Garden* 158) Spring and summer reinforce her pleasure and contentment, as they bring bloom and blossoming amazement. Mary observes the growth of nature in the garden: “Oh! The things which happened in that garden! If you have never had a garden, you cannot understand, and if you have had a garden, you know that it would take a whole book to describe all that came to pass there.” (*Secret Garden* 235) What comes to pass at the same moment is the emergence of a strong and self-confident identity: Alongside Mary’s fascination with plants and flowers, she develops a positive attitude towards animals like the robin and towards her fellow human beings,³⁰ enjoying these feelings (*Secret Garden* 95) as well as her friendship with Dickon and Colin intensely. She matures but is allowed “the experience of childhood as a time of innocence, security, self-worth, and contribution to family and community”.³¹ Though she has lost her parents, Mary is allowed to be happy and to experience a childhood she was not granted before.

The friendship Mary feels for the first time in her life even gives “her an appreciation of how it feels to mother and to be mothered, something she had missed in her relation with her biological mother, who was too preoccupied with her social life to attend to the needs of her child.”³² The idea of a caring relationship and its importance for any human being is emphasised in Mary’s development; these values are quintessential for her growth as a person: “From an ecological feminist perspective, most highly prized are values which stress the importance of beings-in-relationship – mutual care, friendship, reciprocity, diversity, and appropriate trust.”³³ Dickon is depicted as a master of nature

warm, sweet wafts about her and the fluting and twittering and singing coming from every bush and tree. She clasped her hands for pure joy and looked up in the sky, and it was so blue and pink and pearly and white and flooded with springtime light that she felt she must flute and sing aloud herself, and she knew that thrushes and robins and skylarks could not possibly help it. She ran around the shrubs and paths toward the secret garden.” (*Secret Garden* 155)

29 BERRY. “Poetry and Place.” 117.

30 “She walked away, slowly thinking. She had begun to like the garden just as she had begun to like the robin and Dickon and Martha’s mother. She was beginning to like Martha, too.” (*Secret Garden* 65)

31 KURTH-SCHAI, Ruthanne. “Ecofeminism and Children.” In: Karen J. Warren (ed.). *Ecofeminism: Women Culture Nature*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1997. 193 – 212, 193.

32 GOHLKE. “Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” 896.

33 KURTH-SCHAI. “Ecofeminism and Children.” 201.

whose mastery is not based on domination however, but on a deep, intuitive understanding of the processes that are at work in nature.³⁴ Following his example Mary advances in her understanding of nature and simultaneously develops a more altruistic stance, through listening to Dickon and beginning to understand him. She matures in nature, being surrounded by animals and plants; she becomes confident and learns to love herself, qualities that Twine regards as vital for identity construction: “[A]nimalisation, feminisation and naturalisation are common discourses that construct identities.”³⁵

The development of Mary's identity is shaped by “interaction, interdependence, and collaboration rather than isolation, independence and competition.”³⁶ She is no longer alone as she was in India but is surrounded by people who help her – by Martha, Dickon, and Ben Weatherstaff. This supportive environment is essential for Mary: “Networks of loving, reciprocal relationships are required if children are to develop a sense of security and confidence as well as an awareness of their value to the community.”³⁷ Once Mary has developed a sense of responsibility she passes her knowledge and experience on by teaching her cousin Colin lessons that are similar to those she has had to learn³⁸ until they can enjoy the garden together. Her arrival at Misselthwaite has turned out to be a positive experience for herself as well as for Colin: “‘My word!’ [Mrs Sowerby] said. ‘It was a good thing that little lass came to the Manor. It’s been th’ makin’ o’ her an’ th’ savin’ o’ him.’” (*Secret Garden* 249) Mary changes, being in tune with nature – a development that suggests an almost essentialist link between a feminist and an ecological position,³⁹ a “twin domination of women and nature”.⁴⁰ By taking care of the garden Mary could grow, and the garden reciprocally “did seem to begin to grow for her” (*Secret Garden* 107).⁴¹ In the end, Mary is not sour-looking and spoiled anymore; instead, she is responsible, caring and therefore pretty; she develops in her own space – the garden in the Yorkshire moors. Spring in the garden represents Mary's re-birth, since it becomes the origin of her process of growth. Having asked for a bit of earth, she can now play in and tend a garden of her own – a *locus amoenus*. Even though the falling branch caused Mrs Craven's death, the garden is still a place of innocence

34 TWINE. “Ecofeminisms in Process.”

35 TWINE. “Ecofeminisms in Process.”

36 KURTH-SCHAI. “Ecofeminism and Children.” 201.

37 KURTH-SCHAI. “Ecofeminism and Children.” 201.

38 Cf. GOHLKE. “Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” 896.

39 TWINE. “Ecofeminisms in Process.”

40 DAVION, Victoria. “Ecofeminism.” In: Dale Jamieson (ed.). *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. 233–47, 234.

41 A similar idea of cultivation is underlined by Daniella PRICE in her essay “Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden.” In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4–14.

for Mary:⁴² “she felt as if she had found a world all her own” (*Secret Garden* 79), “looking all around at her new kingdom” (*Secret Garden* 82). She invites the others to join her in an almost idyllic happiness.⁴³

Instead of being disagreeable and phlegmatic, Mary has begun to prosper and blossom in Yorkshire.⁴⁴ Nature, fresh air and friendship have allowed her to form a more positive and beneficial identity. Aided by the secret garden, a place of natural magic,⁴⁵ Mary has become a more mature personality. Thus, *The Secret Garden* seems to confirm Buell’s observation that “[p]erhaps the commonest attraction of environmental writing is that it increases our feel for both places previously unknown [at the other end of the world, or secret] and places known but never so deeply felt”.⁴⁶ In other words: “Where gardening is done all sorts of delightful things” (*Secret Garden* 81) turn up, among these the development of responsibility and self-confidence in the protagonist of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*.

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42 Compare McLEOD, Susan H. “A Comment on Madelon S. Gohlke’s ‘Re-Reading the Secret Garden.’” In: *College English* 43,4 (1981): 423 – 25, 424.

43 Parallels to pastoral idylls can clearly be seen here.

44 Cf. KEYSER. “‘Quite Contrary’: Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*.” 3.

45 The quality of the magic in *The Secret Garden* remains to be analysed.

46 BUELL. “Place.” 673.

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‘It was the garden that did it!’ – Spatial Representations with References to Illness and Health in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*¹

Looking first at plants we find that those grown in dark cellars or gloomy places are always pale and blanched; whilst in rooms, that side of the plant which is next the light has always the most leaves on and all the branches grow towards the light.

Thomas Allison. *A Victorian Guide to Healthy Living*.²

Some Reflections on Space

In this paper I seek to explore the ways in which spaces in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s novel *The Secret Garden*,³ are charged with meaning beyond being the place of action. The places that are relevant are India, the place protagonist Mary Lennox was born, as well as Misselthwaite Manor, her uncle’s estate, to which she is sent after the death of her parents, and, of course, the secret garden which lies within its walls. In what follows, I apply the concept of therapeutic landscapes taken from health geography in order to show in what ways the secret garden can be regarded as a healing place.

In 1974 Henri Lefebvre was one of the first scholars to note that “[n]ot so many years ago, the word ‘space’ had a strictly geometrical meaning [...]. To speak of ‘social space’, therefore, would have sounded strange.”⁴ From then on, more and more fields of research – geography, literature, sociology and cultural studies, to name but a few – began to understand the significance of space as a category of meaning, a tendency which culminated in the *spatial turn* of the 1980s.⁵

One of the most important questions Lefebvre asked in his book *The Pro-*

1 Many thanks to Emily Troscianko and Julie Loison for their useful suggestions.

2 ALLISON, Thomas. *A Victorian Guide to Healthy Living*. Edited by Anna Selby. Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2009.

3 BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995 [1911].

4 LEFEBVRE, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]. 1.

5 See, for instance, WARF, Barney and Santa ARIAS. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London/New York: Routledge, 2009.

duction of Space was “To what extent may a space be read or decoded?”⁶ That question is fundamental for my reading of Hodgson Burnett’s novel. More precisely, I will ask whether the aforementioned three spaces can be read and interpreted on the basis of the information that the narrator provides.

In recent years, the concept of space has been taken many steps further and it has been made use of in various respects. One of the most important fields in which questions of space took centre stage is health geography, a sub-category of cultural geography, “which focuses on the interpretation of landscape. Here landscape is seen as a text to be read for what it says about human ideas and activities.”⁷ The general interest in health geography lies in the assumption that different places or spaces possess certain healing or restorative powers.⁸ Studying these places and their impact can then provide useful information as to where and why healing takes place and what can be done in order to improve the beneficial aspects of places such as hospitals and spas.⁹ In 1992 Wilbert Gesler addressed questions of how to interpret different kinds of landscapes. In his first topic related article he establishes that there are “landscapes associated with treatment or healing, which we will call therapeutic landscapes.”¹⁰ Later on, Gesler differentiates between different kinds of environments in order to categorise therapeutic landscapes; these are natural, built, social or symbolic. The first two are regarded as “the classic therapeutic environments that many people associate with health,”¹¹ whereas social and symbolic environments are particularly interesting when it comes to analysing fictional texts with the help of the concept of therapeutic landscapes. In addition, Gesler argues that “[t]herapeutic landscapes may be better understood by interpreting works of art and literature.”¹² He himself applied the concept to Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* and to JD Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* in order to exemplify that exploring the potential of therapeutic landscapes has not yet gone far enough, in that studies often only highlight the positive aspects of these landscapes.¹³ To Gesler and Baer, therapeutic landscape literature “[o]ften fails to realize that no landscape is perfectly healthy. The ideal, in short, is impossible to achieve.”¹⁴ At this point, Hodgson Burnett’s garden can be considered. In the following an-

6 LEFEBVRE. *The Production of Space*. 17.

7 GESLER, Wilbert. “Therapeutic Landscapes: Medical Issues in Light of the New Cultural Geography.” In: *Social Science & Medicine* 34,7 (1992): 735–46,735.

8 Cf. GESLER. “Therapeutic Landscapes.” 736.

9 Cf. GESLER. “Therapeutic Landscapes.” 735.

10 Cf. GESLER. “Therapeutic Landscapes.” 735–36.

11 BAER, Leonard D. and Wilbert GESLER. “Reconsidering the Concept of Therapeutic Landscapes in JD Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*.” In: *Area* 36,4 (2004): 404–13, 406.

12 GESLER. “Therapeutic Landscapes.” 738.

13 BAER and GESLER. “Reconsidering the Concept.” 406.

14 BAER and GESLER. “Reconsidering the Concept.” 406.

alysis it will be seen that the garden is an ambiguous space, a place of healing for Mary and Colin, but also a place with a dark past. The concept of therapeutic landscapes supports the analysis because it provides useful terminology for defining places of illness and health.

Spaces of Illness and Health

India

The first space the reader encounters is India. Though the encounter is brief, the country, strikingly, carries only negative connotations, which ties in with notions of the time. However, the negativity is so striking that it leads even critic Linda T. Parsons, who actually likes the novel, to state that “I am disturbed by the colonial attitude conveyed in the book.”¹⁵ The way Hodgson Burnett depicts India suggests that the environment, especially heat and humidity,¹⁶ has a bad influence on the people who live there.¹⁷ On the very first page of the novel, Mary is described as the “most disagreeable-looking child ever seen” (*Secret Garden* 7). Besides, “[s]he 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” (*Secret Garden* 7). Thus, the idea is put forward that due to her place of birth, Mary is an unhealthy and fretful girl.

Mary’s father, an Englishman by birth, has also often suffered from illness. Her mother is depicted in negative terms as she deserts her child and leaves her alone in order to be raised by governesses and nannies. Reading the book as a novel of (physical and personal) growth, Danielle Price points out that “[w]hen *The Secret Garden* opens, Mary is clearly a bad seed. Or, at least, maternal neglect and her Indian environment have caused weeds to spring up.”¹⁸ This statement provides further evidence that India is not a good place to live in.

With the outbreak of the cholera, India is no longer only a place of disease, but also one of death. Cholera, by the time Hodgson Burnett wrote *The Secret*

15 PARSONS, Linda T. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden: Re-Visioning the Feminine in *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Children’s Literature in Education* 33,4 (2002): 247–68, 250.

16 Compare the depiction of the negative influence of the Indian climate on a healthy body, for instance, with how India is described in a classic of Victorian literature, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

17 Cf. PRICE, Danielle E. “Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden.” In: *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4–14, 8: “Burnett perpetuates common contemporary stereotypes when she depicts Mary as if her birth in India has somehow infected her with the same skin colour as its nature.”

18 PRICE. “Cultivating Mary.” 7.

Garden, was a disease laden with moral and emotional baggage because many people believed that it was a kind of punishment of the “thoughtless and immoral”.¹⁹ Moreover, it was generally believed that cholera was unlikely to attack respectable people.²⁰ In Hodgson Burnett’s depiction, negativity prevails because “[t]he cholera had broken out *in its most fatal form* [italics mine] and people were dying like flies” (*Secret Garden* 10). What is more, when Mary is the focaliser the characters who surround her are seen through a strong colonial lens. The only thing Mary encounters is “mysterious and frightening sounds” (*Secret Garden* 10). And later on, the narrator remarks that “[m]any things happened during the hours in which she slept so heavily, but she was not disturbed by the *wails* and the sound of *things* [both italics mine] being carried in and out of the bungalow” (*Secret Garden* 10). Moreover, the few surviving native servants of the Lennox’ household are more or less described as heartless and uncaring because they “had left the house as quickly as they could get out of it, none of them even remembering that there was a Missie Sahib” (*Secret Garden* 12). Despite the colonial attitude, in the end, both colonisers and colonised are equal because they all die of cholera. All these features create an entirely negative image of India, as a place of disease and death.

Misselthwaite Manor

Having lost her parents to the cholera in India, Mary is sent from India to Yorkshire to stay with her uncle Archibald Craven in Misselthwaite Manor, a huge house on the moor. At first, the house itself appears to pose a threat to Mary with its Gothic grandeur. Her first impression is described as follows:

The entrance door was a huge one made of massive, curiously shaped panels of oak studded with big iron nails and bound with great iron bars. It opened into an enormous hall, which was so dimly lighted that the faces in the portraits on the walls and the figures in the suits of armor made Mary feel that she did not want to look at them. As she stood on the stone floor she looked a very small, odd little black figure, and she felt as small and lost and odd as she looked. (*Secret Garden* 25)

With its oak panelling, iron bars, portraits and suits of armour, Hodgson Burnett’s manor house evokes other Gothic settings such as Gateshead in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), or the archetype of all Gothic castles, Horace Walpole’s eerie *Castle of Otranto* (1764). However, the furnishings are only one important aspect in the passage. What is even more striking is the way in which

19 FURST, Lilian R. (ed.). *Medical Progress and Social Reality. A Reader in Nineteenth-Century Medicine and Literature*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2000. 10.

20 FURST. *Medical Progress and Social Reality*. 10.

the rather gloomy atmosphere is transferred onto Mary. The oppression that the house emanates oppresses and frightens her. This is enhanced by the juxtaposition of words like ‘massive’, ‘big’, ‘great’ and ‘enormous’ to describe the house with the words ‘small’ and ‘little’ that characterise Mary. One gets the impression that she is about to enter a prison-like place. This effect is enhanced by the fact that Mary has to spend most of her time alone inside the seemingly empty house, which appears to be inhabited only by silent portraits and motionless suits of armours. Only after a while she discovers her cousin Colin Craven, “the other sick and lonely child in the book”,²¹ who is confined to his room due to an unspecified illness. Colin is more or less locked up and left to himself in this dark and dingy place (cf. *Secret Garden* 118ff). Mary discovers him in bed at night, cross, tearful and unable to sleep. She finds out that he has been ill most of his young life and thus has been prescribed a treatment resembling a common nineteenth-century practice called ‘rest cure’ which included confinement to bed and no activity of any kind.²² The nature of Colin’s illness is not explained but symptoms include a weak back, headaches, fevers, tantrums, tiredness and restlessness, and he calls himself an invalid. What is more, he often talks about death and dying young. Colin is not an atypical Victorian boy of the upper class. Sarah Graham, in her study on Victorian childhood, points to the fact that often in large manor houses like Misselthwaite “the expense of medical care was no problem, nevertheless physical and emotional neglect were far from uncommon”.²³ This holds true for Colin because his father is away most of the time.

The servants of Misselthwaite call him ‘hysteric’ and thus use a term charged with meaning in order to give a name to a condition which is difficult to diagnose and probably due only to its supposed treatment: to Colin this means having been locked up all alone and almost forgotten in his “lion’s den”, as Martha calls his room (*Secret Garden* 131). “My father won’t let people talk me over [...]. The servants are not allowed to speak about me” (*Secret Garden* 120), he tells Mary. Here an interesting paradox arises which will later become more obvious. Calling Colin’s room a lion’s den implies that Colin is indeed powerful, not just a helpless and sickly boy.

Hysteria was and still is a gendered condition commonly associated with women, as, for instance, David Morris notes.²⁴ As a female illness it was first

21 GOHLKE, Madelon. “Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” In: *College English* 41,8 (1980): 894 – 902, 896.

22 Cf. MORRIS, David B. *The Culture of Pain*. Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1993. 113.

23 GRAHAM, Sarah. *Little Victims. Sick Children in the Victorian Era*. London: Macmillan Journals, 1977. 13.

24 Cf. MORRIS. *The Culture of Pain*. 104 ff.

mentioned in 1618, hypochondria being its male counterpart.²⁵ Its description does indeed resemble Colin's diffuse symptoms, as can be deduced from the quotation below. Morris points out that

[...] hysteria was less a single disease than the name for a hodgepodge of changing symptoms. At least from the time of Galen in the second century, such symptoms included dysfunctions ranging from coughs and hiccups to tremors, tics, fainting, convulsions, and innumerable deficits of vision, hearing, taste, sight, and speech. According to Sydenham,²⁶ in fact, hysteria could imitate the symptoms of almost every known disease.²⁷

Consulting Thomas Allison, physician in nineteenth-century Britain, leads to a similar diagnosis of Colin's illness. What Allison terms nervousness and hypochondria might sound familiar to the reader of Hodgson Burnett's novel:

This [hypochondria] is a peculiar disease, usually affecting the delicate or those who have insufficient work or mental stimulus. It is a condition of the system in which all kinds of symptoms, natural or abnormal, are carefully noted and worried over. A better term for this complaint would be 'hypersensitiveness' that is, the brooding over ordinary things or symptoms which a person in health would not notice.²⁸

This seems to describe Colin's state both of body and mind. Besides, Mary's observation "[w]hen he was amused and interested she thought he scarcely looked like an invalid at all, except that his face was so colorless and he was always on the sofa" (*Secret Garden* 142) is another confirmation of this.

The man responsible for Colin's medical supervision is not only his GP but also his uncle. Dr Craven is an altogether ambiguous character. Very early on, the reader gets the impression that Colin might not be seriously ill after all. When Dr Craven appears, this feeling is enhanced. His double role as uncle and doctor puts him into an ambivalent position because if Colin were to die before him, Craven would become the heir of Misselthwaite. For that reason, he is eager to make Colin believe that he is severely ill. Spending time with Mary revives Colin's spirits, which a good doctor would interpret as a positive development. Not so Dr Craven. He almost reprimands Colin for overexciting himself and later on he uses the nurse to act as a mouthpiece when she tells Colin that "he must not forget that he was ill; he must not forget that he was very easily tired" (*Secret Garden* 141). It does not become clear whether Dr Craven is in a difficult situation financially and thus needs his inheritance, but it is obvious that he has ulterior motives in his treatment of Colin, thinking to himself that "[i]f this

25 Cf. MORRIS. *The Culture of Pain*. 106–07.

26 David MORRIS calls Thomas Sydenham "the English Hippocrates" of seventeenth-century Britain (*The Culture of Pain*. 108).

27 MORRIS. *The Culture of Pain*. 108.

28 ALLISON. *Victorian Guide*. 99–100.

tiresome hysterical boy should chance to get well he himself would lose all chance of inheriting Misselthwaite” (*Secret Garden* 181). However, the character of Dr Craven is not malicious: Hodgson Burnett mitigates his selfish thoughts by having the narrator point out that “he was not an unscrupulous man, though he was a weak one, and he did not intend to let him run into actual danger” (*Secret Garden* 181). The text gives the impression that, at some point, Colin’s father must have distrusted Dr Craven’s skills because he had a doctor from London come to see his son. The way in which this nameless doctor is described emphasises the fact that, in general, in the nineteenth century the social position of physicians was improving substantially in that their profession was respected more, which was mainly due to medical advancements at the time.²⁹ Colin himself recalls the encounter as follows: “I used to wear an iron thing to keep my back straight, but a *grand doctor* [italics mine] came from London to see me and said it was stupid. He told them to take it off and keep me out in the fresh air. I hate fresh air and I don’t want to go out” (*Secret Garden* 121). Despite the fact that Colin calls the physician ‘grand’, his diagnosis did not have any effect on the way Colin was treated medically afterwards. It seems as though the doctor from London was an advocate of the idea that fresh air was good for a child’s development. Some Victorian physicians greatly believed in the positive effects of growing up in accordance with nature. Among them was T.H. Tanner, who argued that “[t]he grand rule for parents to adopt in educating their offspring, is to direct the training in harmony with Nature; or in other words, with a due regard to the principles of physiology, so that the child may grow up with a sound mind in a healthy and vigorous body”.³⁰

Martha, who has worked at Misselthwaite Manor for a long time, also remembers the doctor’s visit, but her evaluation of the situation and of Colin as a patient is of a different nature, as can be seen from the following:

Once they made him wear a brace but he fretted so he was downright ill. Then a *big doctor* [italics mine] came to see him, an’ made them take it off. He talked to th’ other doctor quite rough – in a polite way. He said there’d been too much medicine an’ too much lettin’ him have his own way. (*Secret Garden* 132–33)

That statement sums up nicely what everyone in the house seems to know anyway. Colin is not the easiest of patients, yet there is no one around to tell him off until Mary appears on the scene. This precludes any possible criticism of Dr Craven’s medical skills. Having to react properly to Colin’s tantrums turns him into an almost pitiful character because

29 Cf. FURST. *Medical Progress and Social Reality*. 16 and PORTER, Roy. *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind. A Medical History of Humanity*. New York/London: Norton, 1999. 668 ff.

30 TANNER, T.H. *A Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*. London: Henry Renshaw, 1858. 96.

[h]e was always sent for at once when such a thing occurred and he always found, when he arrived, a white shaken boy lying on his bed, sulky and still so hysterical that he was ready to break into fresh sobbing at the least word. In fact, Dr. Craven dreaded and detested the difficulties of these visits (*Secret Garden* 179).

Interestingly, despite the fact that Dr Craven is a grown man, and probably even an experienced practitioner, he does not express any authority. Like most of the adult characters in the novel he remains colourless and somewhat weak.

By and large, it can be said that the house is ruled by Colin and his illness, trapped in his dark room, until Mary comes and changes his life. She diagnoses Colin's condition properly and she is the only one who dares tell him after one of his dreaded tantrums: "You didn't feel a lump! [...] If you did it was only a hysterical lump. Hysterics make lumps. There's nothing the matter with your horrid back – nothing but hysterics!" (*Secret Garden* 166) Interestingly, before Mary discovers the secret garden she is very similar to Colin, sickly, unhappy and more or less unwanted, so it remains to be established why she is so changed after the discovery.

The Secret Garden

Before finding Colin in his room, Mary is being taken care of by Martha, the good-natured housemaid. She provides her with basic necessities and, for instance, encourages her to eat porridge, which especially in Victorian times was supposed to be good for children.³¹ She also urges her to "wrap up warm an' run out an' play" (*Secret Garden* 34). Victorian physician Dr Thomas Allison was a great believer in fresh air, and claimed that

[t]he longer children are out in the open air the better for them. Let them be out in all weathers; wind will give colour to their cheeks, the sun will tan them and the rain will not harm them. Frost makes them run about to keep warm and the cold weather invigorates them.³²

Being outside has just this effect on Mary, who starts running about with a skipping rope. Out in the open she meets Martha's brother Dickon, "the child of nature"³³, who serves "as a narrative agent, almost, for the transition of Mary and

31 Cf. ALLISON. *Victorian Guide*. 37: "All classes may eat porridge with benefit, and if the precautions and rules I give are attended to, good results must follow its use. Children thrive on it and grown-up persons keep well on it at very little cost.", and HARPER. *Finding out about Victorian Childhood*. 40: "Diet improved towards the end of the century as doctors began to realize the relationship between health and an unbalanced diet."

32 ALLISON. *Victorian Guide*. 109.

33 WILKIE. "Digging up." 81.

Colin.”³⁴ Together with this Pan-like character,³⁵ Mary explores the mysterious garden. Basically, Dickon reflects everything Mary is not. He is literally down-to-earth, always happy and he is in accord with nature.

Mary’s discovery of the door to the locked garden introduces the reader to the third space of the novel after India and Misselthwaite, and, more importantly, to the only therapeutic landscape. The garden as space forms a counter-space to India and the house because it is portrayed as “the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place any one could imagine” (*Secret Garden* 75). Obviously, the garden is man-made and thus it is what Wilbert Gesler calls a built environment. At the same time, as it has been more or less abandoned for a while, it has features of a natural environment, too. It is important to note that Gesler and Kearns explain that built and natural environments are not antithetic and, as a result, can overlap.³⁶

House and garden share a certain mysteriousness, yet the garden differs strongly from Misselthwaite Manor because “the garden is enclosed, but in contrast to the house it is liberating, wild, and health-inducing and egalitarian.”³⁷ In accordance with Victorian notions, this garden is “seen as largely beneficent, recuperative, Edenic, and pleasurable.”³⁸ Or, as Gesler and Kearns put it, “Western culture is strongly affected by notions of a healing Mother Nature.”³⁹ Clearly the garden is a therapeutic landscape because entering it for Mary means healing. In contrast to the rather oppressive atmosphere of the house, Mary feels free in the secret garden. “She liked the name, and she liked still more the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in no one knew where she was. It seemed almost like being shut out of the world on some fairy place.” (*Secret Garden* 86) Strikingly, even the weather conditions improve after her discovery and, accordingly, the narrator opens up a new chapter by stating that “[t]he sun shone down for nearly a week on the secret garden” (*Secret Garden* 86).

It does not come as a surprise, then, that being in the garden has a positive effect on Mary. Its restorative powers bring about a change of a physical nature, which is visible to herself after some digging and working in the garden. She is happy to note that “I’m growing fatter [...] and I’m growing stronger. I used to always be tired. When I dig I’m not tired at all. I like to smell the earth when it’s turned up” (*Secret Garden* 101). Elizabeth Lennox Keyser states that Mary is

34 WILKIE. “Digging up.” 81.

35 Cf. WILKIE. “Digging up.” 78.

36 GESLER, Wilbert and Robin A. KEARNS. *Culture/Place/Health*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002. 133.

37 WILKIE. “Digging up.” 79.

38 WILKIE. “Digging up.” 77.

39 GESLER and KEARNS. *Culture/Place/Health*. 121.

proud because “these are signs of her growing strength.”⁴⁰ The housekeeper Mrs Medlock and Martha also see Mary’s appearance changing (cf. *Secret Garden* 156). And when she visits Colin after a day in the garden, he remarks “You smell like flowers and – and fresh things [...]. What is it you smell of? It’s cool and warm and sweet all at the same time” (*Secret Garden* 174). It seems like the garden is clinging to Mary, even after she has left it.

What is even more fundamental is the fact that inside the garden “somehow she did not feel lonely at all” (*Secret Garden* 77). So, Mary is also altered by the garden on an emotional level. Being inside it turns her into a more empathetic girl who is suddenly interested in other people. This confirms Gesler’s notion that “getting well is not limited to a physical cure. The mind has to be put at rest, one’s spiritual and emotional needs must be met.”⁴¹ And this is what happens to Mary in the garden. In addition, for the first time in her life, she connects with nature and develops an understanding of the seasons, especially the approaching spring.

With the introduction of the garden, a certain inside/outside dichotomy is established. Teresa Bridgeman points out that “[w]hole narratives may be constructed on whether protagonists are inside or outside a container”.⁴² The container in that case is the garden. Indeed, there is a strong emphasis on being inside the garden at several points in the novel. Firstly, after Mary’s discovery the narrator comments “She was standing *inside* the secret garden” (*Secret Garden* 74). Later we learn that “she was *inside* the wonderful garden and she could come through the door under the ivy any time and she felt as if she had found a world of her own” (*Secret Garden* 75).⁴³

After a while, the growth of the plants in the garden reflects Mary’s emotional and physical growth.⁴⁴ At this stage in the narrative, the reader is taken back to India once more, where Mary’s attempts at growing flowers were fruitless. “I didn’t know about them [gardens] in India,” said Mary. “I was always ill and tired and it was too hot. I sometimes made little beds in the sand and stuck flowers in them. But here it is different” (*Secret Garden* 113). It seems as if Mary tried to build her own little space of health in India. In terms of the concept of therapeutic landscapes, she wanted to create a built environment in which she could have grown her own plants and potentially would have got better. Due to the

40 LENNOX KEYSER, Elizabeth. “‘Quite Contrary’: Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Children’s Literature* 11 (1983): 1–13, 9.

41 GESLER, Wilbert. *Healing Places*. Lanham/Boulder: Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, 2003. 3.

42 BRIDGEMAN, Teresa. “Time and Space.” In: David Herman (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 52–65, 53.

43 In both cases, the italics are added deliberately by Hodgson Burnett.

44 Cf. GOHLKE. “Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” 896.

portrayal of India as a place of illness, obviously, it could not serve as therapeutic landscape and thus, quite fittingly, her attempts were to no avail.

The garden, however, is also a space of paradox. Tracing back its history reveals that it used to belong to Colin's mother, who died there, which is why it had been locked up all the time. Colin's father even went as far as burying the key, so nobody could enter the garden again. Although being locked up is not regarded as negative by Mary, it still gives the impression that the garden is a place one should not be in. This negative side of the garden confirms what has been said earlier about therapeutic landscapes not always being entirely positive. As Gesler and Baer point out, "the idea of a complete eradication of all health problems within a therapeutic landscape can be easily dismissed as utopian."⁴⁵ In fact, the garden, more precisely a tree in it, actually caused severe damage and changed Colin's life forever after his mother's death. Thus, the garden is not only a restorative, but also a potentially dangerous space.

Only after her life changing discovery of the garden is Mary able to help Colin. The first thing she does is bring the garden into Misselthwaite by telling Colin stories about her life outside the house and inside the garden. This alone is sufficient to bring about a metamorphosis in Colin – the same transformation that she herself has gone through. Just the thought of the garden alters his appearance notably. The physical impact on him is remarkable: "His whole face brightened and a little color came into it." (*Secret Garden* 172) This supports Allison's aforementioned hypothesis that hypersensitive people brood unnecessarily and thus fall ill, whereas whenever they are kept busy, their condition improves. Mary provides Colin with this mental stimulus in the form of the garden. His first day in the garden is reminiscent of Mary's, and, again, the weather is in tune with the harmonious situation. Mary, Colin and Dickon are wrapped up cosily inside the walls of the mysterious place:

And over walls and earth and trees and swinging sprays and tendrils the fair green veil of tender little leaves had crept, and in the grass under the trees and the gray urns in the alcoves and here and there and everywhere were touches and splashes of gold and purple and white and the trees were showing pink and snow above his head and there were fluttering of wings and faint sweet pipes and humming and scents and scents. And the sun fell warm upon his face like a hand with a lovely touch. And in wonder Mary and Dickon stood and stared at him. He looked so strange and different because a pink glow of color had actually crept all over him – ivory face and neck and hands and all. 'I shall get well! I shall get well!' he cried out. (*Secret Garden* 199)

Despite its dark past, the garden clearly serves as therapeutic, almost utopian, landscape here. What follows is a fairy tale-like transformation of the sad and ill Colin. All of a sudden, he is convinced that he is going to live and not die. What

45 BAER and GESLER. "Reconsidering the Concept." 407.

has been said in the case of Mary also holds true for Colin. In two ways, he grows into a healthy human being: on an emotional level and in a physical sense. Physically, he grows in a fundamental sense because he learns how to walk. The moment he goes out of the house and enters the garden, he grows, literally: he first leaves his bed, then leaves his wheelchair and finally appears in full height. And this, in turn, has an effect on the children's perception of the house. With the children changing, Misselthwaite alters to the positive whenever the two of them act as focalisers. Both Mary and Colin are adventurous now and they "saw more rooms and made more discoveries than Mary had made on her first pilgrimage. They found new corridors and corners and flights of steps and new old pictures they liked and weird old things they did not know the use of" (*Secret Garden* 248). The enumeration and the use of words like 'discoveries', 'pilgrimage', as well as the repetition of the words 'more' and 'new' reflect the children's new adventurousness. In a nutshell, their depiction of the house alters completely and it loses its former dingy character due to the positive wave that comes over it in form of the children, who call this the "Magic" of the garden, which is another rather utopian feature.

The sun is shining – the sun is shining. That is the Magic. The flowers are growing – the roots are stirring. That is the Magic. Being alive is the Magic – being strong is the Magic. The Magic is in me – the Magic is in me. It is in me – it is in me. It's in every one of us. (*Secret Garden* 226)

The emphasis on this "Magic" turns the natural/built environment into a symbolic environment because the positive influence is attested to these mythical healing powers of the garden.⁴⁶ Symbolic environments are often connected to myths about health, or can be "understood through the meanings attached to geographical settings".⁴⁷ In other words, the garden has turned into more than a mere garden; it is a place of magical forces and restorative energies now.

Finally, this powerful force transfers even on to Colin's father, who returns to Misselthwaite after another long absence of running away from sorrow about his wife's death and Colin's condition. In accordance with the rules of happy endings, seeing Mary and Colin healthy turns him into a happy man. On the last page of the novel, there is another concluding reference to the inside/outside dichotomy when gardener Ben Weatherstaff explains to the housekeeper "I'll tell thee this. There's been things goin' on outside as you house people knows nowt about. An' what tha'll find out tha'll find out soon" (*Secret Garden* 276). Finally, the characters who are approaching the house have all been transformed by the restorative powers of a therapeutic landscape, the secret garden.

46 Cf. BAER and GESLER. "Reconsidering the Concept." 406.

47 CURTIS, Sarah. *Space, Place and Mental Health*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. 7.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this analysis shows that three very different spaces can be made out in Hodgson Burnett's novel, the most important of which is the secret garden. In several ways, the garden can be read as therapeutic landscape because it turns two formerly sickly children into happy and healthy ones. Despite the fact that the garden is somewhat paradoxical in being both positive and negative, on the whole it serves as space of health and restoration. At first, the garden is a natural and built environment. Later in the novel, it turns into a symbolic environment full of "Magic".

My attempt was to exemplify that the concept of therapeutic landscapes can clearly be applied to fictional texts. In this case, it provided useful terminology for understanding spaces of illness and health. I agree with Baer and Gesler in that, in the future, the concept needs elaboration and complication at some points in order to be even more useful for literary analyses.⁴⁸ In this respect, reworking or expanding the category of symbolic landscapes could be of particular interest. Moreover, reconsidering the arising paradox of therapeutic landscapes, as could be seen with regard to the secret garden, seems necessary in order to add even more depth to the concept.

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48 Cf. BAER and GESLER. "Reconsidering the Concept." 412.

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Redemptive Children in Frances Hodgson Burnett's Novels: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Secret Garden*

The protagonists in Burnett's most famous novels for children, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *The Secret Garden* (1910–11),¹ share a few common traits, above all the fact that they arrive at a new place where eventually they act as redeeming figures on their surroundings because they are good and help others. This pattern applies to Cedric Erroll in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), who crosses the Atlantic to live with his grandfather whom he 'saves' from his misanthropy; and it also applies to Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*, who comes to England from India because her parents died during a cholera epidemic. She differs from Cedric in that she first has to be 'saved' from her being a "cross" and "contrary"² child so that she can subsequently save her sickly cousin and the whole household of Misselthwaite Manor.³

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- 1 The novel *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, together with a stage version published two years after the book, made Burnett famous and brought her "phenomenal popularity and financial success" (BIXLER, Phyllis. *Frances Hodgson Burnett*. Boston: Twayne, 1984. 50). *The Secret Garden* has variously been adapted to movie versions and is one of the most popular books even nowadays: in "The Big Read" (2003) it was number 51 among the 100 favourite books of the British. See The BIG READ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/top100_2.shtml> (accessed 4 May, 2011). – Bixler compares Burnett's novels to one another, on a generic basis; see BIXLER, Phyllis. "Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett: A Generic Analysis of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*." In: *Children's Literature: An International Journal* 7 (1978): 191–207.
 - 2 Mary is, from the beginning of the novel, labelled as a 'cross' and as a 'contrary' child; cf. BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Dennis Butts. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1910–11]. The term 'cross' appears, e. g., when she is first presented: "One frightfully hot morning, when she was about nine years old, she awakened feeling very cross" (*Secret Garden* 2). The children of the family she stays with after the death of her parents nickname her as "Mistress Mary Quite Contrary" – thereby referring to the nursery rhyme – "by the second day" (*Secret Garden* 8–9) of her sojourn.
 - 3 Yet another related pattern applies to Sara Crewe in *A Little Princess* (1905), who returns to England from India to go to a boarding school, is shortly afterwards orphaned and poor but is still able and willing to help others, which rescues her from her miserable state. The focus of this paper will, however, be on *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Secret Garden*, not only because they are probably the most popular writings of Burnett, but also because they epitomize her

This difference in character between Cedric in the earlier *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and Mary in the later *The Secret Garden* might be described in terms of a change in the depiction of children from ideal to real, from sentimental to authentic and, hence, also in terms of a development in Burnett's writing that reflects a more general development in the portrayal of children in the nineteenth century (that would go on well into the twentieth). While Cedric shows strong resemblances with, e. g., Oliver Twist and also with Romantic notions of childhood,⁴ Mary is akin to girls like Laura Graham in Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* (1839), Jane Eyre in Charlotte Brontë's novel (1847),⁵ and even Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) as well as Alice in Lewis Carroll's tales *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), who all are mischievous and at times even disobedient.⁶

If one considers *Little Lord Fauntleroy* as an early example of Burnett's writing and *The Secret Garden* as a later (and maybe even more accomplished) one, one gets the impression that, in the course of her life as a novelist, Burnett makes use of and varies the pattern of the redemptive child from ideal to authentic. While Cedric Erroll is a model child who behaves perfectly in every situation, Mary starts out as an anti-heroine who, however, eventually turns into a heroine, yet without becoming 'perfect' or ideal. Burnett seems to turn the attributes that are at the basis of Cedric's character into their opposite to create Mary. A few close readings of passages from these two novels shall serve to illustrate the change in style and tone that is linked to the change in presentation.

early and her late work and are therefore particularly apt to illustrate a change in her presentation of children.

- 4 Oliver is presented as incorruptible (see below). As to Romantic notions of childhood, these were in particular based on Wordsworth's idealized and nostalgic conceptions of childhood, as, e. g., in his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"; see also CARPENTER, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985. 8; and ČERNÝ, Lothar. "Autor-Intention und dichterische Phantasie." In: *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 224,1 (1987): 286 – 303, 293.
- 5 Analogies between the character of Jane Eyre and Mary Lennox have been noted in passing by JAMES, Susan E. "Wuthering Heights for Children: Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*." In: *Connotations* 10,1 (2000/2001): 59 – 76; and TYLER, Lisa. "Brontë and Burnett: A Response to Susan E. James." In: *Connotations* 12,1 (2002/2003): 61 – 66; as well as by KEYSER, Elisabeth Lennox. "'Quite Contrary': Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*." In: *Children's Literature: Annual of the MLA Division on Children's Literature and Children's Literature Association* 11 (1983): 1 – 13.
- 6 They are not so by ill-will but mostly also because they are neglected or given too much freedom. Laura, for instance, is often simply thoughtless, e. g. when she and her brother invite all kinds of children to a tea-party without telling their own grandmother, so that there is no food (cf. chapter 2, "The Grand Feast" of *Holiday House*). Jane Eyre, for instance, is an orphan and has never been loved. Alice is designed against the grain of an idealized childhood (cf. my book on Carroll's *Alice* books). And Maggie Tulliver has a rebellious spirit that is, however, not based on a bad character.

I. Beginnings and Introductions

Both children are introduced in the first chapter of the novel. In the case of Cedric Erroll, the reader is first introduced to him after the death of his father when he is trying to comfort his grief-stricken mother. The background story is told first: how his father married an American woman that the old Earl, the boy's grandfather, would not agree to, and how he was subsequently told never to return to England and settled in New York. Then follows a rather long characterisation of the little boy, a perfect child despite the circumstances of his birth and family life so far:

Though he was born in so quiet and cheap a little home, it seemed as if there never had been a *more fortunate baby*. In the first place he was *always well*, and so he never gave anyone trouble; in the second place he had so *sweet a temper* and ways so *charming* that he was a *pleasure* to everyone; and in the third place he was so *beautiful* to look at that he was quite a picture. Instead of being a bald-headed baby, he started in life with a quantity of *soft, fine, gold-coloured hair*, which curled up at the ends, and went into loose rings by the time he was six months old; he had *big brown eyes and long eyelashes and a darling little face*; he had so strong a back and splendid sturdy legs that at nine months he learned suddenly to walk; his *manners* were so good for a baby, that it was *delightful* to make his acquaintance. He seemed to feel that *everyone was his friend*, and when anyone spoke to him, when he was in his carriage in the street, he would give the stranger one *sweet serious look* with the brown eyes, and then follow in with a *lovely, friendly smile*; and the consequence was, that there was not a person in the neighbourhood of the quiet street where he lived – even to the grocery-man at the corner, who was considered the crossiest creature alive – who was not pleased to see him, and speak to him. And every month of his life he grew handsomer and more interesting. [...] His greatest *charm* was his *cheerful, fearless, quaint little way of making friends* with people. I think it arose from his having a very *confiding* nature, and a *kind little heart that sympathized* with everyone, and wished to make everyone as comfortable as he liked to be himself. [...] He had never heard an unkind or uncourteous word spoken at home; he had always been loved and caressed and treated tenderly, and so *his childish soul was full of kindness and innocent warm feeling*.⁷

This is the description of a child that is thoroughly happy and good: he is not only good-looking but also never ill, pleasing, friendly, warm-hearted, cheerful – almost too good to be true. Cedric Erroll is described by the narrator in positive terms only. He is an innately good child who grows up in a loving family who care very much for him. His looks confirm and go hand in hand with his inner goodness: “He is a friend of the whole world because he considers everyone in the world his friend.”⁸ When the New York housemaid thinks that “[i]t’s like a

7 BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. London: Puffin, 1994 [1886]. 6–7 (my emphasis).

8 BIXLER, Phyllis. “Idealization of the Child and Childhood in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Little*

young lord he looks” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 10), she states a kind of nobility that does not only show on the outside but also corresponds to an inner quality. He is a child very much in the tradition of both Romantic poetry and also of formulaic stories:⁹ uncorrupted and pleasant, representing an ideal state of human existence, he never does anything to trouble his relations – neither intentionally nor by mistake¹⁰ – and he is eventually rewarded for his good behaviour by inheriting a large fortune which enables him to help others.

Things are quite different with Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*. She is introduced in the very first paragraph of the story as follows:

When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle everybody said she was the *most disagreeable-looking child* ever seen. It was true, too. She had a *little thin face* and a *little thin body, thin light hair* and a *sour expression*. Her *hair was yellow*, and her *face was yellow* because she had *always been ill* in one way or another. Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. 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 the Mem Sahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. So when she was a *sickly, fretful, ugly little baby* she was kept out of the way, and when she became a *sickly, fretful, toddling thing* she was kept out of the way also. She never remembered seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces of her Ayah and the other native servants, and as they always obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything, because the Mem Sahib would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying, by the time she was six years old she was as *tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived*. (*Secret Garden* 1–2; emphasis AZ)

Lord Fauntleroy and Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer*.” In: Selma K. Richardson (ed.). *Research about Nineteenth-Century Children and Books: Portrait Studies*. Urbana: Graduate School of Lib. Science, University of Illinois, 1980. 85–96, 89. Cf. also AVERY, Gillian. *Childhood’s Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children’s Fiction, 1770–1950*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975. 152: “Innocence and a loving, trustful manner are the key attributes of the late Victorian and the Edwardian ideal child. And prettiness had become of great importance.”

- 9 Cf. BIXLER, Phyllis. “The Oral Formulaic Training of a Popular Fiction Writer: Frances Hodgson Burnett.” In: *Journal of Popular Culture* 15,4 (1982): 42–43.
- 10 Because of this kind of characterisation, Cedric has been regarded as a ‘sissy’ by several critics, e.g. WILSON, Anna. “*Little Lord Fauntleroy*: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation.” In: *American Literary History* 8,2 (1996): 234–38; RICHARDSON, Alan. “Reluctant Lords and Lame Princes: Engendering the Male Child in Nineteenth-Century Juvenile Fiction.” In: *Children’s Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children’s Literature and Children’s Literature Association* 21 (1993): 4–11. Yet Cedric also shows traits and behaviour that are typical of a boy. He is strong, plays with other boys and wins races, plays “soldiers” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 12) and sticks to the ‘male’ role of protecting his mother; see also on this aspect WHITE, Robert L. “*Little Lord Fauntleroy* as Hero.” In: Ray B. Browne and Larry Landrum (eds.). *Challenges in American Culture*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970. 211.

And, a little later, the narrator adds that: “She was not an affectionate child and had never cared much for any one” (*Secret Garden* 5). She is what Mary Stolzenbach calls an “interior orphan”¹¹ who has never been loved and is not able to love in return. While Cedric is introduced and characterised in positive terms, the opposite is the case for Mary: she neither has beautiful looks nor a nice temper, and she is unwanted as her parents are too busy with their position in the government and in society to seriously care for her.¹²

The difference in presentation between Cedric and Mary becomes even more obvious when the two passages in question, the first introductions of the children, are juxtaposed and compared with each other, as in the following chart:

Cedric	Mary
a [...] fortunate baby	a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby
always well	had always been ill
sweet a temper, charming	Fretful
beautiful to look at	most disagreeable-looking child
soft, fine, gold-coloured hair	her hair was yellow
big brown eyes and long eyelashes and a darling little face	her face was yellow
a pleasure to everyone; sweet serious look [...] and [...] a lovely, friendly smile; cheerful, fearless, quaint little way of making friends	little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression
a very confiding nature, and a kind little heart that sympathized with everyone	She was not an affectionate child and had never cared much for any one
his childish soul was full of kindness and innocent warm feeling	as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived

11 STOLZENBACH, Mary. “Braid Yorkshire: The Language of Myth? An Appreciation of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.” In: *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams and the Genres of Myth and Fantasy Studies* 20,4 (78) (1995): 25 – 29, 25. This existence as an “interior orphan” is described as follows: “Mary’s parents lived on a lavish scale, and she was indulged by the ayah and the other servants, but she was an interior orphan, only to become one in fact as well. How well Burnett painted the loneliness of the child in India, combined with the hot, inhospitable strangeness of her environment, climactically revealed in the cholera attack when all die around her – no one thinks of her, they never have! – and she is left all alone. [...] Mary has been forgotten all her life, and it happens again.” (STOLZENBACH. “Braid Yorkshire.” 25)

12 FOSTER and SIMMONS comment on this as follows: “Marginalized, forgotten, refusing to confirm to the romantic archetypes of either femininity or childishness, she forms a complex study of a problem child. While at one level her moral deficiencies are reminiscent of the naughty children of Victorian tract literature, they are presented here more as a natural consequence of her abandonment and ill-treatment. The victim of systematic neglect by her parents, Mary is depicted as withdrawn, sulky and bad-tempered.” FOSTER, Shirley and Judy SIMMONS. “Frances Hodgson Burnett: *The Secret Garden*.” In: Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (ed.). *The Secret Garden: A Norton Critical Edition*. New York: Norton, 2006. 324 – 41, 331.

This juxtaposition of a few characteristics from the texts illustrates that Burnett in her presentation of Mary actually draws on contrasts with Cedric: she turns the positive character traits which she uses to portray Cedric into their opposites to describe the character of Mary. In some cases – a fortunate baby vs. a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby; always well vs. had always been ill; beautiful to look at vs. most disagreeable-looking child – the contrasts are almost verbatim or founded on a variation of the same concepts in the negative. In this respect, Burnett's novels are indeed formulaic as she makes use of standard characteristics from other children's books – either in a positive or a negative way.

Despite this rather negative introduction of Mary, the narrator does not blame the child but emphasises that it is really the fault of the parents, who never took care of their child and did not really want her, and that this is the reason why Mary has developed into such a miserable creature. Still, Burnett makes sure to portray her still *as a child*: early in the story she is shown to be playing in the garden and pretending “that she was making a flower-bed” (*Secret Garden* 2). Pretend-play is characteristic of children – one of the prime examples is Lewis Carroll's Alice, who always pretends all kinds of different things.¹³ However, Mary is not a happy child – and she is not being loved. The difference between the stories is therefore also grounded on a difference between the respective parents: while the narrator stresses the loving relationship between Cedric and his parents – “He had never heard an unkind or uncourteous word spoken at home; he had always been loved” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 7) –, the relationship between Mary and her parents is virtually non-existent and based on alienation rather than love. Cedric is taken care of, and his parents are very fond of him, while Mary is neglected by her mother, who prefers to go to parties, and by her father, who is busy and ill. After the cholera epidemic, for instance, nobody at first realizes that there must be a child somewhere about the house, and Mary is found quite coincidentally and then sent away to live with people she has never met in her life.

13 See, e.g., Alice's “Let's pretend” in the first chapter of *Through the Looking Glass*; CARROLL, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Edited by Roger Lancelyn Green; illustrated by John Tenniel. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1971]. 126. See also FEIN, Greta G. “Pretend Play in Childhood: An Integrative Review.” In: *Child's Development* 52 (1981): 1095–1118; and FEIN, Greta G. “Pretend Play: Creativity and Consciousness.” In: Dietmar Görnitz and Joachim F. Wohlwill (eds.). *Curiosity, Imagination, and Play: On the Development of Spontaneous Cognitive and Motivational Processes*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1987. 281–304.

II. Changes

It is well known that Mary changes after having spent some time at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire – she is transformed both with regard to her appearance and to her attitude and behaviour. On her uncle's estate she does not have to pretend to play in the garden but finds a garden that belongs to her alone and where she grows happier and healthier every day.¹⁴ But Mary does not only change herself, she also brings a change over the whole household of her uncle's manor: she discovers Colin and helps him get well, and this results in her uncle's return home at the end of the novel and his reconciliation with his only son.

Cedric, on the other hand, does not change: there is no need for him to alter his constitution or his behaviour. He is already good at the beginning, and whatever happens to him, he stays so. Yet, despite the overall and overarching differences in character and attitude between Cedric and Mary, there is also an interesting parallel between the two: they both have a healthy and a healing effect on their surroundings that are in need of such good and restorative influence.

Although things are in a graver condition in Misselthwaite Manor – where rooms have been locked since the death of Lilius Craven, Colin's mother, and where everything is governed by grief – also Dorincourt Castle is not in the happiest of states, although a few changes are perceptible already soon after Cedric's appearance on the scene:

Lord Dorincourt had occasion to wear his grim smile many a time as the days passed by. Indeed, as his acquaintance with his grandson progressed, he wore the smile so often that there were moments when it almost lost its grimness. There is no denying that before Lord Fauntleroy had appeared on the scene the old man had been growing very tired of his loneliness and his gout and his seventy-years. After so long a life of excitement and amusement, it was not agreeable to sit alone even in the most splendid room, with one foot on a gout-stool, and with no other diversion than flying into a rage, and shouting at a frightened footman who hated the sight of him. [...]
He hated the long nights and days, and he grew more and more savage and irritable. (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 140)

Until the arrival of Cedric, Dorincourt Castle was mostly determined by its owner's bad moods and grimness that were caused by his loneliness and his gout. It is quite telling with regard to the old Lord's character that he sought

14 For the first time in her life, Mary experiences friendship. Martha Sowerby is the first person to approach her on a friendly basis: "the way in which Martha reacts to and affects Mary resembles the way in which Mary later reacts to and affects Colin." KEYSER. "'Quite Contrary.'" 4. But it is Dickon in particular who evokes her interest and whom she befriends: "she began to feel a slight interest in Dickon, and as she had never before been interested in any one but herself, it was the dawning of a *healthy sentiment*" (*Secret Garden* 31; my emphasis).

“diversion” in flying into a rage and shouting at his servants. But his attitude changes – he even learns to smile again. Cedric wins over people with his kindness, which is already highlighted in his introduction at the beginning of the novel: even the grocery-man, who is known as “the crossdest creature alive”, is “pleased to see him, and speak to him”. He has the same effect on his grandfather:

And then Fauntleroy came; and when the Earl saw the lad, fortunately for the little fellow, the secret pride of the grandfather was gratified at the outset. If Cedric had been a less handsome little fellow the old man might have taken so strong a dislike to the boy that he would not have given himself the chance to see his grandson’s finer qualities. But he chose to think that Cedric’s beauty and fearless spirit were the results of Dorincourt blood and a credit to the Dorincourt rank. And then when he heard the lad talk, and saw what a well-bred little fellow he was, notwithstanding his boyish ignorance of all that his new position meant, the Earl liked his grandson more, and actually began to find himself rather entertained. (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 140)

The words “And then Fauntleroy came” mark the change that his arrival causes. He helps his grandfather lose his “savage and irritable” behaviour merely by being himself. Although it is mostly old Dorincourt’s pride that is being gratified, he is able to show some affection for the little boy and finds pleasure in him – thereby ignoring that the boy’s mother might have had her share in his good behaviour and attributing it solely to his heritage.¹⁵ He watches his grandson when he learns to ride and is “so pleased that he [...] almost forg[ets] his gout” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 141). Cedric’s good looks and his being well-bred help him in gaining his grandfather’s good opinion. He makes the old man forget his ailments: Lord Dorincourt feels better because of the boy’s companionship. It is Cedric’s inner nobility that is important.

At the same time, he is not spoilt¹⁶ nor does he take advantage of his privileged position with the old Lord but rather makes use of it for altruistic motives. His inner nobility shows very directly when he helps a poor lame boy by allowing him to ride his pony and by getting crutches for him. His grandfather is “entertained” by the story and not angry at all, as his groom Wilkins expected; and in fact, this little incident contributes to their “becoming more intimate every

15 Cedric’s qualities have clearly been moulded by his mother, and it is this nurture that Mary – and also Sara Crewe in *A Little Princess* – lacks. See also Silver on this aspect. SILVER, Anna Krugovoy. “Domesticating Brontë’s Moors: Motherhood in *The Secret Garden*.” In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21,2 (1997): 193–203.

16 The narrator explicitly comments on this: “Apparently he was to have everything he wanted, and to do everything he wished to do. And though this would certainly not have been a very wise plan to pursue with all small boys, his young lordship bore it amazingly well. Perhaps, notwithstanding his sweet nature, he might have been somewhat spoiled by it, if it had not been for the hours he spent with his mother at Court Lodge.” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 146) Again the mother’s positive influence is emphasized (cf. n15).

day” as it helps “Faulteroy’s faith in his lordship’s benevolence and virtue increase[...]” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 146).¹⁷

When Cedric’s inheritance is in danger – a woman claims to have been married to the Earl’s older son and have a boy with him who is slightly older than Cedric – the Earl realizes how much he loves Cedric and to what great extent he has got used to having him around:

‘If anyone had told me I could be fond of a child,’ he said, his harsh voice low and unsteady, ‘I should not have believed him. I always detested children – my own more than the rest. I am fond of this one; he is fond of me’ (with a bitter smile). ‘I am not popular; I never was. But he is fond of me. He never was afraid of me – he always trusted me. He would have filled my place better than I have filled it. I know that. He would have been an honour to the name.’ (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 185)

These words are spoken while Lord Dorincourt is watching his grandson sleep. He has just come over his rage about the woman who claims the inheritance and he now regrets his impending loss. The change in his overall attitude is explicitly mentioned, as his rage is different from his usual rages: “this one had been worse than the rest because there had been something more than rage in it” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 185). The narrator is as yet vague as to what that “something more” might be and becomes only slightly more explicit when the lord continues to watch his grandson: “He bent down and stood a minute or so looking at the happy, sleeping face. His shaggy eyebrows were knitted fiercely, and yet *somehow he did not seem fierce at all.*” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 185; my emphasis) It is not spelt out here, but what becomes apparent is that the old man is sad and that he seems to genuinely love the boy and to care for him. This becomes particularly evident when, shortly afterwards, he even goes to visit his younger son’s wife, whom he separated from Cedric to live in a different house. It is then that he admits that he is fond of Cedric: “He pleased me from the first. I am an old man, and was tired of my life. He has given me something to live for, I am proud of him.” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 211) Subsequently, he acknowledges his daughter-in-law for the first time because he recognizes that Cedric owes a great deal of his gentleness and kindness to his mother as well. In the end, the woman who claims to be the real heir’s mother turns out to be an imposter, Cedric is re-installed as the true heir, and the story ends happily. The point of possibly losing his grandson, however, has definitely led to some sort of *anagnorisis* on behalf of the Earl and to a more healthy attitude.

17 “It is Faulteroy’s unquestioning love and innocent belief in him that works upon the embittered old Earl [...]. His efforts change the old man from a gout-ridden roué [...] into a peaceable occupant of the parlor [sic] armchair whence he may fall under the influence of Dearest.” (WILSON. “*Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation.*” 240)

Mary's situation is quite different: she is not at all welcome at her uncle's house – during her journey to Misselthwaite, Mrs Medlock tells her: “‘You mustn't expect that there will be people to talk to you. You'll have to play about and look after yourself.’” (*The Secret Garden* 17) Moreover, it is hard for her to make friends, and for the first time in her life she realizes that she is lonely and becomes much more aware of herself. When she meets the gardener Ben Weatherstaff, he tells her “the truth about herself in her life” (*Secret Garden* 40):

‘Tha' an' me are a good bit alike,’ he said. ‘We was wove out of th' same cloth. We're neither of us good-lookin' an' we're both of us as sour as we look. We've got the same nasty tempers, both of us. I'll warrant.’ (*Secret Garden* 40)

For the first time in her life, Mary starts to think about herself and is then able to make friends, first with a robin, next with Martha and Dickon, and, eventually, with her newly-discovered cousin Colin Craven, an invalid.

Here is another similarity with the story of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. In both stories, an invalid and miserable character is transformed into a healthy and happy one. In the case of Cedric and his grandfather, this transformation is based on the influence of the good character on the ‘bad’: the Earl changes for the better after he has lived with his grandson for a while and under his good influence. Cedric very much resembles Oliver Twist: he does not change for the worse even when exposed to his grandfather's grimness and misanthropy, but “the principle of Good surviv[es] through every adverse circumstance, and triumph[s] at last,” as Dickens put it in the Preface to the third edition of his novel.¹⁸

In the case of Mary and Colin, however, who are both “contrary” and rather selfish, the transformation is based on their similarity. This becomes particularly clear when Colin throws a tantrum during one night and Mary cannot sleep because of him:

As she listened to the sobbing screams she did not wonder that people were so frightened that they gave him his own way in everything rather than hear them. She put her hands over her ears and felt sick and shivering.

[...] She hated them [the sobbing screams] so and was so terrified by them that suddenly they began to make her angry and she felt as if she should like to fly into a tantrum herself and frighten him as he was frightening her. She was not used to any one's tempers but her own. She took down her hands from her ears and sprang up and stamped her foot. (*Secret Garden* 177 – 78)

While Mary is listening to Colin's “sobbing screams”, she becomes so angry that she starts to feel like throwing a tantrum herself; she loses all self-control and

18 DICKENS, Charles. “The Author's Preface to the Third Edition.” In: Kathleen Tillotson (ed.); Stephen Gill (intr. and notes). *Oliver Twist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1841]. liii.

wants to cure him by his own means: she wants to frighten him as he frightens her. Subsequently, she runs to his room and starts to yell at him:

'You stop!' she almost shouted. 'You stop! I hate you! Everybody hates you! I wish everybody would run out of the house and let you scream yourself to death! You *will* scream yourself to death in a minute, and I wish you would!'

A nice sympathetic child could neither have thought nor said such things, but it just happened that the shock of hearing them was the best possible thing for this hysterical boy whom no one had ever dared to restrain or contradict.

He had been lying on his face beating his pillow with his hands and he actually almost jumped around, he turned so quickly at the sound of the furious little voice. His face looked dreadful, white and red, and swollen, and he was gasping and choking; but savage little Mary did not care an atom.

'If you scream another scream,' she said, 'I'll scream too – and I can scream louder than you can, and I'll frighten you, I'll frighten you!' (*Secret Garden* 178–79)

It is exactly her contrariness and her naughty temper that is healthy for him – a nice child would never have achieved the same. The problem is that neither Colin nor Mary ever knew any "constraint" or contradiction, which led to their becoming "contrary" and "hysterical".

As it turns out, Colin is sure that he has felt a lump on his back and will turn into a hunchback, like his father. When he explains this to Mary, she takes his fear seriously and is able to convince him of the truth, namely that he is not an invalid. Colin's healing is based on the ancient medical principle (resurfacing in our culture in homoeopathy) of "similis similibus curantur",¹⁹ that like cures like. Mary and Colin see themselves as in a mirror: Colin only realises his bad behaviour when Mary acts just like him – and vice versa. Thus, they are both healed from their headstrong and contrary behaviour.²⁰ The happy ending of the

19 Cf. the following passage from *The Taming of the Shrew*: "And where two raging fires meet together, / They do consume the thing that feeds their fury." SHAKESPEARE, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Edited by Brian Morris. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 2002 [1962]. 2.1.132–33. This principle of "similis similibus curantur" is also mentioned by Robert BURTON: "I would expell *clavum clavo*, comfort one sorrow with another, idleness with idleness [...] make an antidote out of that which was the prime cause of my disease"; BURTON, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Edited by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling and Rhonda Blair; introduction by J.B. Bamforth. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989. 1: 7.22–25. Angus GOWLAND stresses this aspect in the introduction to his study *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 2. In *King John* this idea occurs as "and falsehood falsehood uses"; SHAKESPEARE, William. *King John*. Edited by E.A.J. Honigsmann. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson Learning, 2002 [1951]. 3.1.277.

20 On the healing process in *The Secret Garden* see also ADAMS, Gillian. "Secrets and Healing Magic in *The Secret Garden*." In: Francelina Butler and Richard Rotert (eds.). *Triumphs of the Spirit in Children's Literature*. Hamden: Library Professional Publications, 1986. 42–53.

story is well-known, but it is remarkable that Burnett would base this on “an angry unsympathetic girl [who] insisted that he was not as ill as he thought he was” (*Secret Garden* 181) and that “he actually felt as if she might be speaking the truth” (*Secret Garden* 181) – instead of having a “nice sympathetic child” caress and indulge him.

III. Endings

In both novels, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Secret Garden*, the happy ending is brought about by means of the redemptive force of children. In *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, the “Eighth Birthday” of the little earl is celebrated in the last chapter; and in *The Secret Garden*, the novel ends with the reconciliation of Colin and his father and the surprise of the whole household when they walk to the house together.

In the very last passage of each novel, however, the redemptive children are conspicuously absent. It almost seems as if their presence is no longer needed now that their redemptive task is accomplished. *Little Lord Fauntleroy* ends with a short passage on the future of Mr Hobbs, who moved to England in the course of the resolution of the affair about the impostor heir:

And that would be the end of my story; but I must add one curious piece of information, which is that Mr Hobbs became so fascinated with high life and was so reluctant to leave his young friend that he actually sold his corner store in New York, and settled in the English village of Erlesboro [...]. And about ten years after, when Dick who had finished his education and was going to visit his brother in California, asked the good grocer if he did not wish to return, he shook his head seriously.

‘Not to live there,’ he said. ‘Not to live there; I want to be near *him*, an’ sort o’ look after him. It’s a good enough country for them that’s young an’ stirrin’ – but there’s faults in it. There’s not an aunt-sister among’em – nor a earl!’ (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 237–38)

Mr Hobbs is so attached to Cedric that he does not want to leave him. But he adds an interesting piece of information: he prefers England to America, although he always had been prejudiced towards the old world, especially after reading a book about the English monarchy where he finds out about Queen Mary and the beheadings during her reign (cf. *Little Lord Fauntleroy* 195), and would have preferred Cedric to stay in America: “It was a pity to make an earl out of him.” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 191) His prejudices become even more obvious when he learns from Cedric that he will not be an earl after all: “It’s my opinion it’s all a put-up job o’ the British ‘ristycrats to rob him of his rights because he’s an American. They’ve had a spite agin us ever since the Revolution, an’ they’re takin’ it out on him.” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 200) He has his own conspiracy theory and is only reconciled with the country when he goes there himself and

finds out what life is like. But this life is, again, determined by Cedric's presence, whose role therefore goes even further than described so far as he has consequently become the symbol of a possible understanding between Britain and America and of an attempt to reconcile the two nations instead of reinforcing cultural stereotypes and clichés.²¹

In *The Secret Garden*, the ending focuses on Colin and his father: Archibald Craven returns to his estate to find his son healthy and running in the garden. Colin being at the centre and Mary fading out towards the end has been regarded as an "antifeminist narrative shift":²² "Colin, in the final episode of the novel, leaves the garden behind and returns to the real power centre, the house, which he is to inherit as master. Mary, the prime mover of his recovery, is significantly absent from the closing tableau".²³ But the reading of her being left out at the end is not necessarily and exclusively negative. The concluding tableau emphasises that the healing of the whole estate has been accomplished – through Mary's agency.

But Mary is not the only redemptive child in *The Secret Garden*, and there is indeed a child in the novel who is, very much like Cedric, thoroughly good and even idealised: Dickon Sowerby.²⁴ It is his influence that helps Mary develop into a happy and healthy girl in the first place, and she is then able to help her cousin Colin. But Dickon is not the central character, and he appears only after Mary has already started to change for the better; yet he has a central role in the overall development of the novel.

21 Cf. WHITE, Robert L. "Little Lord Fauntleroy as Hero." In: Ray B. Browne and Larry Landrum (eds.). *Challenges in American Culture*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970. 209 – 16, 210. – In a similar manner, the old Earl learns to appreciate and respect his daughter-in-law *despite* her being American.

22 WILKIE, Christine. "Digging Up *The Secret Garden*: Noble Innocents of Little Savages?" In: Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (ed.). *The Secret Garden: A Norton Critical Edition*. New York: Norton, 2006. 314 – 24, 322. See also BIXLER, Phyllis. "Gardens, Houses, and Nurturant Power in *The Secret Garden*." In: James Holt McGavran (ed.). *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1991. 208 – 25; FOSTER and SIMMONS. "Frances Hodgson Burnett: *The Secret Garden*." 340; KEYSER. "'Quite Contrary'."; and PAUL, Lissa. "Enigma Variations: What Feminist Theory Knows about Children's Literature." In: Peter Hunt (ed.). *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1990. 148 – 57.

23 FOSTER and SIMMONS. "Frances Hodgson Burnett: *The Secret Garden*." 340.

24 The major difference between Cedric and Dickon lies in their social backgrounds: while Cedric grows up to be an earl, Dickon lives in a poor family with many children. Moreover, he completely lacks Cedric's prettiness; his sister Martha states that "us never thought he was handsome" (*Secret Garden* 114). Dickon is also more mature: while Cedric's behaviour often gives away his childish naivety, Dickon has a grown-up sense for all different kinds of matters, e. g., he knows immediately, by instinct, how to treat Colin when he first meets him. What they share is their innate goodness that has been influenced by their mothers.

Burnett put Mary at the centre of her story, and then Colin beside her. Both are not likeable at first but then are ‘redeemed’ from their being contrary and stubborn. The stylistic device of mirroring the two is one of the ways that makes the story of *The Secret Garden* more complex than the earlier *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. The children are now no longer depicted as ideal or as being entirely good, but as ‘real’ children, which does not mean that they are not good and redemptive but much more interesting, complex and likeable. One can also see that Burnett’s focus shifted in her later story: it is no longer so much about an individual child but rather about a place and how it transforms this child – which is probably why she did not call the story “Mistress/Mary Mary quite Contrary”, as planned originally,²⁵ while her earlier books were entitled as *Editha’s Burglar*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and *A Little Princess*, thus focussing very much on the central character. *The Secret Garden* really is about the magic of a particular place;²⁶ the children who act as redemptive forces within it are agents that are enabled to do so *through* the garden.

By modifying the portrayal of the children in her later novel, Burnett moved away from the imagery of the romantic child and from her earlier (more formulaic) presentation of idealized children. Thus, her story gains complexity, and, maybe, this is one of the reasons why we tend to still talk so much more about *The Secret Garden* than about any of her other books today.

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25 THWAITE, Ann. *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849–1924*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1991 [1974]. 222. This title is found on the first page of the manuscript. She apparently found it not easy to decide for either ‘Mary, Mary’ or ‘Mistress Mary’ in the title. See also RECTOR, Gretchen V. “Digging in the Garden: The Manuscript of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.” In: Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (ed.). *The Secret Garden: A Norton Critical Edition*. New York: Norton, 2006. 186–99, 189.

26 For the concept of ‘magic’ in *The Secret Garden* see, e.g., ADAMS, “Secrets and Healing Magic”; BIXLER, “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” 195; SMEDMAN, M. Sarah. “Springs of Hope: Recovery of Primordial Time in ‘Mythic’ Novels for Young Readers.” In: *Children’s Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children’s Literature and Children’s Literature Association* 16 (1988): 91–107, 97.

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Life in the Domestic Realm – Male Identity in *The Secret Garden*

I. Introduction

As one of the most popular all-time favourites of children's literature Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) has received a huge amount of criticism, has been adapted into various movies and thus, together with *A Little Princess* (1905) and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1885), constitutes some of the best and most impressive of children's literature from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. It is hardly surprising that much of the aforementioned criticism concentrates on themes like constructions of childhood, Victorian and Edwardian values, class ideology or the garden as a metaphor. Most criticism, however, focuses on the development and the psychology of the female protagonist, Mary Lennox, and her relationship to the garden or other characters in the novel – an understandable focus as Burnett's book was "written specifically for juvenile female readers", as Anrhea Trodd points out in her *Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature*.¹ The idea of *The Secret Garden* as a novel for girls rather than boys – which I certainly agree with – has, on the one hand, indeed led to thorough analyses of Mary's character; on the other hand, other inhabitants of Misselthwaite Manor and even some of the main protagonists of the story have been widely neglected. Particularly the male characters of *The Secret Garden* have played a somewhat minor role, in the shadow of Mary and her fellow female characters – that is, the abundance of Burnett's larger-than-life mother figures. Research and criticism on the male protagonists is usually satisfied with Dickon's role as "a Pan figure"² (rarely indeed have critics so unanimously agreed on the interpretation of a character than in Dickon's case, as can be seen in the writings of Jane Darcy, Linda T. Parsons, Elizabeth Lennox Keyser, Danielle E. Price, and many others),

1 TRODD, Anrhea. *A Reader's Guide to Edwardian Literature*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991. 10.

2 STOLZENBACH, Mary M. "Braid Yorkshire: The Language of Myth? An Appreciation of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett." In: *Mythlore* 20,4 (1995): 25 – 29, 27.

Mr. Craven's Gothic aura, and Colin's role as inheritor of the patriarchal legacy. I do not seek to refute the results of former criticism but to expand them, for there is more to the depiction of masculinity in *The Secret Garden*, particularly with respect to the attitudes of the male protagonists towards the two dominant domestic realms – the garden and Misselthwaite Manor. Thus in order to clarify how exactly masculinity is transported through the characters (I will concentrate on Colin and Dickon) it will be necessary to analyse them in the surrounding of the garden and the manor to show that masculinity in Burnett's story is presented as a very complex system.

II. Two Domestic Realms – Misselthwaite Manor

On her way to Misselthwaite Manor Mary is introduced to the building by a description of the housekeeper Mrs. Medlock, who tells her that

[...] it's a grand big place in a gloomy way, and Mr. Craven's proud of it in his way – and that's gloomy enough, too. The house is six hundred years old and it's on the edge of the moor, and there's near a hundred rooms in it, though most of them's shut up and locked. And there's pictures and fine old furniture and things that's been there for ages, and there's a big park round it and gardens and trees with branches trailing to the ground [...] But there's nothing else.' (*Secret Garden* 19)

Mrs. Medlock's description draws attention to the strong Gothic aura that surrounds Misselthwaite Manor. The house has a gloomy atmosphere and is certainly Gothic in character with the locked rooms, old, dusty furniture, and, the most Gothic character trait of all, it is seemingly endowed with a family secret which Mary still needs to solve. However, the Gothic character of the building also establishes an ambiguity, which is a typical feature of houses not only in Gothic but in Victorian literature in general.

According to the Victorian division of genders into public and private sphere, Misselthwaite Manor definitely belongs to the latter. Houses, as the spatial representatives of domesticity, are conventionally associated with womanhood. They are run and kept by women. In Misselthwaite we find Mrs. Medlock in the role of the housekeeper, and the household is mainly organized by female servants like Martha Sowerby. Nevertheless, in her essay “‘Otherways’ into the Garden: Re-Visioning the Feminine in *The Secret Garden*”, Linda T. Parsons observes that “[t]he power of the house is masculine in origin”.³ Mrs. Medlock is only the head of the household in the absence of Mr. Craven and in his presence has “to do at once what Mr. Archibald Craven told her to do” (*Secret Garden* 18).

3 PARSONS, Linda T. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden: Re-Visioning the Feminine in *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Children's Literature in Education* 33,4 (2002): 247–68, 258.

When Mr. Craven is on his journeys she may even use her position to decide on the treatment of Master Colin, at least until the boy decides to use his hereditary, patriarchal power, which he does more and more often in the course of the story. In his first encounter with Mary Colin explains to her, “[e]veryone is obliged to please me. I told you that. [...] If I were to live, this place would sometime belong to me. They all know that” (*Secret Garden* 123). Even though at this early stage of the story he mainly uses his power to order his servants around, it already becomes clear that although the house is considered as belonging to the domestic and thus feminine sphere it is subordinate to patriarchal power. Parsons observes, “[i]t should be remembered that it was Archibald Craven, the master of the house”⁴ who decided to have many rooms in his mansion locked. Thus, the males, here embodied by Mr. Craven and Colin, “wield power in an attempt to escape and forget, and the result is degeneration”.⁵ While Mr. Craven tries to forget the death of his wife and the presence of his son by locking the garden and constantly being absent from the mansion, Colin hides the portrait of his mother behind a curtain. Although Colin shows the same reaction as his father he is incapable of wielding his male power at the beginning of the story (also due to the fact that there is no one present to teach him to do so). Indeed, when he is introduced he has nothing of the future heir of Misselthwaite Manor; instead, he shows characteristics of a hysterical female. Mary becomes aware of her cousin because he is “crying fretfully” (*Secret Garden* 118) during one of his fits. His description supports this impression: “The boy had a sharp, delicate face the colour of ivory and he seemed to have eyes too big for it. He had also a lot of hair which tumbled over his forehead in heavy locks and made his thin face seem smaller” (*Secret Garden* 118). Due to his illness and the absence of his father, who “rarely saw him when he was awake” and who gives him “all sorts of wonderful things to amuse himself with” (*Secret Garden* 122), Colin’s masculinity, like his body, is powerless, crippled, degenerated. Neither does he know how to deal with others due to his seclusion nor how to put his power to use besides ordering servants around like the mistress of the house. As Claudia Marquis points out in “The Power of Speech: *Life in The Secret Garden*”, “Colin, whom gender and social rank might normally designate as the proper hero, spends most of the story confined to a wheelchair; he is denied his narrative birthright of adventure”.⁶ As long as Colin is secluded from the public sphere and confined to the domestic realm he appears like a childlike reincarnation of his dead mother. Even later, after he has left the manor and occupied the garden, Mary still sees a

4 PARSONS. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden.” 258.

5 PARSONS. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden.” 258.

6 MARQUIS, Claudia. “The Power of Speech: *Life in The Secret Garden*.” In: *Journal of the Australian Universities Language & Literature Association* 68 (1987): 163–87, 165.

resemblance: “‘You are so like her now,’ said Mary, ‘That sometimes I think perhaps you are her ghost made into a boy.’” (*Secret Garden* 250) Colin’s ghost-like appearance – his pale face with the big eyes, the eerie wailing Mary hears in the corridor – directly connects him to the domestic, Gothic space of the manor. “We might as well argue that Colin’s position is analogous to that of women, if only because his physical disability means that physically he inhabits the world of others”.⁷

Only through his encounter with Mary can Colin break the bonds that tie him to the bed, his wheelchair, and the manor. Thus, his hereditary power is indeed awakened and saved through the encounter with the real heir of the domestic space: his possible future companion. In consequence, we can say that, for the most part, upper-class patriarchal power in *The Secret Garden* in Misselthwaite Manor is characterised through absence (in the form of Mr. Craven) and repression through the feminine (in Colin). Even though the male heir to the mansion is present, Colin’s confinement to the domestic realm for such a long time turns him into an almost feminine character for the first half of the book and “his indolent, impotent body implies a social critique of the functioning of Misselthwaite Manor. [...] [H]is overweening social power is entirely home grown”.⁸

With Dickon the situation is somewhat different. It is interesting that most criticism which examines his development only sees him in connection to the garden and almost never to the manor. Of course, the scenes in which he actually spends time at Misselthwaite are scarce; yet it is worthwhile to have a look at them and the relationship between him and the young heir of the house. When Colin and Dickon meet for the first time, the degree of experience with the realm of the feminine and the masculine is clearly visible. Dickon, who, like Ben Weatherstaff, functions “in the feminine realm”,⁹ does “not feel the least shy or awkward” (*Secret Garden* 188) towards Colin. An important reason for this is that he recognises Colin as a superior, but not necessarily as a male superior. He rather compares him to one of the animals he brings along for their first meeting.

He had not felt embarrassed because the crow had not known his language and had only stared and had not spoken to him the first time they met. Creatures were always like that until they found out about you. He walked over to Colin’s sofa and put the new-born lamb quietly on his lap (*Secret Garden* 188).

Dickon’s approach towards Colin is characteristic of his upbringing: he takes action. In contrast, “Colin had never talked to a boy in his life and he was so

7 MARQUIS. “The Power of Speech.” 166.

8 PHILLIPS, Jerry. “The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Lion and the Unicorn* 17,2 (1993): 168 – 94, 179.

9 PARSONS. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden.” 256.

overwhelmed by his own pleasure and curiosity that he did not even think of speaking” (*Secret Garden* 188). Colin’s reaction, on the one hand, again shows a somewhat girlish behaviour, but, on the other hand, he finally finds a companion of the same age and sex, though not rank. Through the stories he tells him every day Dickon also becomes Colin’s link to the outside world, more precisely to the territory he is soon to occupy, the garden. For Dickon, however, who so far has taken up considerable space in the novel and has played an important role for Mary’s development, the encounter with Colin, the male occupant and heir of the two domestic realms, is the beginning of his disappearance from the centre of the story. The more Colin takes up the stage, the more Dickon disappears from it. His status as an object of wonder, an animal charmer, gradually diminishes to that of an adviser in matters of physical exercise and gardening and finally to that of a mere observer of Colin’s developments.

III. Two Domestic Realms – The Garden

In her essay “Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden”, Danielle E. Price points out that “in conventional Victorian terms” a garden “is an extension of the domestic”.¹⁰ From what we know of the situation at Misselthwaite Manor before Colin and Mary were born, this convention can also be applied to the garden which has become secret at the time the novel is set. Martha, Dickon’s sister, tells Mary that Colin’s mother loved the place, took care of the flowers, and spent hours and hours in it with her husband, until the fatal fall from the tree (cf. *Secret Garden* 49). Ever since, for Mr. Craven the garden has been a symbol of loss and death and thus, ultimately, a symbol for his wife and the dangers of domesticity, which either have to be abandoned (like Misselthwaite Manor and Colin as an offspring of these dangers) or locked away (like the secret garden). Price observes that in this deed there lies a similarity between the natural domestic space and the feminine domestic: “To produce perfection in women and nature requires enclosure, imprisonment, and instruction, so that ultimately they will provide beauty and comfort”.¹¹ Indeed, the garden has a beautifying effect on Colin and Mary. When she arrives at Misselthwaite she is “the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen” (*Secret Garden* 7), but a short while after she entered the garden for the first time and has been taking care of it she herself observes a change in her appearance: “Mary had seen herself in the glass sometimes lately when she had realized that she looked quite a different creature [...]. This child

10 PRICE, Danielle E. “Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden.” In: *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4–14, 7.

11 PRICE. “Cultivating Mary.” 5.

looked nicer” (*Secret Garden* 143). The enclosure or, as Price puts it, the imprisonment in the garden grants Mary space to develop, not only in beauty but also in spirit, for her own sake. However, this positive development only lasts until Colin enters the domestic realm and claims it as an extension of his patriarchal heritage. While in the manor most of his male character traits were confined for over a decade, in the garden he is immediately aware of his patriarchal power and rank. While Mary, like Dickon, disappears more and more from the story, Colin self-confidently tells Ben Weatherstaff, “‘I’m your master [...] when my father is away. And you are to obey me. This is my garden’” (*Secret Garden* 210). Even before Colin can profit from the healing powers of the garden he makes Mary his companion who nurtures him with her stories and presence and later on introduces him to the secret garden. “Mary [...] becomes a girl who, like the ideal garden, can provide both beauty and comfort, and who can cultivate her male cousin, the young patriarch-in-training”.¹² The garden certainly is a domestic space, which allows Mary to explore her undeveloped femininity. Yet, from the moment it is revealed to Colin it becomes subject to his patriarchal power. Claudia Marquis argues that

[b]y entering into Colin’s strange religious ritual [the summoning he performs in the garden] Mary accepts Colin’s right to supremacy. Life in the garden, then, in spite of its apparent freedom from social conventions, preserves the ideological coherence of the narrative by reaffirming that its true voice is male [...].¹³

This is not completely true as Colin, besides his father, is the only male character who subjects the garden to male power. For Dickon and Ben Weatherstaff the garden keeps its healing and nurturing powers as a domestic space and, thus, like Misselthwaite Manor at the beginning of the story, it incorporates these two male protagonists into the domestic by suppressing their maleness and endowing them with female character traits. Dickon and Ben Weatherstaff both take care of gardens and people. They are indeed not much different from Burnett’s larger-than-life mother figures. Dickon can ‘charm’ and nurture every animal and being – whether it is the young lamb he finds and brings to the first meeting with Colin or Mary, who blossoms in his presence and discovers the first thrills of an awakening sexuality (which can also be detected in the rhetoric that is used to describe her feelings when she is close to Dickon).

12 PRICE. “Cultivating Mary.” 4.

13 MARQUIS. “The Power of Speech.” 183.

IV. Conclusion

Claudia Marquis stresses that “Dickon is clearly the figure of greatest authority throughout the tale” – he is the one who teaches both Colin and Mary in the art of gardening and living – “[h]owever, in the most casual fashion the book finally, inevitably, denies him any opportunity to take possession of power, the kind of adult power that is measured out in privilege and largesse [...]. On the other hand, Colin is all future”.¹⁴ The denial of power for Dickon is visible on many layers. At the beginning of the story, Mary describes him as “beautiful” (*Secret Garden* 107), but later on repeatedly bestows the expression on Colin (cf. *Secret Garden* 212–26). While Dickon more and more retires from the story, Colin, during the time he spends in the garden, does not only gain strength and beauty but also authority – he becomes aware of his patriarchal legacy. While Mary still felt superior to the fragile boy during their first encounters, in the garden she begins to realise that, “queer as he was, Colin had read about a great many singular things and was somehow a very convincing sort of boy” (*Secret Garden* 222). When Colin and Mary are strong enough to stand on their own feet (literally in Colin’s case) the “peculiar authority of Dickon” ends as it “rests in his extraordinary power over animals; he is the ‘animal charmer’. In particular he has rescued young, motherless creatures from the wilds”.¹⁵ Thus it is for Colin to tell his father the whole story of the secret garden and his miraculous recovery: “Then they sat down under their tree – all but Colin who wanted to stand while he told the story” (*Secret Garden* 274). “[T]he right to possession, the right to power, is never something that might pass to Dickon, the moor boy. [...] the right to possession, Colin’s right, is absolute and extends even to the exercise of imagination and the power of speech”.¹⁶ Dickon remains a character associated with the domestic realm. Yet, while this certainly means that he is inferior to Colin in rank, it does not necessarily imply that he is his inferior in more general terms. Like most of Burnett’s mother figures he is a thoroughly positive character, since the domestic space, which he embodies, is also a symbol of growth and nurture. While Colin struggles to escape the private realm and enter the public sphere Dickon’s satisfaction with his affiliation to only one realm is a guarantee for the stability of his character.

14 MARQUIS. “The Power of Speech.” 164–65.

15 MARQUIS. “The Power of Speech.” 167.

16 MARQUIS. “The Power of Speech.” 182.

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Constructions of ‘Otherness’ in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*

During the last hundred years after its first publication in serialised form in *The American Magazine* from 1910 to 1911 Frances Hodgson Burnett’s novel *The Secret Garden* has not only become a children’s classic; it has also been subject to extensive literary criticism. Among the manifold critical approaches to *The Secret Garden*, in the last decades postcolonial studies presented readings of Burnett’s novels focusing on the representation of British imperialism and the British colony India in *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden*.

In the British Empire children’s books were habitually used to disseminate the ideology of imperialism and propagate colonial practices from early childhood onwards.¹ Frances Hodgson Burnett’s children’s classics also make use of tropes of the British Empire; nevertheless they remain ambivalent in this respect: on the one hand, they present the British colony India as the stereotypical ‘Other’, on the other hand, Burnett’s novels imply an anti-imperialist critique by demonstrating the social and moral shortcomings of imperial rule. This is, above all, demonstrated in the metaphor of the neglected children who are unable to flourish under conditions of imperial rule, both physically and mentally. In general, postcolonial critics have formed two contrasting opinions about Burnett’s work – reading *The Secret Garden* either as clearly supporting imperial values, like Daphne Kutzer in her monograph *Empire’s Children*,² or as “arguing an anti-imperialist position”, like Jean Webb.³ This article will analyse the way in

1 The explicit and implicit presence of ideologies in children’s fiction has been examined in a multitude of critical studies. For the ideological functions of language and narrative modes in children’s literature in general see, for example, STEPHENS, John. *Language and Ideology in Children’s Literature*. London/New York: Longman, 1992 as well as KNOWLES, Murray and Kirsten MALMKJÆR. *Language and Control in Children’s Literature*. London/New York: Routledge, 1996. For an analysis of imperialist ideologies in British children’s texts in particular see KUTZER, M. Daphne. *Empire’s Children. Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children’s Books*. New York/London: Garland Publishing, 2000.

2 KUTZER. *Empire’s Children*.

3 WEBB, Jean. “Romanticism vs. Empire in *The Secret Garden*.” In: Deborah Cogan Thacker and

which Frances Hodgson Burnett makes use of tropes of empire and imperial prejudices but employs them in a way which points to the constructed character of these stereotypes.

As Thomas R. Metcalf states, “throughout the Raj, and especially during the years of uncontested British supremacy from 1858 to 1918, the ideas that most powerfully informed British conceptions of India and its people were those of India’s ‘difference’”.⁴ However, in *The Secret Garden* it is not only India which functions as the ‘Other’. Instead, to the young protagonist Mary it is above all England which is unfamiliar and appears to be the ‘Other’. Therefore, this article examines two different examples of constructing ‘Otherness’ in *The Secret Garden*: on the one hand, the representation of India from an imperialist point of view, on the other hand, Mary’s bewilderment when she is confronted with unfamiliar aspects of life in England. These two different notions of ‘Otherness’ are for instance exemplified in Mary’s relationship towards her two maids, her Indian Ayah and her English maid Martha.

The concept of the ‘Other’ is an issue of high significance in postcolonial theory and criticism. “In general terms, the ‘other’ is anyone who is separate from one’s self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is ‘normal’ and in locating one’s own place in the world.”⁵ In its original context in psychoanalysis the idea of the ‘Other’ is central to the formation of identity. In postcolonial studies the concept of the ‘Other’ generally speaking describes the image of foreign – predominantly colonised – countries, their people and life there as different from the country of origin. However, it does not mean portraying foreign cultures in a neutral way but usually evaluating aspects of life in these countries by opposing them to the colonising country and its culture. This process of distinction is ambivalent since, on the one hand, it defines the colonised by the sole characteristic of being different and, on the other hand, the imperial power constructs its own identity by opposition to the colonised ‘Other’. For this reason Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls the process of ‘othering’ a “dialectical process because the colonizing *Other* is established at the same time as its colonized *others* are produced as subjects”.⁶ When applying the paradigms of one’s own culture to the foreign culture in this process of ‘othering’, the latter is stigmatised as inferior. On the whole, observations of ‘Otherness’ are a simplification and regularly give rise to stereotypes, which Homi K.

Jean Webb (eds.). *Introducing Children’s Literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002. 91–97, 91.

4 METCALF, Thomas R. *Ideologies of the Raj. The New Cambridge History of India: III.4*. Cambridge/New York et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1995. x.

5 ASHCROFT, Bill, Gareth GRIFFITHS and Helen TIFFIN. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000. S. v. “Other/other”.

6 ASHCROFT, GRIFFITHS and TIFFIN. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. S. v. “othering”.

Bhabha identifies as the “major discursive strategy” of colonial discourse.⁷ Due to Britain’s colonialism in the Orient, India became the stereotypical ‘Other’ for British citizens. As Edward W. Said observes,

[t]he Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.⁸

Thus, definitions of Europe itself and of India as the ‘Other’ are generally achieved by contrast without taking notice of the constructedness of these oppositions. “For Said, [...] the Oriental ‘Other’ is a projection of the Western view that constructs it.”⁹ These constructions of ‘Otherness’ can also be observed in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*. By means of the development of the young protagonist Mary and her gradual adaptation to the formerly unfamiliar English culture the constructed character of stereotypes becomes evident.

I. Representations of India as the ‘Other’

At the beginning of the novel India in general and Mary’s Indian nurse in particular are presented as the ‘Other’ from the perspective of the imperial British. However, it is only the opening of the novel which is set in India, while the main part of the plot is set in England, where Mary recalls her Indian experiences. Here, Mary satisfies people’s curiosity about the colonies by her accounts of life in India.

What is more, the brief part of the novel which is set in India does not give an insight into the life of the native population. Instead, it is solely set on the colonisers’ estate and concentrates on the activities of an English official and his family. Consequently the novel only presents the colonisers’ perspective. Mary’s father, a colonial officer, and his wife are constantly engaged in the colonial administration and in social activities associated with it. Hence, they do not even show any interest in raising their child:

7 BHABHA, Homi K. “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism.” In: Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2004. 94–120, 94.

8 SAID, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979. 1–2.

9 N.N. “Edward Said.” In: Vincent B. Leitch (ed.). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York/London: Norton, 2010. 1986–90, 1988.

Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. 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 the Mem Sahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. (*Secret Garden* 3)

Due to the constant engagements of her parents and their disinterest in their child, Mary is not brought up to act in a sensible and considerate way. In order not to disturb her parents, Mary is always allowed to get her own way by the Indian Ayah. As a result of her parents' neglect and the Ayah's fear of punishment, Mary thus develops into a selfish and ill-bred child. Burnett here clearly points at the fact that it is the social order associated with colonial administration which results in these failures in Mary's education and her lack of social skills. Instead of taking responsibility for the child, Mary's mother indulges in the pleasures of colonial life and "sacrifices her family's health on the altar of superficial social engagements, postponing seasonal travel to the hills in order to attend a party".¹⁰ Burnett frankly enunciates this critique of the conduct of English colonisers by means of the judgements of her fictional characters, such as the Crawfords, an English clergy couple in India who temporarily take Mary into custody after the death of her parents and her Ayah:

'Perhaps if her mother had carried her pretty face and her pretty manners oftener into the nursery Mary might have learned some pretty ways too. [...]'
'I believe she scarcely ever looked at her,' sighed Mrs. Crawford. 'When her Ayah was dead there was no one to give a thought to the little thing. [...]' (*Secret Garden* 11)

Both Mr. and Mrs. Lennox place the entire responsibility for their child on a dependent. They even forget about Mary at the outbreak of cholera and ignore the health risk they expose her to. They rely on the colonial social structure and take full advantage of their superior position in it. The parents' self-centred attitude and their abuse of unequal power relations provide a negative role model for Mary:

The circumstances of life under imperialist rule have emphasised the negative and antisocial qualities in Mary, and have prevented her from learning the positive traits which are ideally developed in childhood, such as love, laughter, playfulness and a positive sense of self.¹¹

For these reasons Jean Webb sees young Mary "as the innocent victim of British imperialism".¹²

10 KUTZER. *Empire's Children*. 57.

11 WEBB. "Romanticism vs. Empire in *The Secret Garden*." 92.

12 WEBB. "Romanticism vs. Empire in *The Secret Garden*." 91.

In contrast to Burnett's focus on the conduct of the English in the colonies, the life of the Indian native population is only presented in a very indirect way through Mary's interaction with her Ayah. It is from Mary's prejudiced point of view that Indian people and their culture are primarily seen as the 'Other'. Thus, the Indian Ayah is portrayed in a simplified, stereotypical way: she has dark skin, sings lullabies in Hindustani, and Mary's behaviour towards her displays patterns of the colonisers' attitude towards the native. Mary treats her Indian nurse imperiously, and the latter is obedient to the colonisers' child. In addition to slapping the Ayah in the face, Mary does not call her by her name but only refers to her by the Indian vernacular word "Ayah" for "[a] native Hindoo nurse or lady's maid".¹³ The native's name and her personality are thus replaced by her status as a servant. This already indicates that Mary does not treat her Ayah as an individual, but considers her to be replaceable. Although the Ayah is the only person who cares for Mary, the girl does not mourn her loss after the nurse's death but is selfishly looking forward to a new Ayah who will replace the dead one and will tell her new stories:

She wondered also who would take care of her now her Ayah was dead. There would be a new Ayah, and perhaps she would know some new stories. Mary had been rather tired of the old ones. (*Secret Garden* 6)

Moreover, the only way in which Mary shapes her own identity is by contrast to the native population in India. She clearly dissociates herself from the 'Other' and emphasises the alterity of Indian people and culture. When her English maid Martha tells Mary that she expected her to have dark skin, Mary feels humiliated and is furious, thereby irrevocably demonstrating her narrow-minded and intolerant world view.

Mary did not even try to control her rage and humiliation. 'You thought I was a native! You dared! You know nothing about natives! They are not people – they're servants who must salaam to you. You know nothing about India. You know nothing about anything!' (*Secret Garden* 26)

By contrast, Martha's stereotypical image of the Indian population arguably seems more positive:

'I've nothing against th' blacks. When you read about 'em in tracts they're always very religious. You always read as a black's a man an' a brother. I've never seen a black an' I was fair pleased to think I was goin' to see one close.' (*Secret Garden* 26)

Although it is different from Mary's negative attitude, Martha's view is another example typical of "the traditional Western dichotomies in thinking about the

13 SIMPSON, J.A. and E.S.C. WEINER (eds.). *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford/New York: Clarendon Press, 1989. S. v. "ayah".

East, a notorious example being the materialistic West versus the spiritual East".¹⁴ Martha's attitude has clearly been shaped by Christian ideas. Yet both Mary and Martha present stereotypical views of the native population of India. However, it is important to note that Burnett presents both sides of the dichotomy in order to reveal stereotypes to be contradictory by nature, since they are invariably a result of simplification. As regards the effect of these simplified images, Burnett's character constellation induces her young readers to reject the opinion of the disagreeable child Mary and prefer the more positive image of the 'Other' expressed by the benevolent Martha. It is this scene of confrontation between Mary and Martha which finally determines the character constellation of Burnett's novel. In the first part of the novel Mary is characterised as an anti-heroine by the narrator's and the characters' explicit negative accounts of the young girl and particularly by Mary's self-centred, offensive conduct. When Mary insults Martha, who clearly embodies all positive qualities the misguided child lacks, the readers' sympathies are directed towards the maid in contrast to the disagreeable protagonist. Here, Frances Hodgson Burnett does not only introduce an antagonism between Mary's and Martha's world view, but she also employs irony in order to criticise Mary's opinion and demonstrate its irrelevance. Mary, who is an ignorant child in every respect, thus ironically accuses Martha of "know[ing] nothing about anything" (*Secret Garden* 26). By contrast, Mary later only succeeds in acquiring knowledge and social skills through Martha's guidance. Martha functions as a moral role model for the protagonist as well as for the young readers of the novel, which results in a preference for her admittedly stereotypical, yet positive attitude towards the 'Other' and a rejection of Mary's intolerant point of view. On the whole, Burnett's depiction of both Mary's and Martha's stereotypical conceptions, which include repulsion of as well as attraction to the 'Other', exemplifies the ambivalence inherent in stereotypes "[f]or it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency".¹⁵

Moreover, even Burnett's presentation of Mary's prejudiced reports about India implies a hidden critique of imperialism. A case in point is Mary's comparison of her cousin Colin, who behaves in a despotic way towards the maids at Misselthwaite Manor, to "a young rajah":

'Once in India I saw a boy who was a Rajah. He had rubies and emeralds and diamonds stuck all over him. He spoke to his people just as you spoke to Martha. Everybody had to

14 GOONETILLEKE, D.C.R.A. *Images of the Raj: South Asia in the Literature of Empire*. Basingstoke/London: Macmillan, 1988. 160.

15 BHABHA. "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism." 95.

do everything he told them – in a minute. I think they would have been killed if they hadn't.' (*Secret Garden* 124)

Although a rajah is an Indian ruler, this simile may be read as criticising unequal power relations in general. In this way, Mary's report exemplifies the threatening, inhumane character of imperialism and Burnett's critique indirectly addresses English rule in India. Therefore, Jean Webb states that

[t]hrough the interaction between Mary and Colin, Burnett makes it clear that she is principally attacking British imperialism and the abuse of power rather than Indian culture.¹⁶

In addition to the portrayal of stereotypes of the native population of India, *The Secret Garden* presents further aspects of life in India which mark it as the 'Other'. Burnett regularly includes Indian English expressions referring to colonial life in India, such as calling Mary's parents "Sahib" and "Mem Sahib", mentioning "fakirs" and comparing Colin to "a young rajah" (*Secret Garden* 5 and 119). Further cases in point are encounters with Indian animals, such as elephants, camels and tigers, which Mary wants to tell Martha about, or the little snake Mary observes in her nursery:

She heard something rustling on the matting and when she looked down she saw a little snake gliding along and watching her with eyes like jewels. She was not frightened, because he was a harmless little thing who would not hurt her and he seemed in a hurry to get out of the room. (*Secret Garden* 7)

These animals are exotic for the European reader and thereby convey images of 'Otherness'. However, Burnett presents them in an absolutely positive way: the snake is harmless and its eyes are as beautiful as jewels. The metaphor of the snake should therefore arguably not be interpreted from a Western perspective but in its Indian context, as a metaphor for rebirth, as Alison Lurie observes: "The little snake does not, as it might in another story, suggest evil: rather, as in Indian mythology, it stands for the knowledge and wisdom that Mary will gradually attain."¹⁷

All in all, *The Secret Garden* presents India in a stereotypical way as the 'Other' from a British point of view. Unlike in Burnett's novel *A Little Princess*, there is no major Indian character in *The Secret Garden*.¹⁸ Consequently, the novel lacks an

16 WEBB. "Romanticism vs. Empire in *The Secret Garden*." 96.

17 LURIE, ALISON. "Introduction." In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Alison Lurie. London/New York et al.: Penguin, 1999. vii-xxiv, xi.

18 In *A Little Princess* the Indian Ram Dass rescues the young protagonist Sara from poverty and exploitation as a servant in an English boarding school. In contrast to Mary's Ayah, the Indian character here plays a major role in the positive resolution of the plot. Yet, he is not portrayed in the context of his native country but only in the English setting of the novel.

Indian perspective which might facilitate an understanding of ‘real’ Indian culture. Instead, the Ayah’s circumstances of life are presented by the naïve but prejudiced child Mary, and thereby by a Westerner. Nonetheless, to the young as well as to the adult reader the image of India conveyed in the novel remains predominantly positive. The negative portrayal of Mary and her rude behaviour are contrasted to the benevolent Martha and her brother Dickon, who act as role models for Mary and Colin. This results in a rejection of Mary’s stereotypical view of India; instead, the young reader is likely to favour the positive attitude towards the ‘Other’ embodied by Martha. Furthermore, the representation of Indian flora and fauna, which are exotic to the European reader, attract the children’s interest and fuel their imagination. The curiosity of the Yorkshire people, who perceive India as exotic, and Mary’s reports about India demonstrate “that ‘otherness’ [...] is at once an object of desire and derision”.¹⁹ At the same time, the opposed Western attitudes towards India and the Indian population as the ‘Other’ point to the multifaceted quality of cultural difference which goes beyond the simplification inherent in stereotypes. Thereby the novel may serve as an example to support but also transcend Homi K. Bhabha’s “reading of colonial discourse [which] suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse.”²⁰ As will be shown in the following, Burnett’s novel breaks up the rigid binary dichotomy of the self and the ‘Other’ by a shift of perspective with its focus on England as the ‘Other’.

II. Representations of Yorkshire as the ‘Other’

The concept of ‘Otherness’, usually describing the colonised country and its culture, is partially reversed in *The Secret Garden*. Upon Mary’s arrival in England this country and its people appear to be the ‘Other’ to Mary, who has never been to her native country. Before her departure to England she very tellingly asks, “Where is home?” (*Secret Garden* 10). Mary is unfamiliar with England’s geography, weather, the Yorkshire dialect and in particular with English social life and customs. Thus, in the beginning she is alienated from her

Although Ram Dass hence does not give an insight into the culture of his native country from an Indian perspective, the character constellation of *A Little Princess* proves the positive connotation of Indian characters in the wider context of Burnett’s literary work.

19 BHABHA. “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism.” 96.

20 BHABHA. “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism.” 95 (the italics are BHABHA’S).

native country due to social, linguistic and ideological factors. Upon Mary's arrival the landscape and the weather already characterise England to be very different from what Mary is used to from India. She is bewildered and frightened when the carriage is travelling across the Missel Moor, particularly because she does not know at all what a moor is. The strange sounds of the wind, the darkness outside and the jolting of the carriage add to Mary's fear of the unknown country. Furthermore, Mrs. Medlock's description of Misselthwaite Manor as "a queer place" and Mary's realisation that "[i]t all sounded so unlike India" add to the girl's impression of 'Otherness' (*Secret Garden* 14–15). When Mary asks Mrs. Medlock, "What is a moor?", the English housekeeper does not answer but advises her to "[l]ook out of the window in about ten minutes and [...] see", although Mary "won't see much because it's a dark night" (*Secret Garden* 19). Instead of explaining what a moor is, Mrs. Medlock describes it in opposition to landscapes Mary is familiar with:

She [Mary] could see nothing, in fact, but a dense darkness on either side. [...]

'It's – it's not the sea, is it?' said Mary, looking round at her companion.

'No, not it,' answered Mrs. Medlock. 'Nor it isn't fields nor mountains, it's just miles and miles and miles of wild land that nothing grows on but heather and gorse and broom, and nothing lives on but wild ponies and sheep.' (*Secret Garden* 20)

At first, Mrs. Medlock defines the moor by the features of landscape it lacks, contrasts it to any familiar countryside and thereby attributes qualities of 'Otherness' to it. In addition to the landscape, the climate with its "gray rain-storm which looked as if it would go on forever and ever" is another element which characterises the English country as the 'Other' (*Secret Garden* 17). In this way, aspects of exoticism are reversed and attributed to England.

What further confirms Mary's impression of 'Otherness' is the linguistic difference she experiences when she observes that people even seem to speak another language than Mary. The young girl immediately becomes aware of this upon her arrival in Yorkshire: "The station-master spoke to Mrs. Medlock in a rough, good-natured way, pronouncing his words in a queer broad fashion which Mary found out afterward was Yorkshire." (*Secret Garden* 18) In general, a different language and the resulting communication problems is one of the characteristics which increase the impression of 'Otherness'. In *The Secret Garden* it is the Yorkshire dialect which is one of the reasons why Mary feels alienated from English culture. After a conversation with her English maid Martha, Mary compares the regional dialect to the linguistic difference experienced in India:

'I thought perhaps it always rained or looked dark in England,' Mary said.

'Eh! no!' said Martha, sitting up on her heels among her black lead brushes. 'Nowt o' th' soart!'

‘What does that mean?’ asked Mary seriously. In India the natives spoke different dialects which only a few people understood, so she was not surprised when Martha used words she did not know. (*Secret Garden* 53)

For Mary the ‘Otherness’ of Hindustani dialects in India resembles the effect produced by the Yorkshire dialect. During her first encounter with Martha it is not only due to the Yorkshire dialect that Mary does not understand Martha, but also because of the English customs which are unknown to the spoilt child:

‘Who is going to dress me?’ demanded Mary.

Martha sat up on her heels again and stared. She spoke in broad Yorkshire in her amazement.

‘Canna’ tha’ dresen thysen!’ she said.

‘What do you mean? I don’t understand your language,’ said Mary.

‘Eh! I forgot,’ Martha said. ‘Mrs. Medlock told me I’d have to be careful or you wouldn’t know what I was sayin’. I mean can’t you put on your own clothes?’

‘No,’ answered Mary, quite indignantly. ‘I never did in my life. My Ayah dressed me, of course.’ (*Secret Garden* 25)

In contrast to India, where Mary was cared for in every possible way, at Misselthwaite Manor she has to learn to be self-reliant: she is encouraged to dress herself and she also has to entertain herself on her own, things she was not taught in India. In this regard, Mary’s development bears comparison with a ‘decolonisation’ of the self.

In this context, it is the British maid Martha who exemplifies the ‘Other’. Martha has several character traits which contrast her to Mary and the people Mary knew in India: she speaks a dialect, which has the effect of a foreign language on Mary, and she belongs to another social class. This additionally introduces another category of the ‘Other’ to the novel: the social ‘Other’. Mary learns that irrespective of class differences Martha is a person to be respected. In contrast to Mary, who at first tries to form an identity in opposition to English culture and customs, Martha appreciates life in England; for example, she loves the moor and “wouldn’t live away from th’ moor for anythin’” while Mary claims to “hate it” (*Secret Garden* 24 and 23). While English food is strange to Mary and she refuses to eat her porridge, Martha and her family appreciate it very much. The English maid takes it for granted that children should amuse themselves on their own and provides Mary with a skipping-rope, a toy Mary does at first not know how to use. Mary’s unfamiliarity with this working-class toy further emphasises the social ‘Otherness’ between Martha’s family and Mary. All in all, Martha exemplifies ‘the Yorkshire Other’ from Mary’s point of view; nevertheless it is Martha who gradually introduces Mary to life in England. It is by being a moral role model and putting demands on Mary that the young maid helps the disagreeable child to become a sensible and self-sufficient human

being. With Martha, Mary experiences the first relationship of respect and trust in her life. In this regard, Mary's identity formation is characterised by an ambivalent feelings towards the 'Other': Mary's initial repulsion turns into fascination with 'the Yorkshire Other'.

Throughout the whole novel, Frances Hodgson Burnett emphasises aspects of 'Otherness' and frequently compares India and England. Similar to the representation of Indian animals, which are exotic to the Western reader, Burnett presents Mary as unfamiliar with European flora and fauna. Mary is, for example, excited about Dickon's fox cub, crow and pony, and she observes the robin to be "not like an Indian bird" (*Secret Garden* 33). Furthermore, most of the plants in the garden are unfamiliar to Mary and she cannot wait to see the spring flowers in bloom. During her adaptation to England and her development into a healthy, life-affirming child Mary learns to appreciate all aspects of England which in the beginning were unfamiliar and strange to her.

All in all, in *The Secret Garden* Frances Hodgson Burnett criticises imperialism by various means. This critique is most evident in the character constellation and the author's use of irony. In addition, "the catharsis of Mary"²¹ and Colin, which turns them from disagreeable, despotic children into respectful and tolerant persons, symbolises a development from colonialism to democracy and teaches Burnett's young readers the virtues of tolerance. Since the main part of the novel focuses on England and not on India, these moral insights of the protagonist are primarily directed towards British people and culture and Mary does not apply them to India at any point. Therefore it remains the task of the reader to transfer these insights from the English to the Indian context. To the postcolonial reader the change in perspective on the 'Yorkshire Other' can thus introduce another point of view on India.

By means of the diverse perspectives on 'Otherness' Burnett's novel also exemplifies possibilities of transgressing traditional colonial discourse. On the one hand, the constant opposition of India and England and Mary's strategies of dissociation from the 'Other' employed in order to form an identity support Said's statement that "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image"²². On the other hand, in the context of the children's novel this opposition does not only reveal this strategy of colonial discourse, it also fulfils further functions. Thus, the representation of exotic India attracts the young readers' interest while the transposition of England, which is familiar to them, into the 'Other' does not only amuse young readers and induce them to see the extraordinary in the ordinary but above all shows them the possibility of performing a shift of perspective. In this way, Burnett's representation of

21 KNOWLES and MALMKJÆR. *Language and Control in Children's Literature*. 58.

22 SAID. *Orientalism*. 1–2.

‘Otherness’ in both Indian and English culture demonstrates that the notion of the ‘Other’ depends on one’s point of view. It does not adhere to a simple binary opposition but includes various notions of ‘Otherness’, such as the ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic ‘Other’. Thereby it pays tribute to the multifaceted quality of cultural alterity. Furthermore, the contrasting evaluations of different aspects of the ‘Other’ by the Yorkshire characters and by Mary herself before and after her catharsis enable the reader

to understand the productive *ambivalence* of the object of colonial discourse – that ‘otherness’ which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. What such a reading reveals are the boundaries of colonial discourse and it enables a transgression of these limits of the space of that otherness.²³

What is more, Burnett reverses the concept of ‘Otherness’ when attributing its features to the colonising country England. Thereby the novel reveals the rigid binary distinction of ‘Otherness’ to be a mere construction. As a result, the children’s novel arguably succeeds in transcending this binary structure of colonial discourse and serves as an apt example to show “the impact of narrative on a productive disordering of binary dichotomies.”²⁴ Of course, with regard to the socio-cultural context of her time, Burnett did not have a postcolonial position as we do today. Her novel reveals the constructed character of colonial discourse but on the level of the plot it does not yet perform a transposition of this insight. Instead, the novel ends ambiguously in the middle of Mary’s and Colin’s process of understanding without any hint that Mary is able to apply her new moral awareness to the context of colonialism. Yet, by illustrating the cultural alterity of both India and England, *The Secret Garden* emphasises cultural heterogeneity on both sides. To the postcolonial reader, the novel can thereby serve Edward Said’s demand for a more sophisticated view of cultural heterogeneity.²⁵

23 BHABHA. “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism.” 96.

24 SULERI, Sara. “The Rhetoric of English India.” In: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London/New York: Routledge, 1995. 111 – 13, 112.

25 “Es geht ihm [Said] um die differenzierte Erfassung der kulturellen Heterogenität und dynamischen Hybridität, die sich in den Texten beider Seiten abzeichnen.” KREUTZER, Eberhard. “Edward Said.” In: Ansgar Nünning (ed.). *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008. 639 – 40, 639.

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***The Secret Garden* and the Redefinition of Englishness**

When Mary Lennox is taken from India to England, she experiences a radical change of both climate and social environment. Before leaving India, Mary is informed that she is going to be sent “home”, home being England, a place Mary has never seen, and an uncle whom she has never even heard about. She is also told that she is going to live “in a great big desolate house in the country” (*Secret Garden* 10). When after her arrival in London, Mrs. Medlock tells her that the house is “on the edge of the moor” (*Secret Garden* 14), we feel that she is going to the end of the world. This strangeness, however, is fascinating: “Mary had begun to listen in spite of herself. It all sounded so unlike India, and anything new rather excited her” (*Secret Garden* 15). The use of India-returned Mary as a narrative focalizer implies a decentralization of England. The reader is invited to look at Yorkshire, and by implication England, as an undiscovered and exciting *terra incognita*.

This narrative set-up, I should like to argue, allows the author to introduce a particular concept of what it means to be English,¹ a concept which is at variance with the imperialistic discourse, as implied in the notions of ‘Britannia ruling the waves’, the ‘land of hope and glory’ and the ‘white man’s (or Englishman’s) burden’, which certainly dominated nineteenth-century writing about England or Britain. The English reader’s gaze is no longer turned outward, to the exotic places of India, Africa or the South Seas, but inward, to the mysteries (equally unknown) of the English countryside and manifestations of rural culture.

1 Concepts of ‘Englishness’, as denoting the ideas of the British of their national identity, have received a lot of critical attention in the last two decades; cf. e.g. DILLER, Hans-Jürgen et al. (eds.). *Englishness*. anglistik & englischunterricht, vol. 46/47. Heidelberg: Winter, 1992; EASTHOPE, Anthony. *Englishness and National Culture*. London: Routledge, 1998; KASTOVSKY, Dieter, Gunter KALTENBÖCK and Susanne REICHL (eds.). *Anglistentag. Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English: 2001*. Wien. Trier: WVT, 2002. Section IV: Englishness. 267 – 360; MERGENTHAL, Silvia. *A Fast-Forward Version of England. Constructions of Englishness in Contemporary Fiction*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003.

When Mary arrives at Misselthwaite Manor, the first strange and exotic phenomenon she encounters is English weather. Indian weather appears to have been quite simple: It is “frightfully hot” (*Secret Garden* 2), skies are “hot and blazing” (*Secret Garden* 60). There is a rainy season once a year, and after the rains “everything is hot, and wet, and green” and “things grow up in a night” (*Secret Garden* 64). There are no seasons, like springtime (*Secret Garden* 212). The implied reader is supposed to share, or at least sympathize with, Mary’s point of view. Maybe, like Colin in the novel, he has never looked at springtime before:

‘The springtime,’ he said. ‘I was thinking that I’ve really never seen it before. I scarcely ever went out and when I did go I never looked at it. I didn’t even think about it.’ (*Secret Garden* 212)

By being constructed as ‘other’, the English landscape, seasons and weather become exciting and mysterious. Before arriving at her destination, Mary witnesses a “grey rain-storm which looked as if it would go on forever and ever” (*Secret Garden* 17). When they arrive at the station after nightfall, a carriage takes them across the moor, accompanied by the “singular, wild, low, rushing sound” (*Secret Garden* 21) of the wind. The moor, as Mrs. Medlock explains, “isn’t fields nor mountains, it’s just miles and miles and miles of wild land that nothing grows on but heather and gorse and broom, and nothing lives on but wild ponies and sheep” (*Secret Garden* 21). Trying to link this phenomenon to her own experience, Mary can only compare it to the sea (*Secret Garden* 21), which is, of course, an archetypally foreign place.

It is against this backdrop that to Mary, and perhaps the reader, the natural processes of the Yorkshire moors are an entirely novel experience, as when Mary one morning exclaims after waking up: “Look at the moor! Look at the moor!” and admires the sky which is “of a deep cool blue which almost seemed to sparkle like the waters of some lovely bottomless lake” (*Secret Garden* 60) quite unlike skies in India. Nature becomes a storehouse of food for the newcomer’s, and the reader’s, imagination.

In the course of the book many seasonal processes as well as processes of growth and restoration are recorded. These processes are rendered fascinating, I should like to argue, by a double vision. On the one hand, all of them are perfectly natural. It is the Yorkshire climate which allows the plants and animals endemic to Yorkshire to grow and to reproduce. On the other hand, the children experience these processes as something wonderful and magical. As the natural processes are new and foreign to Mary she can only link them to stories.

Dickon’s appearance as well has a magical – and intertextual – quality:

It was a very strange thing indeed. She quite caught her breath as she stopped to look at it. A boy was sitting under a tree, with his back against it, playing on a rough wooden

pipe. He was a funny looking boy about twelve. He looked very clean and his nose turned up and his cheeks were as red as poppies and never had Mistress Mary seen such round and such blue eyes in any boy's face. And on the trunk of the tree he leaned against, a brown squirrel was clinging and watching him, and from behind a bush near by a cock pheasant was delicately stretching his neck to peep out, and quite near him were two rabbits sitting up and sniffing with tremulous noses – and actually it appeared as if they were all drawing near to watch him and listen to the strange low little call his pipe seemed to make. (*Secret Garden* 97)

Dickon may remind the reader of legends of pastoral writing, or even of Pan, the pagan god, who in antique myth and its modern reception often represents the mysteries of nature.

Much of the book is, of course, about the beneficial effects of open-air exercise on the health of children, on their appetites and their tempers.² At first, however, neither Mary nor Colin are expected by their environment or motivated on their own accord to take exercise. It is their imagination which draws them on to explore an undiscovered world. Mary wants to discover the locked-up garden Martha has told her about, and before finding it she keeps wondering about it and about the robin redbreast which somehow lives in this garden and appears to lead her to it. When she finds the door to the secret garden, its attraction is due to its remoteness from the rest of the world, its fairy-tale quality. Similarly, when she meets Colin, it is their imagination which draws the two unsociable children together. Discovering him in the middle of the night, she wonders if she is dreaming (*Secret Garden* 126), and he asks her if she is a ghost. The two children construct each other as strange fairy-tale creatures and thereby overcome their shyness and imperiousness. It is Mary's stories about the secret garden which 'tease' Colin 'out of thought' and lead him on the path of mental and physical recovery. Pretending she has not found the garden yet she tells him:

'You see – you see,' she panted, 'if no one knows but ourselves – if there was a door, hidden somewhere under the ivy – if there was – and we could find it; and if we could slip through it together and shut it behind us, and no one knew anyone was inside and

2 *The Secret Garden* thus takes part in a discursive tradition which began in the Victorian Age and reached its peak in the interwar period; cf. e.g. HOWKINS, Alun. "The Discovery of Rural England." In: Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds.). *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880–1920*. Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm, 1986. 62–88, 63; MATLESS, David. *Landscape and Englishness*. London: Reaktion Books, 1998, esp. 62–100. For a late-Victorian manual of outdoor pursuits see e.g. GRAHAM, P. Anderson. *Country Pastimes for Boys*. London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1897. The first chapter is on "birds'-nesting" and begins as follows: "This is the healthiest, pleasantest, and most interesting of all open-air recreations. It carries one away on long rambles across the fields, along the hedgerows, and by the river-banks, at that delightful season of the year when life is stirring again after the long sleep of winter, when young lambs are bleating in the meadows, and the rooks are cawing above their nests, and birds are singing, and tiny little rabbits are taking a first peep out of their burrow. For eye and ear and brain, as well as limbs, it provides the most invigorating exercise" (1).

we called it our garden and pretended that – that we were missel thrushes and it was our nest, and we played there almost every day and dug and planted seeds and made it all come alive – ’ (*Secret Garden* 134)

Telling a story about the possibility of playing at another story rouses Colin from his stupor and melancholy. He wants to hear more of Mary’s adventures and stories before he makes up his mind to accompany her and see for himself. When Mary talks to him about Dickon and his pipe and animals, he shows her a picture of an Indian snake-charmer and asks Mary if Dickon can do the same.

According to postcolonial theory, we construct the Orient as exotic or ‘other’ in order to prove our superiority and our claims to take possession of the ‘other’ world.³ The snake-charmer, of course, is a typical instance of this construction of otherness. In *The Secret Garden*, however, the usual order is reversed. The snake-charmer is familiar, and the Yorkshire boy is other. It is he, and by implication the wildlife of the Yorkshire moors which appear as exotic and desirable, and which Mary and Colin propose to take possession of.

Another area of this construction of otherness is, of course, the Yorkshire dialect. To Mary, Martha appears as a native of a strange place, who speaks and behaves in a strange way:

‘What is that?’ she said, pointing out of the window.
 Martha, the young housemaid, who had just risen to her feet, looked and pointed also.
 ‘That there?’ she said.
 ‘Yes.’
 ‘That’s th’ moor,’ with a good-natured grin. ‘Does tha’ like it?’
 ‘No,’ answered Mary. ‘I hate it.’
 ‘That’s because tha’rt not used to it.’ Martha said, going back to her hearth. ‘Tha’ thinks it’s too big an’ bare now. But tha’ will like it.’
 ‘Do you?’ inquired Mary.
 ‘Aye, that I do,’ answered Martha, cheerfully polishing away at the grate. ‘I just love it. It’s none bare. It’s covered wi’ growing things an’ smells sweet. It’s fair lovely in spring an’ summer when th’ gorse an’ broom an’ heather’s in flower. It smells o’ honey an’ there’s such a lot of fresh air – an’ th’ sky looks so high an’ th’ bees an’ skylarks makes such a nice noise hummin’ an’ singin’. Eh! I wouldn’t live away from th’ moor for anythin’.’ (*Secret Garden* 24–25)

The strangeness of the dialect seems to underline the strangeness and unattractiveness of the moor; and the use of the second-person singular pronoun obviously corresponds to Martha’s free and easy manners which Mary experiences as face-threatening, an encroachment on her own dignity. Soon, however, the feeling of disgust with landscape and dialect changes to one of fascination. She learns to love the secret garden for its strangeness, and she soon comes to

3 Cf. e.g. SAID, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995 [1978]. 5–9 *et passim*.

recognize “something comforting and really friendly” in Martha’s “queer Yorkshire speech” (*Secret Garden* 28). When she later meets Dickon, she uses her newly-acquired knowledge of the vernacular dialect to try out a communicative approach equally new to her.

Then Mary did a strange thing. She leaned forward and asked him a question she had never dreamed of asking anyone before. And she tried to ask it in Yorkshire because that was his language, and in India a native was always pleased if you knew his speech. ‘Does tha’ like me?’ she said. (*Secret Garden* 111 – 12)

Mary’s exploration and appropriation of an emotional world new to her is helped on by the use of a new language. Incidentally, we may notice that her Yorkshire experience makes her change her attitudes with regard to Indian natives as well. When Martha upon meeting Mary tells her that she expected somebody with a black skin, the enraged girl informs Martha that natives of India are “not people” but “servants who must salaam to you” (*Secret Garden* 27 – 28). Calling Martha “daughter of a pig” (*Secret Garden* 27) she uses an insult which she obviously translated from an Indian vernacular. When talking to Dickon she remembers her skills of socializing with natives by using their language. When meeting Colin, she will sing “a very low little chanting song in Hindustani” (*Secret Garden* 138) to make the fretful boy fall asleep, making good use of what her ayah taught her.

Mary will later amuse herself and Colin by talking to him in Yorkshire dialect:

‘Did Dickon teach you that?’ asked Dr. Craven laughing outright.
‘I’m learning it as if it was French,’ said Mary rather coldly. ‘It’s like a native dialect in India. Very clever people try to learn them. I like it and so does Colin.’ (*Secret Garden* 197)

By the reference to the clever people who learn Hindustani and other vernacular Indian languages Mary counters the notion obviously implied by Dr. Craven that the use of dialect is somehow improper. In India, administrators, missionaries, ethnologists and comparative linguists took great pains acquiring Indian languages in order to understand a strange and fascinating culture. In approaching Yorkshire and Yorkshire people Mary compares herself to the British adventurers who went to India to communicate with the indigenous population and sometimes to gain new spiritual insights.

Mary’s attitudes with regard to Yorkshire mirror two attitudes adopted by nineteenth-century English people with regard to India. In the beginning Mary’s disgust with the alien world she is taken to resembles that of enlightened Englishmen who considered India a place of backwardness, barbarism and superstition. Her later attitude can be compared to that of scholars like Max Müller

and writers like Rudyard Kipling who felt that India could provide impulses for the regeneration of Europeans.⁴

The reader is invited to share this 'Orientalist' attitude and to look at Yorkshire as he or she used to look at India, not as Edward W. Said supposed, in order to politically control and appropriate this colonized place, but to enlarge his or her horizon and achieve a regeneration of his own. Like Mary, the implied reader is a foreigner in this English regional world, but as with Mary, this world can be the seat of sustained fascination.

To the educated reader, as to Mary and Colin, this foreign world in many respects offers a new outlook on his or her identity. Yorkshire, and England, appear as places ruled by the laws of nature, laws which can best be observed when looking at plants and animals. While British India as well as the countryhouse stand for worlds which have become barren, the English countryside is alive and engaged in processes of growth and procreation. Emotionally and physically impoverished children like Mary and Colin can find mental and physical regeneration through discovering the pleasures of open-air exercise, observation of nature and giving assistance to processes of growth, not to domesticate the wilderness but to allow the wild forces of nature to operate: "[...] it was plain that though the lovely wild place was not likely to become a 'gardener's garden,' it would be a wilderness of growing things before the springtime was over" (*Secret Garden* 168–69). Class, like colonialism, comes to appear as a stifling development of a civilization alienated from the natural condition of the human species. Mary's and Colin's move from the deadening civilization of the countryhouse to the enlivening atmosphere of the surrounding countryside could be seen as emblematic of cultural processes going on in the first decades of the twentieth century: a growing distrust of civilization, including the traditional tenets of Christianity, and a corresponding revaluation of natural instincts, a breakdown of the class system, and, most significantly, the replacement of a national identity concept based on empire to one centred in rural England. At the same time, however, the new-discovered place stimulates the imagination by providing links to countless stories known to the children and the reader. In addition to outdoor exercise, a rich imaginative life appears as a precondition to mental and physical regeneration.

Some of these elements had been present in children's and young adults' fiction for some decades. In Richard Jefferies' *Bevis* (1882) a boy physically and imaginatively explores the countryside round his parents' farm.⁵ Jefferies' *Wood*

4 See, e. g., F. Max MUELLER's *India. What Can It Teach Us?* (1882) and Rudyard KIPLING's *Kim* (1901).

5 On Jefferies and the ruralist movement in late nineteenth-century English writing cf. CARPENTER, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens. A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1987. 109–10.

Magic (1881) as well as Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) feature animal characters who can talk like humans but are also endowed with animalistic instincts, and feel constantly drawn to their natural habitats, which are described in great detail. In Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1905) and its sequel *Rewards and Faries* (1910) the landscape of Sussex is shown as a site of several thousand years of English history. Both natural environment and cultural practices contain countless traces of the past; the place is alive with memories of people and of events which made England what it is.⁶ While these books helped establish a discourse of English regionalism, Burnett's *The Secret Garden* can perhaps be considered the first instance of constructing an English region as a foreign place, as archetypally 'other' and thereby rendering it exciting and desirable.

During the period between the two world wars, this new vision of English identity was taken up by several other writers including writers of decidedly 'adult' literature. The best-known 'offspring' of *The Secret Garden* is certainly D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), which has been called a "palimpsest" of Burnett's novel.⁷ In this novel Lady Constance Chatterley leaves her husband, who is bound to a wheelchair due to injuries received in the Great War, to start an affair with Mr. Mellors, her husband's gamekeeper. Mellors, who fills the place of Dickon in *The Secret Garden*, introduces Lady Chatterley to the local dialect as well as to previously unexplored dimensions of sexual pleasure. As with Mary Lennox Constance's attempts at using the dialect indicate her efforts at appropriating this new and exciting world:

She lay still. He softly opened the door. The sky was dark blue, with crystalline, turquoise rim. He went out, to shut up the hens, speaking softly to his dog. And she lay and wondered at the wonders of life, and of being.

When he came back she was still lying there, glowing like a gipsy. He sat on the stool by her.

'Tha mun come one naight ter th' cottage, afore tha goos; sholl ter?' he asked, lifting his eyebrows as he looked at her, his hands dangling between his knees.

'Sholl ter?' she echoed, teasing.

He smiled.

'Ay, sholl ter?' he repeated.

'Ay!' she said, imitating the dialect sound.

'Yi!' he said.

'Yi!' she repeated.

6 Cf. KULLMANN, Thomas. *Englische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Eine Einführung*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2008. 146–50.

7 Cf. e.g. VERDUIN, Kathleen. "Lady Chatterley and *The Secret Garden*. Lawrence's Hommage to Mrs. Hodgson Burnett." In: *D.H. Lawrence Review* 17 (1989): 61–66; PLOTZ, Judith. "Secret Garden II. Or *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Palimpsest." In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 19,1 (1994): 15–19.

‘An’ slaip wi’ me,’ he said. ‘It needs that. When sholt come?’
 ‘When shol I?’ she said.
 ‘Nay,’ he said, ‘tha canna do’t. When sholt come then?’
 ‘Appen Sunday,’ she said.
 ‘Appen a’ Sunday! Ay!’
 He laughed at her quickly.
 ‘Nay, tha canna,’ he protested.
 ‘Why canna I?’ she said.
 He laughed. Her attempts at the dialect were so ludicrous, somehow.
 ‘Coom then, tha mun goo!’ he said.
 ‘Mun I?’ she said.
 ‘Maun Ah!’ he corrected. (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover* 184–85)

As in *The Secret Garden*, the playfulness of acquiring a regional dialect is part of a process of regeneration. There is no redemption, however, to the Colin figure of Lawrence’s novel, Sir Clifford Chatterley. As a symbolic representative of the paralysis of the old order, he simply has to be got rid of.

I should like to compare Burnett and Lawrence to another ‘adult’ novelist who also lays a strong focus on sexuality as a natural force at variance with the conventions of civilization: Mary Webb (1881–1927). Unlike Lawrence, however, she analyses the sexual instinct in the context of old, seemingly ‘primitive’ folk traditions and superstitions. While her books are set in Shropshire, a region close to the Welsh border which to most of her readers is certainly rather close geographically, it is a place characterized by wild nature and archaic customs, constructed as infinitely remote from modern civilization. In *Gone to Earth*, a novel published in 1917, eighteen-year-old Hazel is the daughter of an eccentric and solitary man who makes a living of beekeeping, coffin-making and playing the harp at country festivities. Her mother, a gypsy, had died when she was fourteen years old. Her main emotional investment is in her pet fox which she rescued when its mother was killed and the rest of the litter destroyed. By accident Hazel gets entangled with two men. One of them is a yeoman-squire who sees in her a sexual prey to be pursued as relentlessly as he uses to pursue a fox when taking part in a fox hunt. The other one is a Presbyterian minister torn between the moral rules of his religion and social environment and his desire for Hazel. The conflict between natural passion and civilization inevitably leads to tragedy, civilization being characterized by cruelty, meanness, jealousy and a phony ideal of self-denial, embodied in the Christian religion.

While the novel obviously laments the loss of a natural order of things, it draws attention to the processes of growth and development in nature, as found in the English countryside, as forces which determine the cultural identity of the people who live in that region, and thus as a source of English identity. As in *The*

Secret Garden, nature is attributed symbolic significance, with natural processes closely resembling the emotional development of the protagonist:

For as yet spring had no flight, no song, but went like a half-fledged bird, hopping tentatively through the undergrowth. The bright springing mercury that carpeted the open spaces had only just hung out its pale flowers, and honeysuckle leaves were still tongues of green fire. Between the larch boles and under the thickets of honeysuckle and blackberry came a tawny silent form, wearing with the calm dignity of woodland creatures a beauty of eye and limb, a brilliance of tint, that few women could have worn without self-consciousness. Clear-eyed, lithe, it stood for a moment in the full sunlight – a year-old fox, round-headed and velvet-footed. Then it slid into the shadows. A shrill whistle came from the interior of the wood, and the fox bounded towards it. ‘Wher you bin? You’m stray and lose yourself, certain sure!’ said a girl’s voice, chidingly motherly. ‘And if you’m alost, I’m alost; so come you whome. The sun’s undering, and there’s bones for supper!’ (*Gone to Earth* 13–14)

In his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Gone to Earth*, John Buchan describes Webb’s prose style as “true magic”,⁸ perhaps unaware of the use of this term in *The Secret Garden*. Mary Webb certainly manages to evoke a magical picture of a world unfamiliar to most of her readers, although, this being Shropshire, England, it can be found round the corner. Her vision of rural England, however, does not imply any hope for the healing powers of this natural world, as in *The Secret Garden* and, to some extent, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

Perhaps it is only in children’s fiction that a natural, rural environment can convincingly be portrayed as utopia. In this context I should like to take a look at a text in which a regional identity is based on stories linked to certain sights and geographical features of Sussex: Eleanor Farjeon’s *Martin Pippin in the Daisy-Field* (1937). The stories told by Martin Pippin to six little girls take up folklore motifs, such as fairies and mermaids and sometimes make use of actual folkloristic sources. On the whole, however, it is made-up folklore, exemplifying the function of stories of giving life and meaning to phenomena found in the environment. Some of these stories are etiological, explaining, for example, the rock formation called ‘Seven Sisters’ and the name of a famous public-house, ‘The Mermaid of Rye’. Another story, “Elsie Piddock Skips in Her Sleep” (*Martin Pippin in the Daisy-Field* 73–98), features a girl who is particularly proficient in the game of skipping, which already appeared in *The Secret Garden* as a recommendable outdoor pastime. The fairies take Elsie away and teach her to perform fairy skips; and she goes on skipping on new-moon nights on Mount Caburn. When a lord proposes to fence in Mount Caburn in order to develop it as an industrial site, the local girls persuade him to allow a final skipping party;

8 BUCHAN, John. “Introduction.” In: Mary Webb. *Gone to Earth*. London: Penguin, 1935. 9–12, 12.

when they are tired of skipping he can begin building. Elsie Piddock, however, is among the skippers, and as a fairy, she will never stop, and so the lord's plans are frustrated.

A dialogue which belongs to the frame story may illustrate Farjeon's practice of using folklore. Martin Pippin quotes an "Old Saying" but the girls do not believe it is old:

Stella: [...] We're talking about Old Sayings. You made it up.

Sue: Making up's cheating, you know.

Martin: Of the very best kind. Let us all make up Old Sayings.

Sylvia: What about?

Selina: Trees of course. The Birch is a fountain.

Sophie: The Willow's a bower.

Sally: The Elm is a mountain.

Sue: The Poplar's a tower.

Stella: The Chestnut's a chapel.

Sylvia: The Aspen's a song.

Martin: The house of the Apple holds right things and wrong.

Sue: The Cedar's a table.

Sophie: The Maple's a flame.

Selina: The Fir-tree's a fable.

Sally: The Mulberry's a game.

Sylvia: The Beech is a ceiling.

Stella: The Pine is a mast.

Martin: The Oak has the feeling for first things and last.

'Your line was all wrong, Sally,' said Stella.

'What for?' asked Sally.

'There was one-and-a-quarter too much of it. And how can a Mulberry be a *game*, you silly?'

'Because here we go round on a fine and frosty morning.' (*Martin Pippin in the Daisy-Field* 25–26)

The allusion is, of course, to the children's song: "Here we go round the mulberry bush", which ends with "on a cold and frosty morning". These poetical sayings are made-up, but they evoke a long list of trees, most of them endemic to England and Sussex, and remind the reader of various aspects connected to them, such as shape, or the colour of their leaves, or the uses the wood is put to. Like these sayings, the stories are made up; but still they may be about fundamental issues, such as ethics ("right things and wrong") and the human condition ("first things and last").

The region of Sussex is endowed with a mystical quality which includes both nature and history. Inhabitants of this region are magically linked to this heritage and environment. Most of the readers, of course, will not be natives of Sussex; they are invited to approach Sussex and its folklore from an outside

point of view, to look at its landmarks as something fascinating for its strangeness. In common with *The Secret Garden* the book conveys the message that it is in the regions of England and with the so-called common people that the most exciting stories can be found, not in India or at any other overseas frontier of British imperial expansionism.⁹

The Secret Garden thus appears as a seminal text in a discursive process which was to redefine Englishness. The story of the India-returned girl who develops her full personality in a Yorkshire garden becomes an emblem of a shift of attitude with regard to English, or British, identity. In imitation of Alexander Pope's famous exhortation: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;/ The proper study of Mankind is Man" ("An Essay on Man", II, 1–2), we could say that the message now seems to be: 'explore your own roots, do not presume to rule the world; the proper concern of an English person is England', England being the 'real England' of the countryside and of rural traditions.¹⁰ This discursive process was to receive a particular boost through the catastrophe of the Great War, when the number of soldiers killed in action and the unheroic character of their deaths in the trenches rendered it difficult to hold on to a concept of national identity based on military glory and a mission to civilize the rest of the world. This shift in attitude can perhaps best be illustrated by a speech made by Stanley Baldwin, the British Conservative prime minister, at the annual dinner of the Royal Society of St. George, on 6 May 1924:

To me, England is the country, and the country is England. And when I ask myself what I mean by England, when I think of England when I am abroad, England comes to me through my various senses – through the ear, through the eye, and through certain imperishable scents. I will tell you what they are, and there may be those among you who feel as I do.

The sounds of England, the tinkle of the hammer on the anvil in the country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of the scythe against the whetstone, and the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill, the sight that has been seen in England since England was a land, and may be seen long after the Empire has perished and every works in England has ceased to function, for centuries the one eternal sight of England. The wild anemones in the woods in April, the last load at night of hay being drawn down a lane as the twilight comes on, when you can scarcely distinguish the

9 Cf. KULLMANN. *Englische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*. 200–02.

10 For further manifestation of a 'rural' concept of Englishness see e.g. HOWKINS. "The Discovery of Rural England."; WIENER, Martin J. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit. 1850–1950*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992. 41–80 and GERVAIS, David. *Literary England. Versions of 'Englishness' in Modern Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, esp. 102–32. EGBERT, Marie-Luise. *Garten und Englishness in der englischen Literatur*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2006, esp. 70–74, provides a survey of the history of the English closeness to the countryside. Burnett's *Secret Garden*, however, is not mentioned; and little is said about the period between the two world wars.

figures of the horses as they take it home to the farm, above all, most subtle, most penetrating and most moving, the smell of wood smoke coming up in an autumn evening, or the smell of the scutch fires. (*On England and Other Addresses* 16)

Baldwin's words appear to echo the rhetoric of *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) by his cousin, Rudyard Kipling, where Puck explains to Dan and Una: "I came into England with Oak, Ash and Thorn, and when Oak, Ash and Thorn are gone I shall go too" (*Puck of Pook's Hill* 13). Kipling, of course, performed the shift from 'imperial' to 'rural' England in his own writing and his own life. Having lived in India, America and South Africa for many years he finally settled at Burwash, Sussex, in 1902; in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton (dated 30 November/ 8 December 1902) he remarked:

England is a wonderful land. It is the most marvellous of all foreign countries that I have ever been in. It is made up of trees and green fields and mud and the Gentry: and at last I am one of the Gentry! (*Letters*, vol. 3: 1900 – 1910, 113)

Kipling also praised his chosen county in a poem entitled "Sussex", which ends with the words:

God gives all men all earth to love,
 But, since man's heart is small,
 Ordains for each one spot shall prove
 Belovèd over all.
 Each to his choice, and I rejoice
 The lot has fallen to me
 In a fair ground – in a fair ground –
 Yea, Sussex by the sea! ("Sussex", *Rudyard Kipling's Verse* 216)

It cannot be denied that the narrative and discursive tradition outlined bears some resemblances with continental celebrations of 'the blood and the soil', *Blut und Boden*, as found in *Heimatliteratur*, which was to play such a detrimental role in post-World-War I Germany. There is the same celebration of rural environments and the customs of 'simple' people, the same distrust of civilization and the same celebration of health and of healthy instincts. What saves English ruralism from becoming a vessel of fascist ideology, however, is this paradoxical and ironical construction of an outside point of view which renders the worlds described both strange and familiar, as well as a spirit of intertextual playfulness, which links regional life to a wealth of fairy-tale or folklore pre-texts. It is this playfulness which certainly forms part of a new concept of English cultural identity.

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Hanne Birk

Pink Cats and Dancing Daisies: A Narratological Approach to Anime and Film Versions of *The Secret Garden*

Break open a cherry tree and there are no flowers,
but the spring breeze brings forth
myriad blossoms. [Sojun Ikkyuu]¹

I. Introduction

In the case of a ‘modern classic’, such as Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* (1910–1911), cherished by an adult and younger readership alike, it does not come as a surprise that there are numerous cinematic adaptations featuring protagonist Mary Lennox’ adventures during a springtime in Yorkshire:² “The book has never been out of print; it has been televised three times in Britain and a number of times in the US, the most recent in 1987. It was turned into a film in 1919, 1949 and 1993 and a Broadway musical in 1993, which later transferred to London.”³ Regardless of how close these films keep to the original plot or of how they transform the narrative of *The Secret Garden* into something rather new, these films as well as animated versions have two main aspects in common: Media-specific means, such as the combination of an auditory and visual track (Chatman) are employed to narrate a certain story.⁴

This is the reason why the following essay follows a narratological approach in trying to achieve two main objectives: (1) Following the tradition of the so-called ‘post-classical’, especially ‘intermedial narratologies’, the first part of the essay tries to sketch a narratological toolkit, specifically adapted and designed

1 Quoted from: CAVALLARO, Dani. *Magic as Metaphor in Anime: A Critical Study*. Jefferson, NC/ London: McFarland, 2010. 85.

2 GERZINA, Gretchen Holbrook. “Preface.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. ix – x, ix.

3 DAVIES, Máire Messenger. “*The Secret Garden* in Film and Television.” In: Fiona M. Collins and Jeremy Ridgman (eds.). *Turning the Page: Children’s Literature in Performance and the Media*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006. 83 – 104, 84.

4 Cf. ALLRATH, Gaby, Marion GYMNIC and Carola SURKAMP. “Introduction: Towards a Narratology of TV Series.” In: Gaby Allrath and Marion Gymnich (eds.). *Narrative Strategies in Television Series*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 1 – 43, 1 – 2.

for analyses of animated films, of so-called ‘anime’.⁵ While film studies as well as comic, manga and anime studies are flourishing, and narratologies of films and TV series as well as narratological models for the analysis of graphic novels can be called thriving areas of research, narratological approaches specifically adapted to the interpretation of the hybrid genre of animated films, which combine cinematic and pictorial characteristics, are rare.⁶ Accordingly, Hu considers animated films as a genre of their own as well and understands ‘anime’ as a “‘medium-genre’ because it has acquired unique recognizable characteristics [...] such as character design, background presentation, origins of storylines, production work practices, channels of distribution, and kinds of audienceship.”⁷ (2) Needless to say, a fully-fledged model of an ‘anime narratology’ cannot be presented; rather a selection of tools will be employed in a comparative analysis of two film versions of Burnett’s novel for children: the non-animated *The Secret Garden* (1993) directed by Agnieszka Holland, which “may well become a classic in its own right”, and the animated *The Secret Garden* (1994) directed by Dave Edwards.⁸

Although they were originally aired shortly after one another and are thus for example comparable in terms of their technological options, they differ obviously not only in the fact that the second is an animated version, but also in their target audience and the cultural context of their imagery. While the *Non-animated Secret Garden* is a film version which keeps rather close to the original and meets

5 Instead of the older and potentially even derogatory expression ‘Japanimation’, the term ‘anime’ will be used for animated films having been created in an Asian/Japanese cultural context. Cf. PATTEN, Fred. “‘Anime’ Versus ‘Japanimation’ [Anime Archive Column in *Newtype USA* 2, no. 11, November 2003].” In: Fred Patten. *Watching Anime, Reading Manga: 25 Years of Essays and Reviews*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2004. 85–86.

6 For a list of “academic programs and centers”, “conferences”, “research projects” and “societies and associations” focussing on anime and manga research, cf. KOULIKOV, Mikhail (ed.). *Online Bibliography of Anime and Manga Research*. <<http://corneredangel.com/amwss/>> (accessed September 15, 2011). For a definition of the art form ‘comics’ and an overview of the state of the art in comic studies, cf. SCHÜWER, Martin. *Wie Comics erzählen: Grundriss einer intermedialen Erzähltheorie der grafischen Literatur*. Trier: WVT, 2008. 6–12 and 12–17. For an overview of key works in manga studies, cf. MACWILLIAMS, Mark W. “Introduction.” In: Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.). *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*. Armonk, NY/London: M.E. Sharpe, 2008. 3–25, 4–5.

7 Hu, Tze-Yue G. *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building*. Aberdeen/Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010. 2–3.

8 DAVIES. “The Secret Garden.” 102. In the following the title *The Secret Garden* (1993); Warner Bros. Pictures (production company), American Zoetrope; Agnieszka Holland (director); Caroline Thompson (screenplay); Francis Ford Coppola (executive producer). 97 mins, will be shortened to the ‘*Non-animated Secret Garden*’ and *The Secret Garden* (1994); Mike Young Productions, Greengrass Productions, Rainbow Animation Group (Korea), Jireh Animation (Korea) (production companies); Dave Edwards (director); Libby Hinson (teleplay); Ellen Freyer, Ted Tchoe, Mike Young (producers). 70 mins, will be abbreviated as the ‘*Animated Secret Garden*’.

expectations of a Western/European audience of all ages, the *Animated Secret Garden* deviates more strongly from the original text, seems to target mainly very young Western/European viewers and is simultaneously embedded in the context of the global, i.e. transnational and transcultural, success story of anime and manga and in the cultural tradition of Asian, mainly Korean and Japanese, anime productions (due to the fact that the animation work was mostly done by the Rainbow Animation Group and Jireh Productions Korea).⁹

In order to elaborate on the media-specific potential of animated versus non-animated films and their implicit cultural context, several examples taken from another, all-Japanese, animated version of *The Secret Garden* will complement the analyses. While the *Animated Secret Garden* was produced for the US ABC weekend specials, *Anime Himitsu no Hanazono/ アニメ ひみつの花園* (1991–1992), directed by Tameo Ogawa, was produced in Japan, by Japanese animation professionals for a primarily Japanese audience.¹⁰ But due to the fact that only the dubbed version (in Italian) was accessible to the author of this essay, the *Himitsu no Hanazono* version to be discussed has to be positioned in the larger context of specific transnational anime adaptation processes, influenced for example by the active participation of fan communities ('otaku'), contributing 'scanlations' (a combination of scanning and translation work often beyond copyright laws), and by institutionalised cultural translation processes. As Price explains, the distribution of anime in the US for example tends to change the respective anime considerably: "The Japaneseness of these

9 The transcultural impact of anime and manga is for example discussed in BOUSSOU, Jean-Marie. "Japan's Growing Cultural Power: Manga in France." In: Jaqueline Berndt and Steffi Richter (eds.). *Reading Manga: Local and Global Perceptions of Japanese Comics*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006. 149–65 and LEVI, Antonia. "The Americanization of Anime and Manga: Negotiating Popular Culture." In: Steven T. Brown (ed.). *Cinema Anime: Critical Engagements with Japanese Animation*. New York/Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 43–63. For a discussion of the concept of a transnational 'mangascape', cf. MALONE, Paul M. "Mangascape Germany: Comics as Intercultural Neutral Ground." In: Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke and Gideon Haberkorn (eds.). *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*. Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland, 2010. 223–34. For a diachronic overview of the development of anime, cf. HU. *Frames of Anime and Poitras*, Gilles. "Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture." In: Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.). *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*. Armonk, NY/London: M.E. Sharpe, 2008. 48–67.

10 In the following *Anime Himitsu no Hanazono/ アニメ ひみつの花園/ The Animated Secret Garden* (1991–1992); Gakken, NHK, NHK Enterprises, Sogo Vision (production companies); Tameo Ogawa (director); Hideki Kubo, Hiroshi Suzuki (animation directors), Kaoru Umeno (screenplay). 25 mins. x 39 episodes, will be labelled as 'Himitsu no Hanazono'. For more information on the series, cf. CLEMENTS, Jonathan and Helen MCCARTHY. *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press. 571 and MACDONALD, Christopher, Daniel DELORME, Zac BERTSCHY, Egan LOO and Justin SEVAKIS (eds.). *Anime News Network*. <<http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/anime.php?id=1109>> (accessed September 12, 2011).

shows was fiercely camouflaged, along with any mature content in order to redirect the appeal to a strictly American, as well as a younger, audience.”¹¹ This removal of “the Japanese cultural presence”, which favours global circulation, is called ‘*mu-kokuseki*’, which translates literally into ‘the absence of nationality’.¹² Examples mentioned by Price include the adaptation of characters’ names, the transformation of alcoholic drinks into non-alcoholic beverages, the metamorphosis of Japanese food (such as sushi) into chocolate cake or doughnuts, or the transformation of the originally transvestite protagonist of *Robotech* into a secret agent who sometimes has to dress up as a female due to his assignments.¹³ Thus, by taking a closer look at two animated versions of *The Secret Garden*, not only the variability of anime productions can be illustrated but also their media-specific means of representation, their position in transcultural negotiation processes and their cultural relativity can be addressed.¹⁴

The final part of the essay focuses on the diverging representations of two core elements of the narrative, both of which are closely correlated to the leitmotif ‘magic’ of *The Secret Garden*. By tracing the media-specific means and culture-specific imagery of those strands of the story in which Dickon, ‘the animal charmer’, enters the stage and the secret garden comes alive, some hypotheses on the effects of certain narrative strategies of anime can be elaborated on.

II. Towards a Narratological Toolkit for the Analysis of Anime

In the following paragraphs categories of narratology which have been adapted to audiovisual film media on the one hand and which have been designed for graphic written works (e.g. comics or mangas) on the other hand will be correlated in order to gain a hybrid toolkit, which can be used for the analysis of

11 PRICE, Shinobu. “Cartoons from Another Planet: Japanese Animation as Cross-Cultural Communication.” In: *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 24,1–2 (2001): 153–69, 161. For a discussion of the ‘*The Lion King vs. Kimba, the White Lion*’ controversy, with respect to the US plagiarism of the original Japanese anime, cf. *ibid.* 162.

12 MOUER, Ross and Craig NORRIS. “Exporting Japan’s Culture: From Management Style to Manga.” In: Yoshio Sugimoto (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*. Cambridge/New York et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 352–68, 362.

13 PRICE. “Cartoons from Another Planet.” 161, 163–64.

14 It should be noted that the two anime versions of a children’s classic to be discussed cannot be seen as prominent or typical examples of anime. In contrast to Western traditions of animated films, anime adaptations are not restricted to the genre of children’s literature or fairy tales, cf. CAVALLARO, Dani. *Anime and the Art of Adaptation: Eight Famous Works from Page to Screen*. Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland, 2010. Furthermore, anime and manga are famous for their variety and heterogeneity, cf. MACWILLIAMS, Mark W. “Introduction.” In: Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.). *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*. Armonk, NY/London: M.E. Sharpe, 2008. 3–25.

cartoons or anime, which feature an audiovisual track mediated by pictorial as well as graphic narrative strategies. The discussion of narratological categories pertaining to the discourse and story level of the respective works is preceded by some introductory remarks on features of structural composition.¹⁵

Already a first look at the overall structure of the three film versions reveals remarkable differences. The *Non-animated Secret Garden* and the *Animated Secret Garden* were filmed in movie-length (97 mins. and 70 mins. respectively), which means that each can be interpreted as one single narrative unit. In contrast, *Himitsu no Hanazono* was aired in 39 separate episodes (25 mins. each). As these single units hardly show any closure at the end of each story sequence, but rather correspond to elements of a larger plot, *Himitsu no Hanazono* can be characterised as a ‘serial’ (instead of a ‘series’, in which each episode reaches some degree of closure).¹⁶ As a consequence, the beginnings and endings of the episodes almost simulate the division of the original text into chapters or even paragraphs. In addition, *Himitsu no Hanazono* features another characteristic of a serial: Short summaries of previous important events presented by an anonymous female voice-over narrator precede the beginning of the current episode, and teasers, i. e. flashforwards to impending adventures commented on by Mary’s voice-over, conclude story sequences. Both strategies support the viewers’ interest in the plotline and invite the audience to return faithfully to the next airing.

As a vital element of the discourse level, the narrative agency, in Jahn’s terms the non-anthropomorphic ‘filmic composition device’ (FCD), is responsible for the how and what of the audiovisual presentation of the story.¹⁷ For non-animated as well as animated films, not only the selection and arrangement of the plot, but also camera movements, cuts, the choice of camera angles, captions as well as off-screen sound and music are traces of the FCD.¹⁸ Special cases of filmic narration are provided by so-called ‘voice-over narrators’, to whom either a heterodiegetic or a homodiegetic narrative voice can be attributed.¹⁹

15 The presentation follows the argument in ALLRATH, GYMNIC and SURKAMP. “Introduction.”

16 ALLRATH, GYMNIC and SURKAMP. “Introduction.” 5–6.

17 JAHN, Manfred. *Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genres*. <<http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/ppp.htm>> (accessed September 16, 2011). F4.1.

18 Captions are scarce in the anime versions. An example in the *Animated Secret Garden* comments on Mary’s arrival in England (“Liverpool, England, 6 months later”) and offers thus additional, quick information. The fact that this device is rarely employed might hint at the fact that also children at a non-reading age are seen as potential viewers.

19 ALLRATH, GYMNIC and SURKAMP. “Introduction.” 13–18. Multiperspectivity and unreliable narration represent further possibilities of narrative mediation, but these phenomena do not occur in the *Non-animated Secret Garden*, the *Animated Secret Garden* or *Himitsu no Hanazono*. For a discussion of anime series based on so-called ‘visual novels’, referring to computer gaming events, in which – simply due to the structure of the game – the player

Specifically for analyses of the narrative agency in animated films further discursive aspects have to be taken into account. Firstly, the mode of animation itself is relevant; i.e. simply by the fact who or what is moving in an animated scene the viewer's attention is directed and focussed on certain elements of the storyline. Storytelling with single images alone already relies on pictures conveying a presentative as well as narrative mode, so that a reader of comics for example can create the impression of movement across the 'gutter', i.e. across the space between single panels, but the actual showing of moving pictures can count as a defining characteristic of animations in the literal sense of the term.²⁰ These effects, which viewers sometimes recognize in more or less fluid motions against a static background, are of course closely related to the production processes of anime, which are sketched by Bordwell as follows:

During the 1910s, studio animators introduced clear rectangular sheets of celluloid, nicknamed **cels**. Characters and objects could be drawn on different cells, and these could then be layered like a sandwich on top of an opaque painted setting. The whole stack of cels would then be photographed. New cels showing the characters and objects in slightly different positions could then be placed over the same background, creating the illusion of movement [...]. This system, with a few additional laborsaving techniques, is still in use today.²¹

Secondly, characteristics of the pictorial representation, such as the choice of colouring (e.g. realistic vs. non-realistic), the drawing style (e.g. graphic, manga-like, abstract, watercolour) as well as certain perspectives and possible symmetries can be attributed to the FCD. Thirdly, due to the selecting and presenting tasks of the narrative agency, the influence of elements of Asian (especially Japanese) cultures as well as the use of symbols have to be taken into account. While Papp traces for example the origins of prominent monstrous figures in anime in Japanese art, Price mentions the appearance of 'cherry blossoms' in anime, which represent spring time but also hint at the impending

engages in multiple perspectives, cf. CAVALLARO, Dani. *Anime and the Visual Novel: Narrative Structure, Design and Play at the Crossroads of Animation and Computer Games*. Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland, 2010. 1–5 and 33–77.

20 Cf. HICKETHIER's statement "Erzählen mit Bildern enthält beides: Narration und Präsentation." HICKETHIER, Knut. "Erzählen mit Bildern: Für eine Narratologie der Audiovision." In: Corinna Müller and Irina Scheidgen (eds.). *Mediale Ordnungen: Erzählen, Archivieren, Beschreiben*. Marburg: Schüren, 2007. 98. On reader participation in the reception process of comics, cf. PRATT, Henry John. "Narrative in Comics." In: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 67,1 (2009): 107–17, especially 111.

21 BORDWELL, David and Kristin THOMPSON. *Film Art: An Introduction*. Boston/Burr Ridge, IL et al.: McGraw-Hill, 2004. 163. BORDWELL and THOMPSON (ibid. 164–65) continue to explain: "Computer imaging has begun a revolution in animation. On a mundane level, the computer can perform the repetitive task of making the many slightly altered images needed to give a sense of movement. On a creative level, software can be devised that enables filmmakers to create images of things that could not be filmed in the real world."

death of someone, and the sudden occurrence of protagonists' 'bleeding noses', which express sexual attraction.²² For the interpretation of *The Secret Garden* anime versions, three culture-specific dimensions are particularly relevant:

- a) As Price explains, "Shinto, the native religion of Japan [...] is a natural resource for *anime* artists. Shinto basically provides thousands of stories and ancient myths which Japanese become familiar with from an early age."²³ But this is not the only aspect of Shinto which is important for studies of anime. Cavallaro states "in Shinto, spiritual forces (*kami*) are believed to fill the entire cosmos – mountains and trees, rivers and waterfalls, rocks and stones, as well as human beings and other animals. [...] [I]n Shinto, the notion that the spiritual principle is omnipresent entails that any creature, in theory, holds the potential to affect reality."²⁴ Thus the specifically 'animated' representation of the protagonists' worlds in anime, which manifests itself for example in the appearance of anthropomorphic animals, who exhibit human character traits, facial expressions and are able to talk, can be traced back to Japanese Shinto. In the anime versions of *The Secret Garden* particularly the robin and Mary's cat act as important human-like protagonists and contribute tremendously to the plot development. The introduction of cats into the story – in the *Animated Secret Garden* the domestic cat 'Darjeeling' is Mary's close friend and in *Himitsu no Hanazono* she brings her own little pink cat from India – is particularly remarkable, because the cat ('*neko*'), an animal which is rather prominent in Japanese folk tradition, adds another specifically Japanese element.²⁵
- b) In addition to the use of Japanese instruments and "sound cues", the already mentioned mode of animation itself can also be considered as culturally contextualized: "The very methods of storytelling used by the animator are reflections of centuries-old artistic traditions. The general lack of fluidity in movement and stagnant posing of characters for dramatic effect hark back to ancient Kabuki and Noh theatre."²⁶
- c) Just as in mangas, the use of "conventional graphic emblems" as elements of a Japanese "visual language" can also be identified in anime.²⁷ As Price puts it:

22 PRICE. "Cartoons from Another Planet." 156 and PAPP, Zilia. *Anime and its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art*. Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2010.

23 PRICE. "Cartoons from Another Planet." 156–57.

24 CAVALLARO, Dani. *Magic as Metaphor in Anime: A Critical Study*. Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland, 2010. 8.

25 POITRAS, Gilles. *The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?* Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1999. 92.

26 PRICE. "Cartoons from Another Planet." 158.

27 COHN, Neil. "Japanese Visual Language: The Structure of Manga." In: Toni Johnson-Woods (ed.). *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Continuum, 2010. 187–203, 192. Cf. also SHINOHARA, Kazuko. "Pictorial Metaphors of Emotion in

[A]nime characters tend not to come equipped with the symphony of facial expressions that are so prevalent in American animation. Deep resounding emotion is found instead in a slight twinkle of a character's eye or in an intensely furrowed brow. After all, symbolic resonance is more important than stoic realism in Japanese artistic traditions.²⁸

As these culture-specific factors influence narrative aspects pertaining to the discourse as well as the story level, they will be referred to repeatedly under various headings.

In addition to the dimensions of the narrative agency mentioned so far, the workings of the FCD seem to be closely correlated with different intended audiences, with the potential narratees, in the various versions of *The Secret Garden*. While both the *Non-animated Secret Garden* and the *Animated Secret Garden* begin with a summary of Mary's upbringing in India and the loss of her parents (due to an earthquake and an epidemic respectively), *Himitsu no Hanazono* sets in by showing the ship in which Mary is travelling to England. More precisely, for the intended Western/European audience of the *Non-animated Secret Garden* and the *Animated Secret Garden*, the image of India with its "exotic manifestations of Raj life" and thus the connection of the story to British imperialism was kept:²⁹ The depiction of a spoiled but lonely Mary getting dressed by her Indian servant, of her beautiful mother passing her time as a hostess of extravagant festivities, which potentially fascinates children and adults alike (*Non-animated Secret Garden*), is reworked in the *Animated Secret Garden* into an image of an India featuring an Indigenous population wearing saris and turbans, a village with elaborate temples and jungle-like vegetation. But the actions of two well-meaning and friendly soldiers saving Mary from the house of her parents do not raise any questions regarding the legitimacy of British imperialism. In contrast, the beginning of *Himitsu no Hanazono* offers to its Asian audience a trip to the other end of the world, to England, marked not only by waving British flags on the ship and on cars or by signs in English above shop doors, but also by a sweeping view of rolling green hills. The foreignness of England is further emphasized by employing a watercolour foreground in stark contrast to the dominant clear-cut drawing style of the anime in general, and by the stereotypical pouring rain. The only reference to India at the beginning of this story is to be found in the helpful actions of an Indian man saving Mary's cat from a roof in the harbour area – a scene which highlights Mary's impoliteness without addressing any social issues of colonization. Thus *Himitsu no Hanazono*

Japanese Comics." In: Charles J. Forceville and Eduardo Urios-Aparisi (eds.). *Multimodal Metaphor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009. 265–93.

28 PRICE. "Cartoons from Another Planet." 163.

29 DAVIES. "The Secret Garden." 96.

offers to its intended audience an interesting and exotic setting which is not tinged by any potentially problematic historical notions.

The tendency that the selections and arrangement of plot elements in the animated versions seem to be adapted to a younger audience (and dependent on the narratee's cultural context), whereas the *Non-animated Secret Garden* addresses older children as well as adults, is further enforced by means of camera movement. In the *Non-animated Secret Garden* the scene in which Colin, Dickon and Mary sing and dance around the fire to invoke magic to bring Lord Craven home to Misslethwaite Manor concludes by the camera zooming out until the fire is only a tiny lit spot on the screen. Precisely the same technique is used at the very end of the movie; employing another crane shot, the camera zooms out on Dickon mounted on his white horse in the moor, until he almost vanishes in the dark green Yorkshire plains.³⁰ Rather than self-reflexively hinting at the camera position and thereby underlining the artificiality of the work, these two sequences seem to represent an 'impossible focalisation', i. e. a 'flying camera eye', which leaves the impression of someone (or something) being involved who/which is larger than life, possibly supernatural and watching. As in both instances the leitmotif of 'magic' features prominently, the not-so-young or even adult viewer is invited to ponder e. g. on the connections between the abstract concept of magic and the powers of nature – or on 'the whole world being a secret garden' (cf. the final words of the movie).

In contrast, there are several instances in the anime versions in which the images are zoomed in: In *Himitsu no Hanazono* a recurring sequence, marking a break, shows Mary (seemingly hovering in a yellow background with flowers) using her skipping rope. The zoom closes up on her face and her eyes just as the new scene begins. Similarly, in both anime versions close-ups of the protagonists' faces and zooms into their eyes show what has been called 'conventional graphic emblems' (Cohn) portraying e. g. fear, surprise or joy. These instances tend to fulfil three main functions: Not only do they bind the story back to Mary and her friends, marking it as theirs, but they also invite the viewer to follow the camera movement, to fall into the story-world, i. e. to identify with the protagonists. Furthermore, these zooms highlight the dominant emotion of the sequence, which potentially facilitates its interpretation for younger children.

All three versions feature a specific use of music and of course their own soundtrack. In the *Non-animated Secret Garden*, for example, the soundtrack during the opening credits underlines the Indian setting of the first scenes and

30 BORDWELL and THOMPSON define a 'crane shot' as a "shot with a change in framing accomplished by having the camera above the ground and moving through the air in any direction." BORDWELL and THOMPSON. *Film Art*. 502.

contributes to the atmosphere by an “Indian raga”;³¹ later on, the viewer’s introduction to the wonders of the secret garden is accompanied by a certain piece of music which features a chorus with a full orchestra behind it. From then on, most scenes in the garden or images of growing plants and blossoms are combined with the same piece, resulting in an iterative recognition effect. While the soundtrack of the *Non-animated Secret Garden* has probably not been composed with an audience of a certain age in mind, the soundtracks of both anime versions have probably been chosen for young listeners. And although the scenes in the *Animated Secret Garden*, in which some protagonists suddenly begin to sing (and thus comment on their emotional state) can strictly speaking not be attributed to the FCD, because the origin of the music is on-screen, their effect transcends that of mere additional characterisation strategies. Examples include the scenes in which Mary has a duet with the robin, learning about animal language, or in which Mary expresses her feelings about spring, when Colin has seen the garden for the first time. These sequences are instances of genre-crossing between animated films and musicals, but as such they correspond to the expectations of the youngest viewers, shaped by a media history of US productions employing the very same technique (cf. the Walt Disney movies). As singing is traditionally rather rare in anime, the *Animated Secret Garden* reveals a strategy of cross-cultural adaptation, continues a media-specific tradition and fulfils expectations of a Western audience.

The various instances of voice-over narration in the three versions illustrate the flexibility of this narrative strategy. In the *Non-animated Secret Garden* the voice of Mary introduces herself to the viewer right at the beginning and thus marks the story as her own autodiegetic narration. During the movie Mary’s voice-over sequences continue and fulfil a whole range of functions: For example, when she describes the manor as seemingly “dead, like a spell had been cast upon it”, the setting as well as her own perception of it is clarified, her reporting her first dream of her mother since her arrival in England introduces not only an instance of internal focalization (when the audience sees what she dreams) but her crying in her dream merges into Colin’s wailing and leads to the discovery of her cousin. Furthermore, her voice-over identifies the night Lord Craven leaves the manor as the one in which spring came to Misslethwaite, and thus introduces the prerequisite for the further development of the story. And, finally, it is again Mary’s voice which concludes the story, by stating that the spell has been broken, that her “uncle learned to laugh, and [she, HB] learned to cry”, that the secret garden is now “open, awake and alive”. In sum, Mary’s voice-over narrations represent a very precise, consistent, immediate and intimate way of telling her story.

31 DAVIES. “The Secret Garden.” 96.

Mainly due to the fact that a heterodiegetic narration is employed, the voice-over sequences in *Himitsu no Hanazono* work differently: Right at the beginning of the first episode, which shows Mary on the ship on her way to England, an anonymous female voice compensates for the lacking information on Mary's past in India and summarizes the events that have brought her that far. Further summaries follow at the beginning of each episode. In addition to the fact that these voice-over sequences are a highly economic means of conveying information, the technique simulates a communication situation younger children tend to be used to, i.e. the setting of an oral storytelling, of an adult telling children a story, a fact which might contribute to the appeal of the anime. The *Animated Secret Garden* features an example of a rather unusual voice-over sequence in combination with a flashback, i.e. a sequence of "enacted recounting":³² it is the voice of the robin which tells Mary and Dickon the story of how Mary's aunt died by falling off the swing in the garden (while the viewers watch the scene which is marked as having happened in the past by sepia coloration). In this case, the voice-over sequence supports Mary's intention to take Colin to the garden in order to help him by clarifying that it was not his birth but an accident that killed her.

With respect to the discourse level of the narrative, a further category has to be taken into account. What the viewer perceives, sees and hears is also largely influenced by strategies of character-focalization and by means of presentation of consciousness.³³ Internal focalization can be fixed on one protagonist or change between several agents (multiple and varied focalization). Techniques which contribute to character-focalization include the soundtrack, point-of-view shots, "shots taken from a character's optical standpoint", gaze shots showing the protagonists' facial reactions, eye-line shots (a combination of the two former), over-the-shoulder shots and other representations of a subjective vision.³⁴ The options for internal focalization are often complemented by representations of dreams, visions or internal monologues (a kind of 'mind voice'), which are prominent examples for ways of presenting consciousness.

The character-focalization in the *Non-animated Secret Garden* is varied but favours Mary's point of view. By eye-line shots or over-the-shoulder shots, in which e.g. her hands are visible, viewers follow Mary on her wanderings through the manor, witness her discoveries, such as her aunt's room, which reminds her

32 'Enacted recounting' is defined as "a character tells about past events, and the syuzhet then presents the events in a flashback." BORDWELL, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London/New York: Routledge, 1986. 78.

33 ALLRATH, GYMNICh and SURKAMP. "Introduction." 19–22.

34 BORDWELL and THOMPSON. *Film Art*. 85. The same passage mentions additionally 'sound perspective' which contributes to a 'perceptual subjectivity' as a whole. Cf. ALLRATH, GYMNICh and SURKAMP. "Introduction." 20–21.

of her mother's, watch her hands search the ivy on the walls for a hidden door or weed a garden patch. We hear her 'mind voice' when she asks herself what might be hidden beyond the wall; we share her point of view when the garden is discovered and together with her we also observe Colin managing to walk down the stairs alone after a secret meeting with Mary in her room at night. Additionally the viewer is allowed into Mary's dream, in which she dreams of her mother leaving her alone in a garden and listens to an approximately four-year-old Mary crying when this sound suddenly transforms into Colin's lament at night in the manor. Not only Mary, but also Colin and Lord Craven function as character-focalizers. Prominent examples include the sequence when Colin – having arrived in the secret garden for the first time – is asked to open his eyes and the viewer – due to a pan of the camera – sees the lush garden abounding with blossoms and roses through Colin's eyes.³⁵ In a later scene the viewer watches Colin taking pictures of Mary and Dickon on the swing in the garden, and while the viewer realizes that the resulting photographs must resemble the romantic pictures of Lord Craven and his deceased wife, which the viewer saw when Mary discovered them, it is shown what Colin sees through the lens but does not want to be true, namely Mary and Dickon sharing an intimate moment. A further parallel strategy of character-focalization is constituted by a specific focus on Lord Craven. Very similar to the scene in which Mary discovers her cousin, the viewer follows Lord Craven's field of vision, limited by a handheld lamplight, through the dark hallways of the manor until he opens the door to Colin's room and watches him in his sleep. Finally the viewers witness Lord Craven's dream-vision, in which his deceased wife tells him that she is in the garden together with Colin and it becomes clear that fear for his son being in mortal danger made him return to the manor the very same night.

In sum these examples illustrate that character-focalization contributes to the rounding of characters, because it enables the viewer to share a protagonist's world-view and perceptions, her/his emotions, thoughts and fears. Furthermore, by these strategies certain actions and decisions of protagonists can become comprehensible, relations among characters can be illuminated and core themes of the whole narrative – such as the magic of the secret garden – can be emphasized.

Certainly in part due to the technical conditions of production, the means of character focalization and of presentation of consciousness in the anime versions, such as the singing sequences already discussed, diverge from the strategies mentioned above. While equivalents of over-the-shoulder shots exist, their

35 BORDWELL and THOMPSON define a 'pan' as a "camera movement with the camera body turning to the right or left. On the screen, it produces a mobile framing that scans the space horizontally." BORDWELL and THOMPSON. *Film Art*. 504.

number seems to be reduced in favour of close-ups, i. e. gaze shots, emphasizing the emotional reactions of the protagonist. A scene in *Himitsu no Hanazono* shows e. g. the beginning of a close-up of Mary in despair, featuring elements which contribute to the impression of a ‘conventional graphic emblem’ (Cohn), such as the protagonist’s clenched fists, reddening face and her glistening, quivering and watering eyes ready to burst into tears. This example illustrates the remarkable shape and sheer size of her eyes, which is a graphic tradition of anime adapted from ‘*Kodomomuke* manga’, i. e. manga specifically designed for children; they belong to a specific style which was initially imported via Disney cartoons during the Allied Occupation (1945–51). This specific “archetypical manga style featuring cute characters with large saucer eyes” can be traced back to Osamu Tezuka’s work (e. g. *Kimba, the White Lion/Janguru Taitei* or *Astro Boy/Tetsuwan Atomu*).³⁶

As a result the following tendencies can be deduced: Due to the fact that the number of subjective shots is limited, the representation of perception appears to be less marked as restricted to a certain person (protagonist). In other words, in the anime versions the viewer tends to witness the action as a neutral observer rather than sharing the protagonist’s perspective. Furthermore, the interpretation of a scene is facilitated by the use of ‘conventional graphic emblems’ (Cohn), i. e. certain pictorial topoi the audience is used to: It is by far easier to ‘understand’ eyes filling with water, because it is something that almost everyone has seen before in other anime, than to interpret a complex facial expression of a real person (actress/actor). Similarly, a song which mediates a certain sentiment by its tune and a specific content by its use of words facilitates the viewer’s understanding of certain thoughts and emotions of the protagonist. In sum, the strategies of character focalization and of presenting consciousness in the anime versions seem to require less interpretation effort on the part of the viewer; they tend to mediate precise and less complex emotional and cognitive content, and they might leave the viewer more ‘untouched’, i. e. casting her/him as a witness. Closely related to the focalization strategies on the discourse level are various techniques of characterization on the story level, which will be addressed in the following.

In the next paragraphs several narratological categories which are associated with dimensions of the story level – such as plot structures, characters, time and place – are discussed.³⁷ Instead of giving complete accounts of the plot structures or of how the original plot of *The Secret Garden* was transformed by the re-

36 NORRIS, Craig. “Manga, Anime and Visual Art Culture.” In: Yoshio Sugimoto (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*. Cambridge/New York et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 236–60, 239 and 242–43.

37 Cf. ALLRATH, GYMNICH and SURKAMP. “Introduction.” 22–35.

spective films and instead of trying to give elaborate summaries of character attributes, just a few outstanding plot alterations and a selection of characterization strategies will be focussed upon, which will highlight the differences between the non-anime and anime versions.³⁸

In the *Non-animated Secret Garden* the audience meets Mary, an approximately ten-year-old brown-haired and brown-eyed girl, already right at the beginning of the movie. On the one hand, she is shown as a spoilt and irascible girl, who is not able to, or rather willing to, dress herself and throws tantrums. On the other hand, the viewer begins to understand the reasons for her behaviour when s/he realizes that Mary is not only neglected by her parents (as well as by Mrs. Medlock when she is late in picking Mary up at her arrival) but also tends to be excluded (from festivities in her parents' house), mocked (by other children during her passage to England) or forgotten (by members of the household after the earthquake at her home in India). Mary's rudeness and impatience, growing out of isolation, loneliness and alienation, only begin to vanish when she learns from Ben Weatherstaff that she might have found a friend in the robin of the secret garden. The special relationship between her and the bird is marked externally by her red woollen cap, which matches the colour of the robin, and leads to her communicating with her new friend, who answers with chirps and thus plays the key role in her discovery of the garden. Mary's turning into a dynamic character is triggered by Dickon's influence on her, her experiences in the garden as well as discovering her cousin Colin, who shows several parallel character traits to the former Mary.

Although Colin, a brown-haired boy of the same age as Mary, has not lost both his parents, his emotional situation corresponds to Mary's: As his father hardly ever comes to see him, he is utterly lonely and left on his own with his fears of growing a lump on his back and dying early. Mary seems to be the first who is able to counter his despair. She turns into a – not pitiless but strong – friend, who takes his fears seriously, but does not accept his hot-tempered fits, his bossy behaviour or his arrogance. Under the influence of Mary and Dickon and their spending time together in the garden, Colin, the 'rude and sour Mr. Rajah', begins to turn into a boy full of hope that he might be able to learn how to walk and might live to grow old.

The younger brother of Martha, the housemaid attending to Mary, dark-haired and "Pan-like" Dickon plays a crucial role in the plot development.³⁹ His strong Yorkshire dialect, which he teaches to Mary, and his social standing,

38 Due to the fact that all three films are adaptations of an original text, their respective intermedial strategies are significant; some of these will be addressed in the course of the analysis. Furthermore, the three versions show intramedial references, i. e. relations to other films, more precisely to each other. The resulting similarities will also be mentioned in time.

39 DAVIES. "The Secret Garden." 89.

which is identifiable by his clothing, position him on a lower social scale than Mary and Lord Craven's son Colin. But he outmatches all the others in his knowledge or even wisdom regarding the natural world and his immediate environment, the Yorkshire moor. Dickon, who introduces Mary to the magic of springtime, is portrayed as her closest friend and as a confidant to every living being, as someone who knows everything about plants and can talk to animals, some of which (at least a crow, ducks, a goat and a deer) follow him around. The resulting tension with Colin, who is just beginning to learn about the outside world and who states that he would like to marry his cousin, manifests itself in several scenes revealing Colin's jealousy. But these areas of friction do not prevent the three protagonists from their cooperation in contributing to or even triggering the climactic scenes of the plot. It is the experiences during their shared times in the secret garden during springtime but also Dickon's special gift and his friendship with Mary that alter her enough to play a vital role in changing Colin's life, which in turn will allow Lord Craven to find new hope for happiness.

While some of the basic traits of the protagonists are similarly portrayed in *Animated Secret Garden* and *Himitsu no Hanazono*, there are several significant differences. Firstly, in both anime versions Mary is portrayed as a blonde girl, while Dickon has dark eyes and black hair (and is tanned in *Himitsu no Hanazono*). Although this might be associated with the character's social background in other contexts, this need not be true in this case: Hair colours in anime are often a symbolic means of conveying character traits. As Price puts it, "[b]londes tend to be trouble and those with black hair tend to be more virtuous".⁴⁰ Secondly, in both anime, Mary has a close relationship to a cat (in *Himitsu no Hanazono* she brings her pink cat from India, while in the *Animated Secret Garden* she adopts her aunt's cat, 'Darjeeling'). As a consequence, Mary does not appear as harsh and emotionally secluded and the protagonist Dickon loses his unique feature as animal lover. In fact, in *Himitsu no Hanazono* Mary is shown as a quite happy little girl, who slides down staircase railings and plays in the first snow. Thirdly, there are hardly any references to conflicts or tensions between the two male protagonists in the anime versions. Fourthly, the importance of the Yorkshire dialect, which might signal the regional ties or the social standing of the protagonists, is played down (or did not find an equivalent in *Himitsu no Hanazono*). Fifthly, in the *Animated Secret Garden* the importance of another character is emphasized. In the *Non-animated Secret Garden* Mrs. Medlock is characterized as strict and sometimes as harsh, but she is definitely responsible, well-meaning and worries about Colin's health. In the *Animated Secret Garden*, in contrast, the depiction of Mrs. Medlock is reminiscent of the stereotypical

40 PRICE. "Cartoons from Another Planet." 155. Many thanks to Klaus Scheunemann for a clue to the meaning of hair colours in anime.

‘wicked witch’: the spindly old woman, who always wears dark dresses and whose eyelids are violet, misappropriates money and plans a conspiracy with Lord Craven’s brother, a doctor, in order to kill Colin (with bubbling green poison) and inherit the manor. In sum, the characterization strategies in the anime version seem to level differences or ease tense relations between characters belonging to the same group, i. e. the ‘heroes’ of the story. Mary exhibits right from the beginning all the potential required to turn into a sweet little girl, which is symbolized by the (pink) cat. This group identity is further affirmed by the fact that others, i. e. non-members, are clearly marked as outsiders. In other words, the line between good and evil characters is very clear-cut. Furthermore, potentially problematic issues, such as social differences or signs of puberty are excluded.

The context for the plot and the development of the protagonists is provided by the setting, by representations of time and place.⁴¹ With respect to the time, an analysis of the relation between story and discourse time can reveal whether summaries, ellipses or scenic representation was used (and to what effect). Additional modes include flashbacks or flashforwards, which are often marked by specific codes, such as black-and-white or sepia colouring for memories. For an analysis of the place of action it is important to know whether there are any changes in the location, whether specific landmarks are referred to, whether spatial oppositions might be semantically encoded and in what way the lighting contributes to the atmosphere of a scene.

As in the *Non-animated Secret Garden* a scenic representation of the story is dominant, the remaining exceptions – in addition to the informative summaries by Mary’s voice-overs – are particularly conspicuous. These scenes show the growth of plants and opening of flowers in a high-speed mode, a device which will be discussed in the conclusion. With respect to the representation of place the use of stark contrasts is remarkable. While the scenes in India (and some indoor sequences showing Colin and Mary in his room) are kept in a warm, red glow, the scenes of Mary’s arrival in England, the depictions of the manor, of the barren Yorkshire moor and of the garden in the wintertime are endowed with dark blue or grey ‘cold’ colours and weak lighting. Other scenes influenced by ‘light vs. shadow’ effects include Colin being blinded by the sunshine of the outside world breaking through his windows, from which the blinds have been torn, and Mary’s spotlighted white nightgown when she is wandering through the dark hallways of the manor. These strategies serve mainly as a background contrast for the later springtime scenes in the garden filled with sunlight on colourful blossoms and thus emphasize the character development of the protagonists and the magical transformation of their environment.

41 ALLRATH, GYMNICH and SURKAMP. “Introduction.” 32 – 35.

The anime versions share several features with respect to the depiction of place. Both show the passage to England in brightest orange-red sunset colours and the manor as a gloomy, desolate and eerie place steeped in black and blue shades. In combination with pictorial elements such as old paintings on the wall, scarcely illuminated by the halo of a candle, dark grey armours and statues, frequent thunder and lightning, secret tunnels inhabited by rats, countless deserted rooms, the manor features everything a gothic castle requires. In other words, both anime versions use highly stereotypical elements for the depiction of place, which facilitates once more the young viewers' interpretation process. In *Himitsu no Hanazono* several flashbacks, which provide additional information e.g. on Mary's life in India as a seemingly quite happy child, and the temporal relation between the original *Secret Garden*-plot and its representation contribute further to a story specifically designed for a young audience: In comparison to the other versions, Mary's situation in *Himitsu no Hanazono* does not appear as desperate, and the *Secret Garden*-plot develops only very slowly, due to the fact that a wealth of side stories (focussing on her cat running away, on saving the coachman from the roof, or on her teacher) turn the series into a narrative of a little girl who sometimes seems to have little in common with the desperate and lost Mary Lennox of the original text.

III. Conclusion

In sum, the analyses of the non-animated and animated film versions of *The Secret Garden* lead to the following hypotheses: Partly due to the intended age group and adapted to the respective cultural background of their potential audience, the anime versions tend to facilitate the viewers' interpretation of the story and the protagonists' feelings for example by means of (simulated) camera movement, sequences of singing and dancing, voice-over narrations resembling storytelling situations, modes of character-focalizations using elements of a visual language, by eliminating social tensions, confirming the difference between good and evil and by employing a stereotypical setting. While these aspects might support the process of understanding the story, the very same narrative strategies might increase the effort required on the part of the viewer to identify with the protagonists, to feel part of their fictional world. But there is one aspect of the anime versions which might function as an important trigger for the viewer's success in imaginatively taking part in the narrative: It is precisely their concept of magic which might draw the viewer into the narrated world.

In the *Non-animated Secret Garden*, there are several scenes which show the changes in nature in spring in a fast-forward mode: The viewers witness roots taking hold in the ground, hatching butterflies and opening flowers and leaves.

Although all of these processes are shown in high-speed, the audience is aware of the fact that the magic of spring is a natural and regular occurrence. Similarly Dickon's gift and special relationship with animals do not appear to be supernatural, but rather a result of experience and his way of life and Colin's attempts to walk are paralleled by the first steps of a lamb and are thus cast as a part of the natural process of growing up. In other words, in the *Non-animated Secret Garden* the magic of the secret garden is identical with the magic of nature, conceptualised as an abstract life-force of all living things which manifests itself in the here and now of everyday life.

In the anime versions, Dickon is really represented as an animal charmer, as someone who can talk to and understand animals in their language, an ability which Mary acquires (in the *Animated Secret Garden*) after a sung lesson given by her friend the robin. Furthermore, a vital part of the magic of the secret garden in the *Animated Secret Garden* relies on the media-specific design of anthropomorphic animal protagonists, who can talk to humans and contribute to the happy ending. While *Himitsu no Hanazono* additionally features a green-eyed sorceress living on the moor, in the *Animated Secret Garden* the magic focuses strongly on Mary's animal friends. It is only due to the cat Darjeeling's brave actions and the robin's flight (as a kind of carrier pigeon) through several storms that Mary's message to her uncle is delivered safely and he returns home just in time to save Colin from Mrs. Medlock. Furthermore, it is Mary's singing which introduces the climactic scene, in which Colin enters the garden for the first time and realizes its magic, and it is precisely this sequence in which a vine of blossoming red roses starts to encircle her and Colin and anthropomorphic daisies spring from the earth, make a bow and begin to dance in circles.

In sum, the magic of the secret garden in the anime versions appears less as an abstract concept manifest in normal everyday occurrences but surfaces rather in surreal, anthropomorphic animal protagonists and plant beings, who do not only play important roles in the plot development, but contribute the entertaining humour of the story. In other words, while the *Non-animated Secret Garden* offers a new perspective on or maybe a renewed or deeper understanding of the world, which we call our reality, the anime versions employ media-specific means to present an alternative, surprising world, in which anything is possible. And maybe the temptation to witness – until then unimaginable – occurrences becoming true is just strong enough to draw anybody into animated worlds.

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Forty Years On: Reimagining and Going Beyond *The Secret Garden* in Noel Streatfeild's *The Painted Garden*

I. Introduction

One hundred years have passed since the publication of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, and it has since inspired much debate, many adaptations and gained the status of a children's classic. The very fact that even now, in a world radically different from England in 1911, Burnett's novel is still widely read, appreciated, and discussed suggests that its complex web of themes has never diminished in topicality and relevance. Yet it seems difficult to imagine a transferral of the story to a different time and place. Noel Streatfeild, in her 1949 novel *The Painted Garden* – mostly forgotten and regularly out of print – accomplishes just that and reimagines *The Secret Garden* – set almost forty years later and more than 5,000 miles from Yorkshire. Streatfeild tells the story of ten-year-old Jane Winter and her family, who embark upon a journey to California in order to aid the traumatised father's recovery. Jane, the second of three children and decidedly the plain, disagreeable, even ugly one, soon finds herself cast as Mary Lennox in a fictitious film adaptation of *The Secret Garden*, but without any realistic hopes of succeeding as a film star. Burnett's novel is present not only in the passages depicting life in and around the film studio, but also in the plot and characters Streatfeild creates, and thus the novel may be considered to be doubly reimagined in *The Painted Garden*.

It is a little ironic that a novel which demonstrates, among other things, that its protagonist will not rise to fame, should share the character's fate. However, as a creative reworking of Burnett's classic children's book, it deserves some attention. *The Painted Garden* is closely connected with its literary predecessor, and it can hardly be read without Burnett's novel in mind. However, as this essay will show, Streatfeild ensures constant rethinking of many key aspects of *The Secret Garden*, and she often does so by consciously departing from established patterns. Her novel is strikingly different from Burnett's in its treatment of some of the latter's key aspects, most prominently nature, nurturing, parenting, gender issues, and eroticism. Streatfeild omits from her novel much of the

significance placed on nature and nurturing in *The Secret Garden*, includes parent figures who are – unlike most parents in *The Secret Garden* – present, but not necessarily more effective, and chooses to exclude questions of gender roles and eroticism altogether. Instead of merely rewriting Burnett’s novel, Streatfeild reserves for *The Painted Garden* a place within her own oeuvre and infuses her myriad references to Burnett into a novel about children in the performing arts. It is my argument that Streatfeild thus enables herself to create a novel in its own right. The second half of this essay will be devoted to those features of *The Painted Garden* that make it decidedly modern and that help to provide the novel with an ending that is in some ways more promising for Jane, and surely less disappointing for readers, than the ending of *The Secret Garden* may be to some.

II. Nature and the Artificial: Rural Yorkshire and Urban California

The premises of the two novels are undeniably similar. Both novels feature disagreeable, ‘sour’ girls trying to find their place in life in spite of the harsh reality in which nobody expects them to succeed in anything. In both stories, the protagonist is removed from a familiar environment and taken to a remote location, which is quite different from everything they are used to. Sally Sims Stokes, as one of the few critics who have paid attention to Streatfeild’s reworking of *The Secret Garden*, puts it thus: “Mary and Jane will each now embark on a life-changing journey that neither wishes to undertake.”¹ These journeys – India to England, England to California – are both real and metaphorical. Neither protagonist will be left at the end of their respective stories quite as they entered it, and both have to face significant challenges resulting in personal growth. However, the processes of personal development undergone by Mary and Jane, respectively, and of course the results, are radically different. The very title of Streatfeild’s novel suggests that the nature of Jane Winter’s story is quite literally distinct from that of Mary’s: Jane’s garden is a painted one. Just as Mary Lennox, she will be exposed to a radically new environment, but hers will not be the nourishing wildness of a forlorn garden. It will simply pretend to be one, created entirely by man – not by nature, and certainly not by The Magic – for the sole purpose of serving the (financial) interests of filmmakers through pleasing the audience. Jane will not find herself in nature, but in a film studio. And, ironically, it is the adaptation of a children’s classic very much concerned with nature and nurturing that (again, quite literally) sets the stage for her.

1 STOKES, Sally Sims. “Noel Streatfeild’s Secret Gardens.” In: *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 29,3 (2004): 172–206, 195.

In *The Secret Garden*, a sour, disagreeable child is ‘magically’ transformed through nature. Mary Lennox slowly discovers her maternal, caring, and compassionate side as she brings a forlorn garden back to life. It is the major concern of at least the first half of *The Secret Garden* to demonstrate how an unhappy and spoilt child finds a purpose, friends, and even redemption through her love of growing things. In the very first chapter, Mary, already forgotten by her soon-to-be-dead parents and servants, finds distraction in pretending to make a garden. This solitary game is repeated soon after, while Mary is staying with an English clergyman’s family before travelling to England (cf. *Secret Garden* 4; *ibid.* 7)². We may thus infer that, in spite of the less-than-favourable introduction of the character by the narrator, the seed of nurturing is already within Mary long before she discovers Lilius Craven’s legacy. As Mary cultivates the garden, she in turn is cultivated by it. Danielle E. Price deals extensively with this aspect of Burnett’s novel in her article “Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden.”³ She argues that Mary herself displays properties one might expect of a garden: “Although Mary does not easily relinquish her wildness, she becomes a girl who, like the ideal garden, can provide both beauty and comfort.”⁴

Jane Winter’s development is rather more difficult to explain, as her attachment to nature and her caring qualities find no space within the confines of the film studio – quite drastically described as looking “rather like a prison” (*The Painted Garden* 159). Jane shares Mary’s difficulties in getting along with people, but, like her model, she is shown to have an innate love for something she can cherish and care for – in this case, her dog Chewing-gum. However, whereas Mary’s journey turns out to take her to a place that enables her to intensify her interests, Jane’s removes her from the only creature with whom she has an uncomplicated relationship. Mary finds a secret garden. Jane finds herself in a film studio without the faintest air of mystery.

There is little nature in *The Painted Garden*, and what little there is Jane does not get a chance to experience. The studio where Jane is to bring Mary Lennox to Technicolor life is, as far as challenges and personal growth are concerned, her equivalent to Mary’s garden, but it lacks the vivacious qualities of the outdoors. The trees and flower beds in the studio are only fake; the garden is painted. Mary’s journey unites her with nature and introduces her to The Magic, “the creative life force that works *through* nature as well as through [the children]”⁵

2 BURNETT, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden. A Norton Critical Edition*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

3 PRICE, Danielle E. “Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden.” In: *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4–14.

4 PRICE. “Cultivating Mary”. 4.

5 BIXLER KOPPES, Phyllis. “Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett: A

(to borrow Phyllis Bixler's words). Many critics have emphasised the healing and redemptive effects the garden and the outdoors have on Mary Lennox both physically and psychologically, but no such remark can be made of Jane Winter. As much as Jane mirrors Mary, Streatfeild still chooses to remove her from nature rather than to unite her with it. Ironically, besides her "acerbic Maryness"⁶, it is her love of living things, more precisely animals, that introduces her to film director Bryan J. Browne and inspires him to consider her as sick child star Ursula Gidden's replacement. Indeed, Jane begins to hope for a job soon after meeting Bryan J. Browne, but initially, there is no meeting of the minds. In fact, Jane does not even begin to think about acting until Bryan Browne makes his suggestion; she plans to earn her allowance by taking care of dogs – and by starting with Browne's dog Hyde Park. As Mary is drawn to the garden, Jane is drawn to pets – and just as Mary is fascinated by the forbidding mysteries of Misselthwaite Manor, Jane cannot resist the temptation to explore the strange and unknown world of filmmaking. But Mary's interests coincide quite happily, whereas Jane's acting engagement hardly leaves any room for nature, with the exception of child actor David Doe's wild animals. However, considering that Jane has long desired an opportunity to excel at something and to step out of her siblings' shadows, it is hardly surprising that she takes this unexpected chance. At this point, Jane's challenge departs from Mary's. Both girls have to overcome their own doubts and fears as well as those of others, but whereas Mary's story belongs to a pastoral tradition that emphasises nature's beauty, self-renewal, and the importance of work,⁷ Jane's is a strikingly modern one that places its protagonist into a fast-paced environment and provides her with all the challenges and opportunities of a young girl growing up in the late 1940s. *The Painted Garden* does not completely neglect nature's serenity and beauty, but its characters remain visitors to it – for instance, at Yosemite National Park, where Jane's parents John and Bee, her brother Tim, and their friend Peaseblossom take a short trip, or in a brief, quiet moment near the end of the novel (but only halfway through the Winters' stay in California), when the scene is not set by neon lights and tall buildings, but by a starry sky, the ocean, and the sounds of tree frogs (cf. *The Painted Garden* 242). However, at the heart of the touristic interest of *The Painted Garden* is not nature, but civilisation – the family's fascination belongs to man-made landmarks, motor mobility, and wealth, and not exclusively to flora and fauna. After all, even David Doe, the animal charmer, is successful in a

Generic Analysis of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*." In: *Children's Literature* 7 (1978): 191–207, 200.

6 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 174.

7 Cf. BIXLER. "Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett." BIXLER devotes several pages to *The Secret Garden*'s place within a Georgic pastoral tradition.

business that requires him to abandon nature in favour of metropolitan film studio life.

One might argue that Streatfeild's America as a whole never becomes quite real and remains an ambiguous place throughout the novel. Stokes briefly mentions "the premise of California as garden",⁸ but does not discuss this much further. Indeed, California provides perspective and comfort, and it even displays a nurturing quality (partly embodied by Aunt Cora's servant Bella, who has a kind word for and unconditional faith in everyone); it is, after all, the place of John's recovery. But Santa Monica, where Aunt Cora lives, will not become home to the Winters as Misselthwaite Manor becomes home to Mary; Aunt Cora's guests will not, literally or metaphorically, plunge their hands into American soil⁹ and be transformed by it. California is a giant film studio:¹⁰ it is the set and canvas for the Winters' excursion into a different sort of life. Their U.S. adventure (and an adventure it is!) will be healing to the family in its own way, but once they return to their London home, they will resume their former lives – wiser, perhaps, than before, and certainly with a lot of cherished memories. But the goal of the family's journey to California – aiding John's desperately needed recovery – is set from the start and once that goal is achieved, there will be no reason, nor any excuse, to extend their stay. California is thus a memory to begin with: something to watch, to explore, to see – but not something to become a part of. The Winters are tourists, exploring the unknown and visiting landmarks – and indeed, as Stokes discusses in detail,¹¹ travel writing and commentary form an important part of *The Painted Garden*. But Stokes also points out: "America is veiled in celluloid, and not quite a real place."¹² She refers to the early stages of the Winters' journey here, but considering the aforementioned status of California as a film studio, one could easily extend Stokes' claim to the entire voyage. Just as the painted garden at Bee Bee Studios will be taken apart and locked up in storage – or, worse, destroyed – after filming, the Winter family's stay in America comes with an expiration date.

Considering Streatfeild's treatment of nature, nurturing, and artificiality, it might seem at first glance that she chooses to neglect what is central to her novel's literary model. The opposite is true. In substituting a film studio for a garden and urban California for rural Yorkshire, Streatfeild not only proves that the key aspects of *The Secret Garden* are extremely versatile and applicable even

8 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 187.

9 An expression I borrow from PRICE. "Cultivating Mary." 4.

10 Cf. STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 187. STOKES remarks that in Santa Monica as depicted in *The Painted Garden*, "everybody is somebody else", meaning that most characters are transitory and mirror one or more characters from *The Secret Garden*.

11 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens."

12 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 177.

to a story that seems radically different from Burnett's on the surface. *The Painted Garden* also invites its readers to reconsider what constitutes a garden: it is a nurturing space that invites, or even necessitates, personal growth. In these aspects, Jane's garden, artificial as it may be, is not too different from Mary's – and in its own way (paradoxical as it may seem) no less real.

III. Parent Figures and Gender Roles

One rather prominent aspect of *The Secret Garden* is its treatment of motherhood, and, consequently, of gender issues. As Mary Lennox develops from an unlikeable child to a girl who brings first a garden, then her cousin back to life, it is implied that she will go on to become a wife and mother and thus care for a family just as she cared for the garden and for Colin. Anna Krugovoy Silver focuses on motherhood in Burnett's novel in a 1997 article,¹³ arguing that *The Secret Garden* "is at heart a novel about mothering".¹⁴ Indeed, mother figures can be found throughout the story, with Dickon (suggesting that mothering can be done by men, too)¹⁵ and Mrs Sowerby representing an almost unreachable ideal of warmth and compassion on the one hand, and Mary's and Colin's dead mothers and Archibald Craven figuring as prevented and unfit parents on the other.

Noel Streatfeild includes this aspect of *The Secret Garden* in her reworking of the 1911 classic, albeit less prominently than her model might allow. The Winter children's mother and father are ambiguous characters. John and Bee are loving and caring but at the same time evidently unable to raise a family on their own. With them lives Bee's altruistic and principled longtime friend Peaseblossom, whose strict adherence to routine strongly contrasts John and Bee's lack of discipline. It is Peaseblossom who raises the children, sees to their schooling during the trip (more or less successfully) and whose unexpected inheritance makes the journey to California possible – yet she always remains in the margins of the novel. Peaseblossom is not warm, but, as a mother figure, she is decidedly more competent than Bee. When John expresses his uncertainty as to whether he will be able to secure a double cabin on the *Mauretania* for Bee and himself in addition to the cabin for four he has already booked for Peaseblossom and the children, Bee is furious with him for suggesting they might take an airplane and let her children travel without her (*The Painted Garden* 37) – but it never once

13 SILVER, Anna Krugovoy. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors: Motherhood in *The Secret Garden*." In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21,2 (1997): 193–203.

14 SILVER. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors." 193.

15 Cf. SILVER. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors." 195.

seems to occur to her that if indeed John should be unsuccessful, she might take Peaseblossom's cabin place to be with her children. And John, though he is more readily available to attend to his children's needs and wishes than his wife is, proves quick to tell an overjoyed Rachel, Jane's sister, that it was her "turn for a break" (*The Painted Garden* 315) when she receives news that upon her return to London, she may receive a dancing engagement. Considering Rachel's lack of success in California, he is not wrong, but his conduct at this point leaves the reader to wonder if he would ever have told Jane, "his 'little millstone'" (*The Painted Garden* 12) the same thing when she was feeling left behind her talented siblings.

Other parent figures in *The Painted Garden* are not as ambiguous as the Winters. David's mother, Mrs Doe, represents the ideal mother and, as Stokes writes, "mirroring Susan Sowerby, offers Jane nourishment (a strawberry milkshake and some strawberry shortcake instead of Yorkshire milk and bread); as well as nurture, in the form of kind welcome and wise counsel".¹⁶ Just as Mrs Sowerby encourages and enables Mary Lennox to find what she needs in nature, Mrs Doe aids Jane by teaching her how to "tame" obnoxious Maurice Tuesday. And like Mrs Sowerby, who spares food for Mary in spite of her own poverty, Mrs Doe readily makes sacrifices in leaving her home town to enable David to be an actor and to ensure her other son Gardner will be able to receive a university education. Another mother figure is Bella, who likewise provides food, counsel, perspective, and patience – and even Mrs Tuesday, mother to Maurice and as insufferable as him, is caring and supportive, if exclusively so towards her ridiculously cherished offspring.

However, mothering is not restricted to adult characters in either *The Secret Garden*¹⁷ or *The Painted Garden*. Dickon is one of the most prominent 'mother' figures in Burnett's novel, and he is mirrored by several characters in *The Painted Garden*.¹⁸ David Doe, the animal-charming, down-to-earth child actor and occasional mentor to Jane, is one of these, with Tim Winter being another. Both are readily willing to help others, especially David, who comes closest to being a friend to Jane.¹⁹ However, with the possible exception of David Doe, who raises and tames wild animals, none of the children in Streatfeild's novel can be

16 STOKES, Sally Sims. "Painting the Garden: Noel Streatfeild, the Garden as Restorative, and Pre-1950 Dramatizations of *The Secret Garden*." In: Angelica Shirley Carpenter (ed.). *In the Garden. Essays in Honor of Frances Hodgson Burnett*. Lonham: Scarecrow Press, 2006. 169–87, 179. STOKES is referring to *The Painted Garden* 220–21.

17 Cf. SILVER. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors."

18 For a comprehensive and, I believe, excellent discussion of character parallels between *The Secret Garden* and *The Painted Garden*, see STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens."

19 Note that, just like Dickon, David moves to the background once his work is done – but as a signed and popular child actor, he obviously has decidedly better career prospects than his 1911 model.

considered mother figures in the same sense as their Burnett equivalents. The nurturing they do is expressed not through attachment to nature, but through their contribution to their families' income and well-being, and their awareness of family responsibility. Whereas Burnett presents children in need of finding new stability and a semblance of a family structure, the Winter children come with an intact family. Their challenge is not to create a new family or to repair a broken one, but sometimes to reverse the direction of parent-child care.

The Secret Garden's focus on motherhood is one of the elements that open the novel up to a discussion of gender roles and gender spheres. Danielle Price discusses Victorian attitudes towards gardening, including the notion that women and gardens share a number of characteristics: "To begin with, the perfect woman and the perfect garden require the right kind of cultivation, a particular mixture of nature and human skill. [...] To produce perfection in women and nature requires enclosure, imprisonment, and instruction, so that ultimately they will provide beauty and comfort."²⁰ This attitude is clearly reflected in *The Secret Garden*, but it is also in part reversed and undermined. Mary's garden is an enclosed space, but it is also outdoors. It is both an extension of the domestic and removed from it. As Silver writes: "Burnett ultimately subverts such ideology. Mary does *not* belong at a fireside or anywhere indoors, gaining her strength outside and preferring the garden to traditional female space like the sitting room and the kitchen."²¹ Mary becomes active out of her own free will – and Colin, the would-be future master, is the effeminate, passive character at first. However, Mary will later be moved to a position in the background as Colin takes over and assumes his position as patriarch-to-be. In *The Painted Garden*, this rather problematic aspect is of no importance; Streatfeild chooses not to include gender issues. Even though the Winters constitute a classic nuclear family with the father in the position of breadwinner, girls and women are never treated as inferior to their male partners throughout the novel. In Streatfeild's world, it is only natural that girls and boys alike have career goals and work towards an independent future. Similarly, here, adults are never threatened by their children's professional success and income, and John, whose illness has temporarily rendered him unable to provide for his family, is positively proud of his children's earnings without discriminating between Tim and Jane, boy and girl. A little residue of conservative gender roles remains in the mother figures of the novel, all of whom are either housewives or guardians to their working children, and of course in Aunt Cora, the "manipulative hypo-

20 PRICE. "Cultivating Mary." 5.

21 SILVER. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors." 195.

chondriac”,²² whose antics render her an unmistakable parody of Victorian ideas of female fragility.

With gender issues almost completely omitted, sexuality, too, is rather unimportant in *The Painted Garden*. Its literary model has inspired much discussion concerning its underlying eroticism. Máire Messenger Davies, for instance, notes that “the subject of sexuality is implicit in a book about motherless children and a garden coming alive”²³ and, in a later article, goes on to compare *The Secret Garden*’s structure with that of D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* – arguing that one of the possible ways in which Burnett’s book may be read is “as a metaphorical account of sexual development”.²⁴ Another critic, Timothy Morris, has pointed out the tension between eroticism and childhood in *The Secret Garden* in a chapter aptly titled “Impossibilities”: “The novel *The Secret Garden* is in a tension unresolvable in either erotic or childish terms. It is a song neither of innocence nor of experience.”²⁵ *The Painted Garden* displays no such ambiguity or impossibility. Keeping in mind that neither nurturing nor gender issues are particularly prominent here, it is hardly surprising that sexuality is likewise omitted from Streatfeild’s novel. No allusions to the biological origins of the Winter children exist, nor are there any signs of a sexual relationship between any other couples in *The Painted Garden*. Jane’s garden in particular, and the novel in general, are innocent and chaste. This garden is not only both artificial and real, it is also both nurturing and decidedly asexual. Evidently, not every garden has Edenic qualities.

IV. Streatfeild’s Own: Children in the Performing Arts

The Painted Garden is more than simply a reworking of Burnett’s earlier novel about a disagreeable ten-year-old girl. Published in 1949, it belongs to a group of Streatfeild novels known as the “shoe books” – novels about children in the performing arts,²⁶ and some of Streatfeild’s best-known works.²⁷ The first – and

22 STOKES. “Noel Streatfeild’s Secret Gardens.” 189.

23 MESSENGER DAVIES, Máire. “‘A Bit of Earth’: Sexuality and the Representation of Childhood in Text and Screen Versions of *The Secret Garden*.” In: *The Velvet Light Trap Review of Cinema* 48 (2001): 48 – 58, 51.

24 MESSENGER DAVIES, Máire. “*The Secret Garden* in Film and Television.” In: Fiona M. Collins (ed.). *Turning the Page. Children’s Literature in Performance and the Media*. Oxford: Lang, 2006. 83 – 104, 86.

25 MORRIS, Timothy Raymond. *You’re Only Young Twice: Children’s Literature and Film*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000. 106.

26 Note that the U.S. title of *The Painted Garden* is *Movie Shoes*. Similarly, several other novels of Streatfeild’s were republished under new titles to unite them all under the heading “shoe

possibly most famous – of these, *Ballet Shoes*, was written and published in 1936. Nancy Huse, in a brief biographical article on Noel Streatfeild, reports that the writer – reluctantly and only as a result of her editor’s persuasive efforts – based *Ballet Shoes* on an adult novel she had written five years earlier, *The Whicharts*. In combining the theatre setting of the earlier book with new, younger characters and eliminating any sexual innuendo, Streatfeild created the first of many novels featuring child characters with very adult ambitions and concerns.²⁸

Streatfeild’s novels are no mere pipe dreams, and *The Painted Garden* makes no exception to that rule. The Winter children, just like characters in other books, have to deal with the sometimes cruel reality of family life and economic hardship, and they grow up feeling the responsibility that rests on their shoulders. The novel is not only the story of the children’s development – it is also the story of John Winter’s recovery, and his way back to a regular working life as a writer is a slow one. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the children’s talents are considered an economic resource by themselves as they attempt to contribute to the family’s income and to support each other. As Nancy Huse notes, this is a familiar pattern in Streatfeild’s books:

Many works hinge on economic necessity, in which siblings ranging in ages from about eight through fourteen combine their efforts to keep a family intact. In so doing, they become productive and self-assured. Many of the younger children in the novels are humorous figures; there are few villains, and a range of parental figures, usually women of different classes, make the children’s environment safe and stimulating. With these components, Streatfeild raised crucial questions in non-threatening ways. How money and family are connected, how girls and boys are educated, and whether personal loyalties can extend across class structures are parts of an ongoing analysis of childhood and its meanings, an analysis Streatfeild played a major role in furthering.²⁹

And indeed, *The Painted Garden* is never threatening. The children are at no point pressured to raise money, and their loyalty (even Jane’s) is never called into question. Streatfeild softly hints at the potential consequences in case of John’s further demise, justifying the children’s efforts, but her warnings are subtle, and John gets a happy ending. Thus, the author manages to remind her readers of the Winters’ sensitive financial circumstances occasionally, but never lets this aspect dominate her novel.

The protagonists of *Ballet Shoes* – Pauline, Petrova and Posy Fossil – are mentioned again in *The Painted Garden*, with Posy becoming a mentor and friend to aspiring ballerina Rachel Winter. *The Painted Garden* is densely

books”. Cf also HUSE, Nancy. “Noel Streatfeild.” In: Donald Hettinga (ed.). *British Children’s Writers 1914 – 1960*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1996. 242 – 50, 242 ff.

27 Cf. STOKES. “Noel Streatfeild’s Secret Gardens.” 172.

28 Cf. HUSE. “Noel Streatfeild.” 245.

29 HUSE. “Noel Streatfeild.” 246.

populated with child characters who harbour ambitions of a career in the performing arts. The three Winter children try their luck at different challenges, and with different results. Rachel, the eldest, is used to being the family's prima ballerina in more senses than one, but finds herself torn between the excitement of being able to participate (if only in the shadows) in a famous ballet teacher's classes and the disappointment of being the only family member without an income (and, therefore, also without the desired opportunity to contribute her share to the family's financial needs) while in California. Tim, the youngest, is at eight years of age already considered a promising pianist who easily makes himself at home in Santa Monica and is the first to find an opportunity to earn some money. And Jane, though she is neither a particularly talented actress nor aspires to be, has a stage dream of her own in her goal to become an animal trainer and teach performance tricks to various animals. Besides the Winter children, and of course the Fossil sisters (who have become young adults in the thirteen years between the publication dates of *Ballet Shoes* and *The Painted Garden*), Streatfeild's novel features Rachel's ballet friends in England, who share her dreams and aspirations, and several child actors at Bee Bee Studios, most of whom remain unnamed but are reported by the narrator to have "faces as well known as Princess Margaret's" (*The Painted Garden* 193) among their midst.

Streatfeild does not leave it at a simple, uncritical portrayal of her characters' everyday lives. Each of the Winter children has to struggle to achieve their goal, and none of them will depart from California without having learnt a valuable lesson or two. Rachel is struck hard in the face when it dawns on her that California's ballet scene has not been waiting for her arrival. She must try to understand and deal with the fact that Tim and, unexpectedly, Jane, have temporarily overtaken her on the road to success, and she must at the same time overcome her doubts about her future and improve her self-esteem. Tim's challenge lies in the choice he has to make between practicing highly sophisticated piano music on the one hand and playing for simple fun and entertainment on the other. He will opt for the latter while in California, and thrive on his quite unique opportunity to combine economic success with the easygoing, boyish fun he may have with his friends, restaurant owners Mr and Mrs Antonio and radio host Brent.

At the heart of Streatfeild's novel – in spite of the fact that the focus will often shift to other areas of interest – is the film industry. It is one of Jane's challenges to find her place in a business that will not want her any longer after she has fulfilled her duty in playing Mary. Sally Sims Stokes explains:

[H]er [Streatfeild's] intent in creating the fictional Bee Bee Films, Inc., was not to romanticize the movie industry. Rather, she meant to demonstrate to her young readers

that working in films can be dull and hard; that not all children are suited for it; and that when filmmakers craft a movie from a cherished favourite such as *The Secret Garden*, the original story – as Jane Winter quickly discovers – will be altered, distorted, or lost.³⁰

These are harsh words for a harsh truth, and Jane is the perfect character to aid Streatfeild's aims. Not only is Jane remarkably similar to Mary Lennox – she is also sufficiently lazy and inexperienced to help Streatfeild highlight the hardships of film studio life. Jane replaces the perfect child actress, Ursula Gidden, who “never actually appears in the book, but [whose] charm and talent are dead weight to Jane, who can scarcely breathe without being unfavorably compared to Ursula”.³¹ But with Ursula as Mary, Streatfeild could hardly explore the setbacks of a child actress's life. As readers of *The Painted Garden*, we are told time and again that there is no future in Hollywood for Jane. Just like Petrova Fossil, who chooses flying planes over dancing (*The Painted Garden* 189),³² Jane will retire from acting soon and pursue another dream. In choosing to portray a child character who – in contrast to many protagonists in her other novels – will *not* pursue a stage career, Streatfeild provides her readers, most of whom are probably no more likely to become film stars than Jane Winter, with the comforting knowledge that there is such a thing as life beyond the stage – and that other goals and dreams are just as worthwhile, or sometimes even better.

V. Emancipation: Jane's Story

Jane and Mary will both be overshadowed eventually. As *The Secret Garden* progresses, its focus gradually shifts from Mary's process of growth and improvement to Colin's recovery and his future as the master of Misselthwaite Manor and its grounds. Almost as soon as Mary begins to approach contemporary ideals of girlhood (and, consequently, womanhood), she becomes less central than Colin, who in turn is transformed from a sickly, effeminate child to a healthy boy and master-to-be. Many critics, such as Elizabeth Lennox Keyser, Timothy Morris, and Danielle Price, have expressed regret over this development and interpreted it as an unsatisfactory shift. Keyser, whose essay “‘Quite Contrary’: Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*” has been widely read and discussed by critics (arguably making her work on character and plot development in *The Secret Garden* the most influential), points out that

30 STOKES. “Painting the Garden.” 170.

31 STOKES. “Painting the Garden.” 179.

32 Note that Pauline Fossil tells this to Rachel in *The Painted Garden*, but it originates in *Ballet Shoes*.

“[a]s Mary becomes less disagreeable, she becomes, after a certain point, less interesting. And Colin, as he becomes more agreeable in some ways, becomes something of a prig and a bore”.³³ Keyser’s impression is supported by Morris, who recalls: “Some adults who haven’t read the novel in years tell me that they can’t remember the second half or the ending”.³⁴ And Danielle Price goes furthest of all in expressing her hope “that beyond the confines of *The Secret Garden* she [Mary] finds the power to write the script anew”.³⁵ There is powerful criticism in the words of all three, and they are justified in their disapproval of a plot shift that restricts the initial heroine to a background role of enabler and, eventually, passive onlooker as soon as her personality begins to inspire less controversy.

Jane’s situation is decidedly different from Mary’s – perhaps in part because, throughout *The Painted Garden*, the focus is never entirely on her. From the very beginning, and in spite of being the clear protagonist of Streatfeild’s novel, Jane has to share attention both intradiegetically and in the reader’s mind. The account of her experiences in filmmaking is constantly interspersed with shifts to Tim and Rachel’s Californian fortunes and misfortunes. Consequently, a reader of *The Painted Garden* will most likely not be surprised when, as Sally Sims Stokes notes, the novel’s focus shifts again to someone other than Jane and it is Rachel whose unexpected opportunity to receive a dancing role takes centre stage only a few pages short of the last sentence (*The Painted Garden* 315). Jane is used to being the plain one. As the novel introduces its child characters, we soon learn that between Rachel’s dancing and Tim’s music, Jane – the middle child – is the one without any demonstrable talent. Streatfeild tells us that “one thing she hardly ever had was a good day” (*The Painted Garden* 12). Yet it is evident that she must carry some potential, seeing as, even though she does not try very hard, she easily follows and, when confronted with her apparent lack of attention, repeats whatever she is being taught in school (cf. *The Painted Garden* 11). It is obvious that Jane is extremely frustrated with being second in line to her gifted siblings, and Streatfeild repeatedly highlights her hope to excel and shine at something just once. On several occasions, especially after having been cast as Mary in Bee Bee Films’ production of *The Secret Garden*, Jane defiantly imagines her future as a star – but that hope has nothing to do with cheering crowds and Hollywood glamour. What Jane pictures is a scenario in which her family realises that she is ‘important’. Simply put – and in accordance with the visual medium of film – she wants to be seen. There is a distinct advantage Jane has over Mary: the

33 KEYSER, Elizabeth Lennox. “‘Quite Contrary’: Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Children’s Literature* 11 (1983): 1–13, 3.

34 MORRIS. *You’re Only Young Twice*. 92.

35 PRICE. “Cultivating Mary.” 12.

author's sympathy. Sally Sims Stokes points out that "Streatfeild deeply understands Jane and her pent-up longing to shine at something, anything."³⁶ This understanding is why Jane's sullen determination to succeed as an actress (if only temporarily) gradually makes her more likeable, and why, as Stokes also mentions, "the reader begins hope for a favourable outcome for Jane".³⁷

Jane will not shine at acting, and it is one of the novel's central points that not every child is made for stardom. But she overcomes her obstacles and even manages to surprise a few with the results of her work. Stokes writes that "Jane has not outshone anybody. Her acting the role of Mary has contributed to the film, but only with much clever work in the cutting room, and a lot of anxious pacing about on the part of Bryan Browne."³⁸ But she is only partly right. Yes, Jane's acting abilities are moderate at best. Good editing is essential to make the film work. And Bryan Browne has indeed faced a greater challenge working with Jane than he could reasonably have anticipated. But what Jane does not know, and what readers may easily overlook, is what Bryan Browne tells John Winter in confidence: "It's my bet, when the big shots see the finished version of this, they'll want her under contract. What a fate! She'd play bad-tempered girls for the next four or five years, and some poor devil would have to direct her, but not me, no sir, not twice!" (*The Painted Garden* 277) Right there, in a fleeting moment, is at least a glimpse of film star success for Jane.

Yet Jane returns to being the plain middle child as the family prepares for their return to England, and the long-anticipated, but nonetheless abrupt ending of her acting 'career' might be as disappointing to the reader of *The Painted Garden* as the plot shift of *The Secret Garden* is to Keyser, Morris, and Price (among others). However, Jane – in contrast to Mary – has two lives. Mary has to make as good a life as possible for herself at Misselthwaite, but Jane may return to England without having lost anything she had before. Both girls embark upon their journey towards the unknown reluctantly, but only one of them leaves plans and a beloved creature behind to await her upon her return. From the beginning of *The Painted Garden*, Jane has a goal of her own: to become a dog trainer (cf. *The Painted Garden* 18). And in spite of her brief excursion into the world of film, her initial ambition stays with her throughout the novel. Just as Mary finds help in Dickon, who provides her with gardening tools, seeds, and wise guidance at her request, Jane has a mentor in David Doe, who gives her a reed pipe to charm animals. Sally Sims Stokes points out that there is no need to feel sorry for Jane towards the end of the novel. She writes: "Jane has sorted out her ambitions. In a solitary moment, [...] Jane contemplates her treasured Christmas gift from

36 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 182.

37 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 182.

38 STOKES. "Noel Streatfeild's Secret Gardens." 184.

David, a reed pipe just like his. With ‘superb confidence,’ and the pipe as motivation, she declares her intent to succeed as a trainer.³⁹

Jane knows and the reader knows that upon their return to London, her siblings will once again receive the lion’s share of everybody’s attention. But even though both she and Mary Lennox, whose presence never completely ceases to hover over Jane’s head, are overtaken by others as their stories come to a close, there is decidedly more hope that Jane will live her life according to her own wishes. Danielle Price will not have to extend her hope that Mary will rewrite her story to Jane: the latter’s story, the story of her following her original dream and vocation, has not even been written yet. As for the account of the Winters’ Californian adventure, it comes without the “Master Colin!” (*Secret Garden* 173) moment that, in *The Secret Garden*, seals Mary’s fate as the woman in the background as the novel closes. The last words of *The Painted Garden*, though spoken by Tim, belong to Jane and her “film star flowers” (*The Painted Garden* 320): “Most likely the grandest thing that will ever happen to a Winter.” (*The Painted Garden* 320)

VI. Conclusion

In the end, *The Painted Garden* has decidedly and forcefully emancipated itself from *The Secret Garden* without ever denying its deep connection with Burnett’s classic. In the character of Jane Winter, Streatfeild reimagines Mary Lennox, and in doing so, she goes beyond the confines of the latter’s garden. *The Painted Garden* is often seemingly paradoxical: it is both artificial and strikingly real, nurturing and asexual, an innocent children’s book and a serious rewriting of a complex novel.

Mary and Jane are similar, but they are not the same. Perhaps, if Jane had found herself at Misselthwaite Manor, she might have explored the garden, and Mary in turn might have chosen to try her hand at acting if she suddenly found herself in 1940s California. And yet neither of them can be thought of without keeping in mind the specific setting of their stories: the cultural, political, and social circumstances, the events that lead to their respective adventures, their outlook on life. At the end of *The Painted Garden*, as Jane resolves to follow her lifelong dream and become an animal trainer, it is possible to imagine a number of different outcomes: Jane might change her mind, give up, fail – or she might succeed, maybe even become famous. In any case, it seems highly unlikely that she, like Mary Lennox, will be ‘transformed’ and become a wife and mother, always (voluntarily?) one step behind someone else. Jane’s story is one of

39 STOKES. “Noel Streatfeild’s Secret Gardens.” 185. STOKES is quoting *The Painted Garden*, 316.

emancipation, not redemption – and it certainly is not a story of transformation. Jane will not change nearly as radically as Mary – on the contrary, she returns to her original dream in the end and realises that her desire for attention cannot be fulfilled by struggling to be someone she is not. In deciding to abandon the attempt to succeed in the performing arts, Jane finally liberates herself from the pressure felt in the shadow of her siblings’ success – and in allowing Jane to maintain her independence, Streatfeild’s novel emancipates itself from *The Secret Garden*, too.

Not all children are meant to be on stage, but – and that is perhaps the most important point Streatfeild has to make in *The Painted Garden* – that is alright. And the garden may only be painted here, but that is alright, too.

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Porridge or Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans? – Attitudes towards Food in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and Other Children's Classics

I. Introduction

When Bilbo Baggins in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) is far away from his comfortable home and is exposed to all sorts of danger, he starts dreaming of a proper hobbit-style breakfast, consisting of bacon and eggs, toast and butter. In this way his longing to be home is expressed in a manner that can easily be grasped by children and grown-up readers alike. In J.K. Rowling's first *Harry Potter* novel – *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) – the title character enjoys a sumptuous dinner shortly after his arrival at his new school. This kind of welcome signals that the boarding school Hogwarts will indeed become a real home for the orphaned boy. As these two examples illustrate, food suggests 'comfort' and 'home' in many novels written for children. What these two examples also show is that food, in more general terms, may provide a frame of reference in children's literature that is easily accessible for children (as well as for grown-up readers).¹ Thus, it is hardly surprising that references to food and more or less detailed descriptions of what fictional characters eat and drink can be found throughout children's literature.

There are several reasons for the interest in food that is apparent in many literary texts written for children. Presumably the most basic reason for the frequent references to food is, quite simply, the fact that food tends to be associated with pleasure, comfort and nurturing. A further reason for the references to food is certainly the role that food has played in the context of children's education. Traditionally food has been used to reward as well as to punish children. Giving children their favourite meal or offering them sweets as a special treat may be used as a reward by parents and other adults, just as being sent to

1 Cf. the following comment on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by KREUTZER, Eberhard. *Lewis Carroll: Alice in Wonderland und Through the Looking-Glass*. München: Fink, 1984. 67: "Ein Leitmotiv von wahrlich kindertümlicher Popularität geben die Essens- und Trinkgelüste von Alice ab."

bed without dinner has been used as a punishment for children. Although we may see these methods of rewarding and punishing children in a somewhat critical light today, they have certainly left their traces in children's literature. Moreover, passing on culturally prevalent norms concerning eating habits is typically also part of children's education. Thus, children's literature may convey interesting messages with respect to what is considered right and wrong in terms of eating in a particular cultural and historical context. Beyond that, children's literature may also use the depiction of attitudes towards food and eating for more far-reaching didactic aims, addressing, for instance, gender roles or moral issues in ways that are presumably easy to grasp for children. By comparing the way food and eating have been presented in a number of children's classics since the nineteenth century one can trace a remarkable shift concerning the attitude towards eating, which seems to be a consequence of more general changes with respect to principles of education and concepts of the body.

In the following I will argue specifically that the attitudes towards eating in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *The Secret Garden*, which was first published in 1910–11, are indicative of a major cultural turning point concerning the way the relationship between children and food was conceived. This change appears to be part of a more general development in terms of children's education. As Linda T. Parsons argues, “[b]etween the end of the nineteenth century and World War I, the social definition of childhood changed”.² This change involved “capitaliz[ing] on the use of gardens and fresh air as venues in which to train and cultivate young bodies and spirits” and encouraging children to “be self-reliant rather than obedient [...] listen[ing] to their own conscience rather than to adults”.³ These tendencies are clearly visible in *The Secret Garden*. The attitude towards eating that is expressed in Burnett's novel arguably constitutes a further facet of the changing notion of childhood and pedagogical aims. In order to support the hypothesis that *The Secret Garden* reflects a major turning point concerning the depiction of attitudes towards eating in children's literature I will first of all sketch the attitude towards food that is expressed in *The Secret Garden* and then, in a second step, compare the results to a number of children's novels from the nineteenth century to the present, including Burnett's earlier novels *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1885) and *A Little Princess* (1905).

2 PARSONS, Linda T. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden: Re-Visioning the Feminine in *The Secret Garden*.” In: *Children's Literature in Education* 33,4 (2002): 247–68, 252. Cf. also PHILLIPS, Jerry. “The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*.” In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 17,2 (1993): 168–94, 177.

3 PARSONS. “‘Otherways’ into the Garden.” 252.

II. Getting Fat, Becoming Healthy and Happy – Food in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*

A look at Burnett's *The Secret Garden* clearly shows that food plays a crucial role in this novel, since eating is closely linked to the development of the protagonist Mary Lennox. In fact the different stages that can be discerned in Mary's development correlate with changing attitudes towards eating. The protagonist is introduced to the readers as a very poor eater, but in the course of her development she gradually learns to enjoy food. For Mary, learning to eat with great relish appears to be a crucial component of a more general developmental process, in which Mary improves in terms of her health as well as her general mood and begins to become increasingly active. Moreover, after having been a very lonely child in the first years of her life, she makes friends with Dickon and with her cousin Colin. She gradually becomes more even-tempered and – quite simply – a happy child. This process is accompanied by her developing an increasing appetite. Interestingly enough, Mary does not just start to eat *more* in the course of the novel, but she actually begins to consume remarkable quantities of food – a fact that the novel seems to endorse as the emergence of a 'natural' and 'healthy' appetite. The fact that eating is seen in such positive terms in Burnett's novel clearly ties in with the general idea that "Mary's transformation is effected through the exercise of body and mind, the former working to shape the latter";⁴ physical exercise (i. e. running and gardening) and eating nourishing meals contribute to turning Mary into a different person.

The first explicit references to eating one can find in Burnett's novel show Mary exposed to food that certainly does not appear to be particularly nourishing and wholesome for a little girl. In a memorable episode of the novel Mary is depicted in an unusual dinner scene set in India, the country where Mary has spent the first years of her life: Mary's parents as well as many of the servants in her parents' household have just died as a result of a cholera epidemic or are in the process of dying in their quarters. Mary, who has spent some time all alone in her room, feels neglected by her Indian nurse, her ayah, but is unaware of what exactly is going on around her, in other words, of the omnipresence of death. Still, the little girl is frightened by the sounds she can hear. What is equally frightening for her is that she has apparently been forgotten by everyone. Mary finally ventures out of her room and 'creeps' to the dining room, where she finds the remnants of a meal. The dining-room is "empty, though a partly finished meal was on the table and chairs and plates looked as if they had been hastily pushed back when the diners rose suddenly for some reason" (*Secret Garden* 5).

4 PRICE, Danielle E. "Cultivating Mary: The Victorian *Secret Garden*." In: *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 26,1 (2001): 4–14, 7.

This passage hints at a mystery that is never really resolved in the course of the novel; the readers will never find out why the diners left the table abruptly, but the scene certainly bodes no good. Mary, however, eats some of the food that has been left behind by the (grown-up) diners: “The child ate some fruit and biscuits, and being thirsty she drank a glass of wine which stood nearly filled. It was sweet, and she did not know how strong it was.” (*Secret Garden* 5) The food Mary consumes does not sound particularly attractive; after all, it has been left behind by the diners some time before and is thus presumably not all that fresh. Moreover, one may very well argue that strong wine is inappropriate for a child, although the fact that the wine makes Mary “so sleepy that she could scarcely keep her eyes open” (*Secret Garden* 5) may certainly seem beneficial to the reader, given the way the circumstances of her meal are described. In this somewhat haunting scene, Mary displays a survival instinct one might not expect in a child who is presented by the narrator as always having “been ill in one way or another” (*Secret Garden* 3),⁵ but the loneliness and the miserable situation of the girl, who has been neglected by her parents all her life and who has now become an orphan, are also highlighted in this eerie scene. Mary’s sickness and her lack of appetite in India may be attributed to the effects of the climate in India, which has repeatedly been referred to as ‘unhealthy’ for Europeans in both fictional and non-fictional accounts of the country⁶ – a factor that contributes to the contrast between the English ‘centre’ and the colonial ‘periphery’ which is established in *The Secret Garden*.

After her arrival in England Mary at first does not have much of an appetite, either. Tea, “a little toast and some marmalade” (*Secret Garden* 20) is all she can bring herself to eat on her first morning in Yorkshire. In addition, she tells the young housemaid Martha, who is trying very hard to convince Mary how good porridge with a bit of treacle or sugar on it can taste when you are hungry, that she does not even “know what it is to be hungry” (*Secret Garden* 20). Yet spending time in the healthy air of the Yorkshire moors, playing outdoors with her skipping-rope and, of course, gardening very soon have a positive effect on Mary’s health and teach her what it means to feel hungry:

[...] after a few days spent almost entirely out of doors, she wakened one morning knowing what it was to be hungry, and when she sat down to her breakfast she did not glance disdainfully at her porridge and push it away, but took up her spoon and began to eat it and went on eating it until her bowl was empty. (*Secret Garden* 27)

5 It is perhaps the survival instinct displayed by Mary which makes Madelon S. GOHLKE (“Re-Reading the Secret Garden.” In: *College English* 41,8 (1980): 894–902) argue that the protagonist is ‘remarkably cool’ when confronting the terrible situation she is faced with in India.

6 The title character in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre*, for instance, at one point says: “[...] I feel mine is not the existence to be long protracted under an Indian sun.” (*Jane Eyre* 429)

When she arrived in England, Mary looked extremely thin and unhealthy, or, as the old gardener Ben Weatherstaff puts it, she looked “like a young plucked crow” (*Secret Garden* 54), but soon her looks improve due to her increasing appetite and constant physical exercise in the healthy Yorkshire air. Mary grows stronger and is proud of gaining weight: “Mary was glowing with exercise and good spirits. ‘I’m getting fatter and fatter every day,’ she said quite exultantly. ‘Mrs Medlock will have to get me some bigger dresses. Martha says my hair is growing thicker. It isn’t so flat and stringy.’” (*Secret Garden* 97) There is an obvious correlation between Mary’s improving health, her growing appetite and a positive change with respect to her temper. A very similar development can be observed with Mary’s cousin Colin, another sickly, ill-tempered child who does not have much of an appetite at first and then gradually learns to eat with relish, which apparently improves his health significantly. All in all, *The Secret Garden* clearly suggests that a healthy appetite is a very good thing for a child. Reading *The Secret Garden* one gets the impression that gaining weight is virtually identical to improving one’s health.

In addition, *The Secret Garden* suggests that food should be enjoyed in the company of others.⁷ Colin first starts being interested in food after having met his cousin Mary. Once Mary begins to spend time with Colin and tells him stories about India he grows interested in her company as well as in his meals. In other words, the initial lack of interest in food displayed by both Mary and Colin appears to be a symptom of feeling lonely. Colin’s increasing appetite certainly marks the beginning of his process of recovery from a state of despondency, which caused him to believe that he was destined to die at an early age. The parallel between Mary and Colin emphasises that in *The Secret Garden* eating is associated with health as well as with learning to enjoy life. Moreover, food is associated with nurturing. While the unsuitable food consumed by Mary in India correlates with a lack of nurturing she experienced there, Mary is offered appetising and wholesome food by those characters who are also ready to provide nurturing, especially Martha and Dickon’s mother Mrs Sowerby.⁸ In

7 Although Burnett on the whole does not pay much attention to food in *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, solitary meals are shown to be a dismal business in this novel, too. The Earl clearly did not enjoy the dinners he had on his own before the arrival of his grandson (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 81 – 82), and Cedric does not like to have breakfast all by himself, as his memories of breakfast with his mother, when he “put the sugar and cream in her tea for her, and handed her the toast” (*Little Lord Fauntleroy* 92) reveal.

8 Mrs Sowerby has often been referred to as a prototypical motherly figure by literary critics. Cf., for instance, BIXLER, Phyllis. “Gardens, Houses, and Nurturant Power in *The Secret Garden*.” In: Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden*. Edited by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006 [1991]. 287–302, 293, who refers to Mrs Sowerby as “archetypal earth mother”.

contrast to Mary and Colin, Dickon has benefited from nurturing all of his life, and is now prepared to pass on some of this:

Dickon's personal strength and security is a result of his bonding with a nurturing mother, and he is contrasted with Mary and Colin who lack nurturing. He extends his mother's presence by giving Mary and Colin her advice, telling stories about her, and bringing them food she has prepared.⁹

Nurturing is repeatedly associated with telling stories as well as with providing others with food, or, to be more precise, with sharing food.

It is striking that the type of food that is shown to be nourishing and healthy throughout *The Secret Garden* is relatively simple and, more often than not, quintessentially 'English' food: porridge, crumpets, buttered toast, raspberry jam and clotted cream are among the food items eaten by the characters in Burnett's novel, and Mrs Sowerby sends milk and "a crusty cottage loaf or some buns wi' currants in 'em" (*Secret Garden* 146) to the children. In this respect, the novel resembles many other British literary texts written for children. Rather than enjoying a sophisticated cuisine, children in children's literature generally seem to be fond of relatively simple food. One may certainly assume that the emphasis on 'simple' food echoes many real children's food preferences. Yet references to porridge, crumpets and similar food items here and in many other classics of English children's literature also contribute very much to the 'Englishness' constructed in the respective texts.

Given the importance of nature and in particular gardening in *The Secret Garden*, it is hardly surprising that Mary, Colin and Dickon love to eat outside. The first picnic enjoyed by Mary and Colin is afternoon tea. The idea of eating in the garden is evoked by the robin, Mary's first friend in England: "They saw the robin carry food to his mate two or three times, and it was so suggestive of afternoon tea that Colin felt they must have some." (*Secret Garden* 127) The result is a very satisfactory meal for the children, which also provides some crumbs for the birds living in the garden. The scene in which the picnic is described suggests a state of perfect harmony with nature; the benefit the children derive from the wholesome meal is evidently reinforced by "the life-enhancing qualities of the natural world",¹⁰ which are celebrated throughout *The Secret Garden*:

It was an agreeable idea, easily carried out, and when the white cloth was spread upon the grass, with hot tea and buttered toast and crumpets, a delightfully hungry meal was eaten, and several birds on domestic errands paused to inquire what was going on and were led into investigating crumbs with great activity. (*Secret Garden* 127)

9 PARSONS. "'Otherways' into the Garden." 262–63.

10 DARCY, Jane. "The Representation of Nature in *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden*." In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 19,2 (1995): 211–22, 216.

The food enjoyed here by the children is a far cry from the remnants of a meal Mary found in the dining-room scene in India. The food eaten outside is fresh, hot, appetising and wholesome. The white cloth spread on the grass may certainly be read as a symbol of purity. Moreover, the children enjoy the food in each other's company, which increases the pleasure they derive from their afternoon tea. The idea of being in a state of harmony with nature is further emphasised by the fact that some of Dickon's tame animals also join the picnic; his squirrels Nut and Shell and his crow Soot benefit from the children's afternoon tea: "Nut and Shell whisked up trees with pieces of cake and Soot took the entire half of a buttered crumpet into a corner and pecked at and examined and turned it over and made hoarse remarks about it until he decided to swallow it all joyfully in one gulp." (*Secret Garden* 127) Sharing food with other people and with various animals appears to be part of the enjoyment that is derived from the picnic. Moreover, the animals which appear in this scene and share the children's food are likely to make the description of the meal particularly attractive for young readers of the novel. Joy and playfulness, which are expressed in the passages quoted above, are attributes that reinforce the positive associations of food which are characteristic of *The Secret Garden* in general.

The hunger that is increasingly felt by both Mary and Colin is shown to be 'natural'; this is achieved, for instance, by a comparison of their appetite to the hunger felt by animals. Dickon's mother, who is generally presented as a wise woman, says at one point: "'They're two young 'uns growin' fast, an' health's comin' back to both of 'em. Children like that feels like young wolves an' food's flesh an' blood to 'em'" (*Secret Garden* 146). Thus, by eating considerable quantities of food, the children are apparently doing what is 'natural'. They notice that it grows increasingly difficult to control their hunger. This is not shown to be negative; it only turns into a (minor) problem because Colin is trying to hide his process of physical recovery in order to eventually surprise his father. Colin strives very hard to disguise his hunger by leaving food on his plate – something that turns out to be virtually impossible for him:

He made up his mind to eat less, but unfortunately it was not possible to carry out this brilliant idea when he wakened each morning with an amazing appetite and the table near his sofa was set with a breakfast of home-made bread and fresh butter, snow-white eggs, raspberry jam, and clotted cream. Mary always breakfasted with him and when they found themselves at the table – particularly if there were delicate slices of sizzling ham sending forth tempting odors from under a hot silver cover – they would look into each other's eyes in desperation. 'I think we shall have to eat it all this morning, Mary,' Colin always ended by saying, 'We can send away some of the lunch and a great deal of dinner.' But they never found they could send away anything and the highly polished condition of the empty plates returned to the pantry awakened much comment. (*Secret Garden* 147–48)

As was pointed out above, *The Secret Garden* shows the children's growing hunger to be normal and natural and even to be part of a process of recovery. In this respect, the novel is strikingly different from many earlier children's novels, which certainly did not propagate eating huge quantities of food as something to be encouraged in children. In fact, several children's classics from the nineteenth century as well as from the early twentieth century suggest that eating should always be a matter of self control, as will be shown in the following.

III. Learning to Eat with Restraint: Children's Classics from the Nineteenth Century and the Early Twentieth Century

As was pointed out above, nineteenth-century children's literature, in striking contrast to *The Secret Garden*, typically does not endorse excessive eating. Instead, many nineteenth-century novels for children seem to emphasise that eating with restraint is clearly morally superior to enjoying your meals and eating a lot. In Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), for instance, the four March girls Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy are characterised in one of the first scenes of the novel (Chapter 2, "A Merry Christmas") by the restraint they display with respect to eating. The March family is impoverished, and the four daughters are consequently not used to having particularly ample or luxurious meals every day, although they are certainly not suffering from hunger, either. Thus, the March girls are looking forward to their Christmas breakfast, which promises culinary treats such as cream and muffins. When the girls are just getting ready for their Christmas breakfast, their mother returns from a visit to a poor German immigrant family, the Hummels. Being told that the Hummels will have to do without food even on Christmas morning, the girls readily decide to give up their own breakfast in order to help the poor family. Giving away food to help those who are poor here is shown to be an altruistic deed based on the virtue of charity, which is rewarded by the feeling of having done what is right, as the narrator points out:

That was a very happy breakfast, though they [the March girls] didn't get any of it; and when they went away, [...] I think there were not in all the city four merrier people than the hungry little girls who gave away their breakfasts and contented themselves with bread and milk on Christmas morning. (*Little Women* 16)

In a similar vein, in a later scene of the novel, the consumption of food as a pure luxury good is criticised implicitly. The youngest March girl Amy wants to buy pickled limes because eating these is currently fashionable at her school. For her, buying limes is a way of becoming more popular at school and, thus, it is a matter of social prestige whether Amy can afford to buy limes or not, as the girl explains

to her sister Meg when she asks the latter for the money she needs for the pickled fruit:

'[...] the girls are always buying them [the limes], and unless you want to be thought mean, you must do it, too. It's nothing but limes now, for everyone is sucking them in their desks in schooltime, and trading them off for pencils, bead rings, paper dolls, or something else, at recess. If one girl likes another, she gives her a lime; if she's mad with her, she eats one before her face, and doesn't offer even a suck. They treat by turns, and I've had ever so many but haven't returned them, and I ought, for they are debts of honor, you know.' (*Little Women* 62)

Pickled limes are not primarily seen as food that is needed to satisfy one's hunger; instead, they appear to have been converted into some kind of 'currency' at Amy's school. Eating and in particular trading limes is associated with peer-group pressure, with the desire to impress – and potentially exclude – others and thus negotiate social hierarchies. There is no necessity for having limes other than that of following a fashion and submitting to peer-group pressure. When Amy brings her limes to school, she is a social success at first,¹¹ but she is soon punished by her teacher for hiding limes in her desk. The notions which regulate the exchange of limes as well as the shallow attitudes displayed by the girls in this context are clearly at odds with the ideals propagated by the March family. The episode from *Little Women* can arguably be read as an early criticism of consumerism, albeit on a very moderate scale. The lesson to be learnt from this episode by young readers is certainly that one should not spend money on food that is not necessary merely to impress others.

In her novel *A Little Princess: The Story of Sara Crewe* (1905) Burnett likewise emphasises that giving food to others may be a charitable act and that eating with restraint may ennoble a child. After having been regarded as a 'princess' at her school because of her father's wealth for some time, the title character in Burnett's novel is treated like a servant-girl by the schoolmistress Miss Minchin once Sara appears to have become poor. The hard-hearted Miss Minchin now regularly punishes Sara by depriving her of food, which makes the young girl feel extremely hungry and increasingly weak. One day the hungry girl happens to find "a fourpenny piece" (*A Little Princess* 123) lying on the street while she is running errands for Miss Minchin. Irresistibly attracted by the sight of "delicious newly baked hot buns, fresh from the oven – large, plump, shiny buns, with

11 Cf.: "During the next few minutes the rumor that Amy March had got twenty-four delicious limes (she ate one on the way) and was going to treat circulated through her 'set,' and the attentions of her friends became quite overwhelming. Katy Brown invited her to her next party on the spot; Mary Kingsley insisted on lending her her watch till recess; and Jenny Snow, a satirical young lady, who had basely twitted Amy upon her limeless state, promptly buried the hatchet and offered to furnish answers to certain appalling sums." (*Little Women* 63)

currants in them” (*A Little Princess* 124) and “the delightful odours of warm bread floating up through the baker’s cellar window” (*A Little Princess* 124), Sara buys four buns at the baker’s shop (and is given two additional buns by the baker woman, who feels pity for the thin and hungry girl). Instead of eating all of the buns herself, however, Sara gives away no fewer than five of them to a starving beggar girl who is sitting outside the baker’s shop. Sara reasons that the beggar girl needs the bread more urgently than she does and for this reason suppresses her desire to eat the buns. Although Sara is faint from hunger, she feels the moral obligation to give away food she needs in order to help others. When she was still rich, Sara used to give food to the hungry housemaid Becky, and even when she badly needs food herself, she cannot bring herself to eat while others are suffering. Giving up her own bread despite the fact that she is nearly starving herself clearly shows Sara’s good heart and her generosity.¹² In the end, Sara is rewarded for her charitable attitude by meals which mysteriously appear in her cold and unfriendly attic room every night and, finally, by being taken away from Miss Minchin’s school for good when a friend of her father turns up and informs her that she is a very rich girl after all.

While Alcott’s novel *Little Women* and Burnett’s *A Little Princess* clearly link the idea of eating with restraint with moral principles, other children’s classics from the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century arguably go significantly further in terms of the didactic implications associated with learning to control one’s eating habits. A number of literary texts written for children seem to suggest that learning to control what and in particular how much one eats is important in and of itself and even constitutes a vital step in the child’s development. Showing the terrible consequences of being unable to control one’s eating habits apparently is one of the most important (and easiest) ways of teaching young children a lesson about self-control in children’s literature. Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is a case in point. During her time in wonderland the title character in Carroll’s novel is repeatedly confronted with food and drink that has very strange effects on her body: Eating and drinking makes her grow or shrink, thus rendering her body virtually uncontrollable at times, which is shown to be a somewhat unsettling and unpleasant experience for Alice.¹³ The novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* thus uses a

12 The title character in Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* is equally charitable, but at least he does not have to suffer in order to help others.

13 Cf., for instance, the following passage: “She went on growing, and growing, and very soon had to kneel down on the floor: in another minute there was not even room for this, and she tried the effect of lying down with one elbow against the door, and the other arm curled round her head. Still she went on growing, and as a last resource, she put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney, and said to herself ‘Now I can do no more, whatever happens. What *will* become of me?’ Luckily for Alice, the little magic bottle had now had its

very unusual imagery to drive home a message characteristic of “[a] welter of books aimed at both poorer and better-off Victorians” which “urged them to eat sparingly, with middle-class classics such as *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861) at the forefront”.¹⁴ Consuming only small quantities of food and drink was widely regarded as desirable in the Victorian period, especially for women, for whom controlling their urges (including the desire to eat and drink, but of course also their sexual wishes)¹⁵ was of vital importance in Victorian society, or, as Mary Wilson Carpenter puts it: “Victorian consumer culture both produced objects of desire and dictated that little Alices must learn to control their desires, in imagined contrast to women of the ‘dark continents’ and prostitutes on the dark streets of their own cities.”¹⁶ The protagonist in Carroll’s novel eventually learns her lesson: control how much you eat and drink and you stay in control of your body; by nibbling at pieces from the mushroom she finally manages to bring “herself down to her usual height” (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 64). Nibbling some biscuits and fruit – similar to Mary Lennox in the dining-room scene in *India* – may very well be seen as the diet recommended to Alice and to female readers of the novel.¹⁷ Unpleasant experiences teach Alice the lesson that every middle-class Victorian girl and woman was supposed to learn, namely that eating in moderation is quintessential in order to maintain one’s femininity – a lesson that apparently is no longer relevant to Mary Lennox.

John Tenniel’s famous illustrations of Carroll’s novel, which depict the grotesque changes Alice’s body repeatedly goes through, additionally emphasise the

full effect, and she grew no larger: still it was very uncomfortable, and, as there seemed to be no sort of chance of her ever getting out of the room again, no wonder she felt unhappy.” (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 42) KREUTZER. *Lewis Carroll*. 64 refers to Alice’s experience in this scene as a ‘claustrophobic nightmare’.

14 PURCHASE, Sean. *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 68.

15 On women’s role in marriage and their relationship to sexuality, cf. STEINBACH, Susie. *Women in England 1760–1914. A Social History*. London: Phoenix, 2005 [2004]. 46: “Women were expected to be the subordinate partners and dependent on their husbands. As symptoms of this expectation, women were supposed to remain passive in courtship, allowing themselves to be wooed but not wooing, and marital love was seen as something tender rather than erotic.”

16 WILSON CARPENTER, Mary. “‘Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me’: The Consumable Female Body in Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’.” In: *Victorian Poetry* 29,4 (1991): 415–34, 415.

17 JONES, Jo Ellwyn and J. Francis GLADSTONE. *The Alice Companion: A Guide to Lewis Carroll's Alice Books*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. 63 point out that the implicit advice to consume only small quantities of food echoes Lewis Carroll’s personal attitude towards eating: “Carroll was sparing, rather than fastidious, about eating. He did not enjoy dinner parties or feasts at High Table in Christ Church. Indeed, he did not enjoy lunch. Violet Dodgson, his niece, said that when lunch-time arrived at The Chestnuts, Guildford, he would either go out for a long walk or sit at table nursing a small glass of sherry and a dry biscuit.” And they add: “Jokes about food, rich dishes and meagre dishes, keep surfacing in *Alice*.”

necessity of learning to control what and how much one eats and drinks by showing Alice in very uncomfortable positions whenever she has eaten or drunk anything. Moreover, Tenniel's illustrations establish a striking contrast between the nice and neat girl Alice and the grown-up female characters, the Queen and the Duchess, who seem to be the embodiment of a thorough lack of self-control in the novel, being prone to fits of rage as well as irrational and violent behaviour. The illustrations allow the conclusion that these two female characters are immoderate with respect to their eating habits as well, since they are extremely fat and display grotesquely shaped heads and bodies. The Queen and the Duchess clearly are 'unnatural' women according to Victorian norms, and their unnatural quality is at least implicitly associated with the unrestrained consumption of food. By becoming aware of the 'dangers' caused by eating and drinking Alice learns the lesson that sometimes led to disastrous consequences for the health of Victorian girls from the middle class:

Victorian young women were bred to be 'angels' and were taught to fear the monstrous madwomen they would become should they refuse the submission, self-denial, compliance, docility and silence expected of them. The injunction to be small, sylph-like, almost incorporeal and highly delicate creatures, taken to extremes, engendered diseases such as anorexia nervosa and agoraphobia.¹⁸

If one assumes that Carroll's novel may teach girls a lesson about gender-related eating habits, the notion that in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* "children were released from the didactic",¹⁹ which is cherished by many literary critics, appears more than doubtful. The attitude towards eating in Carroll's novel is clearly a far cry from Mary Lennox happily pointing out that she is getting fatter all the time. Interestingly enough, both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Secret Garden* may teach young readers a lesson in self-control, though. After all, Mary Lennox and her cousin Colin learn how to control their temper, but this lesson in self-discipline is definitely *not* conveyed via advocating eating with restraint.²⁰

Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" (1862) is a poem that teaches its readers

18 THOMPSON, Deborah Ann. "Anorexia as a Lived Trope: Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'." In: *Mosaic* 24,3-4 (1991): 89-106, 92. THOMPSON points out that the Victorian period "was an age when food refusal in young women first came to medical attention and was categorized as the neurotic disorder *anorexia nervosa*" (90).

19 HUNT, Peter. *Children's Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. 50.

20 One might for instance argue that Mary Lennox learns about discipline by gardening. Cf. the comment by KEHLER, Grace. "Gertrude Jekyll and the Late-Victorian Garden Book: Representing Nature-Culture Relations." In: *Victorian Literature and Culture* 35 (2007): 617-33, 622 on the significance of self-regulation in Victorian garden books written by women: "Their books provide long narratives on the endless labor and watchful management required to create and maintain a garden, and the properly managed, aesthetically pleasing garden advertises their ideal self-regulation."

a very similar lesson about the dangers of not controlling what one eats. Here two girls, the sisters Laura and Lizzie, are tempted by the delicious fruits offered to them by a group of goblins. Lizzie does the right thing – she steadfastly resists the temptation and runs away from the goblins – but Laura is unable to resist and tries the tempting fruits. Giving in to the temptation turns out to be nearly fatal for the girl; she falls seriously ill, suffering from a terrible craving to have more of the delicious fruit she tasted only once, while refusing to eat anything else. Yet now she can neither see nor hear the goblins any more, and thus her desire remains unfulfilled. It is only at the very last moment that her wiser sister manages to save Laura's life. Although the dangerous nature of the food is made explicit in "Goblin Market", the reader is invited to empathize with the temptation felt by Laura by the seductive choice of words in Rossetti's poem, since "[t]he very words for these fruits are quite literally mouth-filling and sensuously delectable".²¹ The tempting nature of the fruit is further enhanced by the fact that "these are not just common, home-grown English apples and cherries, but also a rich variety of gourmet fruits imported from foreign climes – pomegranates, dates, figs, lemons and oranges, 'citrons from the South.'"²²

"Goblin Market" was not written for children, but later the poem "has been appropriated for a juvenile audience in anthologies, school texts, plays, and picture books"²³ and thus can be seen as a 'cross-audienced poem', as Lorraine Janzen Kooistra puts it.²⁴ This has led to conflicting readings of the poem. Many literary critics privilege a sexual reading of the poem, but on a more literal level Rossetti's "Goblin Market" also teaches its female readers a lesson about the dangers of excessive eating. In other words, while the fruits in "Goblin Market" can certainly be read metaphorically, they should also be read literally.²⁵ Similar to Alice in Carroll's novel, Laura loses control over her body as a result of eating. Her sister manages to resist the temptation and in this way saves her own life as well as Laura's. Although the goblins try to force Lizzie to eat from the fruit, she

21 WILSON CARPENTER. "'Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me.'" 427.

22 WILSON CARPENTER. "'Eat Me, Drink Me, Love Me.'" 427.

23 KOOISTRA, Lorraine Janzen. "Goblin Market as a Cross-Audienced Poem: Children's Fairy Tale, Adult Erotic Fantasy." In: *Children's Literature* 25 (1997): 181 – 204, 182.

24 KOOISTRA. "Goblin Market as a Cross-Audienced Poem." 182 emphasises that "Goblin Market" "has also been commandeered for 'adults only' in magazines and books, as well as on the stage." She points out: "In contemporary productions of *Goblin Market*, mature content is defined by images of heterosexual gang rape and lesbian love." (194)

25 Cf. THOMPSON. "Anorexia as a Lived Trope." 89: "Often, with the seductiveness which the goblins' fruits have for the protagonist, these images tempt readers to decode them for symbolic meanings; but, with equal tenacity, these images insist upon their surface significations." Several critics have read "Goblin Market" as addressing anorexia nervosa; cf. THOMPSON. "Anorexia as a Lived Trope." and COHEN, Paula Marantz. "Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market': A Paradigm for Nineteenth-Century Anorexia Nervosa." In: *University of Hartford Studies in Literature* 17,1 (1985): 1 – 18.

steadfastly refuses to even open her mouth.²⁶ In both “Goblin Market” and *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, eating is punished. In *The Secret Garden*, in contrast, food is not associated with giving in to a dangerous temptation. Apparently, in Burnett’s ‘Garden of Eden’, eating is an innocent and natural thing and does not pose a threat to human – or female – integrity.

Another text that is very interesting in terms of its depiction of attitudes towards food is J.M. Barrie’s novel *Peter Pan* (1911), which was published in the same year as *The Secret Garden*. In addition to refusing to grow up, the title character occasionally also refuses to eat. Very much to the dismay of the ‘lost boys’, who stay with Peter in Neverland, their leader sometimes decides to do without a meal, simply ‘replacing’ it by purely imaginary food. Peter obviously can defer his desire for food playfully and easily, without feeling hungry, as the narrator points out in the following passage:

The difference between him and the other boys at such a time was that they knew it was make-believe, while to him make-believe and true were exactly the same thing. This sometimes troubled them, as when they had to make believe that they had had their dinners. (*Peter Pan* 70)

Peter’s eating habits are said to differ from those of other children in so far as he is more finicky about what he eats and does not enjoy consuming huge quantities of food simply for the purpose of feeling ‘full’: “He could eat, really eat, if it was part of a game, but he could not stodge just to feel stodgy, which is what most children like better than anything else; the next best thing being to talk about it.” (*Peter Pan* 79) Peter eats with more restraint than the narrator considers typical of children. Thus, Peter Pan can be seen as another advocate for eating with restraint, at least if one wants to keep one’s childish innocence. In other words, the message conveyed about eating by *Peter Pan* again differs very much from the obvious enthusiasm for food that is propagated in Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*.

On the whole, nineteenth-century children’s literature time and again appears to recommend moderation with respect to eating and drinking, offering “the foundation for a whole network of regulatory structures, laws, and controls directed towards the detailed management of [the] body”.²⁷ In addition to the novels mentioned above, there are further texts written for young readers which

26 Cf.: “They [the goblins] trod and hustled her, / Elbowed and jostled her, / Clawed with their nails, [...] Twitched her hair out by the roots, / Stamped upon her tender feet, / Held her hands and squeezed their fruits / Against her mouth to make her eat. [...] Lizzie uttered not a word; / Would not open lip from lip / Lest they should cram a mouthful in” (“Goblin Market” 15–16).

27 CIOLKOWSKI, Laura E. “Visions of Life on the Border: Wonderland Women, Imperial Travelers, and Bourgeois Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century.” In: *Genders* 27 (1998): § 10, <http://www.genders.org/g27> (accessed 1 July, 2011).

convey a similar message, including Robert Louis Stevenson's adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883), where "[t]he way the characters deal with drink and food clearly defines them":²⁸ The pirates waste their food recklessly, whereas the morally upright characters display very disciplined behaviour in terms of eating and drinking. In the nineteenth century even texts written for small children sometimes contained references to food that are not conducive to teaching children to enjoy food in the way depicted in *The Secret Garden*. In Beatrix Potter's picture books, for instance, eating is not shown to be a pleasurable activity. In her *Peter Rabbit*, the title character finds himself in a dangerous situation because he is just too fond of Mr McGregor's vegetables and makes forays into the farmer's garden, ignoring mother rabbit's admonishments. Being greedy in this text leads to a life-threatening situation for the title character. Texts like the ones discussed above seem to reflect a cultural development that Laura E. Ciolkowski outlines as follows: "The 'medico-sexual regime' that Foucault tells us penetrated the nineteenth-century body with such persistence, depended for its justification (and expansion) upon the invention of a European body threatened always by excess, appetite, perversion."²⁹ Children's literature of the kind discussed above contributes to fending off this perceived threat by exhorting its young readers to control their body.

IV. Eating is fun! – Food in Children's Literature from the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

While many classics of nineteenth-century children's literature seek to teach their readers to eat with restraint, twentieth-century children's novels often present characters that clearly enjoy eating. In Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) for instance, the animal characters obviously love their picnics. Moreover, when Rat and Mole arrive at Badger's house after having been lost in the Wild Wood in the snow, a dinner instantly makes them feel better and conveys a vivid impression of home and comfort to the reader. Likewise, Bilbo Baggins, the protagonist of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, who was already referred to in the introduction, is extremely fond of good food. The pantries in his house are well stocked with provisions, and during his adventures, his thoughts of home are often associated with thoughts of food. In Mirkwood, when he is "left alone in

28 SCHEUNEMANN, Klaus. "All Hands to Dinner! – Food and Drink in Naval Stories." In: Marion Gymnich and Norbert Lennartz (eds.). *The Pleasures and Horrors of Eating: The Cultural History of Eating in Anglophone Literature*. Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2010. 361–86, 373.

29 CIOLKOWSKI. "Visions of Life on the Border." § 10.

complete silence and darkness” (*The Hobbit* 151), Bilbo even fantasises about his comfortable home and about food:

That was one of his most miserable moments. But he soon made up his mind that it was no good trying to do anything till day came with some little light, and quite useless to go blundering about tiring himself out with no hope of any breakfast to revive him. So he sat himself down with his back to a tree, and not for the last time fell to thinking of his far-distant hobbit-hole with its beautiful pantries. He was deep in thoughts of bacon and eggs and toast and butter when he felt something touch him. (*The Hobbit* 151)

In this passage, food is associated with home and comfort. Moreover, the references to food in the passage just quoted underline the ‘Englishness’ of the novel, since the breakfast the hobbit dreams of is obviously a typically English breakfast.

In her successful boarding school series *The Twins at St Clare’s*, Enid Blyton also depicts eating as a pleasant activity. In the first volume of the series, which was published in 1941, the girls plan a ‘midnight feast’, which is described in the chapter “The Great Midnight Feast”. Midnight feasts seem to be a regular event at St Clare’s boarding school (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 57), albeit one that has to be kept secret from the teachers. The idea for the midnight feast is born when one of the girls, Janet, receives “a marvellous tuck-hamper” (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 56) for her birthday. Janet is delighted when she unpacks the contents of the hamper: “‘All the things I love!’ said Janet. ‘A big chocolate cake! Shortbread biscuits! Sardines in tomato sauce! Nestlé’s milk. And look at these peppermint creams! They’ll melt in our mouths!’” (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 56) In addition to what is inside the hamper, the food the girls bring for the midnight feast includes bread and butter from tea-time, “a jam sponge sandwich” (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 56), “a bar of chocolate” (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 57), “a really marvellous cake, with almond icing all over it, and pink and yellow sugar roses on the top” (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 57) and a “pork-pie” (*The Twins at St Clare’s* 57). The fairly detailed list of food that is provided in Blyton’s novel is likely to contribute to the reality effect of this passage. What is also striking is that many of the items on the list again sound quite British. Although the midnight feast at St Clare’s is a far cry from the sumptuous dinners that are featured in a more recent boarding-school novel, Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, which will be discussed below, the girls in Blyton’s novel clearly consider their feast delightful – an indication that the novel was written at a time when food was not as easily accessible as it is today. Although midnight feasts are forbidden in their boarding school, the girls are not punished for their communal meal in the middle of the night. Admittedly, some of them feel a bit queasy the following morning, but the forbidden feast has no serious consequences, since both their teacher and the school matron notice what has been going on, but do not see any real harm in the

midnight feast. Thus, eating is endorsed in this novel, being clearly regarded as being a source of pleasure and leading merely to a minor and harmless violation of school rules.

While one tends to expect references to 'ordinary' food in a boarding-school novel, readers of fantasy literature in all likelihood look for something more unusual. Thus, it may come as a surprise that the food Lucy is offered by the Faun in Narnia in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) bears a striking resemblance to the food consumed in Enid Blyton's *St Clare's*. The Faun Mr Tumnus serves Lucy "a wonderful tea. There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey, and then a sugar-topped cake." (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 19–20) The meal certainly serves to make Lucy feel at home in an unusual environment; the references to tea, toast and cake also render the fantasy world constructed in Lewis' Narnia Chronicles somewhat less alien to young readers. This could be claimed for the Narnia Chronicles as well as for Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

Moreover, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the author establishes a contrast between 'good food' and 'bad food'. The former is simple and wholesome food of the kind served to the children at the house of the beavers (including freshly caught trout, potatoes and butter) and eaten pleasantly in the company of others, whereas the latter is luxurious and enchanted food which you do not want to share with others. When Edmund meets the White Witch, she asks him what he would like to eat and, at his request, gives him a whole box of Turkish Delight:

The Queen let another drop fall from her bottle on to the snow, and instantly there appeared a round box, tied with green silk ribbon, which, when opened, turned out to contain several pounds of the best Turkish Delight. Each piece was sweet and light to the very centre and Edward had never tasted anything more delicious. (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 37)

While the magically produced Turkish Delight tastes sweet, it turns out to be dangerous, because it creates an insatiable craving for more of the same food ("this was enchanted Turkish Delight and [...] anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves"; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 38); finally, "Edmund knowingly betrays his siblings for more sweets",³⁰ which shows how dangerous this type of food is. Moreover, ordinary food becomes unappealing for anyone who is under the spell of enchanted food. The parallel with

30 WERNER, Mary. "Forbidden Foods and Guilty Pleasures in Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'." In: *Mythlore* 84 (1998): 18–21, 20.

Rossetti's "Goblin Market" is obvious,³¹ but Lewis' novel arguably does not suggest that there is a special need for women to learn to control their eating habits – and thus the text departs from Rossetti's poem in at least one significant respect.

In contrast to references to food in fantasy literature that stress the familiar, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels regularly feature all sorts of fanciful food items that enrich the portrayal of the fantasy world and stimulate the readers' imagination. When Harry has managed to board the Hogwarts Express for the first time and wants to buy sweets from the trolley, he is in for a surprise:

He had never had any money for sweets with the Dursleys and now that he had pockets rattling with gold and silver he was ready to buy as many Mars Bars as he could carry – but the woman didn't have Mars Bars. What she did have were Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans, Droobles Best Blowing Gum, Chocolate Frogs, Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes, Liquorice Wands and a number of other strange things Harry had never seen in his life. (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 112)

Some of the names in the list quoted above have obviously been chosen for their association with witchcraft (pumpkin, cauldron, wands). Still, many of the items seem to constitute variants of 'normal' sweets the readers are familiar with: The chocolate frogs come with collector's cards, and Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans are clearly based on the ordinary many-flavoured jelly beans. The Every-Flavour Beans, however, also illustrate that food in the *Harry Potter* series is not necessarily very appetising. After all, the range of jelly beans includes "all the ordinary ones like chocolate and peppermint and marmalade, but then you can get spinach and liver and tripe" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 115). In the shop Honeydukes in the magical village Hogsmeade sweets such as "blood-flavoured lollipops", "Ice Mice ('hear your teeth chatter and squeak!')", "peppermint creams shaped like toads ('hop realistically in the stomach!')" and "Cockroach Cluster" (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 214) are on offer. The beans and the Cockroach Cluster embody a principle one can observe in many references to food in recent children's literature: What is most important seems to be that the food that is described is 'interesting'; whether it is tasty or not appears to be of minor importance.³²

31 On the similarities between the two texts, cf. also WERNER. "Forbidden Foods and Guilty Pleasures in Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'."

32 Cf. HIGHFIELD, Roger. *The Science of Harry Potter: How Magic Really Works*. London: Headline, 2002. 133: "When you pop one of Bertie Bott's beans into your mouth you take a gastronomic gamble. [...] Each bean tastes different, and you may find yourself in gourmet heaven, hell or indeed anywhere between. These beans can have the sharp flavour of sherbet lemons, which Dumbledore adores. But they can also taste of curry, pepper, tripe, grass and even, horror of horrors, Brussels sprouts."

Yet the food consumed in the magical world is not universally as fanciful and 'interesting' as the lists quoted before suggest. After all, Harry's friend Ron Weasley cannot afford to buy any of the sweets on offer and comes equipped with corned beef sandwiches in a "lumpy package" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 113) for the train ride to Hogwarts. Thus, even in the magical world the availability of attractive, fanciful food is ultimately dependent on financial means. Moreover, while sweets may offer unusual and occasionally even unpleasant culinary experiences in the world of Harry Potter, the meals which are provided at Hogwarts are invariably inviting and plentiful, but not particularly 'exotic'. Harry's first dinner at Hogwarts, for instance, is less singled out by the unusual, fanciful quality of the food that is served than by its sheer quantity:

Harry's mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were now piled with food. He had never seen so many things he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast potatoes, chips, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup and, for some strange reasons, mint humbugs. The Dursleys had never exactly starved Harry, but he'd never been allowed to eat as much as he liked. Dudley had always taken anything that Harry really wanted, even if it made him sick. Harry piled his plate with a bit of everything except the humbugs and began to eat. It was all delicious. [...] When everyone had eaten as much as they could, the remains of the food faded from the plates, leaving them sparkling clean as before. A moment later the puddings appeared. Blocks of ice-cream in every flavour you could think of, apple pies, treacle tarts, chocolate éclairs and jam doughnuts, trifle, strawberries, jelly, rice pudding ... (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 135, 137)

By describing the range of dishes provided by the school in an appealing way the passage suggests that Harry does the right thing when he "pile[s] his plate with a bit of everything". Being allowed to eat as much as he likes is an entirely new experience for Harry – an experience that is clearly meant to stress that his new home is significantly better than his old one. Thus, in contrast to many nineteenth-century novels for children, the *Harry Potter* series certainly on the whole suggests that eating with relish is a positive experience, which ought to be allowed to children. Nevertheless Dudley, who consumes huge quantities of food without being prepared to share with his orphaned cousin, is shown in a very negative light. In his case a huge appetite is clearly coupled with greed and a lack of generosity; thus, the presentation of Dudley echoes concerns about the importance of sharing food with others that can already be found in Alcott's *Little Women* and Burnett's *A Little Princess*. The list of dishes that are served to the Hogwarts students is not particularly unusual; instead, it sounds quite 'English', including traditional English dishes such as roast beef, pork chops, Yorkshire pudding, peas and trifle. In general, dining at Hogwarts does not mean tasting

unusual dishes. The only fanciful food Harry encounters in the wizards' world are sweets – those sold on the train to Hogwarts and in the village of Hogsmeade. Apart from these food items, *Harry Potter*, similar to many other English children's novels, by and large suggests that good, nourishing and tasty food is traditional English food.

With respect to its depiction of fanciful, unusual food the *Harry Potter* series is representative of a tendency that can also be observed in other comparatively recent children's novels. In terms of presenting 'interesting', unusual food Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) has certainly played a very influential role. Here, whole palaces built out of chocolate are mentioned, although they melt away on hot days. Inside Mr Wonka's factory there is a chocolate river; there is grass "made of a new kind of soft, minty sugar" (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* 64); there are "Everlasting Gobstopper[s]" (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* 82), a chewing-gum that turns a girl into a blueberry and other fanciful inventions by Mr Wonka. While *The Hobbit* and *The Twins at St Clare's* primarily feature traditional English food to whet the readers' appetite, novels such as the *Harry Potter* series, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995) stress the unusual nature of the protagonists' experience by including references to extraordinary food. When Hagrid buys Harry a hamburger at Paddington station after the boy's first visit to the magical shops in Diagon Alley, the ordinary food may serve as a reminder of the gap between the world of the muggles and the magical world the protagonist is about to discover (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 97). The food that is available on the train to Hogwarts, in contrast, promises that there are going to be many surprises for Harry.

In *Northern Lights*, the food the protagonist Lyra gets to eat on her trip to the North may not be as fanciful as the sweets tasted by Harry or the children inside Mr Wonka's chocolate factory, but the food is at least indicative of the 'Otherness' of the places visited by Lyra. While the idea of a girl riding a polar bear may certainly be more clearly a marker of the unusual nature of the protagonist's adventure, the fact that Lyra is given "a strip of dried seal-meat to chew" (*Northern Lights* 208) before she climbs on the back of the bear at least serves to reinforce the reader's impression that her adventures are highly unusual. Later on Lyra eats "a strip of dried reindeer-meat" (*Northern Lights* 235) and even a freshly killed seal while she is staying with the bears at Svalbard:

A fresh seal lay on the snow. The bear sliced it open with a claw and showed Lyra where to find the kidneys. She ate one raw: it was warm and soft and delicious beyond imagining. 'Eat the blubber, too,' said the bear, and tore off a piece for her. It tasted of cream flavoured with hazelnuts. (*Northern Lights* 354–55)

Although the food eaten by the bears may not appear to be very inviting to the average reader, Lyra and Roger eat greedily and obviously enjoy the raw meat. Moreover, by unflinchingly eating raw seal Lyra arguably displays a survival instinct that is somewhat reminiscent of Mary Lennox.

Similar to the *Harry Potter* series, *Northern Lights* establishes a contrast between unusual, 'interesting', though not necessarily particularly appetising food on the one hand and ordinary, bland food on the other hand to distinguish between different types of environment. As was shown above, for Lyra the trip to the North also means being exposed to extraordinary food. At Bolvangar, where the cruel experiments are performed, in contrast, the victims are given ordinary food. After her arrival at Bolvangar, Lyra smells "familiar food, bacon and coffee" (*Northern Lights* 237), and the meal she gets to eat later on consists of "stew and mashed potatoes", "a bowl of tinned peaches and ice cream" and, finally, "a glass of warm milk" (*Northern Lights* 241). The familiar food, however, is anything but reassuring in this case. Instead, 'normal' food is associated with a place that is highly dangerous for the protagonist and the other children who are held captive at Bolvangar.

David Almond's novel *Skellig* (1998),³³ which was the winner of the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year Award, introduces yet another approach to food, which bears certain similarities with the unappetising food in the *Harry Potter* novels, but goes a significant step further. *Skellig* focuses on two children, Michael and Mina, who encounter an unusual 'man' called Skellig, who turns out to be an angel. The latter displays food preferences which at first sight may not appear particularly 'angelic', but which certainly serve to mark Skellig as 'other'. He eats spiders (*Skellig* 17), flies (*Skellig* 18) and mice (*Skellig* 51), and he is even fed by owls (*Skellig* 109), which suggests a certain kinship with these animals. In addition to insects and rodents, the angel also likes Chinese takeaway food, however, in particular "number 27 and 53. Spring rolls and pork char sui" (*Skellig* 26). Yet even when Skellig eats this more ordinary food, the way he eats it stresses that he is different from the human characters:

He dipped his finger in. He licked his finger and groaned. He stuck his finger in again and hooked a long slimy string of beansprouts and sauce. He stuck his tongue out and licked. He slurped out pieces of pork and mushrooms. He shoved the spring rolls into his mouth. The red sauce trickled down from his lips, down over his chin on to his black jacket. (*Skellig* 26–27)

He dropped a long sticky string of pork and beansprouts on to his pale tongue. [...] He ran his finger around the tray and caught the final globs of sauce. He licked his pale lips with his pale tongue. (*Skellig* 52)

33 I would like to thank Elena Baeva for drawing my attention to this novel.

The description of what it looks like when Skellig consumes food turns the process of eating into a quite disgusting activity. The depiction of Skellig's eating habits clearly stresses his 'Otherness' and contributes to turning him into an enigmatic and fascinating character whose powers and disposition remain doubtful right to the end.

V. Conclusion

Exploring the way children's literature represents food and the characters' eating habits may tell us much about *what* and *how much* children (and in particular girls) are allowed to or expected to eat in a particular cultural and historical context. Moreover, the attitudes towards eating that are presented in children's literature more often than not may be regarded as an expression of more general didactic principles. Lessons in self-control or in charity, for instance, may appear in the guise of comments on characters' eating habits. Burnett's *The Secret Garden* seems to be indicative of a major turning point in terms of attitudes towards food and the didactic principles that are expressed by means of references to food and eating. Although one could certainly find counterexamples, nineteenth-century children's literature tends to show a remarkable tendency to teach self-control in terms of eating. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in contrast, attitudes towards food are rarely used to convey messages concerning discipline.

In this respect, as well as in others, *The Secret Garden* can be seen as a remarkably modern text and as a milestone in the history of children's literature. Anna Krugovoy Silver points out that "*The Secret Garden* subverts predominant Victorian child-rearing practices, which discouraged energetic physical activity for girls and segregated activities by gender".³⁴ With respect to attitudes towards eating, *The Secret Garden* likewise breaks away from the patterns that had hitherto been predominant in English children's literature. The striking change in children's literature which is epitomized in Burnett's novel may be accounted for by the fact that Victorian ideas of restraint and self-sacrifice had been at least partially discredited as principles of children's education by the time *The Secret Garden* was published. In the further course of the twentieth century the experience of food shortages in Britain as a result of the Second World War may have contributed to rendering references to food more appealing for children and grown-up readers alike. This may have contributed to the predominantly positive depiction of food and eating in children's novels that were published

34 SILVER, Anna Krugovoy. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors: Motherhood in *The Secret Garden*." In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21,2 (1997): 193–203, 198.

during and shortly after the Second World War, such as Enid Blyton's *The Twins at St Clare's*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Food has become increasingly more fanciful and unusual in more recent children's literature – a development that may be explained by the fact that the relatively simple meals featured in the novels mentioned above have ceased to be interesting for young readers due to the increasing availability of food in general (and sweets in particular). Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* may well have paved the way for other children's novels which draw the readers' attention to food items by stressing their extraordinary nature. The tendency to show 'interesting' but not necessarily appealing food in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels or David Almond's *Skellig* may be an indication of the fact that the potential of the depiction of 'normal', enjoyable food is all but exhausted – a possible reaction to the availability of food that is taken for granted in Western societies as well as to the growing unease regarding food in times when news about genetically modified food and various food scares may induce even young readers to be wary about what they eat. Yet, at a time when food does not necessarily seem safe anymore, the unspoilt joy Mary and Colin experience when they have their picnic may arguably be even more appealing to readers than it used to be, giving rise to a nostalgic view of the past which includes living in a state of harmony with nature as well as enjoying nourishing and wholesome meals.

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Edwardian Girlhood Fiction and the Tradition of the Female Novel of Development

I. The Female *Bildungsroman* as the Antecedent of Edwardian Girlhood Fiction

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a tremendous rise in the publication of so-called girlhood fiction.¹ The novels written for young girls include L.M. Alcott's American classic *Little Women* written in 1868/9, Miles Franklin's Australian novel *My Brilliant Career* (1901) and Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1901), another American girl's classic, which many believe to be the model on which Lucy Maud Montgomery based her famous Canadian novel *Anne of Green Gables*, published in 1908, which in turn influenced American author Eleanor H. Porter when writing *Pollyanna* in 1913. With her novels *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1910) Frances Hodgson Burnett answered to the existing demand for literature of that kind and thus took part in the newly emerging literary tradition of novels written for young and adolescent girls.²

While all those novels are undoubtedly related to each other as they show close connections with regard to their heroine's characterization and presentation, their plot and their didactic function as well as their depiction of and emphasis on national identity, they are much less indebted to each other than to their predecessor, the female *bildungsroman*, as it was presented in the novels

1 Cf. FOSTER, Shirley and Judy SIMONS. *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995, and CADOGAN, Mary and Patricia CRAIG. *You're a Brick, Angela! A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839 - 1975*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1976, for an overview of and introduction to novels for girls.

2 MATTISON, Jane. "Understanding the Adult World through Literature: *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne of Avonlea* and *A Complicated Kindness*." In: *Foreign Literature Studies* 29,6 (2007): 19 - 28, 20 summarizes the elements of adolescent literature, which "is to be distinguished from children's literature. [...] [I]t is the task of the author of adolescent literature to highlight the complexities of personality [...] and [it] must capture the prominent features of teenage experience." Although I believe the difference between children's and adolescent literature to be one of major importance, I will not discuss it in this article at greater length.

written by Jane Austen and by Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Therefore it might be worthwhile to explore in what ways Jane Austen's novels and Charlotte Brontë's classic serve as a model for narratives for adolescent girls and to examine some of the features that make up the key elements of Edwardian girlhood fiction as well as to consider their function.

The focus of this essay is on two novels whose debt to Jane Austen's and Charlotte Brontë's work so far has not been discussed very extensively and which clearly show a transcontinental transfer of subject matter. The main topic to be discussed are the similarities between Australian writer Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* – a novel written not for children but for adolescent girls – and Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* series and their similarities with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as well as with Jane Austen's works. Furthermore, the debt of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* to the work of Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen will be explored as well, highlighting the difference between novels for adolescents and novels for children when it comes to adapting elements of the female *bildungsroman* to the genre of girlhood fiction.

Brontë's *Jane Eyre* may safely be called the archetypal female *bildungsroman*.³ The novel traces the life of the title character from her youth to her marriage, an ending that is only made possible after the heroine has been subjected to temptation and has undergone a transformation that grants her a more mature outlook on life.⁴ Brontë confronts her readers with a rather unconventional heroine, stressing her imaginative faculties, as well as her independence, strong will and self-determination – an uncommon behavioural pattern that is nevertheless crowned by a conventional happy ending: the marriage, which can be regarded as the ultimate proof that this novel also has a didactic function, underlining the need for values and emphasizing the reward that is granted to the heroine for her, after all, conformist behaviour. More over, *Jane Eyre* is certainly aware of the British Empire and even more of the difference between this vast space and her native country. This difference between domestic Englishness and the distant exotic regions is highlighted by the contrasting presentation of Bertha Mason and *Jane Eyre*, which supports and foregrounds the advantages and superiority of a distinctly British identity.⁵

All of these features – a narrative tracing the biography of a quite unlikely, imaginative heroine, who is characterized by a strong will and a wish for in-

3 For an overview of the features of the female *bildungsroman* cf. GYMNIC, Marion. *Charlotte Brontë: Jane Eyre. Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights*. Stuttgart: Klett, 2007. 43 – 49.

4 Cf. NÜNNING, Vera. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Klett, 2000. 59.

5 For a concise summary of the key features of *Jane Eyre* as well as the title figure's uncommon characteristics and choices and the impact of the British Empire cf. NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 59 – 60. For the hierarchical distinction between the English *Jane Eyre* and the colonized Bertha Mason cf. GYMNIC. *Charlotte Brontë*. 81.

dependence, underlining the importance of a national identity – are to a certain extent also evident in Jane Austen’s novels. *Mansfield Park* (1814) follows the life of Fanny Price, a protagonist who certainly defies common notions of a heroine. *Northanger Abbey*’s (1817) Catherine Morland is also quite an improbable heroine: “No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine.” (*Northanger Abbey* 1005). The same holds true for the title character of *Emma* (1815) and for *Persuasion*’s (1818) Anne Elliot. Emma’s meddlesome and haughty nature makes her – at least at times – difficult to like,⁶ while Anne Elliot is rather too old and seems to be too uninteresting to make her a prototypical example of a literary heroine. Imagination runs very strong in some of Austen’s heroines. While *Sense and Sensibility*’s Marianne Dashwood is certainly given to strong feelings of romantic imagination, the most imaginative heroine among Austen’s female characters certainly is Catherine Morland, who pictures herself to be part of a gothic novel. *Pride and Prejudice*’s Elizabeth Bennet, in contrast, may serve as an illustration of the fact that Austen’s heroines also show a marked tendency towards a very strong will, which is also easily recognizable in the depiction of Emma’s character, as well as of the fact that many of Austen’s heroines display a distinct wish for independence. Elizabeth Bennet relies heavily on her intuition and impressions, refusing to be guided by anybody, while Emma’s somewhat distorted sense of independence nearly excludes her from happiness, i. e. marriage. In the end, however, all of Austen’s heroines are rewarded with a husband, although the happiness achieved by this kind of alliance is at least in some of the cases certainly open to discussion. While Elinor Dashwood is certainly happy in her marriage to Edward Ferrars, her sister’s marital bond with Colonel Brandon may not appear to be as blissful as the conventional ending makes the reader want to believe.⁷ Even if the world of Jane Austen’s novels may appear to be quite limited in its scope, the presence of the British Empire is always more or less palpable – be it in the characters of the soldiers, colonels, majors and admirals that form part of all of Austen’s novels⁸ or in the more explicit references of *Persuasion*’s Anne Elliot accompanying her husband on a trip to the West Indies at the end of the novel or the Bertrams’ family fortune being derived from a plantation on Antigua in *Mansfield Park*.⁹

While Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* exhibits all of the trademark characteristics that have become typical of the genre of girlhood fiction and thus may serve as the archetypal model which all girlhood fiction to a greater or lesser

6 Cf. NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 48.

7 Cf. NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 47.

8 Cf. NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 45.

9 Cf. SAID, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.

extent is based on, it also becomes clear that all of Jane Austen's novels show characteristics that can be found in *Jane Eyre* as well as in the girlhood fiction emerging later. Finding out what plotlines, features, narrative strategies, and didactic functions derived from the female novel of development make up the typical elements of girlhood fiction, such as Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* will be the task of this article.

II. Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*: A Fictional Autobiography Based upon Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

All of the features mentioned above – a narrative tracing the biography of a quite unlikely, imaginative heroine who is characterized by a strong will and a wish for independence as well as the emphasis on the importance of a national identity – are also very prominent features of *My Brilliant Career*. Like Charlotte Brontë, Miles Franklin chose a male pen name under which she published her novel,¹⁰ which clearly hints at the fact that *My Brilliant Career* just like *Jane Eyre* puts forward notions of female behaviour that would probably have been regarded as outrageous if the public had from the beginning suspected that the author was a woman, or, in the case of Miles Franklin, a mere girl. Yet, in spite of a heroine whose “Selbständigkeit, Urteilskraft und kompromisslose Wahrheitsliebe ein Frauenbild verkörpert, das gängigen Stereotypen widerspricht”,¹¹ *Jane Eyre* ends, as already noted, very conventionally with a marriage. *My Brilliant Career*, on the other hand, which

examine[s] the situation of colonial women, especially young women, caught between their impulses for independent development and societal pressures to conform, and acceptance of a subordinate rôle in social and personal affairs,¹²

rejects the common notion of a happy ending.

Like *Jane Eyre*, Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* is a fictional autobiography in which a matured first-person narrator looks back on her life so far, beginning with an account of her childhood and continuing with the rather more

10 Franklin had an “express wish that her gender remain secret”, as GINGELL, Susan. “Delineating the Differences: An Approach to Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*.” In: *Australian & New Zealand Studies in Canada* 3 (1990): 43–55, 44 states, a wish which was, however, violated by Henry Lawson, who wrote a preface to the first edition, in which he announced that the author must be a girl (cf. *ibid.*).

11 NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 60.

12 GREEN, G.V. “Overturning the Doll's House: A Feminist Comparison between Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* and Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*.” In: *Cruz* 17,2 (1983): 47–59, 47.

important report of her formative years and the courtship that makes up the integral part of those years that have led to maturity. By choosing the perspective of a matured first-person narrator describing the more or less painful process of growing up, Miles Franklin clearly draws upon Charlotte Brontë's successful model. *Jane Eyre* certainly was a success because of its "gelungene Verquickung von Konventionen der fiktionalen Autobiographie und des Bildungsromans",¹³ a combination of genres which hitherto had been very uncommon.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Nünning concedes, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* might have served as an intertextual frame of reference – a text on which Louisa May Alcott modelled her *Little Women's* different stages of development as well.¹⁵ The intertextual reference to Bunyan's pretext in both the archetypal female *bildungsroman* *Jane Eyre* and in what is thought to be one of the founding texts of the tradition of girlhood fiction, *Little Women*, clearly shows the strong connection between both of the texts as well as the genres in general.

In the female *bildungsroman* as well as in girlhood fiction, unfavourable looks seem to be indispensable to a strong heroine;¹⁶ thus both *Jane Eyre* and Sybylla Melvyn, the protagonist of *My Brilliant Career*, can be described as lacking the advantages of female beauty. *Jane Eyre* repeatedly employs the adjective "plain" (e.g. *Jane Eyre* 332; 340) to describe herself, while Sybylla subjects herself to a prolonged beauty treatment after having asked herself: "Why was I ugly and nasty and miserable and useless?" (*My Brilliant Career* 46) – a question that renders clear which of her deficiencies concerns her most, "ugly" being foremost in her thinking. Her ugliness is apparently not only imagined as it is also the subject of her first conversation with Mr Hawden, an English heir:

'I should smile.' – 'What at?' 'Your being Mrs Bossier's grand-daughter. [...] You are not a bit like Mrs Bossier or Mrs Bell; they are both so good-looking. [...] I was disappointed when I saw you had no pretensions to prettiness, as there's not a girl up these parts worth wasting a man's affections on, and I was building great hopes on you. But I am an admirer of beauty.' (*My Brilliant Career* 41)

Both novels contrast their physically unappealing heroines with at least one beautiful female counterpart who is however outrun by the heroine in the race for the desirable man's attentions. Although Blanche Ingram is described as a perfect classical beauty, she is unable to engage Mr Rochester's affection as she lacks character and soul, even worse, she is proud, haughty, vain and shows a malicious streak when mocking other people. Her name – Blanche – tells it all: her soul is pale, her good looks cannot make up for the want of inner beauty that

13 NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 59.

14 NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 59.

15 NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 59.

16 Cf. GYMNIICH. *Charlotte Brontë*. 63, for the function of 'ugly' protagonists.

she suffers from. Incidentally, Sybylla Melvyn meets one of her rivals in the likewise aptly named Miss Blanche Derrick from Melbourne, who “was considered one of the greatest beauties of that city” (*My Brilliant Career* 119), “but one of your disdainful haughty beauties, who wouldn’t deign to say good-day to a chap with less than six or seven thousand a year” (*My Brilliant Career* 119). Both heroines critically observe their rivals, and the narrative clearly exposes their jealousy in the face of such beauty while at the same time engaging the reader’s sympathy for the heroine.¹⁷ The function of juxtaposing a plain heroine and an attractive rival who is in the end defeated by the ‘ugly duckling’ certainly is a didactic and an ethical one: the female adolescent is made to understand that it is not advantageous to focus on one’s looks as beauty is not rewarded, but that it is cleverness, intelligence and hard work as well as an independent spirit that lead to the highest conceivable prize for a young woman in the nineteenth and early twentieth century: a husband.

Apart from these parallels in the plotline there are also strong similarities to be found in the presentation of courtship. Jane Eyre refuses Mr Rochester only to accept him after he has been reduced to more modest circumstances.¹⁸ Sybylla Melvyn accepts Harold Beecham’s proposal only to call off their wedding until he is reduced to a financially very wretched state. Seeing him thus brought down, she promises to marry him when she is twenty-one. However, he soon falls into good fortune, and Sybylla refuses him for good, finding herself back at Possum Gully “to tread the same old life in its tame narrow path, with its never-ending dawn-till-daylight round of tasks” (*My Brilliant Career* 204). The message is clear: while Jane Eyre is rewarded with the love of a man now better suited to her who is even dependent on her, Sybylla is punished: refusing an eligible suitor because of some foolish, modern notions and antipathies concerning marriage is not the way that leads to a brighter future; indeed, life only appears more dismal and wearisome than ever before. A tendency towards emphasizing the punishment of unwomanly behaviour is observed by Stephen Garton, who correctly remarks:

17 WEBBY, Elizabeth. “Reading *My Brilliant Career*.” In: *Australian Literary Studies* 20,4 (2002): 350–58, 353, comments on the discrepancies between Sybylla’s first impression of Blanche and her “acknowledge[ment] of Miss Derrick’s superior physical attractions” and her “much more jaundiced view” only a few pages after their first meeting. She also poses the question: “Do we read inconsistencies between the various views we are given of Miss Derrick as resulting from Franklin’s youthful lack of control of her text, or as part of her comic depiction of Sybylla’s extreme jealousy, a sign that she is more deeply involved with Harry than she will admit?” I would argue that especially the inconsistencies in her views are a device to make Sybylla appear life-like and to engage the reader’s sympathy.

18 Cf. GYMnich. *Charlotte Brontë*. 49–53.

In a number of women's novels of the nineteenth century the contradictions in the status and role of women in society were played out with particular intensity and force. The difficult choice between marriage and a career, when career could spell poverty and loneliness, while marriage involved degradation, was a persistent theme in the English female literary tradition. Equally Sybylla's punishment (exile to the M'Swat's), in art a consequence of her ambivalence about marriage, is reminiscent of the fate of other characters in such novels as *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey*.¹⁹

The character of the female mentor is also a more or less necessary element of the tradition of girlhood fiction which is derived from the female novel of development. In *Jane Eyre* this part is taken by Helen Burns and Miss Temple at Lowood School and later on by Jane's cousins.²⁰ These women help to guide Jane on her way and serve to a certain extent as female role models to the protagonist. Sybylla's mentor is her Aunt Helen, again an unusual parallel between *Jane Eyre* and *My Brilliant Career* regarding the choice of names. Aunt Helen teaches her niece the womanly ways, understands her and "effects the physical transformation of the labour-coarsened girl into the winning beauty, the aunt-cum-godmother working her magic by prescribing the wearing of gloves and shady hat and providing fine new gowns".²¹ However, Aunt Helen ultimately is a rather negative role model. Although she knows how to make Sybylla appear more attractive to male eyes, Aunt Helen's fate serves as a warning to Sybylla with regard to being too dependent on male attentions, as Aunt Helen has been left despondent by her husband who discarded her in spite of all of her accomplishments.²² The connection between Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre* and Aunt Helen in *My Brilliant Career*, and thus the possibility that the identical names are not merely accidental, becomes clear: while Helen Burns's life is cut short by illness, Aunt Helen's (social) life is cut short by her unfaithful husband, who left her neither a spinster nor a widow, thus limiting her scope of action and social activities immeasurably and condemning her to a life at the mercy of her widowed mother. Aunt Helen, thus, despite her apparent bravery and cheerfulness in fact lives a living death, a state which was very common in Victorian literature.²³

The independence of Jane Eyre in the beginning is a rather forced one, as Jane is an orphan whose aunt refuses to care for her. Nevertheless, Jane succeeds in improving her poor starting point, becoming a teacher and governess and ex-

19 GARTON, Stephen. "Contesting Enslavement: Marriage, Manhood and *My Brilliant Career*." In: *Australian Literary Studies* 20,4 (2002): 336–49, 337.

20 GARTON. "Contesting Enslavement." 46–47.

21 GINGELL. "Delineating the Differences." 47.

22 GINGELL. "Delineating the Differences." 50.

23 PURCHASE, Sean. *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 36.

hibiting a great talent for drawing, which clearly marks her creative vein. She is also ambitious, as she cannot stand the prospect of spending her entire life at the school where she herself has been educated: "I felt that it was enough. [...] I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer. [...] For change, stimulus." (*Jane Eyre* 114) This wish for a change, a new life, is echoed by Sybylla, who complains about her life on the outback station of Possum Gully, a "stagnant [place] with the narrow stagnation prevalent in all old country places" (*My Brilliant Career* 8) where "nothing ever happened" (*My Brilliant Career* 8) and "time was no object, and the days slid quietly into the river of years" (*My Brilliant Career* 8). Sybylla is an extraordinarily talented and intelligent young woman with an interest in music and the arts, whose only consolation in her wearisome daily routine is the writing of a novel. But her talents are also at the heart of her problematic behaviour, which is uncommon for a girl at the turn of the twentieth century. Her "artistic aspirations, her social conscience, and her atheism would set her apart even if she were a man, and doubly isolate her because of her sex."²⁴ Sybylla very strongly feels her difference, and she also feels that her talent and her creativity are wasted; she exclaims: "I was discontented and restless, and longed unendurably to be out in the stream of life. 'Action! Action! Give me action!' was my cry." (*My Brilliant Career* 34) While *Jane Eyre* soon amends her cry for liberty to the modest wish for "at least a new servitude" (*Jane Eyre* 114), Sybylla accepts her grandmother's invitation to Caddagat, resigning herself to the fact that she is only sent there to be prepared for marriage, a state that to her "appear[s] the most horribly tied-down and unfair-to-women existence going" (*My Brilliant Career* 31). Both heroines in fact exchange their old prisons for new limited spaces; however, they do so willingly and are thereby objectively improving their old situations. Creativity and independence as well as the wish and ambition for change make up the second set of key features of Edwardian girlhood fiction derived from the female *bildungsroman*. The heroines function as a model for their young female readership: young women are meant to be proficient in at least one branch of the arts, and it is highly recommendable that a young woman should be able to stand on her own feet, but only within certain limits; nevertheless, creativity, resourcefulness and intelligence as well as a clear direction in life always pay off and are desirable qualities in a young woman.

Another key element to be discussed is national identity. While *Jane Eyre's* Englishness, as already mentioned, is underlined by her comparison to Bertha Mason, *My Brilliant Career* is framed and structured around Australian nationalism. Not only is the whole novel addressed to "My dear fellow Australians"

24 CARRUTHERS, Virginia Kirby Smith. "An Outback Sybil: The Renegade Heroine of *My Brilliant Career*." In: *Philological Papers* 32 (1986): 41–48, 42.

(*My Brilliant Career* “Introduction”), Sybylla at the end of the novel turns to nationalism for consolation in her dejected state, criticizing the British Empire explicitly:

Enough of pessimistic snarling and grumbling! [...] I am proud that I am an Australian, a daughter of the Southern Cross, a child of the mighty bush. I am thankful I am a peasant, a part of the bone and muscle of my nation, and earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, as man was meant to do. I rejoice I was not born a parasite, one of the blood-suckers who loll on velvet and satin, crushed from the proceeds of human sweat and blood and souls. (*My Brilliant Career* 231)

The emphasis on and celebration of one’s nationality in Edwardian girlhood fiction serves the function of promoting the reader’s pride in his or her country. It can be seen as a typical expression of the Edwardian age, as patriotism was a desirable and indispensable quality in every citizen at a time when nationhood was in vogue.

All key features referred to so far, and others as well, can be found in the works of other authors of girlhood fiction, even if they were written at the other end of the world as can be proven, for example, by looking at Canadian Lucy Maud Montgomery’s novel *Anne of Green Gables*.

III. *Anne of Green Gables: The Heir of Jane Austen and Jane Eyre*

Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery was published in 1908, seven years after *My Brilliant Career*. In contrast to Miles Franklin’s novel, *Anne of Green Gables* is not a fictional autobiography narrated by a first-person narrator, but was written in the vein of Jane Austen’s style containing “spritzig, witzige Dialoge, [...] virtuose Wiedergabe von Gedanken und Gefühlen sowie [dem] Zurücktreten des auktorialen Erzählers, der nur selten verallgemeinernde oder moralisierende Kommentare abgibt.”²⁵ Passages in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* such as Rachel Lynde’s introductory characterization are certainly highly reminiscent of Jane Austen’s “Erzählinstanz [mit ihren] treffenden, bisweilen ironischen Charakterisierungen der Figuren, die deren Schwächen schonungslos offen legen”²⁶:

Mrs Rachel Lynde lived just where the Avonlea main road dipped down into a hollow [...] traversed by a brook [...]; it was reputed to be an intricate, headlong brook in its earlier course through those woods, with dark secrets of pool and cascade; but by the time it reached Lynde’s Hollow it was a quiet, well-conducted little stream, for not even a brook could run past Mrs Rachel Lynde’s door without regard for decency and

25 Cf. NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 46.

26 NÜNNING. *Der englische Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 46.

decorum; it probably was conscious that Mrs Rachel was sitting at her window, keeping a sharp eye on everything that passed, from brooks and children up, and that if she noticed anything odd or out of place she would never rest until she had ferreted out the whys and wherefores thereof (*Anne of Green Gables* 7).

Like Sybylla Melvyn, Jane Eyre, Anne Elliot, Catherine Morland and Fanny Price, Anne Shirley is a rather unappealing heroine, a condition she suffers from very much:

Now you see why I can't be perfectly happy. Nobody could who had red hair. I don't mind the other things so much – the freckles and the green eyes and my skinniness. [...] But I *cannot* imagine that red hair away. I do my best [...] But all the time I *know* it is just plain red, and it breaks my heart. It will be my lifelong sorrow. (*Anne of Green Gables* 20)

Again, the notion of being ugly is not only due to a possibly distorted perception of herself on the heroine's part, but is affirmed by other characters in the novel, most notably Rachel Lynde, who calls Anne "terribly skinny and homely" (*Anne of Green Gables* 58) and even exclaims at one point: "Lawful heart, did anyone ever see such freckles? And hair as red as carrots!" (*Anne of Green Gables* 58), a statement that does not go down very well with Anne, to put it mildly. Anne reacts to Rachel Lynde's comments by insulting the lady in return, a behaviour that clearly shows Anne's temper, but also her strong will, one of the key characteristics of an Edwardian girlhood fiction heroine:

How dare you say such things about me? [...] How would you like to be told that you are fat and clumsy and probably hadn't a spark of imagination in you? I don't care if I hurt your feelings by saying so! I hope I hurt them. [...] And I'll *never* forgive you for it, never, never! (*Anne of Green Gables* 58 – 59)

Anne's red hair also is at the heart of the conflict with later lover and husband Gilbert Blythe, who, in a desperate effort to engage her attention, pulls her braid and calls her "Carrots!" (*Anne of Green Gables* 95). Anne's anger does not diminish for a very long time; indeed she is as unrelenting as she had promised to be to Mrs Lynde, and it is only at the end of the novel that Anne recognizes that she envies the other girls for their carefree friendship with Gilbert. Like most of the other heroines mentioned so far, Anne has some rivals in her struggle for Gilbert's affection. During Anne's schooldays, Gilbert is kept busy by Josie Pye, who nevertheless is no real competition for Anne, being "a Pye, [...]" so she can't help being disagreeable" (*Anne of Green Gables* 246), and later on, at college, by Ruby Gillis: "Gilbert Blythe nearly always walked with Ruby Gillis and carried her satchel for her. Ruby was a very handsome young lady [...]. She had large, bright blue eyes, a brilliant complexion, and a plump, showy figure" (*Anne of Green Gables* 233). However, Ruby is no real match for Gilbert, and everybody seems implicitly to know that Anne and Gilbert would be much better suited to

each other: “Ruby Gillis told Jane Andrews that she didn’t understand half the things Gilbert Blythe said; he talked just like Anne Shirley did when she had a thoughtful fit on” (*Anne of Green Gables* 233). The real danger to a possible marriage between Gilbert and Anne comes later in life. Gilbert becomes involved with Christine Stuart, who is “very handsome, in the stately style [...]. A tall girl, with large dark blue eyes, ivory outlines, and a gloss of darkness on her smooth hair” (*Anne of the Island* 205) and who, according to Anne, “looks just as I’ve always wanted to look” (*Anne of the Island* 205). Anne, on the other hand, believes to have found the man of her dreams in “[t]all and handsome and distinguished-looking – dark, melancholy, inscrutable eyes – melting, musical, sympathetic voice” (*Anne of the Island* 198) Roy Gardner, who “could not have more closely resembled her ideal if he had been made to order” (*Anne of the Island* 199). Still, Anne refuses Roy’s proposal of marriage and realizes that she loves Gilbert after all, who, after a long streak of illness, offers marriage to Anne again, after already having been refused by her once.

The plotline of *Anne of the Island*, involving the refusal of one proposal only to accept the second as well as a prolonged series of misunderstandings between the two lovers is not only very much reminiscent of *Anne of Green Gables*, where Anne is unable to forgive Gilbert until the very end of the novel, even though he has offered his apologies once before. It shows a very strong resemblance to Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* but even more so to *Pride and Prejudice*.²⁷ Elizabeth Bennet is unable to accept Darcy’s proposal of marriage and refuses him harshly only to regret her decision and finally understand that she loves him after all. Elizabeth Bennet also suffers from a spell of infatuation with Mr Wickham only to realize that her ideas and preconceptions about him were as wrong as those she entertained about Darcy at that time. However, the plotline of the *Anne* series also very strongly resembles Jane Eyre’s story, in which Jane also refuses Rochester, only to return to him and marry him after his accident and after having been proposed to by St. John Rivers. Similarly, Anne rejects Roy Gardner’s proposal, feeling that something is missing:

The whole effect [of the proposal] was quite flawless. And it was also sincere. There was no doubt that Roy meant what he said. There was no false note to jar the symphony. Anne felt that she ought to be thrilling from head to foot. But she wasn’t; she was horribly cool. (*Anne of the Island* 269)

Although the reader knows from the start of the first novel of the *Anne* series that Gilbert and Anne are meant to be together, Anne only realizes her true feelings

27 Cf. FULLER, Miriam Rheingold. “Jane of Green Gables: L.M. Montgomery’s Reworking of Austen’s Legacy.” In: *Persuasions On-Line. A Publication of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 29,1 (2008), who discusses in detail the connections between the *Anne* series and Jane Austen’s novels.

for Gilbert Blythe after he has contracted typhoid fever, thus being as helpless as Mr Rochester, and seems to be on the verge of death. It thus could easily be assumed that the romance plot – if there is one, since after all some examples of Edwardian girlhood fiction do not possess one, if their intended readership were girls and not adolescents – tends to follow the same pattern, made popular by Jane Austen’s novels, especially by *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*, and later on followed by Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

Another typical element of girlhood fiction derived from the female *bildungsroman*, the character of the female mentor, is also apparent in *Anne of Green Gables*. Anne looks very much up to Mrs Allan, the minister’s wife, with whom she “fell promptly and whole-heartedly in love” (*Anne of Green Gables* 143) and whom she admires tremendously for her smile, dimples and nice talk (cf. *Anne of Green Gables* 144). The other important mentor for Anne is Miss Stacey, the new school-teacher, “a bright, sympathetic young woman with the happy gift of winning and holding the affections of her pupils and bringing out the best that was in them mentally and morally” (*Anne of Green Gables* 159). Miss Stacey’s influence on Anne is strong; she teaches her to let go off her overly romantic aspirations and thus brings quite a realistic turn to the thoughts and the creativity of adolescent Anne, instructing her not to “write anything but what might happen in Avonlea in our own lives” (*Anne of Green Gables* 211) and to write “as simply as possible” (*Anne of Green Gables* 211).

The independence of Anne Shirley, another of the typical characteristics of girlhood fiction, is, like that of Jane Eyre, at the beginning very much inevitable. Like Jane Eyre, Anne Shirley is an orphan; so she has to rely on and take care of herself. Although neither Sybylla Melvyn nor any of Austen’s heroines is an orphan, all these female characters exhibit a strong streak of independence, which is due to the incapability and weakness of their parents or the lack of either mother or father.²⁸ Sybylla’s father is a drunkard, her mother a woman who has become embittered by her life, having fallen from fortune, and now she discourages her daughter’s ambitions as much as possible.²⁹ *Sense and Sensibility*’s Marianne and Elinor Dashwood have lost their father, and their mother is obviously quite helpless. Anne Elliot’s father is unable to handle his economic affairs, and Mr Bennet for the most part of his life hides in his library, while his wife in many ways lacks the maturity one expects from a mother of five. Anne

28 This is also true for many other examples of girlhood fiction. Eleanor H. Porter’s *Pollyanna* is an orphan just like Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess*; Kate Douglas Wiggin’s *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* has lost her father and is sent to live with her aunts by her mother; Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* suffer from their father’s absence due to the Civil War.

29 GINGELL. “Delineating the Differences.” 47.

Shirley's independence is very clearly highlighted by her difference from the population of Prince Edward Island:³⁰

[B]eing confronted half-way down the lane with a golden frenzy of wind-stirred but-tercups and a glory of wild roses, Anne promptly and liberally garlanded her hat with a heavy wreath of them. [...] In the porch [of the church] she found a crowd of little girls [...] all staring with curious eyes at this stranger in their midst, with her extraordinary head adornment. Avonlea little girls had already heard queer stories about Anne; Mrs Lynde said she had an awful temper; Jerry Buote [...] said she talked all the time to herself or to the trees and flowers like a crazy girl. (*Anne of Green Gables* 70)

While the fact that Anne talks to “trees and flowers like a crazy girl” (*Anne of Green Gables* 70) indeed seems strange to the ‘normal’ people of Avonlea, this kind of behaviour really marks Anne’s creativity and overactive imagination. At the beginning, her ability to imagine things is born out of the sheer necessity to make a cruel life bearable. She thus imagines a window friend: “I called her Katie Maurice, and we were very intimate. I used to talk to her by the hour, especially on Sunday, and tell her everything. Katie was the comfort and consolation of my life” (*Anne of Green Gables* 54), who is, even if she is only an imaginary friend, of the same importance to her as Helen Burns is to *Jane Eyre*. Later on, Anne’s wish to imagine things is not so much engendered by the need to improve her situation, but rather because it has become a habit and life thus becomes even more beautiful and exciting. Places with ordinary names are rebranded by Anne (e. g. “Barry’s Pond” becomes “Lake of Shining Waters”, *Anne of Green Gables* 22) and she founds a Story Club (*Anne of Green Gables*, ch. 26), which seems to have its model in *Little Women’s* “Pickwick Club”. In the club, Anne and her friends try their hands at writing stories, but none of the other girls takes the Story Club as seriously as Anne does, although her artistic outpourings are also of a debatable quality at the time. However, her ambition to write stays with her always and under Miss Stacey’s guidance her writing skills certainly improve (*Anne of Green Gables* 211), so that later in life she succeeds in getting published (*Anne of the Island* 252). The imaginative and creative streak that is obviously recognizable in all girlhood fiction based on Jane Austen’s novels, and especially on *Jane Eyre*, thus is clearly identifiable and, more importantly, it changes as the heroine matures.

Anne’s imagination is also a gift that accounts for another parallel with a

30 BLACKFORD, Holly. “Introduction. Anne with an ‘e’: The Enduring Value of *Anne of Green Gables*.” In: Holly Blackford (ed.). *Anne with an ‘e’. The Centennial Study of ‘Anne of Green Gables’*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009. xi–xxxviii, xiii, nevertheless correctly states that Anne is not so different after all: “[S]he both symbolizes *the outsider* [...] and one who *belongs*. In fact, it seems that she has always belonged to the Island: she is red like the colour of the land, a child in a homestead where no children have been or ever can be, a being who takes possession of the landscape and Cuthbert homestead.”

distinctive feature of *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, the presence of Gothic elements.³¹ While in *Jane Eyre* the whole atmosphere and setting of the novel are strongly influenced by the tradition of the Gothic novel, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* rather parodies the vogue of Gothic fiction and highlights the effects of an overwrought imagination. The same is true for *Anne of Green Gables*. But while *Northanger Abbey* is preoccupied with the tradition of the Gothic and its effects, Lucy Maud Montgomery devotes just one chapter to "A Good Imagination Gone Wrong" (*Anne of Green Gables*, ch. 20), whose message is nevertheless the same as *Northanger Abbey*'s. Anne is asked at dusk to run over to Mrs Barry to fetch something for her. Anne refuses to do so and begs Marilla to let her go in the morning, because she "can't go through the Haunted Wood" (*Anne of Green Gables* 138). In the ensuing conversation, Anne confesses that "Diana and I just imagined the wood was haunted" (*Anne of Green Gables* 139) and reveals her imagination, which apparently has been very strongly influenced by the Gothic tradition:

[W]e have imagined the most harrowing things. There's a white lady walks along the brook just about this time of the night and wrings her hands and utters wailing cries. She appears when there is to be a death in the family. And the ghost of a little murdered child haunts the corner up by Idlewild; it creeps up behind you and lays its cold fingers on your hand – so. Oh, Marilla, it gives me a shudder to think of it. And there's a headless man stalks up and down the path and skeletons glower at you between the boughs. (*Anne of Green Gables* 139)

No-nonsense Marilla, however, is not given to romantic and Gothic imaginations like this and decides to teach Anne a lesson, decides to "cure [Anne] of imagining ghosts into places" (*Anne of Green Gables* 140), letting her know that "I've had my doubts about this imagination of yours right along" (*Anne of Green Gables* 139). Anne has to walk to Mrs Barry through the Haunted Wood and she "never forgot that walk. [...] The goblins of her fancy lurked in every shadow about her, reaching out their cold, fleshless hands to grasp the terrified small girl who had called them into being" (*Anne of Green Gables* 140). Anne survives her trip through the wood but promises to "b-b-be cont-t-tented with c-c-commonplace places after this" (*Anne of Green Gables* 140). The message, as mentioned above, is clear, and one that, in combination with Miss Stacey's efforts to restrain the overly fantastic imagination of Anne and guide her creativity into more controlled channels, certainly suggests that imagination may serve well, as long as it is not allowed to run wild. Anne's experience of twilight in the Haunted Wood and her realization that her imagination sometimes carries her too far allow her to become more mature and to take one more step towards adulthood.³²

31 Cf. GYMNIICH. *Charlotte Brontë*. 53–60, for the elements of Gothic fiction in *Jane Eyre*.

32 MILLER, Kathleen A. "Haunted Heroines: The Gothic Imagination and the Female Bil-

The last essential element of Edwardian girlhood fiction to be discussed in this analysis of *Anne of Green Gables* is the issue of national identity. *Anne of Green Gables* is very conscious of its status as a Canadian piece of fiction, and even more proud of its regionalism, emphasizing the beauty and remoteness of Prince Edward Island over and over again: “Montgomery was [...] the most place-conscious of writers. In *Anne of Green Gables* we find, virtually, a cult of place as the author imaginatively appropriates Prince Edward Island, with its iconography of red roads and pointed firs”.³³ The topic of Anglo-Canadianism is even raised in the very first chapter of the novel, when Marilla explains her motives for adopting a child to Mrs Lynde:

Matthew is getting up in years [...] you know how desperate hard it's got to be to get hired help. There's never anybody to be had but those stupid, half-grown little French boys [...]. At first Matthew suggested a 'Home' boy. But I said 'no' flat to that. 'They may be all right - I'm not saying they're not - but no London street arabs for me,' I said. 'Give me a native born at least. There'll be a risk, no matter who we get. But I'll feel easier in my mind and sleep sounder at nights if we get a born Canadian.' (*Anne of Green Gables* 11)

Marilla's reasoning clearly denotes a strong sense of patriotism and nationalism, particularly as she also clearly voices her misgivings and prejudices concerning the possible adoption of a British boy, i. e. a boy from the mother country. Her attitude thus shows a change in the self-perception of the population of the former colonies who obviously have started to gain pride in their being separate and different from Britain, a feeling that is also expressed by Sybylla Melvyn. Marilla instinctively trusts 'her own kind' much more (although her ancestors are not Canadians) than anyone who comes from the country of her ancestors. By expressing views such as Marilla's preference of a “born Canadian”, “*Anne of Green Gables* arrives on a national scene to express a strong anti-imperial sen-

dungsromane of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and L.M. Montgomery.” In: *The Lion and the Unicorn* 34 (2010): 125–47, 126 is of a similar opinion: “In both *Northanger Abbey* and *Anne of Green Gables*, Gothic intrusions into the [...] realistic female *bildungsromane* serve as a means of social instruction for the heroines and discipline for their Gothic imaginations. Moreover, these texts suggest that correct reading practices can lead to right uses of reason in the social sphere and that novels can further the goal of female education – both for their heroines and for their readers. Furthermore, Austen and Montgomery posit that once false readings of Gothic romances – their improper reading and imaginative practices – are swept away, then the heroines will be prepared for their own real-life romantic courtship narratives.”

33 ALEXANDER, Joy. “Anne with Two ‘G’s’: Green Gables and Geographical Identity.” In: Holly Blackford (ed.). *Anne with an ‘e’. The Centennial Study of ‘Anne of Green Gables’*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009. 41–60, 43–44.

timant and a contemplation of the Canadian-born's right to childhood and land".³⁴

Patriotism is a serious business for Marilla and she thus serves as the Canadian conscience in the novel. She does not approve when "the scholars of Avonlea school [...] get up a concert [...] for the laudable purpose of helping to pay for a school-house flag" (*Anne of Green Gables* 161). Anne tries to appeal to Marilla's sense of Canadianism, saying "[b]ut think of the worthy object [...]. A flag will cultivate a spirit of patriotism" (*Anne of Green Gables* 161), which is answered by Marilla's gruff reply "[t]here's precious little patriotism in the thoughts of any of you. All you want is a good time." (*Anne of Green Gables* 161) The theme of patriotism, even if it is approached in both passages quoted here with a certain ironic distance by the narrator, is a typical element of Edwardian girlhood fiction, especially if it was written by postcolonial authors and was set in a postcolonial location. The topic of patriotism as it is introduced in Edwardian girlhood fiction promotes the difference between the former colony and Britain, helps to establish a national consciousness and underlines the importance of a distinct and individual national identity. In this way the establishment of a colony as a country in its own right very much resembles the effort and need of the adolescent girl to become an adult, independent of her mother or the woman who raised her.

IV. *The Secret Garden: The Female Bildungsroman as Children's Novel*

Compared to *My Brilliant Career* and *Anne of Green Gables*, the heritage of the female *bildungsroman* in *The Secret Garden* is of a somewhat different quality. This is mainly due to the fact that L.M. Montgomery's and Miles Franklin's intended readership were adolescent girls, i. e. girls on the verge of womanhood, who show much more interest in a romance plot than children would. Since *The Secret Garden* is a children's classic, it excludes the romance plot from its story, and focuses on the transformation of two rather disagreeable children into likeable and healthy characters.

"Mistress Mary Quite Contrary" (*Secret Garden* 13), like all other heroines of girlhood fiction, is a very unattractive girl: "When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen." (*Secret Garden* 7) The narrator supports

34 BLACKFORD, Holly. "Introduction. Anne with an 'e': The Enduring Value of *Anne of Green Gables*." In: Holly Blackford (ed.). *Anne with an 'e'. The Centennial Study of 'Anne of Green Gables'*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009. xi – xxxviii, xxv.

this statement with an emphatic “It was true, too.” (*Secret Garden* 7), thus underlining the correctness of the description. Although this is slightly different from the way Sybylla Melvyn’s and Anne Shirley’s looks are introduced, the function of the device remains the same: the ugliness of the heroine is to be regarded as a fact; it is undoubtedly given and is not subject to the eye of the beholder.

Interestingly enough, the narrator of *The Secret Garden* continues his unfavourable description of Mary Lennox by nevertheless finding an excuse for her disadvantage concerning her appearance: “She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another.” (*Secret Garden* 7) Mary herself, then, is not completely to ‘blame’ for her unpleasant looks; it is rather the fact that she was born and had to grow up in a colony in a climate that was perceived as unhealthy which has caused her unsightliness. Right from the beginning the superiority of Britain is thus established. India is denoted as a potentially and factually sickening place, as nearly all of the inhabitants of Mary’s home in India, including her father and her mother, contract cholera “in its most fatal form and [...] were dying like flies” (*Secret Garden* 10). The references to India at the beginning of the novel serve to stress Mary’s difference from other children of her age and to explain her ignorance. Thus, for example, she asks, after having been told that she is going to be sent home “Where is home?” (*Secret Garden* 14), a question which is sneeringly answered: “She doesn’t know where home is! [...] It’s England, of course” (*Secret Garden* 14). Another illustration of her limited scope of experience which is linked with her having been brought up far away from Britain is her asking herself “What was a hunchback? She had never seen one. Perhaps there were none in India.” (*Secret Garden* 17) The function of thus linking Mary’s ignorance – which is also caused by the fact that she has been brought up by a native ayah due to her parents’ neglect – and her unappealing looks with the country of her birth can certainly be traced to the wish of highlighting the superiority of Britain. British children born in the colonies thus are marked as weaker, sicker and less intelligent. The danger that emanates from the colonies and their British inhabitants who have not been adjusted to the British ways at an early age is thus explained. Mary Lennox is therefore stigmatized as being deficient.

Later on, however, Mary’s childhood in India is glorified and turned into a fairy tale as well as a means to promote Colin’s health. Mary tells him about the Indian rajahs, how they speak and behave. Hence, as soon as Mary and Colin have started their transformation into ordinary, healthy British children, India is used as a supplement to their experience and as an extension of their knowledge. Again, a moral and ethical function of the presence of the Empire in children’s fiction can be assumed: As long as a young citizen is fairly rooted in his or her

native country, the existence of a vast Empire beyond may prove wholesome and advantageous; however, British superiority is always taken for granted in the same way that Jane Eyre is shown to be by far superior to dangerous, animalistic Bertha Mason. The patriotism so commonly reiterated in girlhood fiction of the Edwardian period is thus duly established.

Another major device that is clearly reminiscent of *Jane Eyre* is the setting of *The Secret Garden*. The Yorkshire moors provide a dramatic backdrop for the action and Misselthwaite Manor shares many characteristics with Thornfield Hall:³⁵

[I]t's a grand big place in a gloomy way. [...] The house is six hundred years old and it's on the edge of the moor, and there's near a hundred rooms in it, though most of them's shut up and locked. And there's pictures and fine old furniture and things that's been there for ages, and there's a big park round it and gardens and trees with branches trailing to the ground – some of them. (*Secret Garden* 19)

The Gothic atmosphere of the house in which Mary Lennox is to spend her childhood from now on is thus irrevocably established and shortly after affirmed when Mary herself arrives at Misselthwaite:

The entrance door was a huge one made of massive, curiously shaped panels of oak studded with big iron nails and bound with great iron bars. It openend into an enormous hall, which was so dimly lighted that the faces in the portraits on the walls and the figures in the suits of armor made Mary feel that she did not want to look at them. (*Secret Garden* 25)

But it is not only the description of the manor that shows many parallels to *Jane Eyre*. In fact, *The Secret Garden* shares the major part of the Gothic-inspired plotline with *Jane Eyre*. While Jane Eyre is intimidated by strange laughter she can hear at night, Mary Lennox hears a “curious sound – it seemed almost as if a child were crying somewhere” (*Secret Garden* 49 – 50). Like Jane Eyre, who is told that the servant Grace Poole laughs in that way, Mary is also being lied to. Martha tries to persuade her that the noise she heard “was th' wind [...]. [A]n' if it wasn't it was little Betty Butterworth, th' scullery-maid. She's had th' toothache all day” (*Secret Garden* 50). Mary, however, knows that Martha is not telling her the truth, and when she hears “another cry, but not quite like the one she had heard last night; it was only a short one, a fretful childish whine muffled passing through the walls” (*Secret Garden* 57), she decides to investigate.

Her wish to know the truth, coupled with her desire to enter the secret garden also clearly identify her as a typical heroine of girlhood fiction, since the urge to do something that is not appreciated by adults is a strong indicator of the heroine's independence. Mary's independence, like that of Jane Eyre and Anne

35 For an analysis of Thornfield Manor as a Gothic place cf. GYMnich. *Charlotte Brontë*. 55.

Shirley, is a more or less forced one since her mother has never cared for her. Nevertheless, her independence and strong will are of vital importance to Mary as they allow her to heal and transform. The fact that she is left to her own devices makes her curious and observant and, after all, allows her to find out about the secret garden and to get to know Colin, who in turn also benefits from Mary's strong will which is displayed for instance by her refusal to be intimidated or impressed by his odd behaviour. *The Secret Garden*, thus, like all girlhood fiction makes a strong case for the independence of its heroine, adding to a growing awareness of girls' needs and capacities which is typical of the first decade of the twentieth century.

V. Conclusion

My Brilliant Career, *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Secret Garden* are just three examples of fiction written for girls during the Edwardian period. However, the elements of these texts which were discussed above can be found in many other novels of this highly popular genre, regardless of the setting of the novel or the author's geographical background. Girlhood fiction fulfilled the distinct function of educating young women morally and ethically and of instructing them in the conventions of female behaviour. To do so, girlhood fiction draws upon its predecessors, the classic texts of the genre of the female *bildungsroman*, copying typical elements and imitating plotlines. Hence, the genre of girlhood fiction as such is ultimately regressive in its orientation, since its formula does not really show new developments apart from modifying certain characteristics of the female novel of development to better suit its target readership of children and adolescent girls. Yet its outlook is a seemingly modern one, since it regards adolescent girls as a worthwhile audience and confronts them with unusual, independent and strong heroines who might serve as role models. Nevertheless, girlhood fiction makes clear that certain ideas about life are rather unwholesome and are not to be tolerated, and trying to live according to such notions is marked as being too progressive to be rewarded. Thus, the overall function of girlhood fiction is to awaken in the young female reader an awareness of being part of a larger female tradition, a desire to become independent, strong and educated and to aspire to a certain amount of self-fulfillment, while at all times warning its readership against pursuing modern notions and ideas excessively. Accordingly, girlhood fiction is truly embedded in its historical context, answering to an ongoing emancipation,³⁶ while feeling the need to conserve 'womanly' behaviour.

36 *My Brilliant Career* is certainly the most obvious example of a novel answering to the new

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